

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

“You Shall Know I Am The Lord”

Bible Study Notes

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THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS - PART ONE

Even though God had redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt and made them a mighty nation, with both a civil and spiritual law that called for their obedient commitment, the nation of Israel was constantly backsliding into idol-worship, civil war, immorality, and the complacency found in a life of abundance and ease. To speak to Israel (and even some foreign nations) on His behalf, the Lord chose His Prophets.

The Call to Obedience

The Prophets were raised up by God to call the people to remembrance, repentance and obedience. The people had taken such God-given institutions as sacrifices and made them into ritualistic substitutes for the true obedience they were designed to represent (Isa. 1:11ff.; Jer. 7:21ff.; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:25; Micah 6:6-8).

Distinguishing False From True

How can we distinguish what is true from what is false when it comes down to religious opinion and testimony? We must compare the opinion and testimony against God's word. To the people of the Old Testament, the Law of Moses stood as the test of religious opinions. The false prophet would try to introduce some "new morality," such as described in Jer. 23:9-22.

The Prophet's Call

The true prophet claimed the "council" of God, that is, being in close communication with God through consultation and companionship. The words most generally used to describe this relationship in the Bible are: prophet and seer. The word prophet means "called (by God)," and indicates that God's mind and will have been revealed to and through the chosen one (2 Tim. 3:16). Seer points to the ability of the prophet to "see" into the affairs of men and the mind of God and indicates a change God makes in the man chosen for this task (2 Pet. 1:21). This ability to "see" would include looking into the past, present, and even the future.

'Thus Says the Lord'

God chose His prophets from many walks of life. Some did not even want to be prophets (Jonah). Their message was first and foremost to those living in the time of the prophecy, yet it is for us as well (Acts 7:38). While some prophets were occasionally dramatic in their presentation, most chose the method of spoken sermons to deliver their prophecy.

How the prophets came to be in possession of God's will is not very clear (Jer. 47:1; Eze. 17:1; Zech. 8:1), but they leave no doubt that they expected their words to be taken as the words of the Lord Himself. It is interesting to note how the Lord worked through the personalities of each of the prophets, giving us the writings of each individual and not some dull, carbon copy boilerplate.

The Present and the Future

God deliberately placed the prophets at crucial turning points in the history of His people. Amos addressed the social decadence and permissiveness caused by a time of national affluence and religious formalism. Isaiah preached to a people on the verge of passing the point of no return in their relationship with God (Isa. 6:9ff.). Jeremiah was on hand at the fall of Jerusalem, while Ezekiel was there as the nation underwent exile. They were available to explain how God would even use the wicked to punish His people if the need arose, and to predict what would happen if the people failed to repent. To avoid future destruction the people were commanded to repent now (Isa. 2:5, 10, 22; 3:1ff. 31:6,7).

The Message of the Prophets

There are five major themes that constitute the framework of the prophet's teaching:

- *The Lord as ruler of all history.* The mighty empires of the day are simply styled as tools of the Lord's will.
- *The primary need to be right with God.* It is more important to side with God (Isa. 30:15), than to seek out powerful human allies.
- *The moral foundation of religion and society.* Jeremiah makes it clear that there can be no true religion without morality (Jer. 7:1-15). To be right with God, man must live in obedience to His standards and commands. This obedience to God leads man to a right relationship with his neighbor.
- *A blend of judgment and hope.* God's judgment is inevitable, yet hope is available to the repentant (Isa. 6:13; 28:5; 29:5; 31:5).
- *The Messianic kingdom.* The prophets point to a bright future state that God has prepared for His people. It is sometimes portrayed as a new covenant (Isa. 54:10; Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 37:26,27), but chiefly it shown as revolving around a great Person, who is: the new "David," "God with us," "God on David's throne," the Servant, dying for the sins of His people, the anointed Conqueror, and born in Bethlehem. The fact that their prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ seals their words as God's words. Jesus Himself stressed the importance of the prophets when He made it clear that we cannot understand Him, know Him or preach Him to the world without the prophets (Lk.24:27, 32, 44-48).

The Prophets - Some Additional Thoughts

At the head of the third great section of the Old Testament stands Isaiah. Sixteen prophets are named including the other Major Prophets: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; along with the 12 so-called minor prophets. Remember, the designation "major" or "minor" simply refers to the length of the book, not its importance.

The prophets wrote over a period of 250-300 years, spanning the decline, the exile, and the return of the children of Israel. Most of their messages were directed toward Judah and Jerusalem: Isaiah, Joel, and Micah before the fall of Jerusalem; Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah at the time of the fall and during the exile; and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi at the time of the return and after.

The mission of the prophets was usually a last ditch effort by God to save His people. The urgency and danger that surrounded them in their endeavors often placed them in life or death situations.

(Adapted from Eerdmans 'Handbook to the Bible' pp. 370-376, including an article entitled: The Prophets, Introduction by Alec Motyer.)

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS - PART TWO

1. While Christians are not under the Old Testament as a system of justification, the OT is of great value for us today...
 - a. Written for our learning, it is a source of comfort and hope - Ro 15:4
 - b. Written for our admonition, we learn what mistakes to avoid - 1 Co 10:11
 - c. As with all scripture inspired of God, it is profitable "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" - cf. 2 Ti 3:14-17
2. This is especially true with regard to "The Prophets"...
 - a. A collection of seventeen books that make up the last part of the Old Testament
 - b. Beginning with Isaiah, and ending with Malachi
3. Those willing to study these books will find their lives enriched as they increase...

- a. Their knowledge of God's holiness, righteousness, justice and mercy
- b. Their understanding of God's dealings in the nations of men
- c. Their appreciation of the Bible as a literary masterpiece

I. WHO WERE THE PROPHETS?

A. THE OLD COVENANT HAD DIFFERENT KINDS OF INSTRUCTORS...

- 1. There was Moses, the lawgiver - Neh 8:1,14; 9:13-14; Jn 1:17; 7:19
- 2. There were the priests, administrators of the law - Lev 10:8-11; Hos 4:6; Eze 22:26; Mal 2:7
- 3. There were the wise men, who gave counsel - 2 Sam 14:1-24; 20:16-22
- 4. There were the psalmists, poets who were the "sweet singers" of Israel - cf 2 Sam 23:1; 1 Chr 6:33
- 5. There were the prophets, communicators of the Word of God

B. A "PROPHET" WAS A SPOKESMAN FOR ANOTHER...

- 1. Like Aaron was for his brother Moses - Ex. 4:16; 7:1
- 2. The word literally means "to boil up like a fountain"
- 3. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a prophet...
 - a. Was a spokesman for God - 2 Pe 1:21
 - b. Was given something to say, and had to say it! - Jer 20:7-9
- 4. A prophet was primarily a "forth-teller", though sometimes a "fore-teller"
 - a. God's word often pertained to future events
 - b. The fulfilled prophecies of these prophets are therefore a strong proof of inspiration --
But much of their word concerned not the future, but current events

C. OTHER DESIGNATIONS HELP TO DEFINE THE ROLE OF A PROPHET...

- 1. Early in Israel's history they were called "seers" - 1 Sam 9:9
- 2. Another appellation was "man of God" - 1 Sam 9:6; 1 Kin 17:18
- 3. Also known as a "servant of God" - 1 Kin 18:36; 1 Chr 6:49
- 4. They served as God's "messenger" - Isa 42:19
- 5. They were also assigned the role of "watchman" - Eze 3:17; 33:7

[The prophets were therefore servants of God, divinely appointed and inspired to proclaim His Word. At times, they were messengers of God's word as it applied to the present, serving as watchmen of the people of God; other times, God's message pertained to the future, and as such they were "seers" of things to come.]

II. HOW ARE THE PROPHETS CLASSIFIED?

A. IT IS COMMON TO SPEAK OF "ORAL" AND "LITERARY" PROPHETS...

- 1. The "oral" prophets are those who left no writings bearing their names
 - a. Such as Elijah and Elisha - cf. 1 Kin 17; 2 Kin 2
 - b. Many others, including Nathan (2 Sam 12), Gad (2 Sam 24:11), Ahijah (1 Kin 11:29)
- 2. Those who left books bearing their names are called the "literary" prophets

B. THE LITERARY PROPHETS ARE CATEGORIZED AS "MAJOR" AND "MINOR" PROPHETS...

- 1. Augustine is credited with being the first to classify them in this way
- 2. The distinction pertains only to the length of the books
 - a. The "major prophets" include the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
 - b. The "minor prophets" are those twelve books from Hosea to Malachi

[As we consider the works of the "literary" prophets, we should note that the order of the books in our Bibles is not chronological. Therefore it may serve useful to review...]

III. THE LITERARY PROPHETS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Please note: Dating the prophets is not without controversy, and with some it can be very difficult. What I provide below are the estimates among many conservative scholars...

A. NINTH CENTURY (EARLY ASSYRIAN PERIOD)

1. Obadiah (ca. 845 B.C.)
2. Joel (ca 830 B.C.)
3. Jonah (790-750 B.C.)

-- This is during the period of "The Divided Kingdom" in Israel's history; to the north and east the empire of Assyria was beginning to make its presence known in Israel

B. EIGHTH CENTURY (ASSYRIAN PERIOD)

1. Amos (755 B.C.)
2. Hosea (750-725 B.C.)
3. Isaiah (740-700 B.C.)
4. Micah (735-700 B.C.)

-- In 722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity; these prophets were proclaiming God's message as the nation was being threatened from the north

C. SEVENTH CENTURY (CHALDEAN PERIOD)

1. Jeremiah (626-586 B.C.)
2. Zephaniah (630-625 B.C.)
3. Nahum (625-612 B.C.)
4. Habakkuk (625-605 B.C.)

-- Assyria was eventually defeated by Babylon; these prophets served as God's messengers when the Babylonian empire threatened the kingdom of Judah

D. SIXTH CENTURY (THE EXILE)

1. Ezekiel (593-570 B.C.)
2. Daniel (605-536 B.C.)

-- Like many of their countrymen, these prophets were taken into Babylonian captivity; from Babylon they served as God's messengers to both captives and kings

E. SIXTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES (POST-EXILIC PERIOD)

1. Haggai (520 B.C.)
2. Zechariah (520-518 B.C.)
3. Malachi (ca. 440 B.C.)

-- After the Jews were allowed to return home from Babylonian captivity, God used Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people to rebuild the temple; later, Malachi was used to reform the priesthood during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah

IV. UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

A. THREE THINGS TO BEAR IN MIND AS YOU STUDY THE PROPHETS...

1. Seek to understand the political, social and religious conditions of the times
 - a. Any interpretation must consider how the message was relevant for the people to whom the prophet spoke
 - b. Secondary fulfillment of prophecy is often found in the NT, but this can be understood only when applied by inspired writers of the NT

- c. Guard against making interpretations that are purely speculative
- d. Any application to modern events must be carefully harmonized in light of the NT
- 2. Consider God's relation to the heathen nations (i.e., other than Israel and Judah)
 - a. The prophets often revealed how God directed their destiny and judged them
 - b. This may provide insight as to how Christ rules the nations today! cf. Mt 28:18; Re 1:5; 2:26;27
- 3. Note any teaching regarding the Messiah and His coming kingdom Ac 26:6-7; 28:20
 - a. The immediate mission of most prophets was to save God's people from idolatry and wickedness
 - b. Failing that, they were sent to announce God's judgment and the coming destruction of the nation
 - c. But many prophets left a message of hope for the future, regarding the Messiah who would come and establish a kingdom that could never be destroyed!

B. SOME OF THE GREAT THEMES DEVELOPED BY THE PROPHETS...

- 1. The holiness of God - He is absolutely pure, righteous, just, merciful, tender, loving, and longsuffering
- 2. The sovereignty of God - He rules the universe and is above all
- 3. The immutability of God's word
 - a. He carries out His promises
 - b. One can depend upon Him to act consistently with His Word
- 4. The terribleness of sin
 - a. God abhors iniquity, and will not tolerate, overlook, nor excuse it
 - b. But He is willing to forgive those who humbly repent
- 5. Repentance and righteousness
 - a. This is the clarion call of the prophets
 - b. Though severe is God's punishment of the wicked, yet God's mercy is great in loving kindness upon the righteous who are of broken spirit and contrite heart
- 6. The worship due God - The proper reverence, awe, and respect for God will cause one to praise Him and give thanks for His wonderful grace and mercy!

CONCLUSION - Why study "The Prophets"? Because in them we learn about...

- A. The nature of God, His holiness, justice, righteousness and mercy
- B. The workings of God, as He dealt with nations, bringing judgment upon the guilty ...which can help us in our relationship with God today, giving us comfort and hope to face the future, knowing that God is in ultimate control!

[Adapted from the "Executable Outlines" Series, Copyright © Mark A. Copeland, 1997]

[Note: these are exactly the same notes that we used to begin our previous study of the Prophet Isaiah.]

EZEKIEL – SYNOPSIS AND TIMELINE

Key Theme: Showing reverence for the name and glory of God.

Key Verse: “You will know that I am the Lord.” (6:7, NIV) (Statement found 70 times in the book.)

I. The Prophet’s Call (1-3)

1. Seeing God’s glory (1)
2. Hearing God’s word (2)
3. Becoming God’s watchman (3)

II. The Fall of Jerusalem (4-24)

1. The judgment predicted (4-7)
2. God’s glory departs (8-11)
3. Godless leaders exposed (12-17)
4. God’s justice defended (18-21)
5. The end of the city (22-24)

III. The Nations Judged (25-32)

1. Ammon (25:1-7)
2. Moab (25:8-11)
3. Edom (25:12-14)
4. Philistia (25:15-17)
5. Tyre (26:1-28:19)
6. Sidon (28:20-24)
7. Egypt (29-32)

IV. The Glorious Future of the Lord (33-48)

1. The city of Jerusalem restored (33,34)
2. The land of Israel renewed (35,36)
3. The nation of Israel resurrected and reunited (37,39)
4. The temple and the priesthood reestablished (40-48)

605 BC	Nebuchadnezzar takes the temple treasures to Babylon: Daniel taken captive
597 BC	Ezekiel taken captive to Babylon at age 25
593 BC	Ezekiel called to ministry at age 30 (Eze. 1-3)
592 BC	Ezekiel’s vision of the temple in Jerusalem (Eze. 8:1ff)
591 BC	Ezekiel interprets Israel’s history (Eze. 20:1ff)
588 BC	Siege of Jerusalem begins (Eze. 24:1ff)
587-85 BC	Ezekiel’s messages against Egypt (Eze. 29-32) and Tyre (Eze. 26:1ff)
586 BC	Jerusalem destroyed by the Babylonian army
585 BC	News comes to Ezekiel of Jerusalem’s destruction (Eze. 33:21,22)
573 BC	Visions of Israel’s glorious future (Eze. 40-48)
571 BC	Ezekiel’s message that Babylon will defeat Egypt (Eze. 29:17-21)

[Synopsis and timeline from *Be Reverent*, Warren W. Wiersbe, pp. 9,10.]

EZEKIEL – GENERAL OUTLINE

PART ONE – PROPHECIES OF JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION (Chapters 1-24)

***[2]**

I. EZEKIEL’S VISION AND CALL (1:1-3:21)

A. Historical Setting of the Prophecy (1:1-3)

1. The time (1:1,2)
2. The place
3. God spoke to Ezekiel (1:3)

B. His Vision of the Glory of the Lord Coming in Just Judgment (1:4-28)

1. The appearance of the four living creatures (cherubim) (1:4-14)
2. The vision of the chariot (1:15-25)
3. The throne of Jehovah’s glory (1:26-28)

C. Ezekiel’s Call to the Office of Prophet (2:1-7)

1. The Spirit enters Ezekiel
2. The people to whom he must speak God’s message (2:3-7)

[3]

D. Ezekiel’s Consecration to Do This Work (2:8-3:15)

1. He is prepared by eating the little book (2:8-3:3)
2. He is commissioned to speak regardless of opposition (3:4-11)
3. Ezekiel is transported to the place of his activity (3:12-15)

E. Ezekiel is Reminded He Was a Watchman to the House of Israel (3:16-27)

1. The responsibility of a watchman (3:16-21)
2. Ezekiel enters into his ministry (3:22-27)

II. FOUR SYMBOLIC PARABLES PORTRAY JERUSALEM’S FALL (4:1-5:17)

[4]

A. Sign of the City Besieged (4:1-3)

B. Sign of the Prophet Lying On His Side (4:4-8)

C. Sign of Eating Polluted Bread (4:9-17)

D. The Sign of the Prophet’s Haircut and Shave (5:1-4)

E. The reason for the Severe Judgment (5:5-17)

III. THE DEVASTATION OF THE LAND (6:1-7:27)

[5]

A. Destruction is Decreed Upon the Land (6:1-7)

B. A Remnant Will be Spared (6:8-10)

C. The Punishment is Just (6:11-14)

D. The Certainty of the Judgment (7:1-9)

- E. The Desolation Described (7:10-27)
 - 1. Social disruption (7:10-13)
 - 2. Military disruption (7:14-18)
 - 3. Economic disruption (7:19-22)
 - 4. Political disruption (7:23-27)

IV. THE GLORY OF THE LORD DEPARTS FROM A DEGRADED TEMPLE AND CITY (8:1-11:25)

- A. Idolatry is Seen in the Temple (8:1-18) [6]
 - 1. Image of jealousy (8:1-6)
 - 2. A secret animal cult (8:7-13)
 - 3. The worshippers of Tammuz (8:14,15)
 - 4. Sun worship (8:16-18)
- B. The Wicked are Slaughtered While the Righteous are Spared (9:1-11)
- C. The Glory of the Lord Departs from the Temple (10:1-22) [7]
 - 1. Coals of fire over Jerusalem (10:1-8)
 - 2. The throne-chariot of the Lord appears (10:9-17)
 - 3. The departure of the Divine Presence (10:18-22)
- D. The Threat of Judgment and a Promise of Mercy (11:1-25)
 - 1. Rebellious rulers are threatened (11:1-13)
 - 2. A remnant of Israel shall be gathered out of the nations (11:14-21)
 - 3. The glory of the Lord departs (11:22-25)

V. THE CERTAINTY OF DESTRUCTION UPON A SINFUL NATION (12:1-19:14)

- A. Two Signs Symbolize the Sureness of Captivity (12:1-20) [8]
 - 1. Ezekiel acts out an emigration from Jerusalem (12:1-16)
 - 2. He eats and drinks with quaking and trembling (12:17-20)
 - 3. Although it was popular to believe otherwise, the judgments of God would soon occur (12:21-28)
- B. Condemnation Against False Prophets and Prophetesses (13:1-23) [9]
 - 1. God's hand is against the prophets who speak from their own inspiration (13:1-16)
 - 2. God's hand is also against the false prophetesses who ensnare people like they were birds (13:17-23)
- C. Idols In Their Hearts Made Them Estranged From God (14:1-23)
 - 1. False people desire false prophets (14:1-11)
 - 2. The presence of righteous men will not avert judgment (14:12-23)
- D. An Allegory of Israel as a Useless Vine (15:1-8) [10]
- E. An Allegory of Israel as an Unfaithful Wife (16:1-63)
 - 1. Jerusalem was found while unclean, miserable, and unwanted (16:1-7)
 - 2. The lord entered into a covenant with her (16:8-14)
 - 3. Israel turned from God like an unfaithful wife (16:15-34)

4. Her punishment will correspond to her sin (16:35-43)
5. Jerusalem is worse than her sisters Samaria and Sodom (16:44-59)
6. God would remember His covenant in the days of her youth (16:60-63)

F. Parable of the Two Eagles (17:1-14) [11]

1. The parable stated (17:1-10)
2. The parable explained and applied (17:11-21)
3. The promise of a goodly cedar planted by the lord (17:22-24)

G. Individual Responsibility Before God (18:1-32)

1. A popular proverb in Israel put all the blame on their fathers (18:1-4)
2. God deals with each one according to his own works (18:5-20)
3. Each man can change his ways, and God will deal accordingly (18:21-32)

H. A Lamentation for the Princes of Israel (19:1-14)

1. A dirge over Judah's kings who were captured and exiled (19:1-9)
2. A dirge over the fall of Judah (19:10-14)

VI. PREDICTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (20:1-24:27) [12]

A. Israel's History of Rebellion (20:1-29)

1. Resistance to God in Egypt (20:1-9)
2. Resistance to God in the wilderness (20:10-26)
3. Resistance to God in Canaan (20:27-29)

B. The Future Restoration of Israel (20:30-44)

1. God would not allow the present generation to inquire of Him (20:30-32)
2. God would purify Israel among the heathen (20:33-39)
3. God will ultimately gather Israel and bless the land (20:40-44)

C. Judgment is Soon to Come Against Jerusalem (20:45-21:27)

1. Parable of a burning forest kindled by the Lord (20:45-49)
2. The sword of the Lord is coming (21:1-7) [13]
3. The sword is prepared for impartial justice (21:8-17)
4. The sword of Nebuchadnezzar will come against Jerusalem (21:18-23)
5. Zedekiah's fall is prophesied (21:25-27)

D. The Ammonites Also Will Be Slain by the Sword (21:28-32)

E. The Sins of Jerusalem and Israel (22:1-31)

1. Jerusalem is guilty of shedding blood and must be judged (22:1-16)
2. Jerusalem will be refined as in a smelting furnace (22:17-22)
3. Destruction is coming because the whole land is corrupt (22:23-31)

F. A Parable of two Immoral Sisters (23:1-49) [14]

1. Their wickedness began in Egypt (23:1-4)
2. The harlotry of Samaria and her just punishment (23:5-10)
3. The harlotry of Jerusalem (23:11-21)
4. The punishment of Jerusalem (23:22-35)
5. A further indictment of the sins of the two sisters (23:36-49)

- G. The Boiling Pot and Death of Ezekiel’s Wife Portray the fall of Jerusalem (24:1-27)
 - 1. The parable of the cooking pot (24:1-14)
 - 2. Ezekiel’s reaction to the death of his wife serves as a sign (24:15-27)

PART TWO: JUDGMENT COMES AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS ALSO BECAUSE GOD’S RULE IS UNIVERSAL (Chapters 25-32)

- I. PROPHECIES AGAINST NEIGHBORING NATIONS (25:1-17) [15]
 - A. The Word Against Ammon (25:1-7)
 - B. The Word Against Moab (25:8-11)
 - C. The Word Against Edom (25:12-14)
 - D. The Word Against Philistia (25:15-17)
- II. PROPHECIES AGAINST THE CITIES OF TYRE AND SIDON (26:1-28:26)
 - A. The Destruction of Tyre (26:1,2)
 - B. Who Could Have Guessed These Prophecies (26:3-21)
 - C. Lamentation Over the Ruin of Tyre (27:1-36) [16]
 - 1. Tyre was like a beautiful ship (27:1-11)
 - 2. Tyre is like a wealthy ship able to trade in any port (27:12-25)
 - 3. But Tyre is like an overloaded ship that sinks (27:26-36)
 - D. Judgment Against the Prince of Tyre (28:1-19)
 - 1. Haughtiness led to the death of the prince (28:1-10)
 - 2. A lamentation is made over the king of Tyre (28:11-19)
 - E. Prophecy Against Sidon and a Promise for Israel (28:20-26)
- III. PROPHECIES AGAINST EGYPT (29:1-32:32)
 - A. “The Word of the Lord Came Unto Me” [17]
 - 1. This expression is found seven times in the next four chapters.
 - 2. Six of these are dated according to Jehoiachin’s captivity
 - B. The Sins of Egypt (29:1-16)
 - C. Egypt Will Be Conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (29:17-21)
 - D. Egypt’s Judgment Will Be Speedy and Complete (30:1-19)
 - E. The Arm of Pharaoh Shall Be Broken (30:20-26)
 - F. Though Like A Giant Cedar Tree, Egypt Will Fall As Did Assyria (31:1-18) [18]

- G. A Lamentation For Pharaoh, King of Egypt (32:1-16)
- H. Lamentation Over the Burial of the King and His Subjects (32:17-32)

PART THREE: ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESTORATION AND SALVATION (Chapters 33-48)

- I. EZEKIEL’S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS A PROPHET (33:1-33) [19]
 - A. The Prophet’s Role as a Watchman (33:1-22)
 - 1. The watchman must warn or else he is responsible for the death (33:1-9)
 - 2. God wants none to die, but He judges each according to his own works (33:10-20)
 - 3. Word finally reaches Babylon that Jerusalem is destroyed (33:21,22)
 - B. The Wrong Attitude of the Remnant left in Judah (33:23-29)
 - C. The Wrong Attitude of the Exiles in Babylon (33:30-33)
- II. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND DEFEAT OF HER ENEMIES (34:1-39:29) [20]
 - A. The Shepherds of God’s People (34:1-31)
 - 1. Woe be to the shepherds of Israel (34:1-10)
 - 2. The lord will care for His flock as a Good Shepherd (34:11-22)
 - 3. David will be set up as their shepherd (34:23-31)
 - B. The Destiny of Edom – A Perpetual Desolation (35:1-15) [21]
 - C. The Restoration and Blessing Upon the Mountains of Israel (36:1-15)
 - 1. The redemption of the land (36:1-7)
 - 2. The repopulation of the land (36:8-15)
 - D. Vindication of the Holy Name of the Lord (36:16-38)
 - 1. God is longsuffering for the sake of His holy name (36:16-21)
 - 2. For His name’s sake, the Lord will bring His people back to the land (36:22-38)
 - E. Israel’s Rebirth Portrayed by the Valley of Dry Bones (37:1-14) [22]
 - F. Israel and Judah Will Be United as One (37:15-28)
 - G. The Final Effort of the Enemies of God (38:1-16) [23]
 - 1. The invasion by Gog (38:1-9)
 - 2. Gog is motivated by the intention to plunder (38:10-16)
 - H. Gog Will Be Overthrown (38:17-39:29)
 - 1. God will be magnified as He comes in fury against Gog (38:17-23)
 - 2. Gog’s destruction is certain (39:1-8)
 - 3. The total destruction of Gog and his host (39:9-20)
 - 4. The result of this judgment and the concluding promise (29:21-39)

III. EZEKIEL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW KINGDOM OF GOD (40:1-48:35)

[24]

A. The New Temple (40:1-43:27)

1. Ezekiel is shown this new order by means of a vision (40:1-4)
2. A description of the boundary wall, gateways, and outer court (40:5-27)
3. The inner court and its gateways (40:28-47)
4. The temple with its porch, side chambers, and building in the back (40:48-41:26)
5. The priests' chambers in the temple yard (42:1-20)
6. The return of the glory of the Lord into the temple (43:1-12)
7. The altar of burnt offering (43:13-27)

B. Regulations Concerning a New Worship (44:1-46:24)

[25]

1. Positions assigned for those who will be allowed in the temple (44:1-14)
2. Regulations for the priests of the Lord who will serve (44:15-45:12)
3. Regulations for the sacrifices and sacred days (45:13-46:15)
4. The inheritance of the prince and the disposition of his property (46:16-18)
5. Sacrificial kitchens for the priests and for the people (46:19-24)

C. A Description of the Future Lands (47:1-48:35)

1. The river of the water of life (47:1-12)
2. The land and its boundaries (47:13-23)
3. Portion assigned the seven northern tribes (48:1-7)
4. The portion for the Lord, for the sanctuary and for the priests (48:8-22)
5. Portion assigned the five southern tribes (48:23-29)
6. The gates and the name of the city (48:30-35)

* Numbers in [] indicate lesson numbers in Harkrider's workbook.

[Outline adapted from Bob Harkrider's workbook: *Ezekiel, "Ye Shall Know I Am The Lord"*]

EZEKIEL – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

I. THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

- A. While the content of the book has puzzled many casual readers over the years the organization and structure of the book is quite logical and easily analyzed.
1. (1-3) – Upon receiving a vision from God Ezekiel is called to be a prophet to the house of Israel.
 2. (4-24) – A series of messages foretelling and justifying God’s judgment upon the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.
 3. (25-32) – A series of oracles showing the judgment to come against the nations surrounding Israel.
 4. (33-37) - The people are promised a return to and restoration of their land.
 5. (38-39) – God’s people will triumph over the invading hordes from the north.
 6. (40-48) – The vision of the New Jerusalem and its temple.
- B. While most conservative commentators ascribe the book to one single author, there are some modern liberal scholars whose opinions range from more than one author to claiming Ezekiel is an altogether fictitious character. “The average reader regards (these quibbles) as a matter of small consequence and he comes to the book of Ezekiel anxious to understand the message of this book and to hear the word of the Lord speaking to his own generation as it did to the Jews of the sixth century BC.” [John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: an Introduction and Commentary*, p.20.] The following six reasons are suggested as to why the book has a single author, the prophet Ezekiel.
1. The book has a balanced structure that extends from chapter one through chapter 48.
 2. The internal consistency of the book fits in with the structural balance.
 3. The book is remarkable in its uniformity of style and language.
 4. The book has a clear chronological sequence which includes dates, a feature not found in any other of the Major Prophets.
 5. The book only contains one short instance written in the third person (1;2,3) while the rest of the book is written consistently as an autobiography.
 6. The picture of the character and personality of Ezekiel appears consistent through the whole book.

II. EZEKIEL THE MAN

- A. What is known about Ezekiel?
1. A priest, possibly the son of a priest (Buzi).
 2. Taken captive by the Babylonians in 597 BC and relocated to the plains of Babylonia.
 3. Called to be a prophet by God when he was 30 years old (593 BC).
 4. He recorded his prophecies until age 52 (29:17).
 5. His wife died at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (24:18).
 6. Due either to his status as a prophet or to his inherited social standing he was consulted by the elders (8:1; 20:1).
- B. Where was Ezekiel located during his prophetic ministry?
1. In his house or on the plain near the river Chebar at a place called Tel Abib near the Euphrates in Babylonia.
 2. Via vision he traveled to Jerusalem (8:3-11:24).

3. Some scholars argue for a partial Palestinian ministry due to his knowledge and rebuke of what was going on in Jerusalem. Conservative scholars do not see this as necessary, since after all Ezekiel was a prophet of God and through God could have a perfect knowledge of the happenings in Palestine.
- C. What were the living conditions of the exiles?
1. They seemed to be free to move about within unspecified limits and were able to receive visitors and messages from Jerusalem (33:21; Jer. 29).
 2. They were able to organize their community, raise crops, practice their religion and marriage customs, and communicate with Jerusalem some 700 miles away.
- D. What about Ezekiel’s “unusual” behavior?
1. He often reinforces his oracles with dramatic acts.
 2. His upbringing as a priest made the use of symbolism second nature.
 3. Every word and action had meaning to Ezekiel.
 4. His writings are often ponderous and repetitive.
 5. His writings, while often dry by the standards of some of the other prophets, contain a passionate intensity towards his hearers, his message and most of all towards God.
 6. Ezekiel was a unique combination of prophet (the message), elder (the good of the people), and priest (the holiness of God).

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- A. The politics.
1. Five kings reigned in Judea during Ezekiel’s lifetime. The Assyrian dominance of the middle east began to wane during this time, followed by a short time of Egyptian rule and finally control of the region by the Babylonians.
 2. King Josiah (640-609 BC) was responsible for a spiritual return, but it was short-lived after his passing.
 3. The four kings that followed were ineffective in continuing the reforms of Josiah or were outright idolaters themselves.
 4. Upon Jehoiachin’s (597 BC) capture by the Babylonians his brother Zedekiah was set up as a puppet king. Jeremiah acted as an advisor to the king.
 5. The Babylonians eventually laid siege to Jerusalem, captured Zedekiah and destroyed the city (587 BC).
- B. Ezekiel’s chronology. The following table contains scholars’ best guesses as to the dates mentioned by Ezekiel.

Reference	Event	Ezekiel’s date	Our date (BC)
1:1	Ezekiel’s call	4/5/30	7/31/593
1:2	Ezekiel’s call	4/5/5	7/31/593
8:1	Vision of idolatry in Jerusalem	6/5/6	9/17/592
20:1	Deputation of elders	5/10/7	8/9/591
24:1	The siege begins	10/10/9	1/15/588
26:1	Oracle against Tyre	11/1/11	2/12/586
29:1	Oracle against Egypt	10/12/10	1/7/587
29:17	From Tyre to Egypt	1/1/27	4/26/571
30:20	Pharaoh’s broken arm	1/7/11	4/29/587
31:1	Oracle against Pharaoh	3/1/11	6/21/587

32:1	Lament over Pharaoh	12/1/12	3/3/585
32:17	Pharaoh in Sheol	12/15/12	3/17/585
33:21	The city has fallen	10/5/12 (10/5/11)	1/19/586
40:1	Vision of the New Jerusalem	1/10/25	4/28/573

IV. THE MESSAGE OF EZEKIEL

The bare-bones message of Ezekiel to those listening to his prophecy in real time was two-fold: *God will destroy* and (after 587 BC) *God will restore and rebuild*. However, to expand our understanding of his overall message let's examine the following five recurring themes.

A. *The otherness of God.*

1. The God of Israel did not simply possess the quality of holiness – He is Holiness! His name is holy, as are his people, His place of worship, His ministers and His place of dwelling.
2. The chariot-throne scene (chs. 1-3) typifies His otherness, His ultimate Holiness and Majesty. The presence of such power caused Ezekiel to fall to the ground on his face (compare Peter Lk. 5:8). The true prophet of God comes forth from His presence permanently marked with the glory of the Lord.
3. While Ezekiel knew that the God of Israel was the God of all creation, it must have been comforting that there on the banks of the river Chebar some 700 miles from the Temple, His presence could be felt. Even in exile among the heathen Babylonians God still cared for His people.

B. *The sinfulness of Israel.*

1. Regardless of the fact that the Jews were God's chosen people, Ezekiel set out to prove to them that they were lost and unworthy of God's blessing and in need of full repentance. He will do this in two ways: generically and specifically.
2. He will bring their sins to their attention through the use of parables or stories, including:
 - a. The parable of the foundling (16:1-63).
 - b. Israel's history portrayed as a cycle of disobedience followed by God's decision to withhold His hand (20:1-31).
 - c. The allegory of the two sisters (23:1-49).
 - d. Compare this method of teaching to Lk. 20:9-19.
3. More specifically Ezekiel cites the wrongdoing going on in the Temple (ch. 8). Note that Ezekiel is concerned with the religious sins and scarcely mentions any social sins (as in Amos). They had profaned God's holy name and since God is holiness, their sins were of the most despicable nature.

C. *The fact of judgment.*

Ezekiel's prophecy was no mere threat of judgment to come, it was a foretelling of imminent judgment. God said, "The words which I speak will be performed." (12:28)

D. Individual responsibility.

1. Ezekiel's intention in acting as a watchman was to turn the people from their sins ahead of God's impending judgment (18:1-29). Each man's fate is conditioned by his own personal choice. The wicked man must choose to return to God and the righteous

man must choose to remain a child of God. The Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but wishes that all would repent (18:23, 32).

2. No one can hide behind the righteousness of others (14:12-20). Yet even in the face of the destruction of Jerusalem individuals could repent and be saved.

E. *The promise of restoration.*

1. The individuals that are saved will enjoy their salvation in a restored community of fellow believers. This new community will not be divided (as Israel and Judah, 37:17). This new land will have the Messiah King as its head (37:24f.). Under His rule, the downtrodden will be cared for, the land will flourish and the river of life will flow.
2. Each penitent soul will possess a new heart and a new spirit and be motivated to live a life based on the commandments of God (Jer. 31:31-34). The greatest stumbling-block that stands between man and God is man's own will.

[Adapted from John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: an Introduction and Commentary*, pp. 13-47.]

V. THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

- A. To understand the book of Ezekiel we must first become acquainted with 2 Kings 21-25 and 2 Chronicles 33-36.
- B. Jeremiah also provides contributions towards understanding the historical setting of Ezekiel's prophecy. Unfortunately, Jeremiah's book is not in chronological order so for the purposes of our study read it in this order: 22, 26, 35, 25, 36, 45, 24, 29, 28, 27, 39, 21, 37, 38, 32, 33, 34, 40-42.

[*The Book of Ezekiel*, Jim McGuiggan, pp. 7, 8.]

VI. OTHER THOUGHTS TO PREFACE THE STUDY

- A. God's people are identified in scripture as those who reverence His Holy Name (Rev. 11:18).
- B. Since His name is a glorious name, His glory is associated with His Name (1 Chron. 29:13).
 1. Ezekiel's prophecy focuses on the glory of God. He uses the phrase "Sovereign Lord," NIV over 400 times and repeats the solemn phrase "I am the Lord," 59 times. Why? So that "you will know that I am the Lord." (6:7)
 2. While in Babylonian captivity the Jews had Ezekiel with them. He spoke to them in words and signs to keep the glory of the Lord in the forefront of their minds.
- C. We too are a generation that needs the message of Ezekiel for as a people we lack reverence for the glory and the name of God.
- D. We must see beyond Ezekiel's message of repentance and look to the lives we can live right now in the church and look forward to in heaven in the after awhile. The new name of Jerusalem is "Jehovah Shammah – the Lord is there (48:35). Hallowed be His great and Holy name!

[*Be Reverent: Bowing Before Our Awesome God*, Warren Wiersbe, pp. 7, 8.]

EZEKIEL

PART ONE – PROPHECIES OF JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION (Chapters 1-24)

[2]

I. EZEKIEL’S VISION AND CALL (1:1-3:21)

A. Historical Setting of the Prophecy (1:1-3) See McGuiggan’s preparatory remarks on Ch. 1, p.19.

1. The time (1:1,2)

(1,2) Many commentators believe that “the 30th year” refers to Ezekiel’s age when he was commissioned. His description of his visions will be forthcoming. Jehoiachin's captivity - Called also Jeconiah and Coniah; see 2 Ki. 24:12. He was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar; see 2 Ki. 24:14. (ACC)

2. The place – on the banks of the River Chebar in the land of Babylon among the exiles from Judah.

3. God spoke to Ezekiel (1:3)

(3) He was filled with God’s power, and with the influence of the prophetic spirit.

B. His Vision of the Glory of the Lord Coming in Just Judgment (1:4-28)

1. The appearance of the four living creatures (cherubim) (1:4-14) See McGuiggan p.24 for a list of 12 characteristics of the cherubim.

(4) A tornado appears from the north; the direction of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon. But this was not a normal desert whirlwind as Ezekiel’s further description indicates. The cloud was filled with fire, which enfolded upon itself. “Amber” here refers to a shiny bronze-like metal.

(5) It is from this shiny area in the fire filled cloud that the living creatures emerge. The beings seem to have the general appearance of a man.

(6-8) The fact that the face that turned toward the prophet was that of a man, added to the human-like appearance. Note that each creature had four faces and four wings in addition to human hands and feet like calves’. These brass hooves indicate destructive power. (See Rev. 1:15.)

(9) When their wings were extended, they formed a sort of canopy level with their own heads or shoulders; and on this canopy was the throne, and the "likeness of the man" upon it, Eze. 1:26. (ACC)

(10) The four faces represented the highest forms of life from among God’s various creatures: man – humanity; lion – king of the wild beasts; bull (ox) – king of the domesticated animals; and eagle – ruler of the flying creatures. The four creatures formed a square so that regardless of which direction it pointed, the human was in front, the ox on the left, the lion on the right and the eagle to the rear.

(11-14) Covering their bodies with two wings indicates modesty in the presence of the Lord. The beings are not mindless or irrational, but are impelled by “a spirit.” Is this “spirit” the Spirit of God, the wind, their own spirit, or the impulse of God as He directed them from His throne? While the Hebrew will allow any of these meanings, perhaps the last is to be preferred. (Taylor, p. 56.) The fire that envelops them reminds us that they are involved in purging and judgment. They move with the speed of lightning and could easily be seen by the human eye. (Compare Lk. 17:23,24 and Mt. 24:26-28.)

2. The vision of the chariot (1:15-25)

(15-18) Just how these wheels functioned is hard to discern. No complex wheel has ever been designed by man to move as these wheels’ of God moved. There is much debate among the commentators as to what the “eyes” represent. McGuiggan suggests that their presence represents the omniscience of the

God and reminds us of the saying, “My parents must have eyes in the back of their heads.” (p. 28.) The chariot could proceed in any direction at any moment, able to reach the impenitent and carry out God’s judgment upon them regardless of where they might be found.

- (19-21) The wheels and the creatures worked together as one, where one went the other went. The throne of God is propelled effortlessly whenever He wills it.
- (22-25) There was a space between the chariot and its Holy Rider and a firm platform on which he is carried. The platform appeared to Ezekiel as ice or crystal. The platform hovered over four sets of two wings. “When the whirlwind drove the wheels, the wind rustling among the wings was like the noise of many waters; like a waterfall, or waters dashing continually against the rocks, or rushing down precipices. Like distant thunder; for this is termed the *voice of God*, Ps 18:13; Ex 9:23,28,29; 20:18.” (ACC)

3. The throne of Jehovah’s glory (1:26-28)

- (26-28) Now Ezekiel describes the Holy Rider. But notice the lack of detail as compared to his previous descriptions of the creatures, the wheels, and the throne platform. Taylor suggests that this is in keeping with the Hebrew thinking that God could not be viewed, thus keeping idolatry at bay. Note the instances where Hagar, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, and Manoah met manifestations of God. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Ex. 33:20-23; Jud. 6:22; 13:22; Deut. 5:24. (Taylor, pp. 58,59.) It is no accident that the Holy Rider is seen as fire from the waste down. Compare to the Hebrews writer’s “God as a consuming fire,” and Daniel’s vision of God on a throne of fire as He judges the 4th beast of Dan. 7. “Yet, there is an element of mercy here – the rainbow. “...We have the rainbow, the token of God’s covenant, to show that though there should be a destruction of the city, temple, &c., and sore tribulation among the people, yet there should not be a total ruin; after a long captivity they should be restored. The rainbow is an illustrious token of mercy and love.” (ACC) Ezekiel’s response is appropriate as he falls on his face before the living God. In spite of the fact that Jerusalem is about to go under and God is here to bring judgment on the impenitent, it is very apparent to Ezekiel that God still reigns!

C. Ezekiel’s Call to the Office of Prophet (2:1-7) [3]

See McGuiggan’s preparatory remarks on Chs. 2 and 3, p.33.

Ezekiel is commanded to: Stand and Listen (2:1,2), Go and Speak (2:3-5), Don’t Be Afraid (2:6,7) and Receive the Word Within (2:8-3:3)

1. The Spirit enters Ezekiel (2:1,2)

- (1) The phrase “son of man” is not being used in a Messianic sense here, but refers only to Ezekiel’s station when compared to God Almighty. He told to rise up from the ground and stand on his feet to receive God’s instructions.
- (2) A measure of God’s Holy Spirit is given to Ezekiel here, empowering him to receive and later proclaim God’s message (1 Pet. 1:10,11).

2. The people to whom he must speak God’s message (2:3-7)

- (3) God styles the Israelites as rebellious, transgressors, impudent and stubborn. These exiles (and Israel in general) would not be a fertile field for preacher Ezekiel.
- (4,5) Impudence implies brazenness, even in the presence of God, while stubbornness indicates an unwillingness to acknowledge their wrong and repent (Isa. 48:4). Even though Ezekiel was not to expect repentance from his listeners, they would know that Ezekiel was “speaking as the oracles of God” and that he was a true prophet of God. From the messenger’s point of view his faithful witness

is what is important, not the listener's response. Our responsibility is to plant and water, and let God give the increase.

(6,7) Ezekiel is given no chance to make excuses, God immediately instructs him to have courage. The Israelites will not react kindly to the message, but will make their rebellion against God clear in their actions and countenance.

D. Ezekiel's Consecration to Do This Work (2:8-3:15)

1. He is prepared by eating the little book (2:8-3:3)

(8-10) Ezekiel meets his first test of obedience when he is told to eat the little scroll. Ingesting the Word as spiritual food is made even clearer in the physical act of eating the scroll. It is not clear as to why the scroll was written "within and without." Generally scrolls were only written on the inside. Perhaps God was leaving no room for any of Ezekiel's own amendments. The contents of the scroll would make it appear to not be very tasty – it was filled with lamentations and woes.

(1-3) By eating the little scroll Ezekiel received God's Word. Note the prophet's surrender – he opened his mouth to receive the book; but also consider it was God who caused Ezekiel to eat it. The possession of the Word would give the prophet an inner compulsion to present it (Jer. 20:9; Acts 4:20). Compare the sensation of taste experienced by Ezekiel to those of Jeremiah, the Psalmist, and John (Jer. 15:16; Ps. 19:10; 119:103; Rev. 10:10).

2. He is commissioned to speak regardless of opposition (3:4-11)

(4-9) Ezekiel will not be preaching to foreigners that speak a different language, but to his own people who can understand every word that he utters. Strangely, God indicates that the foreigners would have been more receptive to the Word, than the Israelites! Even though the Jews will understand Ezekiel's words they will not receive them. The prophet is not to take this personally; they are rejecting God, not Ezekiel. God hardening the prophet's head could be a play on his name as Ezekiel can be translated "God hardens." It means that Ezekiel will be given the strength to outlast his adversaries. The word "adamant" (v.9) comes from a Hebrew word that can also be translated "hardness."

(10,11) Now Ezekiel hears that the sphere of his ministry is to include the Babylonian exiles. Their reaction to the Word cannot be allowed to influence his preaching. God allows room here for further revelation, beyond what Ezekiel ingested from the book. If there is further revelation it too will be "thus says the Lord."

3. Ezekiel is transported to the place of his activity (3:12-15)

(12-15) As Ezekiel's vision comes to a close, both he and God are about to take their leave. A voice proclaims the glory of the Lord and the chariot begins to move. Whether this is the cherubim's voice or that of Ezekiel himself is not clear. It has also been translated "as the glory of the Lord arose from that place," which would suggest no spoken voice at all. He is transported (either literally moved there or figuratively as he leaves the vision) to the place where he is to prophesy – Tel Abib by the River Chebar. Note v. 14b: "*I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.*" Clarke translates the verse: "Being filled with indignation at the wickedness and obstinacy of my people, I went, determining to speak the word of God without disguise, and to reprove them sharply for their rebellion; and yet I was greatly distressed because of the heavy message which I was commanded to deliver." (ACC) Once among his people Ezekiel remained astonished (silent?) for seven days.

E. Ezekiel is Reminded He Was a Watchman to the House of Israel (3:16-27)

1. The responsibility of a watchman (3:16-21)

(16-21) The idea of a watchman shows up quite often in the Bible (Isa. 21:11,12; 56:10; 62:6; Jer. 6:17; Ps. 127:1; 130:6; Heb. 13:17). It is the prophet's obligation to watch and warn the guilty as well as the righteous. Ezekiel makes it clear that each individual is held accountable before God. People will die if the watchman is unfaithful. Their blood will be on the prophet's head. Those that refuse to heed the faithful watchman will die (Mt. 27:37-39). The watchman might not warn those that were righteous, but have turned away from their first love. Finally, the righteous might heed the watchman's warning and remain in a covenant relationship with God. God's people have many privileges, but one of them is not the privilege to sin. Our fellowship with the Father depends on setting our minds on obedience (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). His children that disobey will be disciplined (Heb. 12:1-11). Persistent resisting may take the disciples life (Heb. 12:9). There is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16,17). [Wiersbe, p. 24] Stumbling blocks exist in this world; it is the responsibility of the watchman to point them out and for the child of God to choose to avoid them.

2. Ezekiel enters into his ministry (3:22-27)

(22-27) Ezekiel returns to the presence of the Lord for further instructions; this time going out into the plain, instead of beside the River Chebar. The Spirit commands him to go and shut himself up inside his own house. The exiles would prevent Ezekiel from doing his work. Most commentators feel that this is not a literal binding, but a figurative one caused by the rebellious nature of the people. Also they think that his dumbness was self-imposed and lasted about six years. In other words, he could speak, but refused to do so because God had no message for His rebellious people at this time. Clarke interprets it this way: "When it is necessary to address them again, thou shalt sum up what thou hast said in this one speech: Thus saith the Lord, "He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear." Let him who feels obedience to the voice of God his interest, be steadfast. Let him who disregards the Divine monition go in his own way, and abide the consequences." (ACC) Note the similarity between "He who hears, let him hear" and Jesus' famous injunction, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." The saying always indicates that we are responsible for hearing and obeying the Words and Will of God. We can hear it and obey it or ignore it and be condemned. It is a call to full submission of our will to God's. "God being who and what He is and we being who and what we are the only thinkable relation between us is one of full Lordship on His part and a complete submission on ours." (A.W. Tozar)

II. FOUR SYMBOLIC PARABLES PORTRAY JERUSALEM'S FALL (4:1-5:17) [4]

See McGuiggan's preparatory remarks on Ch. 4, p. 49.

Note: Ezekiel was not the only prophet to use symbolic actions to accompany his prophecy. See also: Ahijah, 1 Ki. 11:30; Zedekiah, 1 Ki. 22:11; Elisha, 2 Ki. 13:17; Isaiah, Isa. 20:2-4; Jeremiah, Jer. 13:1-14, 19:1-10; and Agabus, Acts 21:10ff.

A. Sign of the City Besieged (4:1-3)

(1-3) The prophet takes a tile and draws the city of Jerusalem on it and begins to lay siege to his model. He sets an iron pan between himself and the model and begins to advance. So, Ezekiel foretells the end of the city and how the end was to come about. Meanwhile, he maintains his silence as he presents this and three additional "action sermons."

B. Sign of the Prophet Lying On His Side (4:4-8)

- (4) Make no mistake about it, this lying on the side represents the northern kingdom being punished for their sins. Clarke suggests the significance of the various parts of the sign as follows: 1. *the prophet* himself represents the Jews. 2. *His lying*, their state of depression. 3. *His being bound*, their helplessness and captivity. 4. *The days* signify years, a day for a year; during which they were to bear their iniquity, or the temporal punishment due to their sins. 5. *The three hundred and ninety days*, during which he was to lie on his left side, and bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, point out two things: the first, the duration of the siege of Jerusalem. Secondly, the duration of the captivity of the ten tribes, and that of Judah. 6. The prophet lay three hundred and ninety days upon his left side, and forty days upon his right side, in all four hundred and thirty days. (ACC)
- (5,6) The commentators argue as to whether the days ran consecutively or concurrently. While the 1 day = 1 year formula applies here and Number 14:34; we need to be careful not to think of this as a constant rule. We know it's true here because the text says so. The significance of 430 years (390 + 40) could reflect back on the Egyptian captivity (Ex. 12:40,41). The 40 years could have been seen separately as representing the wilderness wanderings. Punishment was coming and it would be commensurate with the sins committed. Judah thought it would never be taken captive regardless of what had already happened to Israel. Ezekiel's display would show them that their thinking was wrong, as the very fact that they were already 700 miles from home should have implied.
- (7,8) It seems that Ezekiel was not bound 24 hours a day, but only during the time he gave his daily demonstration at the tile. God gave Ezekiel strict commands (laid bands on him) to perform these signs. These first two action sermons were designed to show the Jews that the siege of Jerusalem would become a reality and the reasons for it occurring. The next two sermons would indicate the horror of the siege and fall.

C. Sign of Eating Polluted Bread (4:9-17)

- (9-11) In times of scarcity, it is customary in all countries to mix several kinds of coarser grain with the finer, to make it last the longer. This mashlin, which the prophet is commanded to take, of wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and fitches, was intended to show how scarce the necessities of life should be during the siege. (ACC) His diet would be restricted to about 8 ounces of bread and one pint of water per day. These are starvation rations so some commentators feel that this was what he ate during the daily demonstration and probably ate other foods when his demonstration was done.
- (12-14) As a sign of the defilement that would take place during the siege and the fact that the Jews would take on heathen ways during their captivity (Hos. 9:3,4), Ezekiel is instructed to cook his bread over a fire using human excrement as fuel. Ezekiel is horrified by the thought and reminds God that he has never defiled himself by eating or preparing foods that were denied to the Jews (Acts 10:14). Note that God did not make the concession until the point was instilled in the prophet's mind.
- (15-17) The Jews will learn that the sinner's row is a hard one to hoe. In their case it would include the pain of siege, exile, and ceremonial defilement.

D. The Sign of the Prophet's Haircut and Shave (5:1-4)
See McGuiggan's preparatory remarks on Ch. 5, p. 59

- (1) Ezekiel's haircut and shave stand as another of his "action sermons," this one showing what would become of Jerusalem's inhabitants. 1. *The prophet* represents the Jewish nation. 2. *His hair*, the people. 3. *The razor*, the Chaldeans. 4. *The cutting the beard and hair*, the calamities, sorrows, and disgrace coming upon the people. Cutting off the hair was a sign of mourning; (see on Jer. 45:5;

48:37) and also a sign of great disgrace (see 2 Sam. 10:4). 5. He is ordered to *divide the hair* (Eze 5:2) into three equal parts, to intimate the different degrees and kinds of punishment which should fall upon the people. 6. *The balances* (Eze 5:1) were to represent the Divine justice, and the exactness with which God's judgments should be distributed among the offenders. (ACC)

(2) 7. This hair, divided into three parts, is to be disposed of as follows: a. a third part is to be burnt in the midst of the city; to show that so many should perish by famine and pestilence during the siege. b. Another third part he was to cut in small portions about the city, (that figure which he had portrayed upon the brick,) to signify those who should perish in different (attacks), and in defending the walls. c. And the remaining third part he was to scatter in the wind, to point out those who should be driven into captivity. And, d. The sword following them was intended to show that their lives should be at the will of their captors, and that many of them should perish by the sword in their dispersions. (ACC)

(3,4) e. The few hairs which he was to take in his skirts, Eze 5:3, was intended to represent those few Jews that should be left in the land under Gedaliah, after the taking of the city. f. The throwing a part of these last into the fire, Eze 5:4, was intended to show the miseries that these suffered in Judea, in Egypt, and finally in their being also carried away into Babylon on the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. (ACC) The few hairs tied to his garment must represent the “remnant” that God needed to keep the lineage of the Messiah intact.

E. The Reason for the Severe Judgment (5:5-17)

The sentence passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful; the manner of expression makes it still more so. Who is able to stand in God's sight when he is angry? Those who live and die impenitent will perish forever without pity; there is a day coming when the Lord will not spare. Let not persons or churches, who change the Lord's statutes, expect to escape the doom of Jerusalem. Let us endeavor to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Sooner or later God's word will prove itself true. (MHCC)

(5-7) The Lord shows His sadness and disgust at the fall of His chosen city. They had been given every opportunity to flourish and yet had destroyed everything they had ever been given. If they had been Sodom or Gomorrah, then their actions would have been understandable – but for Jerusalem to behave this way was unbelievable. Israel had failed in its God-given mission: to influence for good and glorify God among the other nations.

(8-11) Unparalleled sin required unparalleled judgment. This would include such consequences as cannibalism (2 Ki. 6:28ff; Jer. 19:9; Lam. 4:10). By causing these atrocities to occur in the sight of all nations, a public example would be made of God's disobedient people and His holiness would be vindicated. (Taylor, p.86.) Ezekiel now makes his first mention of the detestable religious practices that had been ongoing in the Temple. He will have more to say about this beginning in chapter 8. Note verse 11, “...therefore I will also diminish you.” Various translations have this as “I will cut you down,” but the one that seems most fitting is “I will shave you.”

(12) This verse confirms our interpretation of the preceding verses. Burning with fire = death by pestilence and famine during the siege. Take a moment and read the narrative of this event (2 Ki. 25:1-21; 2 Chron. 36:17-21; Jer. 39:1-18).

(13) The Lord will be pacified (comforted) only when His vengeance is completed. We learn here that 1- God does become angry, but 2- he does not remain angry forever. His anger is not an emotionally charged knee-jerk reaction to something He does not like; but instead His anger is based on principle and justice (Heb. 10:31; 12:29).

(14,15) Jerusalem's judgment will not only be public, but come at the hands of its own God. The foreign nations will be amazed and instructed by this judgment. If God will tolerate the wickedness of His own people, then ultimately He will not tolerate the wickedness of any nation.

(16,17) Note the Lord's four forms of judgment: famine, sword, pestilence (death or plague), and wild beasts (Jer. 15:2; Eze. 14:21; 24:25; 33:27; 38:22). The wild beasts represent the desolation of the land.

When man is not present the beasts and the undergrowth return (Isa. 13:20-22). Contrary to what the people were hoping for and the false prophets were saying, Jerusalem was about to be destroyed.

III. THE DEVASTATION OF THE LAND (6:1-7:27) [5]

See McGuiggan's preparatory remarks on Chapters 6 and 7, p. 69.

A. Destruction is Decreed Upon the Land (6:1-7)

"War desolates persons, places, and things esteemed most sacred. God ruins idolatries even by the hands of idolaters. It is just with God to make that a desolation, which we make an idol. The superstitions, to which many trust for safety, often cause their ruin. And the day is at hand, when idols and idolatry will be as thoroughly destroyed from the professedly Christian church as they were from among the Jews." (MHCC)

- (1,2) The land of Israel represents the people and the pollution of the land represent the pollution of idols that had affected the minds of the people. When God is through with Israel, the land will be like a lonely widow without children (Isa. 62:4,5). The mountains are particularly addressed here because they were the seat of idol worship in the land. Of all the kings of Judah and Israel only Hezekiah and Josiah were able to destroy the "high places." Unfortunately their work did not hold up under the reign of their successors.
- (3) Once the temple was built, the informal places of worship (generally "high places") were to be abandoned. Yet, the people continued to use them for convenience sake and they became places where idol worship was intermixed with Jehovah worship.
- (4-7) (See Lev. 26:30; 2 Ki. 23:20; Ps. 53:5; 141:7; and Jer. 8:1ff.) It is interesting that the idols of the Jews would be destroyed by the Chaldeans who were idolaters themselves. Secular history indicates that the conquerors usually spread the bodies of the defeated around the altars of their decimated idols. "The exclusiveness of God is not an easy lesson to learn." (McGuiggan, p. 73.) The idea of One God was not an easy lesson for His own people to learn, much less the idolaters living near Israel.

B. A Remnant Will be Spared (6:8-10)

"A remnant of Israel should be left; at length they should remember the Lord, their obligations to him, and rebellion against him. True penitents see sin to be that abominable thing which the Lord hates... (Sinners) give glory to God by their repentance. Whatever brings men to remember Him, and their sins against Him, should be regarded as a blessing." (MHCC)

- (8-10) (See Jer. 44:28; Eze. 12:16; and 14:22.) The remnant refers to those that will choose to learn (and repent) from their mistakes and the punishment and consequences that come along with those mistakes. The word Ezekiel uses for "idols" appears to be a made-up word from the Hebrew that can mean "pellets of dung" in that language. History bears out the fact the Jews have never returned to idolatry since the Babylonian captivity ended.

C. The Punishment is Just (6:11-14)

"It is our duty to be affected, not only with our own sins and sufferings, but to look with compassion upon the miseries wicked people bring upon themselves. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore, stand in awe, and sin not. If we know the worth of souls, and the danger to which unbelievers are exposed, we shall deem every sinner who takes refuge in Jesus from the wrath to come, an abundant recompense for all contempt or opposition we may meet with." (MHCC)

- (11-14) This is not a call for Christians to stomp their feet and clap their hands in worship service any more than Ezekiel's previous actions mean for us to lie on our sides or give ourselves a shave and haircut with a sword. It is however an indication of God's triumphant happiness over the destruction of idolatry. Those that follow after idols will meet their demise via famine, sword, or pestilence. Not

only will the idols (and their followers) be destroyed, but the typical places where idol worship took place would also be laid waste. Ezekiel has invoked the phrase “they will know that I am the Lord” four times in this short chapter. It is Ezekiel’s (and the Lord’s) wish that all men would come to understand Jehovah as the one true and living God.

D. The Certainty of the Judgment (7:1-9)

The fact that this message needs to be repeated so often is based on the refusal of the Israelites to believe that Jerusalem could be destroyed. They truly believed that as long as God was God, the Temple was God’s house, and Jerusalem was the city of God’s house, then it could not be destroyed.

(1-4) “The end has come” (Amos 8:2). The destruction of Jerusalem was necessary if God was to be consistent. He had relented and spared the people time and again, but now “the end had come.” The abominations of the people will stand as the evidence God would use to convict them. God’s judgment will reach to the four corners of the nation and no sinner will be spared.

(5-9) The coming judgment would be decisive. An evil day of doom would come shortly. This judgment was of their own doing and could not be blamed on other people or nations. (See 2 Ki. 21:12-13; Zep. 1:14-15.)

E. The Desolation Described (7:10-27)

1. Social disruption (7:10-13)

(10,11) The morning will wait no longer. The rod that is to chastise them has blossomed; it is quite ready. Their insolence, obstinacy, and daring opposition to God have brought forth their proper fruits. (ACC)

(12,13) A “good buy” will be a thing of the past. Purchases will be worthless. Not even the Year of Jubilee will guarantee they return of family property as many will still be in captivity in Babylon when it came and others would be dead.

2. Military disruption (7:14-18)

(14) Any defense that the people might have prepared would be futile. Weapons and armies that are in God’s hands will suffer ultimate defeat.

(15-18) The prophet suggests that the people put on their sackcloth and throw their money out into the streets. There will no place to run and no place to hide. Those in the city will starve to death and those outside the city will be slain. Sometimes even true repentance will not avoid the consequences of sins. The remnant will also suffer in these times of calamity. Concerning baldness see: Isa. 3:24; 15:2,3; Jer. 48:37; Amos 8:10.

3. Economic disruption (7:19-22)

(19-22) Their stomachs cannot be filled with silver or gold. True happiness is not to be found in possessions. “Their beautiful temple was their highest ornament, and God made it majestic by his presence. But they have even taken its riches to make their idols, which they have brought into the very courts of the Lord's house; and therefore God hath set it-the temple, from him-given it up to pillage. Some say it means, ‘They took their ornaments, which were their pride, and made them into images to worship.’” (ACC) Not only will those who have disobeyed God be filled with heartache and pain, God will feel the same.

4. Political disruption (7:23-27)

(23-27) “Whoever break the bands of God's law, will find themselves bound and held by the chains of his judgments. Since they encouraged one another to sin, God would dishearten them. All (will) be in trouble, when God comes to judge them according to their deserts. May the Lord enable us to seek that good part which shall not be taken away.” (MHC) See: Micah 3:5-7 for a similar threat. Perhaps the chain represents a long line of beaten people being led away by their Babylonian captors. These captors were not righteous, but the captives were more unrighteous in God’s eyes. “Vision shall perish from the prophet, the law from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. Previously to great national judgments, God restrains the influences of his Spirit. His word is not accompanied with the usual unction; and the wise men of the land, the senators and celebrated statesmen, devise foolish schemes; and thus, in endeavoring to avert it, they hasten on the national ruin. How true is the saying, ‘those whom God designs to destroy, he first infatuates.’” (ACC)

IV. THE GLORY OF THE LORD DEPARTS FROM A DEGRADED TEMPLE AND CITY (8:1-11:25)

A. Idolatry is Seen in the Temple (8:1-18)

[6]

1. Image of jealousy (8:1-6)

The glorious personage Ezekiel beheld in vision, seemed to take hold upon him, and he was conveyed in spirit to Jerusalem. There, in the inner court of the temple, was prepared a place for some base idol. The whole was presented in vision to the prophet. If it should please God to give any man a clear view of his glory and majesty, and of all the abominations committing in any one city, he would then admit the justice of the severest punishments God should inflict thereon. (MHCC)

- (1) Fourteen months pass by and the elders come to Ezekiel, probably seeking consolation or consultation concerning what was happening in Jerusalem.
- (2,3) The prophet again sees the image of chapter 1:27. Ezekiel is now carried away to the Temple in a vision or trance. Outside the court gate he sees an idol described as the “image of jealousy” called thusly because of the righteous jealousy that it provoked in God. (Deut. 32:16,21; Jer. 7:30; 32:34.)
- (4) The terrible cherubim were back. They seemed to be standing, waiting by, waiting on the Lord to give them the signal to destroy the Temple.
- (5,6) Though Manasseh had introduced and removed the Asherah from the Temple (2 Ki. 21:7) and Josiah had to remove and burn it later (2 Ki. 23:6), it seems it had made another appearance in Ezekiel’s time. The north gate was the most honorable of the gates because it was the one used by the King. Notice the emphasis on “north.” Sacrifices were slaughtered on the north side of the altar. The enemy would attack from the north.

2. A secret animal cult (8:7-13)

(7-13) Ezekiel approaches the wall and peers through a hole in it. He is instructed to enlarge the hole so he might enter the Temple and witness the abominations taking place there, behind closed doors. The entire nation is represented by the presence of 70 elders and the son of a nobleman (2 Ki. 22:3; Jer. 26:24). “It is very likely that these images portrayed on the wall were the objects of Egyptian adoration: the ox, the ape, the dog, the crocodile, the ibis, the scarabaeus or beetle, and various other things.” (ACC) These idolaters believed that the Lord had abandoned them and could not see what they were doing.

3. The worshippers of Tammuz (8:14,15)

(14,15) The women were weeping, but not for Judah. They were worshipping the Sumerian god of vegetation, Tammuz, who was thought dead and in the underworld. Part of the worship of this god involved mourning and fertility rites. There may be a connection between this Tammuz and the Greek god Adonis.

4. Sun worship (8:16-18)

(16,17) “These most probably represented the twenty-four courses of the priests, with the high priest for the twenty-fifth. This was the Persian worship, as their turning their faces to the east plainly shows they were worshipping the rising sun.” (ACC) (Deut. 4:19; 2 Ki. 23:5,11.) Taylor (p. 100) believes that a more accurate translation of “branch to their nose” would indicate their idolatry put a stench in God’s nostrils. “It really seems that at this time the Jews had incorporated every species of idolatry in their impure worship, Phoenician, Egyptian, and Persian. I might add that some imagine the image of jealousy to be a personification of idolatry itself.” (ACC)

(18) Imagine what Ezekiel has just witnessed: an idol set up for all to worship, the elders worshipping animals, the woman practicing fertility rites, and finally, even the priests given over to Sun worship. The Lord was through listening to these people that even with the Law of Moses had no concept of how He should be truly approached and worshipped. (Pr. 1:28; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 11:11; 14:12.)

B. The Wicked are Slaughtered While the Righteous are Spared (9:1-11)

(1) Now is the time for confrontation, the time for talk is ended. The comparison between Ezekiel’s vision and later apocalyptic prophecies concerning the final judgment are too obvious to dismiss (Rev. 7:3; 8:2ff).

(2) Six dealers of death from the north are at the door. In their midst stands a seventh man, dressed as a priest and set to bring an element of mercy upon certain individuals (Lev. 16:4). This one is equipped as a scribe and is prepared to mark the faithful remnant to prevent their destruction.

(3,4) The glory of the Lord moves from the chariot to the threshold of the Temple and from there instructs the man clothed in linen and then the six executioners (v. 6). Some have tried to place a particular significance upon the mark – perhaps the Hebrew letter *tau*. This is the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet is basically an “X.” An “X” is a form of a cross, so they want this mark to represent Christ’s people. This is a stretch, to say the least. The mark simply represents those that would be spared. This remnant would be spared because they had God’s attitude toward all that was happening among the Israelites – they were heartsick. (Amos 6:6.)

(5) All unmarked were to be destroyed without compassion by the six standing by the altar of burnt offering.

(6,7) 1 Pet 4:17 indicates that judgment begins at the household of God and so here the slayers start to work at the Temple. In the actual destruction of Jerusalem we know that many righteous died alongside the wicked. But remember, all suffering is not punishment when one dies “in the Lord.” Did any wicked survive the destruction of the city? If so, this vision is a pictorial representation of the truth and an indication of the final judgment. (See McGuigan p.97.)

(8) As Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Amos attempted to intercede for Israel, Ezekiel pleads for a remnant to be spared. Though God had made Ezekiel hard-headed, He had allowed him to remain soft-hearted.

(9-11) The reason God was so angry was that His station as the One True God, had been ignored by His very own people. He had been relegated by them to “just another god.” This just would not do. They would be taught a lesson that they would never forget and as we have already remarked Israel has

never turned to idol worship again. Just when all seemed hopeless to Ezekiel, the linen clothed man returns and reminds the prophet that some mercy was shown to the remnant of faithful Israelites.

C. The Glory of the Lord Departs from the Temple (10:1-22) [7]

1. Coals of fire over Jerusalem (10:1-8)

- (1) It is just here that Ezekiel identifies the “chariot-throne” as being made up of cherubim. On the use of sapphire (royal blue in color) as pavement for the throne see Ex. 24:10.
- (2) Ezekiel indicates that Jerusalem was in for the same treatment as Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24). The servant from chapter 9 is commanded to take burning coals from under the chariot throne. A man of God must be ready (as this servant was) to administer mercy or chastisement, whichever God demands. Coals are sometimes a sign of purification, but here they are sign of punishment.
- (3,4) The chariot-throne was located on the south side of the Temple. The smoke represents the glory of Lord filling up the Temple. Note 1 Ki. 8:10-11.
- (5-8) The sound of the wings of the cherubim was loud like thunder. The man in linen carried out his duties, regardless of their results. A cherub hands the coals to the man in linen. Perhaps even this angelic assistant had to keep some distance between himself and the throne.

2. The throne-chariot of the Lord appears (10:9-17)

“Ezekiel sees the working of Divine providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it. When God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above, and all events below, further his departure. The Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, directs all creatures, in heaven and on earth, so as to make them serve the Divine purpose. God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and, when ready to depart, would return to them, if they were a repenting, praying people. Let this warn sinners to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call on him while he is near, and cause us all to walk humbly and watchfully with our God.” (MHCC)

(9-11) Revisit 1:15-18.

(12,13) Ezekiel revisits the descriptions found here as a matter of emphasis and reminder concerning the power and the glory of the All Mighty.

(14-17) Note that verse 14 substitutes cherub, for “face of an ox.”

3. The departure of the Divine Presence (10:18-22)

(18-22) The glory of the Lord comes out from the Temple and by standing over the cherubim signals that the time of departure for the mountains was near. Here we get a clear sense that the cherubim are the chariot-throne (see also: 1 Chron. 28:18; Ps. 18:10).

D. The Threat of Judgment and a Promise of Mercy (11:1-25)

1. Rebellious rulers are threatened (11:1-13)

“Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as uncertain, he gains his point by persuading them to look upon it as at a distance. These wretched rulers dare to say, we are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, we shall receive no more damage from the besiegers than the caldron does from the fire. When sinners flatter themselves to their own ruin, it is time to tell them they shall have no peace if they go on. None shall remain in possession of the city but those who are buried in it. Those are least safe who are most secure. God is often pleased to single out some sinners for warning to others. Whether Pelatiah died at that time in Jerusalem, or when the fulfillment of the prophecy drew near, is

uncertain. Like Ezekiel, we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, and we should still plead with the Lord to have mercy on those who remain.” (MHCC)

- (1) Now the Spirit carries Ezekiel to the east gate, where he finds 25 leaders of the people that worship the sun. Among these men are two that are prominent and would be known by name. These are probably not the men of the same name mentioned elsewhere.
- (2) The leadership of these men is contrary to God’s will. They had plans, but these plans were not from God. “Carnal security and contempt of God's threatenings prepare the way for wicked counsels and mischievous devices.” (Family Bible Notes.)
- (3,4) These leaders suggest that the words of prophets such as Jeremiah should be ignored, the city would protect the people from harm as a pot protects its contents from burning. Ezekiel is called on to prophesy against these men and their false teaching.
- (5-7) These leaders are rebels and murderers in God’s eyes. God agrees that the city is a caldron, but its contents were the righteous citizens of Jerusalem that had been murdered by these leaders. These leaders did not deserve to die in the city among the innocent. They would pass this life outside the walls of the city.
- (8,9) The shameful epitaph of these men will be “I Rebelled Against God!” Their deaths will be among their enemies, without God, and in the face of eternal torment.
- (10-12) See 2 Kings 25:1-7 for the story of the deaths of the princes that attempted to escape with Zedekiah. Instead of following God’s ordinances, they had set up their own laws based on the laws of the surrounding nations. When comparing this passage with 5:7 and 16:47 we see that they could not even follow the laws copied from the Gentiles properly!
- (13) “Most probably (Pelatiah) was struck dead the very hour in which Ezekiel prophesied against him. His death appears to have resembled that of Ananias and Sapphira, Ac 5:1,” (ACC) At this point Ezekiel fears for the remnant. Will anybody be left?

2. A remnant of Israel shall be gathered out of the nations (11:14-21)

“The pious captives in Babylon were insulted by the Jews who continued in Jerusalem; but God made gracious promises to them. It is promised, that God will give them one heart; a heart firmly fixed for God, and not wavering.” (MHCC)

- (14,15) The false prophets only agreed on one thing: Ezekiel and Jeremiah were both liars. Some of these false teachers believed and taught that those in captivity were the ones being punished and those left behind were righteous in the eyes of the Lord. Ezekiel could see otherwise. It was the captives that represented the whole house of Israel. They were now the true Israel of God.
- (16-18) It is the captives that would be shielded from idolatry and given sanctuary by God. Just as the people of Moses’ time were waiting to return to the land of Promise, so these captives and their offspring should hold a similar hope.
- (19-21) This giving of a one heart and a new spirit reminds the Christian of “putting off the old man of sin” and “putting on the new man” in Christ. By giving themselves over to God, the remnant among the captives could reclaim spiritual Israel and eventually physical Israel as well. (Jer. 31:33; 24:7) “The holiness of their lives shall prove the work of God upon their hearts.” (ACC) Those that refuse to have their hearts and spirits renewed will have the full reward that their idols can give – nothing. The infinite gain of heaven is always countered in the scripture by the irreparable loss of Hell (Deut 11:26; Mt. 7:13ff).

3. The glory of the Lord departs (11:22-25)

“Here is the departure of God's presence from the city and temple. It was from the Mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain. Though

the Lord will not forsake his people, yet he may be driven away from any part of his visible church by their sins, and woe will be upon them when He withdraws his presence, glory, and protection.” (MHCC)

- (22,23) “This vision is no mean proof of the long-suffering of God. He did not abandon this people all at once; he departed by little and little. **FIRST**, he left the temple. **SECONDLY**, he stopped a little at the gate of the city. **THIRDLY**, he departed entirely from the city and went to the Mount of Olives, which lay on the east side of the city. Having tarried there for some time they would repent and turn to him-**FOURTHLY**, he departed to heaven. The vision being now concluded, the prophet is taken away by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, and there announces to the captive Israelites what God had showed him in the preceding visions, and the good that he had spoken concerning them; who at first did not seem to profit much by them, which the prophet severely reproves.” (ACC) The ultimate loss is not physical; it is the loss of communion with God.
- (24) The vision comes to a close as Ezekiel is transported back to Chaldea.
- (25) He now recounts his vision to the elders. Note: 1) He did speak and he did not hold his peace. 2) He spoke only what the Lord told him to speak. 3) He told everything God had revealed to him, not just the pleasant things.

V. THE CERTAINTY OF DESTRUCTION UPON A SINFUL NATION (12:1-19:14)

- A. Two Signs Symbolize the Sureness of Captivity (12:1-20) (See McGuiggan, p. 121.) [8]
1. Ezekiel acts out an emigration from Jerusalem (12:1-16)
“By the preparation for removal, and his breaking through the wall of his house at evening, as one desirous to escape from the enemy, the prophet signified the conduct and fate of Zedekiah. When God has delivered us, we must glorify him and edify others, by acknowledging our sins. Those who by afflictions are brought to this, are made to know that God is the Lord, and may help to bring others to know him.” (MHCC)
 - (1,2) (Isa. 6:9; 42:20; Jer. 5:21; Mt. 13:13,14.) The prophet is given another reminder of the iniquity of God’s people. This next series of actions and oracles attempts to deal with the objections that will be raised by the people concerning Ezekiel’s prophecies of destruction.
 - (3) In this “action sermon” Ezekiel will prepare his belongs as if going into captivity during the day and dig through the wall of his house as if preparing an escape route at night. He was to make an obvious choice of items to take on his “journey,” so that it would be clear that he was miming a journey into exile. Perhaps this activity will cause the people to consider what they have refused to believe so far.
 - (4) He was to proceed at a slow pace, with a defeated air and gloomy countenance. He was not out on a stroll.
 - (5,6) Here Ezekiel is predicting the manner of Zedekiah’s escape from Jerusalem. In sight of the exiles, Ezekiel is to breach the wall of his house and keep his eyes covered. The walls of his house would represent the walls of Jerusalem.
 - (7) Regardless of Ezekiel’s own possible personal feelings about acting out these signs, he completed them as commanded.
 - (8,9) God knew what Ezekiel was doing. This is of course is a question asked to elicit an indication of Ezekiel’s understanding.
 - (10-16) Now God confirms exactly what the action sermon looks forward to – the escape of Zedekiah from Jerusalem. (Jer. 52:4-11; 2 Ki. 25:1-7.) Because Zedekiah was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar he arrived as a captive in Babylon unable to see the very land in which he would die. The allies of Zedekiah would not go unpunished. They would be killed, beaten or scattered. A number of them would live out their lives in captivity so that they might be witnesses to the truth of God’s prophecies.

2. He eats and drinks with quaking and trembling (12:17-20)
“The prophet must eat and drink in care and fear, with trembling, that he might express the condition of those in Jerusalem during the siege. When ministers speak of the ruin coming upon sinners, they must speak as those that know the terrors of the Lord. Afflictions are happy ones, however grievous to flesh and blood, that improve us in the knowledge of God.”
(MHCC)

(17,18) “Assume the manner of a person who is every moment afraid of his life, who has nothing but a morsel of bread to eat, and a little water to drink. Thus signifying the siege, and the straits to which they should be reduced.” (ACC)

(19,20) Fear will grip the people. Desolation is coming due to their chronic wickedness and violence. Severe punishment is sometimes the only warning a person will understand.

3. Although it was popular to believe otherwise, the judgments of God would soon occur (12:21-28)

(21,22) Ezekiel will now have to contend with two wrong attitudes concerning his (the Lord’s) prophecy: 1) some thought it to be false while, 2) others thought it would be fulfilled in the distant future. The people had a proverb concerning the end of Israel that reflected their opinion: “Time passes, but no vision ever comes to anything” (Moffatt’s translation). See Amos 6:3 and 2 Pet. 3:4.

(23-25) The Lord will put this false proverb to rest once and for all. One of the reasons that true prophecy was being ignored was because of the flattering speech of the false prophets – telling the people what they wanted to hear! Those that were mocking Ezekiel’s prophecy would live to see its results (Lk. 21:32,33).

(26-28) These unbelievers are a little less skeptical. They think the prophecy will come true someday – but not immediately. 2 Pet. 3:3-13 shows a similar problem of skepticism in apostolic times. This skepticism is alive and well in our time. Some think, “Christ has not come back for over 1900 years, so he is probably not coming back today or tomorrow.” In the case of Israel the time of judgment was upon them.

- B. Condemnation Against False Prophets and Prophetesses (13:1-23) (See McGuiggan, p. 133) [9]
1. God’s hand is against the prophets who speak from their own inspiration (13:1-16)

(1,2) It is the teaching of the false prophets that have undermined the true prophecy. The false prophets are in essence making their own religion to use in lieu of God’s religion. Man-made religion is vain (Mt. 15:9), it is in conflict with God (Mt. 15:3,6), and it will be rooted up (Mt. 7:24-27; 15:13).

(3) Sincerity is no substitute or guarantee of truth. Some of these prophets might have been sincere in their thinking, but foolish concerning the will of God. Taylor is less sympathetic, noting that the Hebrew word for foolish is “*nabal*.” This reminds us of the story of Nabal (1 Sam 25 and 2 Sam 13:13). He was rude, arrogant and immoral. (Taylor, p. 120.) See also Jer. 29.

(4-7) “The cunning of the fox in obtaining his prey has been long proverbial. These false prophets are represented as the foxes who, having got their prey by great subtlety, run to the desert to hide both themselves and it. So the false prophets, when the event did not answer to their prediction, got out of the way, that they might not be overwhelmed with the reproaches and indignation of the people.”
(ACC) The dangers of false prophecy are obvious: offering hope when there is no hope and making promises in the name of God that God did not make. Those that make the Lord’s commands optional are under the same condemnation as these false prophets.

(8,9) Make no mistake, God is against these false prophets. They will endure a three part punishment: 1) they will lose their place of honor among the assembly (inner council of citizens), 2) their names will

be removed from the civil register (taking away their blood-born citizenship) and 3) they will never be allowed to return to the land of Israel.

- (10) False prophets will cry “peace” when there is none to be had (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). The walls constructed by these false prophets would not withstand the judgment of God. Even though the walls had been whitewashed to take on a visible appearance of strength and beauty, they were weak and ready to fall.
- (11-16) Untempered mortar and bricks may stand for many years in a dry climate, but unseasonable rains can bring their destruction. God will bring such a massive storm against this weak wall that it will crumble to the ground. The storm will wash away the whitewash and expose the naked wall for what it was – a weak and unreliable wall. Its makers and those who trusted in them would die underneath the wall’s destruction. So we have people looking for safety behind the wrong wall, built by the wrong builders, using the wrong materials while building on the wrong foundation! Verse 16 clearly reveals who these false prophets were and what their false prophecies concerned, namely Jerusalem and its downfall. (Mt. 18:7.)

2. God’s hand is also against the false prophetesses who ensnare people like they were birds (13:17-23)

(17-19) “That there were true prophetesses among the Jews is evident enough from such being mentioned in the sacred writings. Miriam, the sister of Moses Ex 15:20; Nu 12:2; Deborah, Jg 4:4; Huldah, 2Ki 22:14; Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, Lu 2:36; the four daughters of Philip the (evangelist), Ac 21:9.” (ACC) Unfortunately for Israel there were also false prophetesses such as those condemned in these verses. It appears these women were practicing some occult powers using various articles of clothing and perhaps amulets of some description. Some commentators feel that they were using their sorcery to obtain food (barley and bread) but others feel that these were ingredients of their magic. Matthew Henry describes five sins of the false prophetesses: 1) They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune, 2) They profaned the name of God by pretending to have received those lies from him, 3) They kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions, 4) They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane, and 5) They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions.

(20-23) God will free the souls that the false prophetesses hunted. They would lose all respect and source of their livelihood. It is the false teacher who uses his ability to make the righteous sad, the wicked to feel secure in their sins, and bring a nation to ruin – all with just words! (Jer. 23:14, Mic. 3:6.)

C. Idols in Their Hearts Made Them Estranged From God (14:1-23) (See McGuiggan, p. 145)

1. False people desire false prophets (14:1-11)

“No outward form or reformation can be acceptable to God, so long as any idol possesses the heart; yet how many prefer their own devices and their own righteousness, to the way of salvation! Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and are of their own setting up; God will let them take their course. Sin renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God; and in his own eyes also, whenever conscience is awakened. Let us seek to be cleansed from the guilt and pollution of sins, in that fountain which the Lord has opened.” (MHCC)

(1,2) These elders came to Ezekiel supposedly to see what the Lord had told him. We shall see that elders were wicked men and their hearts were not pure.

(3) Because of the impurity of their hearts, they had lost their right to enquire of the Lord. They were hypocrites of the first order, claiming to be servants of the one true God, but inwardly believing in the power of idols.

- (4,5) God gives Ezekiel an oracle of judgment to deliver to these elders. “Any man of Israel with an idol in his heart will be treated as idolater!” For the people to return to the Lord, He must first capture their hearts.
- (6) For the people to avert the prophesied calamity they must repent. The sense in the original Hebrew is they must reject their idols and return to the Lord.
- (7,8) Those that would go into exile would want a prophet that would tell them what they wanted to hear. The Lord says that He will bring them the true prophecy. Concerning “set My face against the man,” see Lev. 17:10; 20:3-6; Jer. 44:11.
- (9) The Lord allows the false prophets to compound the unbelief of the Israelites, giving them the opportunity to hear what they wanted to hear. (2 Thess. 2:11) Part of the punishment of unbelievers is that God allows them to believe false teachers and prophets.
- (10,11) The responsibility for believing a false prophecy will be equally shared between the false prophet and his followers. “Thus God's judgments against the wicked are admonitions to the godly to cleave to the Lord and not to defile themselves with the same abominations.” (GBN)
2. The presence of righteous men will not avert judgment (14:12-23)
 “National sins bring national judgments. Though sinners escape one judgment, another is waiting for them. When God's professing people rebel against him, they may justly expect all his judgments. The faith, obedience, and prayers of Noah prevailed to the saving of his house, but not of the old world. Job's sacrifice and prayer in behalf of his friends were accepted, and Daniel had prevailed for the saving his companions and the wise men of Babylon. But a people that had filled the measure of their sins, was not to expect to escape for the sake of any righteous men living among them; not even of the most eminent saints, who could be accepted in their own case only through the sufferings and righteousness of Christ. Yet even when God makes the greatest desolations by his judgments, he saves some to be monuments of his mercy. In firm belief that we shall approve the whole of God's dealings with ourselves, and with all mankind, let us silence all rebellious murmurs and objections.” (MHCC)
- (12,13) The people believe that God will spare Israel on the backs of a few righteous men. These verses are a strong argument against this thinking. Their thinking is that if even Sodom was offered an out based on a few righteous men, surely Jerusalem would get an even better offer. The prophet rejects this notion and asserts that not even the presence of Noah, Daniel, and Job could assure salvation for anyone other than themselves. Persistent unfaithfulness will not be tolerated by either man or nation. Famine will come upon the land of unbelievers.
- (14-16) Jer. 15:1 indicates that the presence of Moses and Samuel would not save the nation either. There are concerns among the liberal commentators that this cannot be the Daniel of the Bible because of their timeline for the writing of the prophets. There seems to be no conservative reason to reject this Daniel as the Bible Daniel. Wild beasts will occupy the land of unbelievers.
- (17-20) Foreign armies and the resulting pestilence will also aid in the destruction of the unbelieving nation and its unbelieving inhabitants. God does not judge a land for no reason. For Him to visit all four of these judgments on Israel means only one thing – they deserved it!
- (21) The fourfold punishment of sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts was one that was universally feared in the ancient near East. As McGuiggan puts it, the case of Israel calls for all “four barrels” of punishment to be fired against their sin.
- (22) While we generally think of the remnant as the righteous few that have been saved, in this instance it fits the context better to think of them as a microcosm of those destroyed in Jerusalem. In other words the first exiles would come to realize the truth of Ezekiel's prophecy when they made contact with the evil people of the second exile.
- (23) But how will the suffering of evil men be a consolation to the exiles? By viewing the unrighteous remnant, the exiles would be able to see the justice of God in the destruction of Jerusalem. “There is

no part of the conduct of God towards man that is not dictated by the purest principles of justice, equity, and truth. He does nothing but what is right; and whatever is right to be done, that ought to be done. In God's justice there is no severity; in God's mercy there is no caprice. He alone doth all things well; for he is the Fountain of justice and mercy.” (ACC)

- D. An Allegory of Israel as a Useless Vine (15:1-8) (See McGuiggan, p. 155) [10]
“If a vine be fruitful, it is valuable. But if not fruitful, it is worthless and useless; it is cast into the fire. Thus man is capable of yielding a precious fruit, in living to God; this is the sole end of his existence; and if he fails in this, he is of no use but to be destroyed. What blindness then attaches to those who live in the total neglect of God and of true religion! This similitude is applied to Jerusalem. Let us beware of an unfruitful profession. Let us come to Christ, and seek to abide in him, and to have his words abide in us.” (MHCC)
- (1,2) Israel’s purpose was to bring forth fruit for God’s use. They had failed. Now they were nothing but a barren vine – good for nothing except fuel for a fire.
- (3-5) Sturdy wood (oak, cedar, spruce, etc.) has its use as building material, but the vine has no additional use. It would not even make a tent peg or wall peg, much less a wall, mast, bow or arrow. Once it has been thrown in the fire it would not be retrieved as it was serving its only purpose. Note that no part of Israel would be spared from this searing experience.
- (6) Ezekiel applies the parable to Jerusalem. It is Jerusalem and her people that are the fruitless useless vine. “The design of this parable is to abate the pride of the Jews; to show them that, in their best estate, they had nothing but what they had received, and therefore deserved nothing; and now, having fallen from all righteousness, they can have no expectation of any thing but judgment unmixed with mercy.” (ACC)
- (7,8) The Babylonian fire had already scorched them twice. Captives had been taken in 605 BC (Daniel) and again in 597 (Ezekiel). Judah had been burned but not consumed. Now the fire would reach out and bring Jerusalem to total desolation.
- E. An Allegory of Israel as an Unfaithful Wife (16:1-63) (See McGuiggan, p. 163)
In this chapter God's dealings with the Jewish nation, and their conduct towards him, are described, and their punishment through the surrounding nations, even those they most trusted in. This is done under the parable of an exposed infant rescued from death, educated, espoused, and richly provided for, but afterwards guilty of the most abandoned conduct, and punished for it; yet at last received into favor, and ashamed of her base conduct. (MHCC)
1. Jerusalem was found while unclean, miserable, and unwanted (16:1-7)
- (1,2) These opening verses make the point of the chapter clear – Jerusalem is very very wicked!
- (3) While Abraham and Sarah were indeed born of idolatry, they followed the Lord when called. These sinners did not deserve to claim them as their parents, instead they were the spiritual offspring Amorites and Hittites. (Jn. 8:39,44.)
- (4,5) The Jews were a people that no one cared for – like a baby abandoned in a ditch. It was a custom in some barbarous cultures to abandon deformed or unwanted children to die.
- (6,7) The Lord finds the baby struggling and kicking in blood and saves the child. As the child grows to maidenhood it still is poor and without physical possessions.

2. The Lord entered into a covenant with her (16:8-14)

- (8,9) Upon finding her at a marriageable age, the traveler takes her as his wife and once again cares for her needs. We must be careful not to try to take this parable too far. To ascribe an exact period in Israel's history to any particular verse of this parable is dicey at best.
- (10) This skin is the same kind used to cover the tabernacle.
- (11,12) Here the groom supplies the appropriate jewelry for his bride.
- (13) See also Deut. 32:13f and Hos. 2:8 for descriptions of rich fare.
- (14) Though Israel had not deserved God's graciousness, it was given to them in abundance (Rom. 8:32; Eph. 2:3-8).

3. Israel turned from God like an unfaithful wife (16:15-34)

Henry suggests four reasons why scripture uses the idea of harlotry when referring to Israel's idolatry: 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debauches the conscience, sears and hardens it; and those who by their idolatries dishonor the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reprobate mind, to dishonor the human nature with vile affections, Ro 1:23, &c. It is a besotting, bewitching sin; and, when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful scandalous sin for those that have joined themselves to the Lord to join themselves to an idol. (MHC)

- (15) See Gen. 38:14ff; Jer. 3:2; Isa. 57:8; Hos. 1:2. Note that gifts God had given Israel became the means of her apostasy. Here the gifts are represented by: her beauty, her garments, her jewelry, her food, and even her children.
- (16-19) From 2 Ki. 23:7 we see that these multi-colored hangings were for idolatrous purposes: including such things as feasting, fornicating, and child sacrifice.
- (20-22) To offer a child to Molech involved killing the child then burning it. Kings Ahaz and Manasseh were guilty of this abomination (2 Ki. 16:3; 21:6). See also Lev. 18:21; 2 Ki. 23:10; Jer. 32:35 and especially Mic. 6:6-8.
- (23-25) The Canaanite cults practiced ritual harlotry as fertility rites and it appears that some Israelites had embraced it for religious purposes as well.
- (26-29) Harlotries with the Egyptians, Philistines, Assyrians, and Babylonians go beyond religious infidelity to political alliances forbidden by God. Because of these political and religious prostitutions God would diminish Judah as He already done to Israel. Part of the problem of Judah aligning herself with these more powerful countries was that she would eventually come under the influence of their false religions.
- (30-34) But even the trade of the common prostitute is perverted by Judah. She sought out her men and bribed them to lie with her. She paid them! (Hos. 8:9,10.) Israel does not have the excuse of the adulteress (blind love) or the prostitute (stark necessity).

4. Her punishment will correspond to her sin (16:35-43)

- (35-43) "Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime. This notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, Eze. 16:35. The prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, O harlot! Hear the word of the Lord. Our Savior preached to harlots, for their conversion, to bring them into the

kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, an apostate church is a harlot. Jerusalem is so if she becomes idolatrous. How has the faithful city become a harlot! Rome is so represented in the Revelation, when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here. Re 17:1, Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore. Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.” (MHC) Note that the punishment for her crime will be dealt out by the very ones with whom she had committed her sins.

5. Jerusalem is worse than her sisters Samaria and Sodom (16:44-59)

“The prophet here further shows Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them, and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good if we are but as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst.” (MHC)

(44-48) The tendency in this family was to always reject the Lord (Father and Husband). Judah was willing to sin beyond Sodom! Judah is named in this family of Canaan because she had adopted herself to them, practiced their ways and taken their sins to a new level.

(49,50) The traditional condemnation of Sodom for their sexual perversions is set aside here as God goes to the root of the problem – a life of ease, pride, full of food, and neglect of the needy.

(51,52) The sins of the ten tribes (Samaria) were not as great as those of Judah. If God destroyed Sodom and allowed Samaria to be taken captive, how can Judah escape punishment? (Compare Mt. 11:23ff.)

(53-55) Those that take these prophecies as literal predictions of the end-times must have quite a bit of trouble here. Sodom and Samaria will be restored alongside Judah! The real point is to make Judah feel guilty of her sins. To raise her up in her sins would call for Sodom and the northern kingdom to also be restored, if God is fair and just. We know from Eze. 37:22 that the ten tribes would never be restored. Some do understand that Sodom represents Gentiles who will follow Christ, this may have some merit.

(56-59) Judah in her self-righteousness held herself so far above Sodom and Samaria that she could not see her own comparable sins.

6. God would remember His covenant in the days of her youth (16:60-63)

“After a full warning of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved. These closing verses are a precious promise, in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but to have fuller accomplishment in gospel times. The Divine mercy should be powerful to melt our hearts into godly sorrow for sin. Nor will God ever leave the sinner to perish, who is humbled for his sins, and comes to trust in His mercy and grace through Jesus Christ; but will keep him by his power, through faith unto salvation.” (MHCC)

(60,61) Nevertheless! It is hard to believe after the first 59 verses that God would have a single word of encouragement at this point, but He does. He will remember the covenant that He made with Abraham and confirmed in David (Jer. 21:13ff.). A covenant will be established in which Israel can welcome her sisters back into the family of God. Salvation of the entire world will be available through this covenant that will be established through the offspring of Judah – Jesus Christ.

(62,63) While God has obligated Himself to forgive and forget our sins, we will remember them forever as a warning and reminder against taking them up again. Note Paul in 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13. “Even a justified sinner should not forget that he has a past of which he is right to be ashamed.” (Taylor, p.142.)

1. The parable stated (17:1-10)

Mighty conquerors are aptly likened to birds or beasts of prey, but their destructive passions are overruled to forward God's designs. Those who depart from God, only vary their crimes by changing one carnal confidence for another, and never will prosper. (MHCC)

(1-4) For additional background see Jer. 21, 37, 39, and 52. Three possible reasons exist for why God chose to use a riddle here: 1)- riddles can reach the heart and convict it before the heart knows what hits it (David and Nathan), 2)- riddles often make the truth more vivid, and 3)- riddles sometimes make the truth easier to grasp and remember longer. The first eagle represents Babylon, Lebanon represents Israel, and the second eagle represents Egypt. The cedar stands for the remnant of Israel (Judah) and the top of the cedar is the royal house. Babylon would crop the top of the tree (Jehoiachin, 2 Ki. 24:12) and carry it into captivity in their land.

(5,6) The eagle planted the seed of the land (Zedekiah) in fruitful soil. Zedekiah had every opportunity to grow and prosper. This seed grew up as a willow instead of an oak. Instead of strength in the face of Nebuchadnezzar, the vine would bend and stoop, but obtain sustenance from Him.

(7,8) Zedekiah turns to Egypt (the second, weaker eagle) and thus begins the end of his power. If Zedekiah would have been content, then Nebuchadnezzar would have left Judah alone.

(9,10) By ignoring Jeremiah and listening to his pro-Egyptian advisors, Zedekiah had ruined his chances of continuing as king of Judah.

2. The parable explained and applied (17:11-21)

The parable is explained, and the particulars of the history of the Jewish nation at that time may be traced. Zedekiah had been ungrateful to his benefactor, which is a sin against God. In every solemn oath, God is appealed to as a witness of the sincerity of him that swears. Truth is a debt owing to all men. If the professors of the true religion deal treacherously with those of a false religion, their profession makes their sin the worse; and God will the more surely and severely punish it. The Lord will not hold those guiltless who take his name in vain; and no man shall escape the righteous judgment of God who dies under unrepented guilt. (MHCC)

(11,12) The explanation of the parable is straightforward enough. Nebuchadnezzar would remove Zedekiah and his kin from power. (2 Ki. 24:11-20.)

(13,14) Zedekiah had taken an oath before God to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. 36:13.) It appears that Babylon fully intended for Judah to prosper under this arrangement of vassalage.

(15) Zedekiah must have sent his ambassadors into Egypt, between the sixth month of his sixth year, and the fifth month of his seventh year. Compare Eze. 8:1, with Eze. 20:1. (ACC) He has broken his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, which he swore before God. In this act of faithlessness Zedekiah brings on the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the wrath of Babylon which ultimately represents the wrath of God.

(16-21) See Jer. 37:5-15; 52:4. When the Egyptians came, the siege of Jerusalem was temporarily broken. However, the Egyptians were repelled and the siege was intensified. By breaking his oath with Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah showed the Lord that oaths made in His name meant nothing. Zedekiah had sealed not only his own fate, but the fate of all Judah.

3. The promise of a goodly cedar planted by the Lord (17:22-24)

The unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect. The parable of a tree, used in the threatening, is here presented in the promise. It appears only applicable to Jesus, the Son of David, the Messiah of God. The kingdom of Satan, which has borne so long, so large a sway, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, which was looked upon with

contempt, shall be established. Blessed be God, our Redeemer is seen even by the ends of the earth. We may find refuge from the wrath to come, and from every enemy and danger, under his shadow; and believers are fruitful in him. (MHCC)

- (22) I will raise up another monarchy, which shall come in the line of David, namely, the Messiah; who shall appear as a tender plant, as to his incarnation; but he shall be high and eminent; his Church, the royal city, the highest and purest ever seen on the face of the earth. (ACC) See also: Isa. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; Zec. 3:8.
- (23) Through the Messiah the Davidic house will once again flourish. No government that arose in Judah between Zedekiah and Christ fulfilled these prophecies.
- (24) What God wants to happen – will happen. He accomplishes His goals in spite of man standing in His way or their unbelief. The expected order (Babylon and Egypt) would eventually wither and fade and the low and dry (the Messianic kingdom) would take its place. (Lk. 1:51-53)

G. Individual Responsibility Before God (18:1-32) (See McGuiggan, p. 185)

The soul that sinneth it shall die. As to eternity, every man was, is, and will be dealt with, as his conduct shows him to have been under the old covenant of works, or the new covenant of grace. Whatever outward sufferings come upon men through the sins of others, they deserve for their own sins all they suffer; and the Lord overrules every event for the eternal good of believers. All souls are in the hand of the great Creator: he will deal with them in justice or mercy; [none] will...perish for the sins of another, who is not in some sense worthy of death for his own. We all have sinned, and our souls must be lost, if God deal with us according to his holy law; but we are invited to come to Christ. If a man who had shown his faith by his works, had a wicked son, whose character and conduct were the reverse of his parent's, could it be expected he should escape the Divine vengeance on account of his father's piety? Surely not. And should a wicked man have a son who walked before God as righteous, this man would not perish for his father's sins. If the son was not free from evils in this life, still he should be partaker of salvation. The question here is not about the meritorious ground of justification, but about the Lord's dealings with the righteous and the wicked. (MHCC)

1. A popular proverb in Israel put all the blame on their fathers (18:1-4)

- (1,2) Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah had to deal with this false parable, namely, that the sons would be punished for the sins of the father. (Jer. 31:29.) It is not unreasonable that the Jews had come to believe this parable as it reflects back to their understanding of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:9; See also Lam. 5:7). Even Ezekiel's own teaching placed much of the blame for Judah's current situation on the previous generation's dalliance with idolatry and unrighteousness. The teaching of the Law implied that only the children that followed the sins of their fathers would receive punishment for those sins.
- (3,4) Ezekiel's teaching on this subject was not new; Moses had already clarified it in the Law (Deut. 24:16). Ezekiel calls for the people to desist from using the parable anymore. Bottom line: the one that commits the sin will be held responsible for it.

2. God deals with each one according to his own works (18:5-20)

- (5-9) Here we see the characteristics of the truly righteous man. He does what is right and avoids that which is wrong. Note the list of things that he does and does not do; all found in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The truly righteous man lives for God and will in the end live with God!

- (10-13) What if the righteous man has an evil son? The evil son will answer for his own sins. It really is that simple. The Bible teaches us here and elsewhere that godly parents can have rebellious children and still stand blameless in the sight of God. "Environment is not omnipotent!" (McGuiggan, p.189.)
- (14-18) Now we come to the grandchild. Regardless of the goodness of his grandfather or the unrighteousness of his father, this man will be judged by his own doings.
- (19,20) God has never ridden anyone into either heaven or hell on the coattails of another person. (Rom. 2:6,9). Please compare the lives of these three men to the lives of Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah.

3. Each man can change his ways, and God will deal accordingly (18:21-32)
 "The wicked man would be saved, if he turned from his evil ways. The true penitent is a true believer. None of his former transgressions shall be mentioned unto him, but in the righteousness which he has done, as the fruit of faith and the effect of conversion, he shall surely live. The question is not whether the truly righteous ever become apostates. It is certain that many who for a time were thought to be righteous, do so, while verses 26,27 speaks the fullness of pardoning mercy: when sin is forgiven, it is blotted out, it is remembered no more. In their righteousness they shall live; not for their righteousness, as if that were an atonement for their sins, but in their righteousness, which is one of the blessings purchased by the Mediator. What encouragement a repenting, returning sinner has to hope for pardon and life according to this promise! In verse 28 is the beginning and progress of repentance. True believers watch and pray, and continue to the end, and they are saved. In all our disputes with God, he is in the right, and we are in the wrong." (MHCC)

- (21-23) A man does not live under the shadow of his father's sin and neither does he need to live under the shadow of his own sin. He can repent. It is God's will and longing that all men repent and live (2 Pet. 3:9). God is just when He forgives the penitent. Here we see that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination was not in force under the Old Law. "And if God can have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, he cannot have made a decree to abandon him to the evil of his nature, and then damn him for what he could not avoid: for as God can do nothing with which he is not pleased, so he can decree nothing with which he is not pleased. But he is "not pleased with the death of a sinner," therefore he cannot have made a decree to bring him to this death." (ACC)
- (24) A righteous man can fall from grace. Another Calvinistic belief bites the dust! A previously godly man can choose to *repent* of his righteousness and follow a lifestyle of evil.
- (25-29) God's ways are fair and just. It is Israel that wishes for injustice and unfairness. God's law of individual responsibility is supremely just.
- (30-32) "The Lord will judge each of the Israelites according to his ways. On this is grounded an exhortation to repent, and to make them a new heart and a new spirit. God does not command what cannot be done, but admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for what is not. Ordinances and means are appointed; directions and promises are given, that those who desire this change may seek it from God." (MHCC) God calls for individual activity and effort in order to affect repentance and enable a spiritual reformation to take place. The fatalistic view that we inherit our father's sins and therefore have no recourse but to bear their consequences, leads to our own condemnation. To live by the proverb of v. 2 is to capitulate and die! (Paraphrased from Taylor, p. 152)

H. A Lamentation for the Princes of Israel (19:1-14) (See McGuiggan, p. 201)

1. A dirge over Judah's kings who were captured and exiled (19:1-9)
 Ezekiel is to compare the kingdom of Judah to a lioness. He must compare the kings of Judah to a lion's whelps; they were cruel and oppressive to their own subjects. The righteousness of

God is to be acknowledged, when those who have terrified and enslaved others, are themselves terrified and enslaved. When professors of religion form connections with ungodly persons, their children usually grow up following after the maxims and fashions of a wicked world. Advancement to authority discovers the ambition and selfishness of men's hearts; and those who spend their lives in mischief, generally end them by violence. (MHCC)

- (1) Some commentators suggest that the two whelps of this story represent Jehoahaz (2 Ki. 23:31-35) and Jehoiachin (2 Ki. 24:8-16). McGuiggan reminds us that the second whelp could not be Jehoiakim due to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 22:18) forbidding lamentations on his behalf.
- (2-4) King Jehoahaz (Shallum) only reigned for three months before he was carried off to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho. The attributes assigned to Jehoahaz only reflect his potential because he was carried off to Egypt within 3 months. The lioness probably represents the nation of Judah as opposed to Jehoahaz's real mother or perhaps the royal family in particular.
- (5-9) Ezekiel skips over Jehoiakim and continues the tale with his son Jehoiachin. Similar liberty has been taken with Jehoiachin's record for the purpose of the story, as he also reigned only for three months before being taken into captivity. The word for "cage" here has come to mean "dog collar" in Hebrew.

2. A dirge over the fall of Judah (19:10-14)

Jerusalem was a vine, flourishing and fruitful. This vine is now destroyed, though not plucked up by the roots. She has by wickedness made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel to burn her. Blessed be God, one Branch of the vine here alluded to, is not only become a strong rod for the scepter of those that rule, but is Himself the true and living Vine. This shall be for a rejoicing to all the chosen people of God throughout all generations. (MHCC)

- (10) See Gen 49:9-12 for the first instance in the Bible of the imagery of lions, scepters and vines. Here the scepters represent the succession of rulers of Israel sent out by the vine (royal family). When the vine is transplanted to the desert its chief branch (Zedekiah) destroys the fruit and foliage of the vine.
- (11) The mighty "rods" of Israel included such men as David, Jehoshaphat, Solomon, Uzziah, and Hezekiah.
- (12,13) The royal vine would be uprooted and carried away to Babylon, the end of a long line of setbacks to the royal family.
- (14) The responsibility for the plight of the royal family is the royal family itself! There would be relief via Zedekiah as he was part of the problem.

VI. PREDICTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (20:1-24:27) [12]

A. Israel's History of Rebellion (20:1-29) (See McGuiggan, p. 209)

1. Resistance to God in Egypt (20:1-9)

"Those hearts are wretchedly hardened which ask God leave to go on in sin, and that even when suffering for it; see v. 32. God is justly angry with those who are resolved to go on still in their trespasses. Cause the people to know the evil deeds of their fathers, that they may see how righteous it was with God to cut them off." (MHCC)

- (1) Note three recurring themes in this chapter of real history: a) Israel's rebellion against God, despite of His continued mercy; b) the wilderness wanderings represented as a state of Israel's collective mind; and c) God's concern for His name. The pious acting elders once again approach Ezekiel looking for some comforting words concerning their plight. The year is 590 BC.

(2-4) " The whole chapter is a consecutive history of the unfaithfulness ingratitude, rebellion, and idolatry of the Jews, from the earliest times to that day; and vindicates the sentence which God had pronounced against them, and which he was about to execute more fully in delivering them and the city into the hands of the Chaldeans." (ACC) They did not come to hear the truth, just some comforting words. The Lord styles them as models of their unrighteous forefathers.

(5-9) Israel's history technically begins not with Abraham, but Moses at the "burning bush." But even before Moses, the children of Israel were dabbling with Egyptian idolatry. See that it was God who elected Israel, revealed His will for them to them through Moses, and provided for them as they escaped from Egypt. God through Moses took measures to protect His name and bring Israel back to an understanding of one true God. Note commandment number one.

2. Resistance to God in the wilderness (20:10-26)

"The history of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament as well as in the Old, for warning. God did great things for them. He gave them the law, and revived the ancient keeping of the Sabbath day. Sabbaths are privileges; they are signs of our being his people. If we do the duty of the day, we shall find, to our comfort, it is the Lord that makes us holy, that is, truly happy, here; and prepares us to be happy, that is, perfectly holy, hereafter. The Israelites rebelled, and were left to the judgments they brought upon themselves. God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, yet he is not the Author of sin: there needs no more to make men miserable, than to give them up to their own evil desires and passions." (MHCC)

(10-17) God must force Israel out of Egypt and into the freedom of the wilderness. He institutes the Sabbath as a sign of His deliverance. He gave them a Law of honor, which they continually refused to keep throughout their history. Because of their unfaithfulness, the majority of those that left Egypt were banned from entering the Promised Land (Num. 14:29; Ps. 95:8-10). Note the repeated pattern of grace, rebellion and wrath withheld. Salvation (then as now) is predicated on doing the will of the Father.

(18-26) Despite the Lord's pleadings while they were in the wilderness, the people continued to rebel and sin willfully. This disobedience occurred generation after generation. Jehovah was willing to let His people "go to the gutter" so that they might see that He is God. Nothing can be right if God is left out of the picture (Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24; 2 Thess. 2:11).

3. Resistance to God in Canaan (20:27-29)

"The Jews persisted in rebellion after they settled in the land of Canaan. And these elders seem to have thought of uniting with the heathen. We make nothing by our profession if it be but a profession. There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead." (MHCC)

(27-29) Through God's mercy the remnant of Israel finally enters the land of Canaan and immediately takes over the heathen high places for their own idolatry.

B. The Future Restoration of Israel (20:30-44)

1. God would not allow the present generation to inquire of Him (20:30-32)

(30-32) Now the word comes to the Israel of Ezekiel's day. If it was up to the Israelites, they would have become absorbed into the nations that surrounded them. God makes it clear that this would not happen in their generation. God refuses to be inquired of by such a wicked people.

2. God would purify Israel among the heathen (20:33-39)
“The wicked Israelites, notwithstanding they follow the sinful ways of other nations, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity, but shall be separated from them for destruction. There is no shaking off God's dominion; and those who will not yield to the power of his grace, shall sink under the power of his wrath. But not one of God's jewels shall be lost in the lumber of this world. He will bring the Jews to the land of Israel again; and will give them true repentance. They will be overcome with his kindness: the more we know of God's holiness, the more we see the hateful nature of sin. Those who remain unaffected amidst means of grace, and would live without Christ, like the world around them, may be sure it is the way to destruction.” (MHCC)

(33-39) The Babylonian captivity will serve as another wilderness experience for Israel. This one will finally purge the idolatry from among them. Those that want to continue to sin are welcome to make that choice, but God wants His name left out of their doings.

3. God will ultimately gather Israel and bless the land (20:40-44)

(40-42) Finally, the true Israel will come to spiritual Zion and worship God in a manner that He deserves. Some commentators feel that this is reference to the return led by Ezra and Nehemiah, but all (that I consulted) agree that these verses have Messianic overtones.

(43) “These promises may, in a certain limited sense, be applied to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity; but they must have their proper fulfillment when the Jews shall accept Jesus as their Savior, and in consequence be brought back from all their dispersions to their own land.” (ACC)

(44) In contrast to these “inquiring minds” the members of true Israel will have a repentant spirit and will know that God is the Lord. They will realize that God has been lenient with their nation. The remnant will be restored, penitent, accepted and instructed.

C. Judgment is Soon to Come Against Jerusalem (20:45-21:27) (See McGuiggan, p. 219)

1. Parable of a burning forest kindled by the Lord (20:45-49)
“Judah and Jerusalem had been full of people, as a forest of trees, but empty of fruit. God's word prophesies against those who bring not forth the fruits of righteousness. When He will ruin a nation, who or what can save it? The plainest truths were as parables to the people. It is common for those who will not be wrought upon by the word, to blame it.” (MHCC)

(45-49) This prophecy is towards the forests of the south. Imagine Ezekiel standing in Babylon and looking towards Judea. In Old Testament times Palestine was a forested land and not the tree poor land of modern times. A forest fire is coming that will sweep through the land. No one will be able to fight it and everyone will see it and its results. There will be no doubt that the fire came from the Lord. Ezekiel presupposes that his listeners will label him a “riddler of riddles” and asks the Lord for a plainer vision.

2. The sword of the Lord is coming (21:1-7) [13]
“Here is an explanation of the parable in the last chapter. It is declared that the Lord was about to cut off Jerusalem and the whole land, that all might know it was his decree against a wicked and rebellious people. It behooves those who denounce the awful wrath of God against sinners, to show that they do not desire the woeful day. The example of Christ teaches us to lament over those whose ruin we declare. Whatever instruments God uses in executing his judgments, he will strengthen them according to the service they are employed in. The sword glitters to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It is a sword to others, a rod to

the people of the Lord. God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence, and the prophet must show himself in earnest in publishing it.” (MHCC)

(1-7) The plain language begins. The word of the Lord is against Judea, Jerusalem, and the Temple. The wicked would be punished (not by fire as in the parable) but literally by the sword. Unfortunately, as in any war, even the innocent would feel some suffering via captivity. Losing their righteous remnant will be the “straw that breaks the camel’s back.” Isa. 57:1 indicates that sometimes the righteous die to spare them from facing evil. (See also 2 Ki. 22:20, concerning righteous King Josiah.) The sword of the Lord would stay out of its sheath until the job was done. Ezekiel gives another of his action sermons by giving an outward display of anguish. The object here is to provoke appropriate questions from the people. Note the unifying theme of the “sword” in the oracles of this chapter.

3. The sword is prepared for impartial justice (21:8-17)

(8-11) The Sword of the Lord is polished and sharpened and ready for slaughter. What kind of fool would mock such a sword in the face of imminent danger? The Sword is impartial and finds and destroys evil wherever it may be, whether in foreign lands or in David’s own kingdom. Even the royal line itself will not withstand the Sword.

(12-17) Ezekiel is to clap his hands and strike his thigh as if in either horror or glee. If in horror, it is a response to the dreadful nature of the punishment coming against his people. If in glee, then he is representing himself as a spectator “enjoying the show.” The reference to “doubling” and “three times” probably represents the three captivities and the deposing of the final three kings. The same sword that is sent to kill Zedekiah (“deadly wounded wicked one”) will kill princes and commoners alike. Ezekiel seems to be acting out the part of the master swordsman as he prophesies; he most likely was brandishing a sword as he gave this action sermon. The Lord claps his hands together as if calling for the festivities to cease.

4. The sword of Nebuchadnezzar will come against Jerusalem (21:18-24)
“By the Spirit of prophecy Ezekiel foresaw Nebuchadnezzar's march from Babylon, which he would determine by divination. The Lord would overturn the government of Judah, till the coming of Him whose right it is. This seems to foretell the overturnings of the Jewish nation to the present day, and the troubles of states and kingdoms, which shall make way for establishing the Messiah's kingdom throughout the earth. The Lord secretly leads all to adopt his wise designs. And in the midst of the most tremendous warnings of wrath, we still hear of mercy, and some mention of Him through whom mercy is shown to sinful men.” (MHCC)

(18,19) The prophet is to lay down a road from Babylon that has two forks. One fork would go towards Jerusalem and the other towards Ammon. He will set a signpost at the fork clearly marking the way to each town.

(20) Jerusalem is noted as being fortified. Even though the false prophets did not think that war was coming, they were prepared (or so they thought) because they aligned themselves with Egypt.

(21,22) Here we see the Babylonian practices of divination: shaking the arrows, consulting the images and looking into the liver of a dead animal. The arrows would be marked and tossed to determine which way to go, much like our coin toss. The liver was universally thought to be the chief organ by the ancients. The medium would examine the liver of a sacrifice and especially pay attention to its lower end. What the Babylonians did not realize was that God had rigged their divinations, causing Jerusalem’s arrow and a good liver to come into play.

(23) “To Zedekiah and his ministers, who had bound themselves by the oath of the Lord to be faithful to the Chaldeans, and to pay them the promised tribute. The oaths may refer, farther, to the alliances

formed with the Egyptians, Ammonites, and others. They will not believe that Nebuchadnezzar shall succeed against them, while they expect the powerful assistance of the Egyptians.” (ACC)

(24) God will not forget the open iniquity of the princes, prophets, and priests. The very ones that should understand that God should not be withstood to the face are the ones withstanding God to the face!

5. Zedekiah’s fall is prophesied (21:25-27)

(25-27) There was no hope for Israel as long as people like Zedekiah were in charge. The turban here represents the priesthood which will also be brought down because of their corruption. Chaos will reign until the new Master comes. The Christ will be given the right to represent God to man and man to God. Regardless of where the people believe their real hope lies, only God can guide them to it (Hos. 2:15; Josh 7:26).

D. The Ammonites Also Will Be Slain by the Sword (21:28-32)

“The diviners of the Ammonites made false prophecies of victory. They would never recover their power, but in time would be wholly forgotten. Let us be thankful to be employed as instruments of mercy; let us use our understandings in doing good; and let us stand aloof from men who are only skilful to destroy.” (MHCC)

(28) See Zep 2:8-10. Ammon will not get off lightly. Their day is also coming. “They had reproached and insulted Judea in its low estate, see Eze. 25:3,6. This prophecy against them was fulfilled about five years after the taking of Jerusalem.” (ACC) it appears that even though Ammon originally allied itself with Judah against Babylon, they eventually changed sides and brought the sword against Jerusalem.

(29-32) After destroying Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar would give the land of Palestine a rest. But he would eventually return and the Ammonites would not be spared. Their ultimate fate would be more devastating than that of Israel or Egypt; there will come a time when they would be remembered no more. “No prospect of restoration, no continuance in succeeding generations, no memorial, not even a memory. Oblivion.” (Taylor, p. 165.)

E. The Sins of Jerusalem and Israel (22:1-31) (See McGuigan, p. 233)

1. Jerusalem is guilty of shedding blood and must be judged (22:1-16)

“The prophet is to judge the bloody city; the city of bloods. Jerusalem is so called, because of her crimes. The sins which Jerusalem stands charged with are exceeding sinful. Murder, idolatry, disobedience to parents, oppression and extortion, profanation of the Sabbath and holy things, seventh commandment sins, lewdness and adultery. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness. Sinners provoke God because they forget him. Jerusalem has filled the measure of her sins. Those who give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts will justly be given up to be portioned by them. Those who resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other happiness than their own hands can furnish; and a miserable portion it will prove.” (MHCC)

(1,2) As in 20:4, God sets Ezekiel up as the prosecutor in His court. The court has already rendered a guilty verdict and is now in the penalty phase. Ezekiel is to list their shortcomings in no uncertain terms.

(3-12) Note the list: murder, idolatry, lack of parental respect, orphans starved and raped by the courts, Sabbaths despised, sexual crimes (including incest) and lying. Compare this list to the Ten Commandments and the so-called Holiness Code of Lev. 17-26. They had broken every statute God had given them.

- (13) “The curse of God rests upon wealth gained by sinful practices. It brings upon its owners trouble and misery instead of profit in this life, and exposes them to his wrath in the life to come.” (FBN) To dabble in sin is danger, the results are spiritually deadly.
- (14) On the judgment day there will be no defiance from man – just fear.
- (15,16) Israel would learn that sin brings the ultimate humiliation, it creates loneliness and homelessness, and it abuses and mistreats its victims. This is a terrifying description of a nation whose end was near.
2. Jerusalem will be refined as in a smelting furnace (22:17-22)
 “Israel, compared with other nations, had been as the gold and silver compared with baser metals. But they were now as the refuse that is consumed in the furnace, or thrown away when the silver is refined. Sinners, especially backsliding professors, are, in God's account, useless and fit for nothing. When God brings his own people into the furnace, he sits by them as the refiner by his gold, to see that they are not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful. The dross shall be wholly separated, and the good metal purified. Let those who suffer pains, or lingering sickness, and find that their hearts can scarcely bear these light and momentary afflictions, take warning to flee from the wrath to come; for if these trials are not sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the cleansing their hearts and hands from sin, far worse things will come upon them.” (MHCC)
- (17-22) “They are all like base metal-brass, tin, iron, and lead alloyed together with silver. Ye must be put in the furnace, and subjected to the most intense fire, till your impurities are consumed away. No ordinary means will avail any thing; the most violent must be resorted to.” (ACC) Here God is not speaking of a refining process, it is not about the pure gold that remains, but about the dross that is destroyed in the process.
3. Destruction is coming because the whole land is corrupt (22:23-31)
 “All orders and degrees of men had helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt. The people that had any power abused it, and even the buyers and sellers find some way to oppress one another. It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained. Let all who fear God, unite to promote his truth and righteousness; as wicked men of every rank and profession plot together to run them down.” (MHCC)
- (23-25) Though already suffering, Judah has not fully paid for her sins. The drought of destruction is not over, it has barely begun. The prophets are conspiring against the people (and thus the Lord). The religious leaders are spiritually sick and therefore the entire nation is infected.
- (26) “Even they whose lips should preserve knowledge, have not instructed the people: they have violated my law, not only in their private conduct, but in their careless and corrupt manner of serving in my temple.” (ACC) Contrast these false priests to Ezra (Ezr. 7:10). If the spiritual leaders will not or cannot lead, how can the people follow?
- (27,28) The leaders of the political nation were no better. They used their influence to manipulate the prophets and priests and oppress the people. Can honest men work in the upper levels of government? See Dan. 1, 3, 5, and 6. “Even those who profess themselves to be my prophets, have been unfaithful in the discharge of their office; have soothed the people in their sins, and pretended to have oracles of peace and safety when I had not spoken to them.” (ACC)
- (29) Anyone with enough power or authority to “lord it over” someone else – would! The corrupt church and government did not bother the corrupt citizens; they used both to their own advantage.
- (30) “I sought for a man... that would faithfully exhort, reprove and counsel, with all long-suffering and doctrine. But none was to be found!” (ACC) Of course this is figurative language because we know Jeremiah and others were still on God's side in Jerusalem. The nation as a whole however was virtually entirely corrupt.

- (31) Because no one could be found that would live under God's authority, the nation was doomed. Sin is nothing less than ultimate self-doom. "Considering the above, has there not been sufficient reason why I should abandon such a people, and pour out upon them such a destructive storm of calamities?" (ACC)

F. A Parable of Two Immoral Sisters (23:1-49) (See McGuiggan, p. 247) [14]
In this parable, Samaria and Israel bear the name Aholah, "her own tabernacle;" because the places of worship those kingdoms had, were of their own devising. Jerusalem and Judah bear the name of Aholibah, "my tabernacle is in her," because their temple was the place which God himself had chosen, to put his name there. The language and figures are according to those times. Will not such humbling representations of nature keep open perpetual repentance and sorrow in the soul, hiding pride from our eyes, and taking us from self-righteousness? Will it not also prompt the soul to look to God continually for grace, that by his Holy Spirit we may mortify the deeds of the body, and live in holy conversation and godliness? (MHCC)

1. Their wickedness began in Egypt (23:1-4)

- (1,2) "All the Hebrews were derived from one source, Abraham and Sarah; and, till the schism under Rehoboam, formed but one people: but as these ten tribes and a half separated from Judah and Benjamin, they became two distinct people under different kings; called the kingdom of Judah, and the kingdom of Israel. They are called here, because of their consanguinity (close connection or relationship, *cd*), *two sisters*. The elder, Samaria, (for there was the seat of government for the kingdom of Israel,) was called Aholah, "a tent." The younger, Judah, was called Aholibah, "my tent is in her," because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the seat of the government of the kingdom of Judah." (ACC) These verses cannot be taken too literally as the split in the kingdom was not evident in Egyptian captivity. They do point to what would become the frame of mind of both kingdoms after the split did occur.
- (3) The "sisters" began their evil practices as young girls while under Egyptian bondage. They not only allowed the Egyptians to ravage them, they encouraged it. These passages refer to Israel's idolatry, but more to the point of this chapter, Israel's willingness to be politically embraced by whatever nation seemed to be the best ally for the time being.
- (4) As noted above in the Clarke quote, the names are given a reference based on each kingdom's relationship with God. Samaria had already abandoned God's "tent," while Judah remained faithful for a time.

2. The harlotry of Samaria and her just punishment (23:5-10)

- (5-8) Regardless of the fact that Samaria was the "wife" of God; she chose to lust after Assyria's leaders and her riches. Even if the Assyrians were not available, Samaria was ready to leave God for somebody – anybody that she thought would fulfill her desires.
- (9,10) 2 Ki. 17:3-6, 23; 18:9-11. God let Samaria have what she lusted for and Assyria took her, used her, abused her and left her!

3. The harlotry of Jerusalem (23:11-21)

- (11-21) Judah refused to learn from the mistakes of Samaria and began to make exactly the same mistakes with "lovers" of her own, including the Assyrians. But the Assyrians did not slake her lusts so she went after the Babylonians as well. Upon receiving what she lusted for, she becomes repulsed by it

and seeks even other “lovers.” Her continued bad behavior made it impossible for God to forget her prior sins (all the way back to Egypt).

4. The punishment of Jerusalem (23:22-35)

(22-35) Note the four oracles: 1)- vv. 22-27: Judah will come under the judgment of her foreign lovers (at God’s direction). 2)- vv.28-31: Judah will come to hate her former lover (Babylon) because of the results of the hostile invasion that will come down upon from the north. 3)- vv. 31-34: This oracle is in the form of a poem introduced in verse 31. For a literal rendering of the poem see Taylor, p. 175. 4)- v. 35: This oracle repeats the verdict of 22:12, showing that their punishment is based on their inability to remember the Lord. Israel did not find God to be a compatible or satisfying partner, so she sought new lovers. These new lovers were even less satisfying than God. But Israel would still not return to God and thus must be punished.

5. A further indictment of the sins of the two sisters (23:36-49)

“After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters had in effect become one again; and therefore, in these verses, the prophet takes those to task jointly who were thus conjoined...” (MHC)

(36-44) God calls on Ezekiel to state a verdict. The case is summarized: Sabbath breaking, child slaying, idolatry and hypocritical worship. Would supposed children of God really do these things? Sin all week and show up at worship services and act as if all is right with the world and God!

(45-49) The punishment is as much for the survivors as it is for the punished. The key for us is that we realize that we are the survivors and that we must avoid the pitfalls of Samaria and Judah in our own lives.

G. The Boiling Pot and Death of Ezekiel’s Wife Portray the Fall of Jerusalem (24:1-27) (See McGuiggan, p. 257)

1. The parable of the cooking pot (24:1-14)

“The pot on the fire represented Jerusalem besieged by the Chaldeans: all orders and ranks were within the walls, prepared as a prey for the enemy. They ought to have put away their transgressions, as the scum, which rises by the heat of the fire, is taken from the top of the pot. But they grew worse, and their miseries increased. Jerusalem was to be leveled with the ground. The time appointed for the punishment of wicked men may seem to come slowly, but it will come surely. It is sad to think how many there are, on whom ordinances and providences are all lost.” (MHCC)

(1,2) January 15, 588 BC, see also 2 Ki. 24:1-2; 25:1; Jer. 52:4; and Zech. 8:19. While the liberal commentators take Ezekiel’s knowledge of this date as “proof” that he must have been in Palestine; conservatives counter that this is “proof” that he was a true prophet and spoke under the direct influence of God. It has been a little over three and one-half years since Ezekiel began to preach and now the day had finally arrived.

(3-5) (Jer. 1:13.) Taylor believes these verses are from a house-hold cooking song that Ezekiel is using to make his point. The caldron is Jerusalem; the fire represents the siege; and the pieces of flesh are the inhabitants. (Taylor, p. 178.) McGuiggan believes this is another of Ezekiel’s action sermons.

(6-14) The old scummy pot will yield up its contents randomly, with no regard as to whether the meat is of a choice cut or not. The blood spilled in the process would not be handled properly and would be used against Jerusalem as Abel’s blood was used against Cain. (Nah. 3:1; Hab. 2:12.) Not only will the

stew be consumed in the boiling pot, but eventually the pot itself will be consumed. If Jerusalem had been amenable to God's wishes much earlier they would have avoided this suffering, punishment, and exile. (Heb. 5:8,9; Mt. 16:21-23.)

2. Ezekiel's reaction to the death of his wife serves as a sign (24:15-27)

“Though mourning for the dead is a duty, yet it must be kept under by religion and right reason: we must not sorrow as men that have no hope. Believers must not copy the language and expressions of those who know not God. The people asked the meaning of the sign. God takes from them all that was dearest to them. And as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. Blessed be God, we need not pine away under our afflictions; for should all comforts fail, and all sorrows be united, yet the broken heart and the mourner's prayer are always acceptable before God.” (MHCC)

(15,16) Ezekiel would lose his loving wife during the very day it was revealed. While this would send any loving spouse into mourning, he was to refrain from open sorrow and continue with his work.

(17) The usual Jewish signs of grief were to be closely avoided. (Jer. 16:5-13)

(18) “The prophet's wife was a type of the city, which was to him exceedingly dear. The death of his wife represented the destruction of the city by the Chaldeans; see Eze 24:21, where the temple is represented to be the desire of his eyes, as his wife was, Eze 24:16.” (ACC) Do not think less of Ezekiel for his actions here. He is not disrespecting the memory of his beloved wife, but following the instructions of his Beloved Lord.

(19-24) In these verses Ezekiel makes the explanation and application of all that had just happened and been said. Just as Ezekiel had lost his dearest object, the nation was about to lose theirs – the Temple. Some commentators feel that mourning would be out of place in the face of such a complete disaster. McGuiggan tends toward something like, “now take your medicine, you have it coming.”

(25-27) This brings us to a turning point in Ezekiel's ministry. His God-imposed “dumbness” is lifted and he is now free to speak when and as he wishes (of course under God's direction). The people will begin to receive him as a true prophet once the report from Jerusalem comes to Babylon. Ezekiel had himself become a sign to the exiles. “Thus he was not only a prophet to foretell such things, but he was also a sign or portent, shadowing them out by circumstances in his own person and family; and thus the prediction, agreeing so perfectly with the event, proved that the previous information was from the Lord.” (ACC)

EZEKIEL

PART TWO: JUDGMENT COMES AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS ALSO BECAUSE GOD'S RULE IS UNIVERSAL (Chapters 25-32)

God's reign is not limited to believing nations; it extends to the heathen as well. (See Isa. 13-23; Jer. 46-51; and Amos 1,2.) These prophecies against nations carry a two-fold purpose; 1) there is only one true God and 2) those that have disregarded God's laws for all mankind will be judged accordingly. Note the conspicuous absence of Babylon in this list of nations. While it is omitted by Ezekiel, both Isaiah and especially Jeremiah see that it gets the condemnation it so richly deserves. (Isa. 13:1-14:23; 21:1-9; Jer. 31, 40, 50-51.)

- I. PROPHECIES AGAINST NEIGHBORING NATIONS (25:1-17) [See McGuiggan, p. 265] [15]
Note the "because...therefore" pattern that these oracles employ.
- A. The Word Against Ammon (25:1-7)
"It is wicked to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people; it is a sin for which he will surely reckon. God will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. It is better to know Him, and to be poor, than to be rich and ignorant of him." (MHCC)
- (1-7) Ammon, Moab, and Edom are blood relatives of the Jews, yet have been enemies and thorns in Israel's side for years. Josephus (the Jewish historian) tells us that it was about five years after the fall of Jerusalem that Babylon conquered Ammon. Their name was to be blotted out from the list of nations (Jer. 49:1-6), because they had gloated ("clapping hands and stamping feet") over Judah's misfortunes.
- B. The Word Against Moab (25:8-11)
"Those who glory in any other defense and protection than the Divine power, providence, and promise, will, sooner or later, be ashamed of their glorying. Those who will not leave it to God to take vengeance for them may expect that he will take vengeance on them. The equity of the Lord's judgments is to be observed, when he not only avenges injuries upon those that did them, but by those against whom they were done. Those who treasure up old hatred, and watch for the opportunity of manifesting it, are treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath." (MHCC, vv. 8-17)
- (8-11) See Jer. 48. Regardless of their kinship, Moab regarded Judah as just another nation. Their pride and arrogance brought on their destruction. They would share the fate of Ammon; eventually having their territory overrun by desert tribesmen.
- C. The Word Against Edom (25:12-14)
(12-14) The entire book of Obadiah (one chapter) is an oracle against Edom; the country that claimed closest kin of all the nations to Judah. During the time between the testaments the Jews conquered Edom and caused them to be circumcised. The far-reaching effects of conquering Edom were not felt until the Herods (descendants of the Edomites) rose to power in Judah.
- D. The Word Against Philistia (25:15-17)
(15-17) The long term hatred between Israel and Philistia is well documented in the Old Testament. There was no kinship here, only hatred. Think of Samson and Delilah and David and Goliath, just for

starters. This continual harassment of Israel would eventually lead to their ultimate downfall (punishment) at the hands of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar would get revenge for their allegiance with Tyre and Sidon. After the time between the testaments, they vanished from the earth as a people, leaving only the names of their cities behind.

II. PROPHECIES AGAINST THE CITIES OF TYRE AND SIDON (26:1-28:26)

While Ezekiel leaves off prophesying against Jerusalem, please note that the territories in these chapters are within 100 miles of Jerusalem and were visible from the mountaintops of Judah. For a description of Tyre, see Taylor, p. 189.

A. The Destruction of Tyre (26:1,2)

“To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others, when we are likely to get by it; or with their fall, when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that easily besets us, yet is not thought so bad as really it is. But it comes from a selfish, covetous principle, and from that love of the world as our happiness, which the love of God expressly forbids. He often blasts the projects of those who would raise themselves on the ruin of others. The maxims most current in the trading world are directly opposed to the law of God. But he will show himself against the money-loving, selfish traders, whose hearts, like those of Tyre, are hardened by the love of riches. Men have little cause to glory in things which stir up the envy and rapacity of others, and which are continually shifting from one to another; and in getting, keeping, and spending which, men provoke that God whose wrath turns joyous cities into ruinous heaps.” (MHCC)

(1,2) “This was the year in which Jerusalem was taken; the eleventh of the captivity of Jeconiah, and the eleventh of the reign of Zedekiah. What month we are not told, though the day is mentioned. There have been many conjectures about this, which are not of sufficient consequence to be detailed.” (ACC) Tyre rejoiced at Jerusalem’s fall and congratulated herself on losing a serious commercial competitor. It appears that Tyre looked forward to taking over business left behind by the fallen Jerusalem.

B. Who Could Have Guessed These Prophecies? (26:3-21)

(3-6) Tyre’s punishment would be to become a bare rock (a play on her name). She would become a place fit only for fishermen to dry their nets. Her suburbs on the mainland would become easy pickings for attacking armies (Babylon would take the mainland after a 13 year siege, though it never could take the “Rock.”) Eventually Tyre would fall to Alexander the Great, when he uses the rubble of the mainland to build a causeway to the island.

(7-14) Note the alternate spelling of Nebuchadnezzar. The use of horses in the siege must refer to the siege of the mainland stronghold as opposed to the island stronghold. Unable to finish the job after 13 years, Babylon retreats from Tyre.

(15-18) “See how high, how great Tyre had been. See how low Tyre is made. The fall of others should awaken us out of security. Every discovery of the fulfillment of a Scripture prophecy is like a miracle to confirm our faith. All that is earthly is vanity and vexation. Those who now have the most established prosperity, will soon be out of sight and forgotten.” (MHCC) The final fall of Tyre will stagger the surrounding nations as well because of their dependency on Tyre for trade. From our perspective, it is hard to imagine the power that Tyre actually wielded in Ezekiel’s time.

(19-21) Tyre’s ultimate destruction will consist of being cast into Sheol, the bottomless Pit. (See Egypt’s fate: Eze. 31:14-18; 32:13-32 and Babylon’s as well, Isa. 14:4-21.) It is the absolute finality of her defeat that will cause the nations to fear.

C. Lamentation Over the Ruin of Tyre (27:1-36)

[16]

1. Tyre was like a beautiful ship (27:1-11)

“Those who live at ease are to be lamented, if they are not prepared for trouble. Let none reckon themselves beautified, any further than they are sanctified. The account of the trade of Tyre intimates, that God's eye is upon men when employed in worldly business. Not only when at church, praying and hearing, but when in markets and fairs, buying and selling. In all our dealings we should keep a conscience void of offence. God, as the common Father of mankind, makes one country abound in one commodity, and another in another, serviceable to the necessity or to the comfort and ornament of human life. See what a blessing trade and merchandise are to mankind, when followed in the fear of God. Besides necessities, an abundance of things are made valuable only by custom; yet God allows us to use them. But when riches increase, men are apt to set their hearts upon them, and forget the Lord, who gives power to get wealth.” (MHCC)

(1-11) Tyre will fall because of her own high opinion of herself. The “ship” that was Tyre was constructed of the finest materials from every corner of the known world. The crew was comprised of men of many sea-going nationalities.

2. Tyre is like a wealthy ship able to trade in any port (27:12-25)

(12-25) For her size, Tyre was the most glorious and renowned kingdom of her time. Countries all around were glad to be in business with her. The list of trading partners seems to be listed in geographical order from west to east; beginning with Tarshish and ending with Mesopotamia. Reference a good Bible atlas for further information on these countries and their locations.

3. But Tyre is like an overloaded ship that sinks (27:26-36)

“The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, come down. Those who make creatures their confidence, and rest their hopes upon them, will fall with them: happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their Help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever. Those who engage in trade should learn to conduct their business according to God's word. Those who possess wealth should remember they are the Lord's stewards, and should use his goods in doing good to all. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” (MHCC)

(26-36) All of the trading partners will suffer when Tyre falls. Their tears will not be for Tyre so much as for their lost trade and power that was dependant on Tyre. To “hiss through their teeth” is not necessarily a sign of decision, but indicates a sense of shock and dismay. It is interesting that Tyre's downfall will begin where they were strongest – in the middle of the sea.

D. Judgment Against the Prince of Tyre (28:1-19)

“Ethbaal, or Ithobal, was the prince or king of Tyre; and being lifted up with excessive pride, he claimed Divine honors. Pride is peculiarly the sin of our fallen nature. Nor can any wisdom, except that which the Lord gives, lead to happiness in this world or in that which is to come. The haughty prince of Tyre thought he was able to protect his people by his own power, and considered himself as equal to the inhabitants of heaven. If it were possible to dwell in the Garden of Eden, or even to enter heaven, no solid happiness could be enjoyed without a humble, holy, and spiritual mind. Especially all spiritual pride is of the devil. Those who indulge therein must expect to perish.” (MHCC)

1. Haughtiness led to the death of the prince (28:1-10)

(1-10) Perhaps the prince of Tyre was actually claiming to be a god, but it is more likely that he and his nation had replaced God with themselves. The nation regarded itself as all-powerful, self-sufficient, and eternal; possessing wealth and wisdom beyond any other country. In their own opinion they thought themselves wiser than even Daniel, whose wisdom was world renowned. Their arrogance in thinking that they were self-made and self-sufficient would lead to their eventual downfall at the hands of the Babylonians.

2. A lamentation is made over the king of Tyre (28:11-19)

(11-19) God had blessed Tyre, but they would not give Him any credit for their blessings. It could be that they had been spared to this time because of their willingness to assist in the building of Solomon's Temple. None of these descriptions in these verses is literal. It is a description of the "ideal" Tyre. Many commentators want these verses to apply to the devil and make a future application of the results. This seems quite a stretch to this student.

E. Prophecy Against Sidon and a Promise for Israel (28:20-26)

"The Zidonians were borderers upon the land of Israel, and they might have learned to glorify the Lord; but, instead of that, they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols. War and pestilence are God's messengers; but he will be glorified in the restoring his people to their former safety and prosperity. God will cure them of their sins, and ease them of their troubles. This promise will at length fully come to pass in the heavenly Canaan: when all the saints shall be gathered together, every thing that offends shall be removed, all griefs and fears for ever banished. Happy, then, is the church of God, and every living member of it, though poor, afflicted, and despised; for the Lord will display his truth, power, and mercy, in the salvation and happiness of his redeemed people." (MHCC)

(20-26) "Sidon for a long time had possessed the empire of the sea and of all Phoenicia, and Tyre was one of its colonies; but in process of time, the daughter became greater than the mother. It seems to have been an independent place at the time in which Tyre was taken; but it is likely that it was taken by the Chaldeans soon after the former." (ACC) Other than the fact that Sidon was a constant thorn in Israel's (and God's) side, little is said of this "mother-nation" of Tyre. Of course this is sufficient reason for it to be condemned. In contrast to these foreign nations, Israel was kept afloat by her God as opposed to her own brilliance, military might, or wisdom. To conclude these oracles Ezekiel gives a forward look at Israel's return.

III. PROPHECIES AGAINST EGYPT (29:1-32:32)

A. "The Word of the Lord Came Unto Me"

[17]

1. This expression is found seven times in the next four chapters.
2. Six of these are dated according to Jehoiachin's captivity

B. The Sins of Egypt (29:1-16)

"Worldly, carnal minds pride themselves in their property, forgetting that whatever we have, we received it from God, and should use it for God. Why, then, do we boast? Self is the great idol which [the entire] world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy. Such a one, and all that cleave to him, shall perish together. Thus end men's pride, presumption, and carnal security. The Lord is against those who do harm to his people, and still more against those who lead them into sin. Egypt shall be a kingdom again, but it shall be the basest of the kingdoms; it shall have little wealth and power. History shows the complete

fulfillment of this prophecy. God, not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, breaks the creature-stays on which we lean, that they may be no more our confidence.” (MHCC)

- (1,2) This oracle against Egypt came towards the end of 587 BC, while Jerusalem was under siege. The reference here is probably to the half-hearted response of Pharaoh Hophra to Zedekiah’s appeal for help. (Jer. 37:7)
- (3-5) Egypt (styled as a crocodile) would be dragged out of the Nile and cast into the wilderness. The people of Egypt and their mercenaries would not be spared.
- (6-9) Egypt had been “an inefficient and faithless ally. The Israelites expected assistance from them when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem; and they made a feint to help them, but retired when Nebuchadnezzar went against them. Thus were the Jews deceived and ultimately ruined, see Eze. 29:7.” (ACC) Also see Isa. 36:6 and 2 Ki. 18:21. Egypt was also an arrogant nation; believing they were the source (originators) of the Nile and that it belonged exclusively to them.
- (10-16) Egypt would suffer a symbolic 40-year wandering period. They would suffer desolation from north to south. They would never again achieve their previous status as a world power and to this day they remain a “lowly kingdom.” Israel would never trust Egypt again.

C. Egypt Will Be Conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (29:17-21)

“The besiegers of Tyre obtained little plunder. But when God employs ambitious or covetous men, he will recompense them according to the desires of their hearts; for every man shall have his reward. God had mercy in store for the house of Israel soon after. The history of nations best explains ancient prophecies. All events fulfill the Scriptures. Thus, in the deepest scenes of adversity, the Lord sows the seed of our future prosperity. Happy are those who desire his favor, grace, and image; they will delight in his service, and not covet any earthly recompense; and the blessings they have chosen shall be sure to them for ever.” (MHCC)

- (17-21) Now we will begin to see how Babylon would contribute to the downfall of Egypt. This oracle dates to 571 BC and is presented here to place it close to the oracles against Tyre. History shows that Nebuchadnezzar had held Tyre under siege from 587 to 574 BC. After finishing off Tyre, Egypt will feel God’s wrath via Babylon. Note that Egypt will then know that Jehovah is Lord and Ezekiel’s words will finally be respected by the Babylonian captives.

D. Egypt’s Judgment Will Be Speedy and Complete (30:1-19)

“The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is very full. Those who take their lot with God’s enemies shall be with them in punishment. The king of Babylon and his army shall be instruments of this destruction. God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another. No place in the land of Egypt shall escape the fury of the Chaldeans. The Lord is known by the judgments he executes. Yet these are only present effects of the Divine displeasure, not worthy of our fear, compared with the wrath to come, from which Jesus delivers his people.” (MHCC)

- (1-5) The first of four oracles in this section. “The day of the Lord” will come upon the Egyptians as only previously announced against Israel herself. Compare to Isa. 21:12-17; Joel 1:15; 2:1,2; Amos 5:18-20; Zep. 1:7, 14-18.
- (6-9) The second oracle indicates “all her helpers are broken.” The allies and satellites of Egypt will be brought down as well.
- (10-12) God Himself will “dry up the Nile” via Nebuchadnezzar appearing to act as His agent.
- (13-19) The complete devastation of Egypt is related by a list of place names from throughout the country. These places will not be spared. For further comments on the place-names see Taylor, p. 203-04. Jeremiah also spoke of Egypt’s fall in chapters 42 and 43.

E. The Arm of Pharaoh Shall Be Broken (30:20-26)

“Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. If lesser judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. God justly breaks that power which is abused, either to put wrongs upon people, or to put cheats upon them. Babylon shall grow stronger. In vain do men endeavor to bind up the arm the Lord is pleased to break, and to strengthen those whom he will bring down. Those who disregard the discoveries of his truth and mercy shall know his power and justice, in the punishment for their sins.” (MHCC)

(20-26) This appears to deal with Hophra’s less than stellar attempt to aid Judea during Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem. About this time Egypt also engaged in an ill-fated war with Libya and experienced a devastating civil war. Nebuchadnezzar followed up these wars with a whipping of his own and later the Persians would overwhelm Egypt as well. It is interesting that those who call for a literal latter day fulfillment of these prophecies do not call for a world-wide scattering of Egyptians!

F. Though Like A Giant Cedar Tree, Egypt Will Fall As Did Assyria (31:1-18) [18]

“The falls of others, both into sin and ruin, warn us not to be secure or high-minded. The prophet is to show an instance of one whom the king of Egypt resembled in greatness, the Assyrian, compared to a stately cedar. Those who excel others, make themselves the objects of envy; but the blessings of the heavenly paradise are not liable to such alloy. The utmost security that any creature can give, is but like the shadow of a tree, a scanty and slender protection. But let us flee to God for protection, there we shall be safe. His hand must be owned in the rising of the great men of the earth, and we must not envy them. Though worldly people may seem to have firm prosperity, yet it only seems so.” (MHCC)

(1-9) June, 587 BC. Pharaoh is likened to a great cedar tree. Many commentators feel that “Assyria” is wrongly translated here as it is similar to a Hebrew word for an evergreen tree. Others make the point that comparing Egypt to Assyria makes sense as Assyria was a world power defeated by Babylon as Egypt would also be. The flattery spoken in these verses are exaggeration made to heighten the extent of Egypt’s coming downfall.

“The king of Egypt resembled the king of Assyria in his greatness: here we see he resembles him in his pride. And he shall resemble him in his fall. His own sin brings his ruin. None of our comforts are ever lost, but what have been a thousand times forfeited. When great men fall, many fall with them, as many have fallen before them. The fall of proud men is for warning to others, to keep them humble. See how low Pharaoh lies; and see what all his pomp and pride are come to. It is best to be a lowly tree of righteousness, yielding fruit to the glory of God, and to the good of men. The wicked man is often seen flourishing like the cedar, and spreading like the green bay tree, but he soon passes away, and his place is no more found. Let us then mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” (MHCC)

(10-14) Here we see the reason for the cedar’s downfall, a description of its ruin, and why God motivated its catastrophic end. The once great tree falls because of its pride and its branches, limbs, and logs are scattered among the nations. All nations regardless of their godlessness will come to the ultimate realization that their beauty and prosperity was in God’s hands all along.

(15-18) Now we see the effects of Egypt’s demise on the surrounding nations. It will be hard for them to believe that such a mighty nation could be humbled thusly. When Egypt falls it will fall further into the Pit than any of the more lowly nations that had fallen before.

G. A Lamentation for Pharaoh, King of Egypt (32:1-16)

“It becomes us to weep and tremble for those who will not weep and tremble for themselves. Great oppressors are, in God's account, no better than beasts of prey. Those who admire the pomp of this

world, will wonder at the ruin of that pomp; which to those who know the vanity of all things here below, is no surprise. When others are ruined by sin, we have to fear, knowing ourselves guilty. The instruments of the desolation are formidable. And the instances of the desolation are frightful. The waters of Egypt shall run like oil, which signifies there should be universal sadness and heaviness upon the whole nation. God can soon empty those of this world's goods who have the greatest fullness of them. By enlarging the matters of our joy, we increase the occasions of our sorrow. How weak and helpless, as to God, are the most powerful of mankind! The destruction of Egypt was a type of the destruction of the enemies of Christ.” (MHCC)

- (1) March, 585 BC.
- (2-8) Egypt fancied itself a lion-like creature, but she was actually a crocodile in God’s eyes. Egypt’s reputation would be of no use where she was headed. Her flesh would be scattered, her waters bloodied, and her skies darkened. The potential of Egypt as a nation would never be reached. These punishments should cause Pharaoh to recollect the days of his ancestor and his confrontation with Moses which resulted in the ten plagues.
- (9-15) When the surrounding nations see the captivity, destruction, and military defeat of Egypt, then they will be concerned to say the least. The desolation will take place at the hands of the Babylonians.
- (16) The funeral rites of Egypt will be chanted by the professional wailing women of all the nations as a feature of Egypt’s funeral. (Jer. 9:17-20.)

H. Lamentation Over the Burial of the King and His Subjects (32:17-32)

“Divers nations are mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, who are ready to give her a scornful reception; these nations had been lately ruined and wasted. But though Judah and Jerusalem were about this time ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here. Though they suffered the same affliction, and by the same hand, yet the kind design for which they were afflicted, and the mercy God reserved for them, altered its nature. It was not to them a going down to the pit, as it was to the heathen. Pharaoh shall see, and be comforted; but the comfort wicked ones have after death, is poor comfort, not real, but only in fancy. The view this prophecy gives of ruined states shows something of this present world, and the empire of death in it. Come and see the calamitous state of human life. As if men did not die fast enough, they are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. Also of the other world; though the destruction of nations as such, seems chiefly intended, here is plain allusion to the everlasting ruin of impenitent sinners. How are men deceived by Satan! What are the objects they pursue through scenes of bloodshed, and their many sins? Surely man disquiets himself in vain, whether he pursues wealth, fame, power, or pleasure. The hour cometh, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of Christ, and shall come forth; those that have done good to the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.” (MHCC)

- (17) For discussion of Sheol in light of other OT passages, see Taylor, pp. 210-11. The date is perhaps two weeks since the previous oracle.
- (18-21) Arrival in the land of the dead will not be a welcome, but instead a taunting from those nations that have gone there beforehand. Egypt prided itself in being a circumcised nation and finds itself lying in the midst of the uncircumcised in death.
- (22-32) Nations small and large await Egypt. Assyria, Elam, Edom, and others are all there mocking Egypt. They had all suffered the same fate as Egypt for the same reason – they had opposed God and lost. Perhaps when Egypt sees the multitude of nations that had been defeated by the God of Israel they will not feel quite so bad. As we conclude these eight chapters Taylor reminds us that every nation of consequence has been mentioned save Babylon. Ezekiel may have expected his listeners to make the obvious leap of thought and realize that Babylon would eventually be in for some of the same punishment.

EZEKIEL

PART THREE: ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESTORATION AND SALVATION (Chapters 33-48)

- I. EZEKIEL'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY AS A PROPHET (33:1-33) [19]
(See McGuigan, p. 277)
- A. The Prophet's Role as a Watchman (33:1-22)
1. The watchman must warn or else he is responsible for the death (33:1-9)
"The prophet is a watchman to the house of Israel. His business is to warn sinners of their misery and danger. He must warn the wicked to turn from their way, that they may live. If souls perish through his neglect of duty, he brings guilt upon himself. See what those have to answer for, who make excuses for sin, flatter sinners, and encourage them to believe they shall have peace, though they go on. How much wiser are men in their temporal than in their spiritual concerns! They set watchmen to guard their houses, and sentinels to warn of the enemies' approach, but where the everlasting happiness or misery of the soul is at stake, they are offended if ministers obey their Master's command, and give a faithful warning; they would rather perish, listening to smooth things." (MHCC)
- (1-6) Compare Eze. 3:16-21. As we segue into the next phase of Ezekiel's ministry, note how he reviews what had been and extends the meaning to what will be. It is not until Ezekiel clearly redefines the roll of watchman and the individual responsibilities of each hearer, that God allows the news of Jerusalem's fall to reach the captives ears. The job of the watchman included watching for the enemy and sounding the alarm at their approach. To disregard the warning was basically signing your own death warrant; but if the watchman failed in his duties, your death was on his head.
- (7-9) Even though Ezekiel will be recognized as a true prophet once word of the fall of Jerusalem reaches the captives; the people will still not heed his message! His message basically remains unchanged – judgment will come via the word of the Lord.
2. God wants none to die, but He judges each according to his own works (33:10-20)
"Those who despaired of finding mercy with God are answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to show mercy. The ruin of the city and state was determined, but that did not relate to the final state of persons. God says to the righteous, that he shall surely live. But many, who have made profession, have been ruined by proud confidence in themselves. Man trusts to his own righteousness, and presuming on his own sufficiency, he is brought to commit iniquity. If those who have lived a wicked life repent and forsake their wicked ways, they shall be saved. Many such amazing and blessed changes have been wrought by the power of Divine grace. When there is a settled separation between a man and sin, there shall no longer be a separation between him and God." (MHCC)
- (10) Compare with Eze. 18:21-29. The people (sort of) admit their guilt, but whine that they are not fully responsible for it. They do not appear to possess the "godly sorrow that leads to repentance" (2 Cor. 7:9). Compare with Isa. 63:15-64:12.
- (11) God would as always prefer to forgive and forget (2 Pet. 3:9), but without true repentance they were still guilty and in need of judgment. God is innocent; man is guilty and responsible for his own predicament.
- (12-16) Once again Ezekiel stresses the possibility of apostasy and the possibility of forgiveness.

- (17-20) The people once again complain that God is not measuring them with just weights. The people will be judged and judged individually as well as nationally and corporately.
3. Word finally reaches Babylon that Jerusalem is destroyed (33:21,22)
 “Those are [not] teachable indeed, who do not learn their dependence upon God, when all creature-comforts fail. Many claim an interest in the peculiar blessings to true believers, while their conduct proves them enemies of God. They call this groundless presumption strong faith, when God's testimony declares them entitled to his threatenings, and nothing else.” (MHCC)
- (21) Somewhere between 6 and 18 months after the fall of Jerusalem, word arrives via a refuge and confirms what Ezekiel already knew (24:26ff).
- (22) Since his last oracle, Ezekiel had remained “dumb” per the Lord’s instructions. But now his “dumbness” will be removed at the words of the refuge – “the city is smitten!”
- B. The Wrong Attitude of the Remnant left in Judah (33:23-29)
- (23,24) Ezekiel has received the word that what he had been predicting all along was finally fulfilled. The remnant in Judah (Jer. 40,41; 2 Ki. 25:25-26) were making claims that they would never be totally put out of the land and compared themselves to Abraham. Note that the Jews always appeal to their relationship to Abraham when the chips are down (Mt. 3:9; Jn. 8:39; Acts 7:5).
- (25-29) Morally and religiously (idolaters, murderers, war-mongers, and adulterers), this arrogant remnant did not have a leg to stand on. Since they were committing the same sins that caused Jerusalem to be destroyed in the first place, they would not be spared either. Jer. 41 indicates that this remnant eventually fled to Egypt.
- C. The Wrong Attitude of the Exiles in Babylon (33:30-33)
 “Unworthy and corrupt motives often lead men to the places where the word of God is faithfully preached. Many come to find somewhat to oppose: far more come of curiosity or mere habit. Men may have their hearts changed. But whether men hear or forbear, they will know by the event that a servant of God has been among them. All who will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them will justly be made to know their worth by the want of them.” (MHCC)
- (30,31) Ezekiel is now a celebrity. The word of mouth is out and now listeners flock to hear what he has to say. Unfortunately, they will refuse to obey the word. The remnant was not the true Israel; the true Israel would be found among the exiles. (Jer. 24.)
- (32,33) Now the words of Ezekiel will sound like a popular song to the ears of the people, but its affect will be fleeting. It is a telling comment that even the words of a “popular preacher” often go unheeded. Yet these words (as the previous words of doom) will not go unfulfilled.
- II. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND DEFEAT OF HER ENEMIES (34:1-39:29) [20]
- A. The Shepherds of God’s People (34:1-31) [See McGuiggan, pp. 287-88.]
1. Woe be to the shepherds of Israel (34:1-10)
- (1-6) “The people became as sheep without a shepherd, were given up as a prey to their enemies, and the land was utterly desolated. No rank or office can exempt from the reproofs of God's word, men who neglect their duty, and abuse the trust reposed in them.” (MHCC) Here we see three accusations against the kings of Israel: 1)- they exploited God’s people under their care, 2)- they did not care for

and defend the weak and helpless, and 3)- they allowed the flock of God to be scattered. This scattering allowed them to fall prey to hostile nations (1 Ki. 22:17; Mt. 9:36). See McGuiggan (pp. 290-91) for a thorough discussion and application of these verses to church leaders today.

“The Lord declared that he intended mercy towards the scattered flock. Doubtless this, in the first place, had reference to the restoration of the Jews. It also represented the good Shepherd's tender care of the souls of his people. He finds them in their days of darkness and ignorance, and brings them to his fold. He comes to their relief in times of persecution and temptation. He leads them in the ways of righteousness, and causes them to rest on his love and faithfulness. The proud and self-sufficient, are enemies of the true gospel and of believers; against such we must guard. He has rest for disquieted saints and terror for presumptuous sinners.” (MHCC)

(7-10) While Ezekiel does not call for radical punishment for these inept shepherds (as Jeremiah does in 23:2), he does call for the removal of the people from their care. Shepherds that want the honor, but not the work are wicked in the eyes of God, because of their own false sense of importance and the fact that they have let the flock suffer.

2. The Lord will care for His flock as a Good Shepherd (34:11-22)

(11-16) God will take over the duties of the Shepherd. He will find the strays, rescue the lost, feed the flock and heal the wounded. (Compare Lk. 15:4ff.)

“The whole nation seemed to be the Lord's flock, yet they were very different characters; but he knew how to distinguish between them. By good pastures and deep waters, are meant the pure word of God and the dispensing of justice. The latter verses, 23-31, prophesy of Christ, and of the most glorious times of his church on earth. Under Him, as the good Shepherd, the church would be a blessing to all around. Christ, though excellent in himself, was as a tender plant out of a dry ground. Being the Tree of life, bearing all the fruits of salvation, he yields spiritual food to the souls of his people. Our constant desire and prayer should be that there may be showers of blessings in every place where the truth of Christ is preached; and that all who profess the gospel may be filled with fruits of righteousness.” (MHCC)

(17-22) Among the flock itself were those that were helping to destroy the flock. These would be the nobles and perhaps the merchant class. These bullies drank the clear water and then muddied the stream – their selfishness was obvious and harmful. Do not confuse this passage with the separation of the sheep and the goats at the end-time. Here Ezekiel is only contrasting the fat and the strong with the hungry and the weak. Not only will God clean up the shepherds, He will clean up the flock as well.

3. David will be set up as their shepherd (34:23-31)

(23,24) “DAVID, king of Israel, had been dead upwards of four hundred years; and from that time till now there never was a ruler of any kind, either in the Jewish Church or state, of the name of David. This, then, must be some typical person; and from the texts marked in the margin we understand that Jesus Christ alone is meant, as both Old and New TESTAMENTS agree in this. And from this one Shepherd all Christian ministers must derive their authority to teach, and their grace to teach effectually.” (ACC) As far as the Jews of Ezekiel's time were concerned, they were not expecting someone named Jesus in particular, but they had plenty of prophecy (including this one) pointing to the Messiah. In the previous verses God said that He would be the Shepherd, but now “David” is said to be the shepherd of the future. Which is correct? Both, if you believe Jesus Christ is the God-Man.

(25) Now Ezekiel paints a picture of future harmony, peace and security in the land of Palestine.

- (26) While Egypt depended on the Nile for water, Israel depended on the fall and winter (to early spring) rains. This is passage that inspired our hymn, “There Shall Be Showers of Blessing.”
- (27-31) The land will bring forth an abundance of crops, and men will be free. But is it a literal return to Palestine? Not if David, Egypt, and Assyria are not literal. As he speaks of the restoration of Palestine, is it not possible that Ezekiel is simply giving a picture of the future glory under the reign of the Messiah, using language and characters that Ezekiel’s listeners could comprehend?

B. The Destiny of Edom – A Perpetual Desolation (35:1-15) [See McGuiggan p. 299] **[21]**
 “All who have God against them, have the word of God against them. Those that have a constant hatred to God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can only expect to be made desolate for ever.” (MHCC) The perpetual hatred between the descendants of Jacob and those of Esau is probably only part of the reason that Edom (Mt. Seir) receives another round of negative prophecy by Ezekiel. The Edomites are accused on three counts: 1)- because of their perpetual hatred and attacks during times of calamity (v. 5), 2)- because of their lust for the land of Israel (v. 10), and 3)- because of their arrogance and cruel boasting over Israel’s downfall (v. 12-15).

- (1-3) Israel had no more constant enemy than Edom. Dating back to the twins wrestling in the womb and extending all the way to the days of the Herods, Israel and Edom had been at each others throats. The nation of Edom would pay dearly for their sins and even the people would eventually lose their ability to track their ancestry. Desolation of their land is in the near future.
- (4-9) Isaiah (34:4-17) gives an interesting picture of Edom’s coming desolation. The connection between the land and the people in ancient times was perhaps even more pronounced than the connection we see in the western world today. This connection was made even more evident by the god (idol) of each land. Namaan believed that the God of Israel was a “local god” and could only be worshipped on His own soil. This was a common belief among the heathen concerning their own gods as well as the gods of their neighboring nations. Part of the reason for God returning Israel to their land was to show His might to the surrounding nations in terms they could understand. Perpetual desolation was an even crueler fate for Edom; at least there is still an Egypt today! But Edom deserved it because of their willingness to “afflict the afflicted.” “To afflict the afflicted is cruel. This is scarcely of man, bad as he is. He must be possessed by the malignant spirit of the devil, when he wounds the wounded, insults over the miseries of the afflicted, and seeks opportunities to add affliction to those who are already under the rod of God.” (ACC) (Obad. 1:13)

“When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses, and crosses, which others meet with, instead of showing ourselves greedy of worldly things, we should sit more loose to them. In the multitude of words, not one is unknown to God; not the most idle word; and the most daring is not above his rebuke. In the destruction of the enemies of the church, God designs his own glory; and we may be sure that he will not come short of his design. And when the fullness of the Jews and Gentiles shall come into the church, all antichristian opposers shall be destroyed.” (MHCC)

- (10-13) The two nations are Israel and Edom. In addition to her perpetual enmity with Israel, Edom was also guilty of anger, envy, hatred (v. 11), revilings (v.12), arrogance (v. 13), and glee over Israel’s troubles (v. 15). Edom had the gall to claim that it would possess the land of Israel, even with God in residence. This claim was their suicide note (McGuiggan). God will take blasphemy from no man or nation, regardless of whether they believe in Him or not.
- (14,15) “Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap.” Edom wanted blood, theirs shall be spilled; they laughed at Israel’s calamity, their calamity will draw the world’s laughter. Paraphrasing the words of Adam Clarke - This whole chapter strongly impresses this maxim: Do as you would be done by; and what

you would not have done to you, do not to others. And from it we learn that every man may, in some sort, be said to make his own temporal good or evil; for as he does to others, God will take care to do to him, whether it be evil or good. Would you not be slandered or backbitten? Then do not slander nor backbite. Would you wish to live in peace? Then do not disturb the peace of others. Be merciful, and you shall obtain mercy.

C. The Restoration and Blessing Upon the Mountains of Israel (36:1-15)

Those who put contempt and reproach on God's people, will have them turned on themselves. God promises favor to his Israel. We have no reason to complain, if the more unkind men are, the more kind God is. They shall come again to their own border. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, of which all God's children are heirs, and into which they all shall be brought together. And when God returns in mercy to a people who return to him in duty, all their grievances will be set right. The full completion of this prophecy must be in some future event. (MHCC)

1. The redemption of the land (36:1-7)

(1-7) The nations surrounding Israel (especially Edom) will suffer for the way they have treated Israel. These countries had refused to acknowledge the God of Israel's choice of territory and not only did they not want Israel to possess the land, they coveted the land for themselves.

2. The repopulation of the land (36:8-15)

(8-15) On a more positive note, Ezekiel prophesies of the coming fruitfulness of the mountains and a repopulation of the land by the homecoming exiles. "The restoration of the Jews is so absolutely determined that you may rest assured it will take place; and be as confident relative to it, as if you saw the different families entering into the [borders of Israel]. It was near at hand in God's determination, though there were about fifty-eight of the seventy years unelapsed." (ACC) Through the years Canaan had been known as an inhospitable land, even prior to its possession by the Israelites. In the future this will not be so; it will once again be a land that flows with milk and honey.

D. Vindication of the Holy Name of the Lord (36:16-38)

The restoration of that people, being typical of our redemption by Christ, shows that the end aimed at in our salvation is the glory of God. The sin of a people defiles their land; renders it abominable to God, and uncomfortable to themselves. God's holy name is his great name; his holiness is his greatness, nor does any thing else make a man truly great. (MHCC)

1. God is longsuffering for the sake of His holy name (36:16-21)

(16-21) Again Ezekiel repeats God's claim that the sins of Israel could no longer remain unpunished. They deserved punishment and it would be withheld no longer. Even the punishment itself (the scattering) brought reproach upon God's name. Sometimes we must reach the very bottom before we can understand just where "up" is. This is where Israel would find itself and where we as sinners find ourselves when we finally realize it is time to repent. (Rom. 5:8.)

2. For His name's sake, the Lord will bring His people back to the land (36:22-38)

Water is an emblem of the cleansing our polluted souls from sin. But no water can do more than take away the filth of the flesh. Water seems in general the sacramental sign of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost; yet this is always connected with the atoning blood of Christ. When the latter is applied by faith to the conscience, to

cleanse it from evil works, the former is always applied to the powers of the soul, to purify it from the pollution of sin. All that have an interest in the new covenant, have a new heart and a new spirit, in order to their walking in newness of life. God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, complying with his holy will. Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul, as the turning a dead stone into living flesh. God will put his Spirit within, as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier. The promise of God's grace to fit us for our duty, should quicken our constant care and endeavor to do our duty. These are promises to be pleaded by, and will be fulfilled to, all true believers in every age. (MHCC)

- (22-32) See Ps. 106:8. God needs to vindicate His power and holiness; therefore the blessings to come will not be earned by the remnant, but will be a free gift from God. When will all this take place? Commentators waiting on a thousand year earthly reign of Christ think that is the time of complete fulfillment. However, it seems more logical that these prophecies are fulfilled in the first century beginning in the book of Acts. How will the restoration take place? 1)- the exiles will retake the land (24); 2)- a number of moral and spiritual changes will be made, such as a cleansing with water (25), a renewing of the mind and spirit (26), a will to follow God's statutes and judgments, and an indwelling of the Holy Spirit (27), and God's covenant with the people will be renewed (28). 3)- the nation will then prosper (29). It is when Israel realizes just what God has done for them that they will humble themselves before God, hate their sins, repent, and finally walk with God.
- (33-36) Israel will once again be blessed, but as in the past (Deut. 7:6ff) it will not be because of her righteousness. God will rebuild His nation. The heathen will see that God is powerful and blesses His true worshippers.
- (37) Previously, the Lord would not be inquired of by these people, now that has changed. Why? Because this is a new kind of people asking for new kinds of things (Jas. 4:1ff.). "Neither Jew nor Gentile shall be thus saved who do not earnestly pray to God; and for this thing; for this complete salvation; this setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, and particularly in their own souls." (ACC)
- (38) "I do not ask my reader's pardon for having considered this most beautiful chapter as relating, not to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity, but to the redemption under the new covenant by Jesus Christ. There is no period of the Jewish history from that time until now, to which it can be applied. It must belong to the Gospel dispensation; and if the Jews will still refuse, contradict, and blaspheme, let no Christian have any fellowship with them in their opposition to this Almighty Savior. Let none be indifferent to his salvation; let all plead his promises; and let the messengers of the Churches proclaim to the Christian world a FREE, a FULL, and a PRESENT SALVATION! And may great grace rest upon themselves, and upon all their flocks!" (ACC)
- E. Israel's Rebirth Portrayed by the Valley of Dry Bones (37:1-14) [See McGuiggan p. 309] [22]
"No created power could restore human bones to life. God alone could cause them to live. Skin and flesh covered them, and the wind was then told to blow upon these bodies; and they were restored to life. The wind was an emblem of the Spirit of God, and represented his quickening powers. The vision was to encourage the desponding Jews; to predict both their restoration after the captivity, and also their recovery from their present and long-continued dispersion. It was also a clear intimation of the resurrection of the dead; and it represents the power and grace of God, in the conversion of the most hopeless sinners to himself. Let us look to Him who will at last open our graves, and bring us forth to judgment, that He may now deliver us from sin, and put his Spirit within us, and keep us by his power, through faith, unto salvation." (MHCC)
- (1,2) Now Ezekiel returns to the valley (plain) of 3:22. Here he has a vision of the bones of the exiles bleached white by the sun, like the remnants of some battlefield catastrophe.

- (3) Only God could know if these bones could live. Ezekiel was wise enough to leave resurrection of the dead to God's will and power. However, it was no more a common occurrence, then as now. Is Ezekiel showing a lack of faith here?
- (4-6) Ezekiel's commission is to preach to whomever God sends him; whether it is bones, trees, corpses, or the wind (or even live people!) Ezekiel's job is to preach the word of the Lord and let the Lord see to the increase. The message here is one of hope and optimism; even these very dry bones can live again. *Ruach* (breath) signifies soul, breath, and wind; and sometimes the Spirit of God. In this passage it perhaps alludes to all of these meanings. Without this breath of life, the restored corpses were still dead.
- (7-10) The reanimation of the corpses is preceded by an earthquake. Then bone attaches to bone, until the skeletons are fully formed. Sinew and flesh are added and the corpses are completely restored. But it will take the wind (God's breath of life) to complete the resurrection. Notice that this miracle (as with all miracles) takes place at God's behest and not man's. If man does play a part, it is in obeying God's word and by no power of his own.
- (11-14) The bones represent the state of the whole house of Israel, both Samaria and Judah. While the restoration looks forward to a return from the Babylonian captivity, it is also a prophecy of Messianic proportions. Life can come to dead souls only by the Spirit of God. So it was in Ezekiel's day and so it is today.

F. Israel and Judah Will Be United as One (37:15-28)

"This emblem was to show the people, that the Lord would unite Judah and Israel. Christ is the true David, Israel's King of old; and those whom he makes willing in the day of his power, he makes to walk in his judgments, and to keep his statutes. Events yet to come will further explain this prophecy. Nothing has more hindered the success of the gospel than divisions. Let us study to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; let us seek for Divine grace to keep us from detestable things; and let us pray that all nations may be obedient and happy subjects of the Son of David, that the Lord may be our God, and we may be his people for evermore." (MHCC)

- (15,16) Ezekiel is to take two sticks and write the names Ephraim (the 10 tribes) and Judah (Judah and Benjamin) on the sticks. (See Num. 17 for a similar incident.)
- (17-20) By holding the sticks as one, Ezekiel is signifying to the exiles, the restoration of Israel. There is probably no miraculous "joining" here. This is the last of Ezekiel's action sermons that we have become so familiar with in our study.
- (21-23) The healing of the divisions had been longed for in previous prophecies (Isa. 11:13; Jer. 3:18; Hos. 1:11). As far as returning to a land where a king would again physically reign Clarke adds, "Politically speaking they never had a king from that day to this; and the grand junction and government spoken of here must refer to another time-to that in which they shall be brought into the Christian Church with the fullness of the Gentiles; when JESUS, the King of kings and Lord of lords, shall rule over all." (ACC) Of course then the argument begins between those who believe the kingdom is in progress and those waiting on the so-called church age to end and the 1000 years to begin.
- (24) If the new king will be David, then is he coming back from the dead? Ezekiel has one supernatural king in mind, not a string of kings of David's lineage.
- (25) Canaan will be their eternal home. "Jacob means here the twelve tribes; and the land given to them was the whole land of Palestine; consequently, the promise states that, when they return, they are to possess the whole of the Promised Land." (ACC)
- (26) "My sanctuary - I will set up a spiritual glorious temple, and worship among you. For evermore - Never to be altered or abolished on earth, but to be consummated in heaven." (JWN)

(27,28) It will take the commentary of the New Testament to establish all of what is being prophesied here. As far as the prophecy being already fulfilled (amillennialist view) or not yet fulfilled (premillennialist view), McGuiggan thinks both of these views to be incorrect. He suggests that the rule of the Messiah now stretches over the entire world and into the heavens where his blessed ones on both sides of the veil are enjoying their spiritual lives right now. See his book *The Reign of God* for more on this topic.

G. The Final Effort of the Enemies of God (38:1-16) [23]

“These events will be in the latter days. It is supposed these enemies will come together to invade the land of Judea, and God will defeat them. God not only sees who are now the enemies of his church, but he foresees who will be so, and lets them know by his word that he is against them; though they join together, the wicked shall not be unpunished.” (MHCC) When these events were to occur has been the topic of much speculation. In any case the figurative language points to the fact that God will defeat all of His enemies regardless of when or where they arise.

1. The invasion by Gog (38:1-9)

- (1-3) McGuiggan believes that Gog is representative of the largest army that Satan could amass against God’s people. It is not a real army, but “ideal” army; a “worst case scenario” if you will. In Ezekiel’s case, the Babylonians; in John’s case (Revelation) the Roman Empire. Even an army of this magnitude could not withstand the forces of God.
- (4-6) This leader, Gog, will assemble soldiers from all points of the compass and lead them against God’s people. However, all of these forces will be repelled.
- (7-9) God wants Gog to come prepared for battle so that his defeat will be resounding and undeniable. The premillennialists want these “latter days” to refer to the second coming of Christ, but that is an unnecessary stretch to say the least.

2. Gog is motivated by the intention to plunder (38:10-16)

- (10-13) The attack will come when Israel seems to be the most unprepared. If the premillennialists want this to occur during the millennium, they have a problem because they believe all the ungodly will be gone. According to these verses Gog will strike against a people that have already been rescued from captivity, have “David” as their king, and dwell securely in their land. Gog is interested in the spoils of the land. This could refer to things or souls. See Harkrider, p. 94 for problems the premillennialists face trying to make these prophecies fit their doctrine.
- (14-16) Gog will be forewarned, he will have all the weapons needed to complete the task at hand, and his prey will be easy pickings. Despite all of these plusses on Gog’s side, God will still destroy Gog. Gog will not realize until it is too late that he is being used by God for God’s own purposes.

H. Gog Will Be Overthrown (38:17-39:29)

1. God will be magnified as He comes in fury against Gog (38:17-23)

- (17) From these verses and the fact that no other prophet ever mentions Gog and Magog, it would appear that they stand figuratively as the “forces of evil.” This is not a physical battle, but a showdown between God and Satan, when it occurred or will occur is where the speculation comes to play.
- (18-23) Many of the same natural disasters depicted here are also in the Revelation where they stand for God’s judgment against His enemies.

2. Gog's destruction is certain (39:1-8)

“The Lord will make the most careless and hardened transgressors know his holy name, either by his righteous anger, or by the riches of his mercy and grace. The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper. Though this prophecy is to be fulfilled in the latter days, it is certain. From the language used, it seems that the army of Gog will be destroyed by miracle.” (MHCC)

(1-8) Ezekiel is speaking in the language of his day. The weapons of Gog will be useless, many of the army will fall in the mountains, and God would burn their homeland in their absence. We can see that the army of Gog will be huge due to the number of weapons that will be gathered in their defeat. It will take seven months just to clean up the dead bodies and even then the land would have to be continually searched for more corpses.

3. The total destruction of Gog and his host (39:9-20)

(9,10) The dead will be buried somewhere in Israel's territory. Note that these elements of judgment are ones that God had used in times past against various enemies. (McGuiggan)

“How numerous the enemies which God destroyed for the defense of his people Israel! Times of great deliverances should be times of reformation. Every one should help the utmost he can, toward cleansing the land from reproach. Sin is an enemy every man should strive against. Those engaged in public work, especially of cleansing and reforming a land, ought to be men who will go through with what they undertake, who will be always employed. When good work is to be done, every one should further it. Having received special favors from God, let us cleanse ourselves from all evil. It is a work which will require persevering diligence, that search may be made into the secret recesses of sin. The judgments of the Lord, brought upon sin and sinners, are a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people. See how evil pursues sinners, even after death. After all that ambitious and covetous men do and look for, "a place of graves" is all the Lord gives them on earth, while their guilty souls are doomed to misery in another world.” (MHCC)

(11-16) Where these burials are to take place is disputed among the conservative commentators. To take these things literally, would make Gog's army amount to as many as 360 million dead. This is more people than most sources believe were alive in the whole world at the time. What are we being told then? Gog's army is undefeatable, yet God will defeat it. Israel has nothing to worry about in the future. Their current captivity will be their lowest point. Taylor (p. 248) believes this prophecy has three purposes: 1)- the fulfillment of God's prophetic word (vv. 5,8), 2)- God's desire to vindicate His holy name (v. 7); and 3)- the heathen will understand the power of Israel's God (v. 7).

(17-20) While Gog was preparing to slaughter Israel, God was preparing to sacrifice Gog to the birds and wild animals. It is not the Israelites being invited to eat flesh and drink blood – it is the birds and the beasts.

4. The result of this judgment and the concluding promise (39:21-29)

“When the Lord shall have mercy on the whole house of Israel, by converting them to Christianity, and when they shall have borne the shame of being cast off for their sins, then the nations shall learn to know, worship, and serve him. Then Israel also shall know the Lord, as revealed in and by Christ. Past events do not answer to these predictions. The pouring out of the Spirit is a pledge that God's favor will continue. He will hide his face no more from those on whom he has poured out his Spirit. When

we pray that God would never cast us from his presence, we must as earnestly pray that, in order thereto, he would never take his Holy Spirit from us.” (MHCC)

- (21) The nations will observe and see that their perception of Jehovah as a weak god was false. They will be witnesses of His mighty power.
- (22-24) Israel and the nations will finally come to realize that the exile was not due to God’s weakness, but due instead to His righteousness and holiness. His character demanded that Israel be punished for her sins. (Isa. 26:9)
- (25) God will show mercy on a people that did not really deserve it. Remember this saying, *Grace is God giving is what we do not deserve and Mercy is God not giving us what do deserve*. Indeed if the merciful are blessed, then God is the most blessed of all.
- (26,27) Israel will have an inward feeling of self-reproach when they remember the past as they live in the merciful present (paraphrased from Cooke).
- (28,29) The Lord now promises the penitent and restored people His unbroken fellowship. He has poured out His Spirit on His people. (Joel 2:28ff; Acts 2:1-4; 17ff, 38,39.) When will this occur? “All that chose had liberty to return; but many remained behind. This promise may therefore refer to a greater restoration, when not a Jew shall be left behind. This, the next verse (29) intimates, will be in the Gospel dispensation.” (ACC)

III. EZEKIEL’S DESCRIPTION OF THE NEW KINGDOM OF GOD (40:1-48:35) [24]

“Here is a vision, beginning at ch. 40, and continued to the end of the book, ch. 48, which is justly looked upon to be one of the most difficult portions in all the book of God. When we despair to be satisfied as to any difficulty we meet with, let us bless God that our salvation does not depend upon it, but that things necessary are plain enough; and let us wait till God shall reveal even this unto us.” (MHCC)

Taylor suggests that there are four major views concerning these last nine chapters of Ezekiel: 1)- the *literal prophetic* view, in which these chapters represent a blueprint of a restored temple; 2)- the *symbolic* Christian view, in which these prophecies are fulfilled symbolically in the Christian church; 3)- the *dispensationalist* view, in which the prophecies hold both literal and futurist meanings and 4)- the *apocalyptic* view, in which the prophecies show a view of the end-times. (pp. 251-54.)

McGuiggan has much to say concerning the problems with the literal view. (pp. 331-340.) If we adopt a figurative view of these concluding chapters McGuiggan suggests that this boils down to two possible approaches: 1)- an allegorical approach (see Taylor’s symbolic and dispensationalist view) or 2)- a simple picture of the glory the Jew could receive under the leadership of the Messiah. McGuiggan favors this second view and believes “that Ezekiel is now telling the beaten Jew that the day is coming when they would enjoy prosperity and glory under the Lord and that he described it in terms with which they were altogether familiar.” (p. 340.)

A. The New Temple (40:1-43:27)

1. Ezekiel is shown this new order by means of a vision (40:1-4)

- (1) The date of the vision: 573 BC. In the 25th year of the Babylonian captivity Ezekiel has the following vision.
- (2) The city of the vision. Apparently Ezekiel is taken in the vision to the hill country surrounding Jerusalem, where he sees a structure standing on the southern slope of a high mountain.

(3,4) The man and his message. He is accompanied by an angelic surveyor (or architect) who gives him a tour of the structure. The man carries a measuring line and measuring rod. Ezekiel is charged with teaching Israel this vision, thus he is told to look, listen, and fix his mind on all that he sees and hears.

2. A description of the boundary wall, gateways, and outer court (40:5-27)

(5-16) Measuring the outer walls and the east gate. The length of the cubit is disputed among the commentators. Lengths between 12 and 24 inches are suggested by the various experts. McGuiggan settles on the 21 inch cubit for his descriptions, but admits that he might be wrong. Various diagrams are available from Bible dictionaries, Taylor, McGuiggan and others. Please consult those resources to help visualize the possible look of the structure. See McGuiggan, p. 344. The entire temple grounds are surrounded by a wall 10.5 feet high and 10.5 feet thick. It is built on a square 875 feet on a side. The outer wall contains three gates, one each on the north, south, and east. It is seven steps up into each gate.

(17-19) The outer court (chambers and distances). See Taylor, p. 256. Each of the gates leads to the outer court. In each of the four corners of the outer court is a boiling room for sacrifices. Along the walls were 30 chambers set aside for unspecified reasons.

(20-27) The northern and southern gates in the outer wall. We see that these gates are identical to the eastern gate described in verses 5-16.

3. The inner court and its gateways (40:28-47)

(28-37) The gates leading to the inner court. The inner court was raised above the level of the outer court by eight steps. Three gates were available to reach the inner court.

(38-43) The chambers and the tables of the inner court. In the center of the inner court stands the altar of burnt offering. The placement of the tables and the chambers cannot be discerned from the text.

(44-47) Two special priestly chambers. The chambers on the north side of the inner court for the priests responsible for the day-to-day running of the temple (the Zadokites, see 44:15ff.).

4. The temple with its porch, side chambers, and building in the back 40:48-41:26)

(48,49) The porch leading to the temple itself. Ten steps up from the inner court lies the entrance to the temple proper.

(1-4) The holy place and the holy of holies. The porch leads to the nave, which in turn leads to the most holy place. Notice that the entrance ways narrow as you proceed from the outer towards the inner. This narrowing indicates sanctity.

(5-12) The chambers around the temple itself. They ranged along the north, south and west sides. They were arranged in three stories and were probably used for storage.

(13-26) Measurements and descriptions. These measurements indicate to Ezekiel that everything was a perfect fit and nothing was out of place. A table of showbread was placed at the entrance to the most holy place. We will leave it to the student to contrast and compare these measurements and furnishings with Solomon's Temple.

5. The priests' chambers in the temple yard (42:1-20)

(1-14) More priestly chambers of the inner court.

(15-20) The main (outer) wall. Some commentators read *cubits* here for *rods*. See McGuiggan's 13 summation points on chapters 40-42, pp. 346,347.

6. The return of the glory of the Lord into the temple (43:1-12)

- (1-5) The Lord's appearance in the temple. The Lord returns in appearance as in the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry. It had been 19 years since Ezekiel had his first temple vision. As God left his former sanctuary because of its desecration (8:6), He enters this new sanctuary because of its purity. The glory of the Lord fills this temple just as it had Solomon's (1 Ki. 8:10f; 2 Chron. 5:14; Isa. 6:1-3).
- (6,7) The Lord's dedication speech – part 1: The God of holiness. It befits God's character to rule from a place of pure holiness. He intends to have an unbroken fellowship with His people.
- (7-9) The Lord's dedication speech – part 2: The people of wickedness. His holiness is further emphasized by His separation from the wicked.
- (10-12) The Lord's dedication speech – part 3: The call to holiness. The viewing of the blueprints of the Temple will make the people realize how wicked they had become and how holy they would need to be to worship God successfully.

7. The altar of burnt offering (43:13-27)

- (13-17) The measurements of the altar of burnt offering. It appears that the altar would be measured with the same cubit as the temple. Its size is comparable to the altar of Solomon's temple (2 Chron. 4:1). The shape is in three ascending squares, getting smaller as they go up. The altar would be located in the dead center of the inner court which in turn was to be in the dead center of the temple itself. The altar will be consecrated for sacrifice making it the most important aspect of the temple.
- (18-27) The consecration of the altar. Only the Zadokites (of all of Aaron's descendants) would be allowed to work the altar. Only they have shown themselves to be faithful to God through times of crises. Sin offerings would both cleanse the altar and make atonement for it. It would take seven days to cleanse the altar with burnt offerings. Only after this offering would the Lord accept the people's sin offering.

B. Regulations Concerning a New Worship (44:1-46:24)

[25]

1. Positions assigned for those who will be allowed in the temple (44:1-14)

“This chapter contains ordinances relative to the true priests. The prince evidently means Christ, and the words in v. 2, may remind us that no other can enter heaven, the true sanctuary, as Christ did; namely, by virtue of his own excellency, and his personal holiness, righteousness, and strength. He who is the Brightness of Jehovah's glory entered by his own holiness; but that way is shut to the whole human race, and we all must enter as sinners, by faith in his blood, and by the power of his grace.”
(MHCC)

- (1-3) The off-limits gate. The east gate was kept shut because it was the entrance of the Lord. For any to use it would be profane. We will see the exception to this in chapter 46.
- (4-9) The excluded people. Part of the former abominations of Israel was the practice of letting foreigners into the temple. This practice is now strictly forbidden in the new temple.
- (10-14) Levitical responsibilities. Under Ezekiel's system the priests would be demoted to more menial tasks. These had previously been assigned to the foreigners that are now excluded from the temple. The priests would now be janitors, policemen, sacrifice slayers, kitchen assistants, and guides for the people.

2. Regulations for the priests of the Lord who will serve (44:15-45:12)

- (15-27) Zadokite responsibilities. The Zadokites were not perfect, but they were the best that God had. They had supported David in the appointment of Solomon and did not follow after Jereboam. The restrictions placed on their lives remind us of the Nazarite vow, Num. 6:1-21.
- (28-31) Zadokite support. They will not receive land, but will live by the offerings at the temple. Being dependent on the offering of the people was precarious at best. (Neh. 13:10ff)
- (1-12) The holy land connected with the temple. See the chart in McGuiggan, p. 365 for an idea of how the land would be divided. Note the *oblation* set aside for the Lord (v. 1). See McGuiggan p. 356-57 for further descriptions. The priests were given so much property to encourage them not to steal (remember Naboth's vineyard?). Note the call for honesty in weights and measures as well.

3. Regulations for the sacrifices and sacred days (45:13-46:15)

- (13-17) The prince and national offering. A specific tax would be paid to the prince and he would supply the needs for the national offering. It puts the prince in the forefront as an example of how the people should practice their religion – religiously!
- (18-20) The cleansing of the sanctuary. The festivals would need preparation time so that they would be presented in a pure way. This included New Year's.
- (21-25) The prince and national festivals. Also included in the national festivals were Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.
- (1-15) The prince and personal worship. The flow of traffic through the temple is of interest. Exactly how this would work is more complex than it would seem at first glance. The conclusion is that a man should leave the temple differently than he came in. Should not we all leave God's presence differently than when we approached? The prince was to worship with the people and in the same manner. An exception to the rule of 44:2 occurs here – the gate would be opened when the prince makes a free-will offering. Note that three types of offerings are regulated here: 1)- feasts and appointed seasons, 2)- the free-will offering of the prince, and 3)- a daily offering.

4. The inheritance of the prince and the disposition of his property (46:16-18)

- (16-18) The prince and his property. The prince may lease his land for a time (perhaps up to 50 years), but he may not sell it off. The prince may not confiscate the land of others.

5. Sacrificial kitchens for the priests and for the people (46:19-24)

- (19-24) The priestly kitchens were to be located on the four corners of the outer court. This description concludes Ezekiel's tour of the temple grounds began in ch. 42.

C. A Description of the Future Lands (47:1-48:35)

1. The river of the water of life (47:1-12)

- (1,2) Where the water springs and flows from. This is obviously symbolic and has never applied to the temple area of Jerusalem itself. It expresses the blessings flowing forth from God's presence. Zechariah and Joel also speak of the rivers flowing forth from God's presence, but their prophecy is different and not to be taken literally either. Perhaps this is a picture of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 4; 7:37-39 and note Rev. 22:1ff.). Perhaps a parallel can be seen with the account of the Garden of Eden?

- (3-6) How the water deepens as it flows. It will even bring fresh healing waters to the reaches of the Dead Sea. Those who have truly experienced the grace of God agree that His blessing become deeper as time and distance increases. Accepting God's grace and mercy perpetuates even more grace and mercy.
- (7-11) How the water heals as it flows. Everywhere it reaches it heals.
- (12) The trees on the banks beside the water. These trees will also have healing power The God so despised by the Gentiles is the God of healing and life; His temple is the source of the healing waters – these truths will be vindicated once and for all time at the day of judgment.

2. The land and its boundaries (47:13-23)

- (13,14) The specific land commission. The land described here is the exact land described in Num. 34 and shown to previously be in the possession of the Israelites in Josh. 21:43-45 and 23:14-16. Therefore there is no millennial land promise in need of being fulfilled. See McGuiggan's five points, p. 362.
- (15-17) The northern border. Note that these borders correspond to the borders of Numbers 34.
- (18) The eastern border.
- (19) The southern border.
- (20) The western border.
- (21-23) A summary remark. Strangers among the people are to be treated as home-born. Anyone willing to accept the standards and regulations of Israel would be treated as an Israelite. (Lev. 24:22; Num. 15:29; Isa. 56:3-8; Eze. 14:7; 22:7.)

3. Portion assigned the seven northern tribes (48:1-7)

See Taylor, p. 282 for possible reasons for placement of the tribes.

- (1) Dan's portion.
- (2) Asher's portion.
- (3) Naphtali's portion.
- (4) Mannaseh's portion.
- (5) Ephriam's portion.
- (6) Rueben's portion.
- (7) Judah's portion.

4. The portion for the Lord, for the sanctuary and for the priests (48:8-22)

See Taylor, p. 283

- (8-12) For the priests. "This was a portion of land twenty-five thousand cubits in length, by ten thousand broad; in the centre of which was the temple, which must be destined for the use of the priests, the Levites, and the prince." (ACC)
- (13-14) For the Levites.
- (15-20) For the public. Land allotted just south of the priests portion.
- (21,22) For the prince.

5. Portion assigned the five southern tribes (48:23-29)

See Taylor, p. 284. Note that while Judah and Benjamin are given preferential treatment in the position of their allotment the other tribes seem to be positioned according to Isaac's wives and concubines.

- (23) Benjamin's portion.
- (24) Simeon's portion.
- (25) Issachar's portion.
- (26) Zebulun's portion.
- (27) Gad's portion

(28,29) Summary remarks.

6. The gates and the name of the city (48:30-35)

(30-35) A description of the city. See Taylor, p. 284-85. And the city has a new name – *The Lord is There*.

Concluding Remarks

Wiersbe (pp. 201-02) suggests five spiritual lessons from the concluding nine chapters that still apply. While he extends these applications into the so-called Millennium, we will make them in regards to the Kingdom Age which we believe we are living in today as we await Christ's Second Coming and the Judgment Day.

- Ø Separation From Sin – Ezekiel's description of the Temple reminds us that God puts a difference between the Holy and the profane and expects us to respect that difference. (Isa. 5:20.)
- Ø Worship – It is not our decision as to how to worship God, it is our responsibility to simply obey His word and worship Him according to His precepts.
- Ø Fulfillment – *God is not slack concerning His promises*. Eventually, all true believers will experience the fulfillment of every promise He ever made. Some may come true during this earth-life, but all will be fulfilled in the heavenly home.
- Ø God's Glory and God's Name – We are to honor God's name and magnify His glory. At least 60 times Ezekiel quoted God as saying; *They shall know that I am the Lord*.
- Ø The Sovereign Rule of God – Ezekiel's vision of the chariot-throne moving about the world accomplishing God's purposes is seen today in the church. It is the church which must do God's tasks today. Not only must we pray for God's will to be done, we must be about our Father's business helping to accomplish His will. With God on His throne and Jesus Christ at His right hand can we do anything less than Their will?