

The Book of Ezekiel

Chapters 1–39

Bro. Frank Shallieu

(1987–1989 and 1973–1976 Studies)

The following notes were compiled from a Bible study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1987–1989 with additional notes inserted from a 1973–1976 study. They should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. The original studies did not follow a prepared text but were extemporaneous in nature.
2. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord's help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the study, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1987–1989
with notes inserted from 1973–1976 study)

The first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel is a highly figurative vision of the glory of Almighty God; it is a word portrait, in symbolism, of His most holy character (Ezek. 1:28). Chapter 10, which also describes Jehovah's character, is similar.

Ezek. 1:1 Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Ezek. 1:2 In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

Ezek. 1:3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The time setting was the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, which was 612 BC, or just six years before the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple in 606 BC. King Jehoiachin reigned only three months and then was taken captive to Babylon.

"Ezekiel," whose name means "the strength of God" or "God is strong," was among the Israelite captives by the river Chebar in Babylon. It is unusual that he was a priest, for as a general rule, the faithful prophets of the Old Testament did not come from the priestly line. While Ezekiel encouraged the Israelites who were in exile in Babylon, the first half of the book is a scathing denunciation, and Chapter 1 is an interlude. The Book of Ezekiel furnishes more information on the Kingdom than any of the other prophets.

"The word of the LORD came expressly [firsthand and solely] unto Ezekiel." The prophet had many such experiences because God's favor and power were on him. Thus the Book of Ezekiel is a firsthand report. He had the Urim and Thummim, as it were, and the people came to recognize it in time. The purpose of the visions was to get Ezekiel to preach with vigor the rest of his life. He was being prepared for a *powerful* message.

Ezek. 1:4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

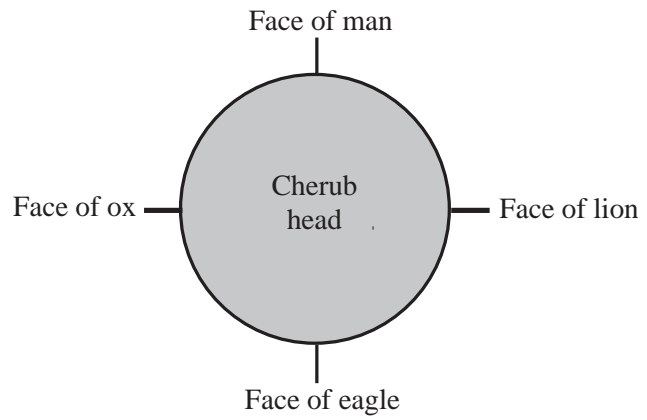
When the vision of God's glory began, the first thing Ezekiel saw was a whirlwind coming out of the *north*, signifying it was of *divine* appointment, it was from *God*, and it was associated with *judgment*. The "*great cloud*" looked ominous. From a distance the whirlwind looked like a cyclone. Moreover, the main body was turning about, suggesting a *whirlwind*. Incidentally, the Pleiades, to the *north*, the center of the universe, is the throne of God; hence north is spiritual and south is earthly.

Unlike a normal tornado, the whirlwind was "a fire infolding itself"; that is, a *self-feeding* fire that never went out enfolded the whirlwind, enfolded back on itself. Although the cloud proper was dark, tongues of fire lapped up from the bottom or center core. God is a "consuming fire" to those not in the proper heart condition (Heb. 12:29). If faithful, we will dwell with the "everlasting burnings"; we will dwell with God in this fire (Isa. 33:14).



*A Living Creature
(Ezekiel 1:5-13)*

Ezekiel 1:10

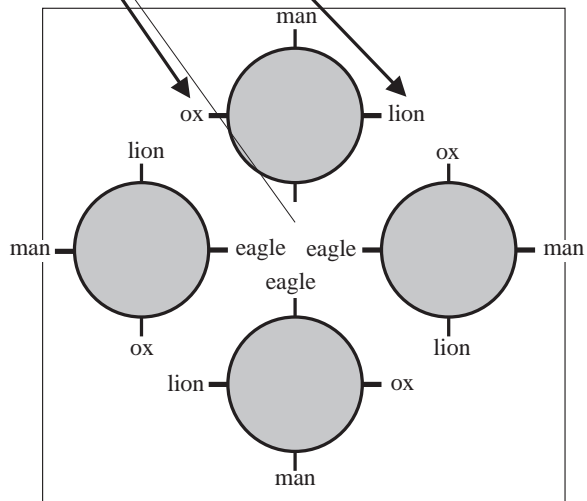


Ezekiel 10:14

Probable Point and Angle of Observation

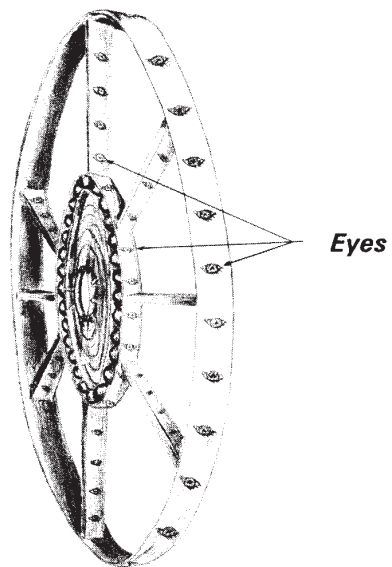
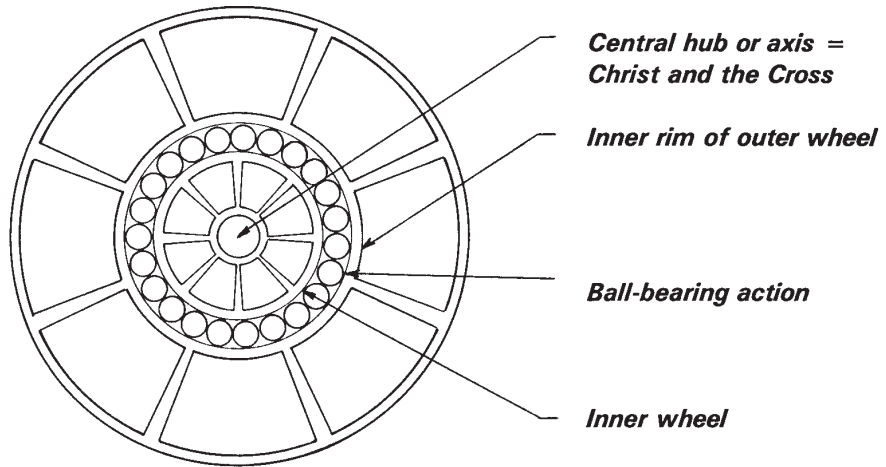


*External inspection of faces 1 to 3
Hebrew customarily viewed and read backwards)* [3]
Later internal identification of fourth face [4]



[3]
[2]
[1]
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Appendix 4:
Symbolism of Ezekiel Wheels (Ezekiel 1 and 10)



Round about the cloud was a “brightness,” a halo effect that looked almost like an atomic explosion. Stated another way, the cloud shielded the very bright light, but there was a halo effect. And out of the midst of the cloud and fire was an “amber” color, a gleaming or *glowing* bronze color, which suggested personality. God would speak to Ezekiel out of the center of the whirlwind.

Although the cloud was a shroud that (figuratively) covered Jehovah’s presence, His presence is so powerful that even the cloud could not completely hide it. Fire and color emanated. This great cloud was approaching Ezekiel, coming from north to south.

The self-feeding fire reminds us of the burning bush in Sinai that was not consumed. The burning bush was a very holy, supernatural occurrence. God dwells in light that no man can approach unto (1 Tim. 6:16). God’s *glory* is being emphasized here in the first chapter of Ezekiel, and only the glorified Church will get “intimately” acquainted with Jehovah.

The cloud had a metallic substance in the center. A light continuously flashed forth, suggesting direction and personality, not merely a phenomenon of nature. The cloud over the Tabernacle had a personality too, an example being when a light like lightning darted out and consumed Nadab and Abihu, showing a judgment (Lev. 10:1,2).

Ezek. 1:5 Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

Ezekiel now saw four living beings step out of the enormous cloud in the heavens. This drama involved *motion*. What a tremendous spectacle! The living ones had “the likeness of a man” in that the shape of the torso, or main part of the body, was that of a man. They were immense in size. “Four *living ones*” or “four *beings*” is a better translation than “four living *creatures*.” Of course the four living beings are not to be understood in a literal sense.

Ezek. 1:6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

As the cloud got closer, Ezekiel noticed more detail. Each living being had four faces—*one* head and *one* neck stem with *four* faces. In contradistinction, each of the four living beings in Revelation 4:7 had a *different* (singular) face on its one head. Moreover, each living being that Ezekiel saw had two pairs of wings: one pair supported the throne platform and one pair covered the body. Each pair of wings pictured the Old and New Testaments, the Word of God. Wings are used for motion and flight. In other words, the pair of wings that supported the throne emanated from the back part of each shoulder. The pair of wings that was used to either fly or, when not in motion, cover the body emanated from the side or front part of each shoulder or collarbone, but in both instances—that is, whether flying or resting—this pair of wings faced the same direction forward of the body as the pair that supported the throne.

God’s glory exuded from the cloud. The prophet Isaiah and John the Revelator both had experiences similar to Ezekiel’s.

Spiritually speaking, the living beings represent the four divine attributes (God’s Love, Justice, Wisdom, and Power), as shown in the four faces of each being. There were four beings because one was on each side of God’s throne to provide *universal* coverage. God is Emperor of the universe—He surveys *all*. His attributes are *always* ready to obey.

Ezek. 1:7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

The feet went *straight* forward, showing the living beings acted correctly and made straight paths, *never deviating from the line of God's purpose*. They had strict errands to perform. "The sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot." In other words, the living beings had cloven hooves, the two parts indicating that they rightly divided the Word of truth. The "feet" included the legs, which were also straight. Therefore, all three sparkled like burnished brass: the feet, the soles, and the legs. We are reminded of the description of Jesus' feet in Revelation 1:15—they were "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace."

Ezek. 1:8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

Under *each* wing was a *human* hand (that is, each living being had four wings and four hands). The hand symbolizes that God uses *human* servants, messengers, and agencies to expound His Word, the Old and New Testaments. For example, God spoke or commanded "by the *hand* of Moses" (Lev. 26:46; Josh. 21:8). For *Studies in the Scriptures* the Pastor used the term "A Helping *Hand* for Bible Students." When Moses was commissioned to go back into Egypt, God assured and strengthened him with three signs (Exod. 4:1–17). One sign was that Moses' hand first became leprous and then was cleansed. The changes in the condition of the hand represent God's use of imperfect human beings in the present life who, if faithful, will be raised perfect in due time. Still another example was the supernatural appearance of the fingers of a *man's* hand that King Belshazzar saw writing "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin" on the wall at the feast (Dan. 5:5,25).

Ezek. 1:9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

The wings were both paired and joined, showing harmony and unison. What is the lesson? *Everything* God does is *consistent*. Moreover, the wings (and the living beings) "turned not when they went" but proceeded straight ahead and did not deviate from their purpose. In other words, God's Word does not return unto Him void but accomplishes all that He purposes (Isa. 55:11). The living ones went straight forward to do God's purpose. In speaking of the "Father of lights," the Apostle James said, "With whom [there] is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). In Malachi 3:6, God said, "I am the LORD, I change not."

Another lesson is that God is not caught off balance. There is a serenity to the divine being. All is under His control. Of course He does have feelings, but when He expresses anger, for instance, it is righteous indignation.

As we will find out in later verses, the four living ones supported a platform, and on the platform was a throne in which God sat. (The Lord God was hidden by a glowing fire except for His legs.) Hence God's throne is supported by His four attributes.

A living being was centered on each side of the throne. Two outstretched wings of each cherub upheld a side. The living beings faced outward, looking north, south, east, and west. When they "went" in a direction—for example, east—all four beings and heads wheeled

around and went east with the throne (although in some pictures a cherub could go alone). When at rest, the four beings were like sentinels watching God's universe, each looking out at a cardinal point of the compass. The four attributes (Love, Justice, Power, or Wisdom) were always ready to go into operation. They turned *before* they went, not after.

Ezek. 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

The King James Version describes the faces of the living beings when they *rested*. The Revised Standard Version describes their faces when Love would act or *move*. Thus there were different postures: at rest, preparing to go into motion, or in motion. In the King James, Ezekiel viewed the faces from an off-angle, catty-corner perspective with no one face predominating. On the right side were the faces of a man and a lion, and on the left side were the faces of an ox and an eagle. Although the faces were viewed diagonally, a face was *straight forward* in the direction in which an act was to occur. Normally, all four attributes were on the alert. When one attribute had to act—take Love for an example—the neck stem, or body, of each living being turned so that the man's face was forward.

The order of the faces in verse 10 shows how God's attributes will be revealed in the Millennial Age. For the following reasons, the particular faces were selected by the Holy Spirit to picture the attributes.

<u>Attribute</u>	<u>Face</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Love	Man	Man's heart of flesh is compassionate and tender.
Justice	Lion	God roars as a lion when He visits judgment (Isa. 42:13). He roars from Zion (Joel 3:16). Ariel, the hearth of the altar in Ezekiel's Temple, is called the "lion" of God, and this is where Justice is satisfied.
Power	Ox	There is a saying "strong as an ox." Horns on the Tabernacle altar represent power, and they came from an ox or a steer.
Wisdom	Eagle	Just as an eagle is noted for its voracious appetite and keen vision, so a Christian's hunger for Scriptural knowledge results in spiritual vision.

Priority was given to the face of a man (Love) because Ezekiel was supposed to realize that the intent of God's message was love, not destruction. Ezekiel knew he was condemned (through Adam), and thus he needed assurance that God's purpose is compassionate. It is God's desire that man will choose *life*, not death.

Ezek. 1:11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

Upward, outstretched wings (one pair on each being) supported the throne. Reaching from corner to corner of the platform, the outstretched wings touched (or kissed) each other. This arrangement pictures *complete* coverage and shows that *everything* God does is in balance.

The second pair of wings of each being covered the torso from shoulders to ankles. In other words, the wings *hid* the body. What is the signification? Only with the Bible do we understand God's Word and character, but to the world they are hidden. Many use their imaginations to try to know God, but the Bible must be used. As we receive the Holy Spirit,

we can perceive and understand the deep things of God.

Both pairs of wings were the same size. The wings that supported the throne went slightly upward (to miss the head of the living being) and then *outward*.

Ezek. 1:12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

“Spirit” means “instruction.” “Whither the *instruction* was to go, they went.” Instruction comes from God’s voice. His plan, character, and purpose are hidden in His Word.

Ezek. 1:13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

The living creatures had transparent body cavities, in which burning coals like lamps could be seen going up and down. This *internal* detail is in addition to previous descriptions. The coals of fire went up and down *within* the living beings, not among them as the King James Version states. (The Hebrew word can be variously translated.) Each living creature had *one* burning coal or lamp.

Several definitions are needed for the symbolic meaning. (1) The “lamp” pictures the Word of God. “Thy word is a *lamp* unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). (2) The burning coals represent a message burning to be delivered. We are reminded of the prophet Jeremiah, who had a burning coal in his mouth. “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a *burning fire* shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. 20:9). Jeremiah tried to keep quiet for a while, but found the message churned within him so that he had to declare it and spit it out. In his case the message was one of indignation. (3) The living creatures picture God’s attributes.

Why did the Holy Spirit use a lamp of *fire* and a *burning* coal? God’s Word has a *purging* effect. As it searches out and purifies, it should engender *zeal* in us. We are to study and examine the Bible to perceive God’s mind and character and get direction for our lives. In turn, or as a result, we should have a burning fire or *zeal to declare God’s message*.

Or the symbolic meaning can be considered from another standpoint. From God’s perspective, the lamps indicate inspection. Hebrews 4:12 says, “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Stated succinctly, the Bible is a *living* Word, powerful and active.

Ezekiel represents the Church, the body of Christ. The Church, not the world, “sees” the vision. This *moving* drama unfolded detail by detail before the prophet’s eyes. He did not see everything all at once.

We imperfect, mortal, *sinful* beings are given an insight into God’s *holy* character. Hence to behold this vision is awesome and scary. However, if one is in *perfect* harmony with God, that which is scary to others becomes natural and peaceful, and this will be true when we are raised perfect beyond the veil. As we realize our sins and think on this awesome vision in the *present* life, our tender conscience should make us uncomfortable and desirous of

repentance and reformation. Thus this vision is upbuilding and yet, at the same time, destructive to that which is amiss.

The fire in the living beings was *bright*. Since the vision was *large*, the lamps within the living creature were also a good size. Probably the vision *filled* the firmament, and in fact, the vision had to be large for Ezekiel to see all the detail.

Inside each living creature, a lamp of fire went up and down. Stated another way, each living being had *one* lamp internally, and a golden coal of fire was in each lamp. (The coals were an integral part of the lamps.) Lightning flashed forth out of the lamps of fire or the burning coals. In other words, not only were the lamps very bright, but a flash of lightning darted forth periodically. Each flash of lightning symbolized a startling revelation—a sudden, quick revelation—that either exposed an evil or disclosed a wonderful truth previously hidden.

The lamp going up and down invites us to behold God's attributes, to study them in His Word. The more we look (or study), the more we understand.

Ezek. 1:14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The emphasis was on *speed*, suddenness. When a living creature moved, it moved with lightning speed. It ran straight out (with no deviation) and came back like a flash of lightning. When all four living beings went at the same time, the throne or chariot moved with them. If only one living being went, the other three remained stationary with the throne. Normally all four did not go on an errand, just one.

One living being was stationed on each of the four sides of the platform, on each of the four cardinal points of the compass, showing complete coverage of the universe. God looks out on the *entire* universe, and *nothing* catches Him unawares. As Emperor of the universe, He is all-seeing, all-knowing—He is *omniscient*.

When a particular work or deed was to be done in a particular place, a living creature darted out and back, illustrating that God's Word goes forth and accomplishes that which it is instructed to do. A living creature on the side where the deed was to be done performed a specific personal service, as it were. Sometimes the chariot moved with all four beings, but here Ezekiel was describing the action when only one creature performed an errand, as was normally the case. It should be noted, however, that when only one living being went out on an errand, the faces of the other three beings, who remained with the throne, also changed to that attribute.

When a particular attribute went into operation, the other three attributes observed and were in harmony. For example, if God's wrath were being exercised, the face of the lion (Justice) swiveled to the forefront. On the particular living being who performed the errand, with Justice (the lion face) forward, the other three attributes on the *same* neck stem accompanied Justice, showing *harmony*.

Ezekiel said in verse 12, "*They went,*" because he observed first one living creature go and return on one side, then another living creature go and return on another side, etc. The living beings went separately, not simultaneously. He could see different ones go and return. The very fact that *four* attributes were on *one* living being suggests that only one

being went at a time; the other three living beings remained behind with the throne.

Nothing can make the living beings deviate out of their course. Nothing can deter God's Wisdom, Love, Power, or Justice. *If* there is a delay, there is a reason. *If* answers to our prayers are delayed, it is because we need lessons or other experiences or because we have to come into the proper heart condition. When we pray to God, an angel travels in light-years to relay the message; that is, he travels with the speed of lightning, which is the speed of thought.

Ezek. 1:15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

In this moving drama, a wheel suddenly appeared. Each living creature had one large wheel, the rim of which rested on the ground. Since the Scriptures are silent about the size of the cherub in relation to the wheel, we may reasonably conclude that the wheel was approximately twice the height of each enormous cherub, since the wheel touched the earth and it rose above the outside edge of the platform. However, we should not conclude that a wheel always touched the earth, for this was God's chariot and it could also move in the heavens.

Each living creature was stationed in the center of a side of the platform, on which the throne rested. The creatures' heads were below the platform, but their wings stretched up and out to support it. The outspread wings of each creature on each side of the platform reached from end to end on that side, and thus touched a wing of two adjacent creatures at the corners.

From a symbolic standpoint, the wheels had to touch the earth, for the contact showed that the earth is God's footstool. The contact further indicated that God is dealing with mankind and has a plan for the earth.

We should keep in mind that this was a *tremendous* vision, *filling heaven*. Each living being had to be correspondingly large to support a side of the platform. Moreover, Ezekiel *alone* saw this vision while dwelling among the captives in Babylon. He *alone* saw God's glory, as the Christian does amidst the ignorant world.

Ezek. 1:16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

All four wheels looked alike. They were golden (yellowish green) and had a stone texture that resembled the semiprecious stone chrysolite (rather than beryl). *Chrysolithos*, the "golden stone," is the stone of wisdom—in this case, *divine* wisdom. In other words, the wheels looked like gold stone, and not like metal or wood.

"Their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." Inside each large wheel was a smaller inner wheel. The "work" was the inner construction, that is, the rim and the spokes. Imagine a huge wagon wheel with a hollow hub through which the axle goes. Here in the vision, a smaller second wheel was inside the hub. Ball-bearing action allowed independent motion (like minute and hour hands moving independently on a clock). The ball bearings were between the two wheels, so that when the inside wheel turned, it did not affect the outside wheel and vice versa. The inner wheel moved faster

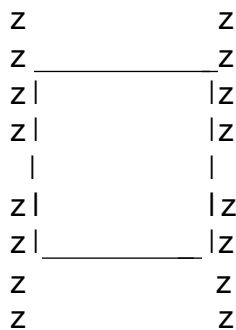
and thus attracted attention.

A wheel suggests motion, progress. Part of a wheel—that is, an arc (or semicircle)—represents a whole wheel. As the wheel turns, it shows the progression of God’s plan, His activity, His movement during a particular time. The bigger outer wheel portrays the three large dispensations or worlds (the World That Then Was from the creation of Adam to the Flood; the Present Evil World from the Flood to the establishment of the Kingdom; and the World to Come, also called the World Without End, which extends from the Kingdom into the illimitable future). In other words, the time periods are 1,656 years, approximately 4,500 years, and the unending future. On the other hand, the smaller inner wheel pictures the ages within the dispensations: the Patriarchal, Jewish, Gospel, and Millennial ages. Being shorter in duration, the ages move more quickly. We can see more clearly what God is doing in the shorter ages.

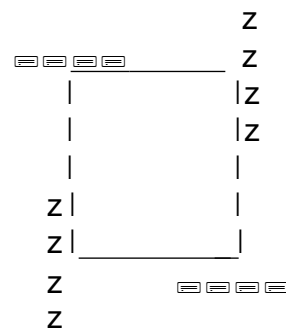
Ezek. 1:17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

Each of the four wheels was beside a living creature on a side of the throne platform. Therefore, when the wheels went, “they went upon their four sides [the four sides of the living creatures]: and they [the wheels] turned not when they went.” The wheels did not deviate but went in the direction that the will or spirit of God wanted them to go—the same direction in which the cherubim were going. Once the course was set, there was fixity of purpose. Like the faces, the wheels turned *before* they moved so that they would be going in the right direction.

If the wheel was at the left side of a cherub, it was on the corner of the left wing, at the tip. The axle of the wheel was on the corner so that the wheel could swivel. (The wheels are not quite accurate in *The Keys of Revelation*; they are too large.)



Wheels in motion



Wheels when standing still, stationary

Ezek. 1:18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

“As for their rings [rims], they were so high that they were dreadful [awesome].” The vision filled the horizon. Ezekiel saw the throne, the majesty, a lot of activity of glowing fire, a halo effect, etc., so that the upper part of the wheel disappeared out of his sight, up into the heavens, as it were.

“Their rings [spokes—a different Hebrew word] were *full* of eyes,” and so were the rims (see Ezekiel 10:12). The eyes on the rims and the spokes of the wheels were a symbol of wisdom. Part of the words of a hymn are “How His plan His wisdom shows.” The Apostle Paul

spoke of the length, breadth, height, and depth of God's love (Eph. 3:18,19). It is impossible to fully fathom any of God's attributes.

The wheels were higher and much larger than the cherubim. They were on a sort of ball-bearing type of axle so that they could swivel without bumping the cherubim. The wheels represent God's plan in regard to the earth; they go out prophetically and come back fulfilled.

Let us consider the construction of the wheels again. Each "wheel" consisted of two separate wheels, a large one and a smaller one, with a common hub. In other words, a wheel (circle) was within a wheel (circle). They were disengaged and yet engaged. Although the two wheels had separate spokes, all of the spokes went to a common axis or hub. The smaller wheel, which moved faster, pertains to our day—to Israel, to God's dealings in our own life, for example—and is thus more interesting to us personally. The larger, slower wheel portrays God's perspective and dealings: His *great* dispensational truths in all three worlds, His slow dealings in epochs such as the seven Creative Days.

With the wheels on four sides, the suggestion is of a vehicle or carriage moving the throne of God. The Ark of the Covenant was called the "chariot of God." The hub of the wheels was at the corners of the platform, where the wings joined.

The eyes have a further significance. They indicate that God knows what He is doing. He makes no mistakes. He foresees everything in advance and knows how to handle every situation. From another standpoint, God's plan, from whatever angle it is viewed, is seen to be harmonious and just.

Ezek. 1:19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

Activity is considered from two standpoints: (1) When one cherub went individually on an errand, his wheel accompanied him. (2) When the throne moved, when God moved with the chariot, when all four cherubim went collectively, all four wheels accompanied and went in the direction determined by the spirit (the voice or will) of God. In other words, either just one living being went or all four living beings went (with the platform). The cherubim moved with the speed of lightning.

The charioteer is Jehovah; He occupies the throne, the chariot. Stated another way, this is the chariot of Almighty God.

The vision was given to Ezekiel to record for future generations; that is, it was given primarily for *us now* at the end of the Gospel Age. Back in the prophet's day, the vision served the purpose of inspiring Ezekiel with awe to obey God's subsequent instructions and the required self-inflicted humiliations. Similarly, Jesus was inspired by hearing the words "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17).

Without present truth we could not understand this vision. The general interpretation by others is that a space vehicle is being described. That is why some fundamentalists think UFOs are associated with the holy angels. They probably base the conclusion on Elisha's prayer and the subsequent revelation of chariots of the Lord on the mountain to strengthen the faith of his servant (2 Kings 6:15–17). However, we *know* we properly understand this vision if we can *explain* each word. Those who say this is a space vehicle are

writing *fiction*, not explaining the vision verse by verse. The book *Chariot of the Gods* conveys a false concept of a *literal* vehicle of transport.

Ezek. 1:20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

“The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels [also].” The same personality or spirit that was in the living creature was also in its adjacent wheel. This statement sums up what is said in verses 19–21. The mechanics of the vision were as follows: What the cherub did, the wheel did. They were *inseparable*; they operated and moved *simultaneously* (one did not follow the other). If the cherub went forward, so did the wheel, and if the cherub was lifted up, so was the wheel, etc., because the *same* invisible “spirit” motivated or energized *both*. Whether animate (the living beings) or inanimate (such as the wheels), everything in the vision pictures God’s plan, character, purposes, and glory.

Just as the revolving movement was discernible in the little inner wheel but not in the big outer wheel that was so awesome, so we cannot discern God’s movement at the time it is occurring in the big ages or dispensations. Only as we look back at history can we see His stately steppings down through centuries. On the other hand, we can discern the smaller dispensational truths.

There was an invisible connection between a cherub and its wheel so that they moved or stood still absolutely *simultaneously*—even when the movement was lightning fast. The same “spirit” that was in the living creature and made it go was also in its wheel.

If the whole throne moved, the wheels too had to turn in that direction (somewhat like large dolly wheels). The spirit of God accomplished the turning of the heads and the wheels. For example, if the chariot or carriage (that is, the throne) had to rise, the wheels and the cherubim also rose. Being inseparable, the wings moved when the wheels moved, showing that the intellect and the heart are interrelated. God’s dealings with mankind are in harmony with His Word. Even though one attribute may predominate, the other attributes are always in accord.

Ezek. 1:21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

For purposes of clarity, verse 21 is a repeat of verse 20. When the living beings went, the wheels went. “Over against them” implies there was an invisible bond between the two. It was as if they were wedded together. Since the cherubs represent the four attributes of God and the wheels picture the divine plan, the lesson is that whatever God does is according to His *predetermined plan*, with no wasted motion, and is in harmony with the divine attributes and principles.

What a potent picture! The vision is God’s description of HIMSELF in a metaphorical sense.

Ezek. 1:22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

When the next few verses are analyzed, the “firmament” proves to be a platform that held God’s throne. Normally the firmament is the atmosphere, the space between heaven and earth (Gen. 1:6–8). Hence Ezekiel saw a space above the heads of the living creatures. It looked glassy, like awesome rock crystal or ice, but it was figuratively solid and thus could support God’s throne. The platform was “stretched forth” above the heads of the living creatures; that is, their wings, being higher than their heads, supported the platform. The platform was not immediately visible in the whirlwind—the four living creatures appeared first, then the wheels, and then the platform, which appeared frozen and glass-like, having a transparency that resembled the firmament of heaven but having actual dimension. Such a sight filled Ezekiel with awe and wonder.

The crystal platform was limited to the area over the heads of the cherubim and gave the impression that the whole cherubim arrangement was the basis of God’s throne. In other words, the platform and the cherubim were the prop for the throne.

Ezek. 1:23 **And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.**

This verse describes the cherubim and their wings *in repose*. The *upper* pair of wings stretched up and then out to support the platform over the heads of the cherubs. The cherub wings went “one toward the other”; that is, the wings met at the corners and touched (one wing of one cherub met one wing of another cherub). The one pair of wings going straight up over the heads of the cherubim and then straight out were like the wings of an airplane. Mobility of flight is indicated, for when the platform moved, it was God’s vehicle or chariot. This upper pair of wings acted as a rudder. (Remember, this vision was *symbolic*, coming down to our level, to help us understand the glory of God.)

The seraphim (cherubim) of Isaiah 6:2 each had three pairs of wings: one pair for flying, one pair to cover the face, and one pair to cover the feet. “Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.” Or, one could say, each cherub had three wings on the right side and three wings on the left—a total of six wings arranged in three pairs. In all three instances the wings represent the Word of God, the Old and New Testaments.

Since the cherubim had three pairs of wings, their bodies were *hidden even when flying*. Spiritual meaning: Although God’s Word is available for all, it is not understood by all. God’s attributes are in His Word, but they are hidden unless one is in harmony with Him. His precepts are sprinkled (hidden) in His Word, here a little, there a little (Isa. 28:10,13). To one class the Bible is confusion and seeming contradiction; to the other class it has harmony and understanding. The wings effectively hide the plan, the character, and the purposes of God. Why? so that the permission of evil can try the consecrated and give them persecutions.

Ezekiel, on the other hand, saw the cherub body because there were only two pairs of wings. When the cherub flew, the lower wings flapped, revealing the body. Ezekiel could see that the body was hidden at rest and revealed in motion. Thus he saw both aspects. As for the world, Satan has blinded their eyes lest they see the glorious gospel in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). But the Ezekiel class understands.

Isaiah distinguished between the face and the feet (the movements), whereas Ezekiel did

not. Yet in both cases the wings teach the same lesson. Ezekiel explained more, however. Isaiah showed that one pair of wings hides from the world the face of Jehovah (that is, familiarity with Him) and another pair hides His feet (His movements in the earth).

Ezek. 1:24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

This verse begins to describe the living beings and their wings *in motion and operation*. When in action, the lower wings made a great noise (a “noise of great waters”); that is, they sounded like Niagara Falls—a thunderous, voluminous sound like much water cascading over a precipice into a stream below.

The wings also sounded like “the voice of the Almighty.” (In writing down these descriptions after having the vision, Ezekiel tried to record the details in the order noticed.) The sound of the wings was the “voice of speech.” In other words, the wings, which are a symbol of the “Word” of God, are His voice or speech, which has a depth, a volume, a majesty (the “noise of great waters”). “Waters” fittingly represent many people and tongues. Since the Bible has been translated into the various languages of earth, God communicates His thinking to people in their own language. He can speak through the Bible to millions of people at the same time.

In the awesome picture of God in Isaiah 6:1–4, His voice was so powerful that it shook the timbers of the house, indicating the ultimate removal of that house (that which can be shaken will collapse). “And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isa. 6:4).

Ezekiel gave still another description of the wings; namely, they made “the noise of an host.” The thought is that God is conversant in all the languages of earth. He can communicate the message of truth in a person’s own vocabulary and language. Jesus superintends the consecrated as a high priest, and the communication comes through the Word from an *invisible* God. Just reading the Word can bring radical reform in a reprobate. *Power* from the *living* Word creates a miracle. God speaks in a majestic voice! Incidentally, when God spoke during Jesus’ ministry, those who heard were not able to distinguish the words but said it had thundered (John 12:29).

When the living beings moved, the two wings that covered their bodies were activated with *noise* (like great waters, like the noise of a host), but when they returned and stood still, the two wings ceased their action and dropped down to cover their bodies on each side, and there was *silence*.

Ezek. 1:25 And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

The living beings were standing still, in repose, and “had let down their wings” when Ezekiel heard a voice through the solid pavement firmament over their heads. The voice came through as stereophonic sound. The prophet was being prepared for the source of the voice, which was *God Himself*. The Almighty’s voice became activated when the cherubim were stationary (in repose waiting to receive a message) with the lower pair of wings covering their bodies. When the living beings were moving (in flight), they were *transmitting* a message. They were ready, eager, willing, and very responsive in running out

with messages. When they returned, they stood at attention, showing respect, reverence, and deference to God. When they got another message, they ran out again, doing as they were told. When they returned, they were instructed by the voice over them. The living beings are messengers and sentinels of God. The beautiful harmony of the four attributes is seen here.

Ezekiel 10 helps us to understand Ezekiel 1 by showing that the “let down” lower pair of wings had nothing to do with supporting the platform (“firmament”). These wings, which at rest covered the entire body, were the wings that started the flight. Therefore, if the living beings were not moving, the upper pair of wings were stretched out and held the throne and the lower pair of wings covered the body. (With each cherub having two pairs of wings, there were two wings on the left side and two on the right side.)

Ezek. 1:26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Above the platform, above the awesome clear (pure) barrier, Ezekiel saw a throne—the back side of a chair—that appeared like a solid jewel, a (blue) sapphire stone. In other words, the whole fabric of the throne was stone, and only *one* stone was used. The throne represents God’s seat of authority and judgment. The blue of the sapphire, like the blue heavens, portrays faithfulness, God’s dependable nature. Thus mercy is implied here, and the throne is meant to be comforting.

Above the storm clouds is the peaceful, true blue of the heavens. As long as the heavens endure—the sun, moon, and stars—so will God’s Word endure. If man can nullify the heavens, then he can nullify God’s Word—but man cannot break the sun’s attraction with the earth, etc. The heavens are, therefore, a symbol of constancy and foreverness, hence *faithfulness*. Blue is a symbol of faithfulness just as a sail on the horizon represents the whole sailboat. The (blue) star sapphire even contains gold specks that appear to be stars.

Next Ezekiel saw the likeness of a man who was *huge*—much larger than the large cherubim. The likeness was the shape or physiognomy of a man seated in the throne. Ezekiel did not see the face, just the hips and legs, above which there was a brilliant radiance. He saw the beginning of a torso and then an effulgence of light that obliterated the form.

Ezek. 1:27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

The illumination in the center part of the body—a fire that glowed outward with a halo—showed the being had *tremendous virility and power*. Ezekiel could see only the “loins” (the bottom half) of the man, not the upper body or head. The man represented Jehovah. There was a brightness downward, like a halo, but an intense illumination upward that obscured above the loins, above the hips and thighs.

Ezekiel likened the color “amber,” or burnished brass, to fire. Round about and in the throne was a flame, a brilliance of light, that obscured the top portion of what looked like a man. In other words, the personality of God was seated in that throne. The American

Revised Standard reads: “And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire enclosed round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him.” The *actual* personality of God cannot be pictured by any literal creature except that He is a male. God’s character (His attributes) is described but not Him personally.

Ezek. 1:28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

In verse 27 Ezekiel explained who was in the throne. Now he said that the whole throne with the personage on it was surrounded or encircled by a rainbow. The *living* Word is a light that shines more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18). Ezekiel fell on his face. Then he heard the somewhat toned-down voice of God trying to comfort him. The rainbow reminds us of both the emerald-colored rainbow, or arc, about God’s throne in the Apocalypse and the rainbow Noah saw after the Flood, the *token* between God and all living flesh that never again would they all be destroyed by a flood (Gen. 9:11–17; Rev. 4:3).

The unsettling, awesome aspect of the vision made Ezekiel aware he was nothing. In humility he fell on his face. Now he needed to be strengthened, and the rainbow shows the vision was intended to be an encouragement. Our experience is similar. While God, in giving these visions, wants us to realize our nothingness, our littleness, He does not mean to discourage us. To the contrary, He lifts us up and gives us these visions to *encourage* us. His purpose is not to destroy all flesh. The blue (faithfulness) of the sapphire is also encouraging. God’s intention is beneficent.

Ezekiel had just seen a vision of the glory of *Almighty God*, a word portrait in symbolism, of Jehovah’s character. The tenth chapter also describes the glory of God. The *entire* arrangement of the visions—the cherubim, wheels, platform, throne, and the personality on the throne—pictures *God’s glory*.

Imperfect, fallen man is dull in his sensitivity and desire to understand the Word. However, a Christian should have *honesty, humility, and hunger* (the *desire* to know). We are to search for truth as for hid treasure, that is, *diligently and perseveringly* (Prov. 2:3–5). We are to SEARCH, not just read, and to DESIRE UNDERSTANDING.

Vision of the Glory of God

Discourse given by Bro. Frank Shallieu, June 7, 1998

Note: Because of the importance of the vision of the glory of God, Bro. Frank chose to give a discourse that would consider the subject as a whole.

When we read Chapter 1, we notice immediately that the first three verses are a prologue. They are introductory, explaining the historical circumstances of the prophet’s experience.

Verse 1: Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

Verse 2: In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,

Verse 3: The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The thirtieth year was not necessarily the thirtieth year of a Jubilee cycle but the thirtieth year of Ezekiel's life. As a priest, his ministry started at age 30—and particularly as a high priest. Although the account does not state he was a high priest and history does not verify the fact, he was in that role, to all practical purposes, under these unusual circumstances. Possibly the reason he was given such a wonderful vision is that he was high priest.

There is an interesting parallel with our Lord. When Ezekiel was at the river Chebar at age 30, "the heavens were opened" to him and he saw visions of God. Likewise, when Jesus was baptized at the river Jordan at age 30, the "heavens were opened unto him" (Matt. 3:16).

The river Chebar was in the nation of Babylon, specifically in the land of Chaldea. Ezekiel was probably a captive in the vicinity of Nippur, a city that was 10 to 15 miles southeast of Babylon, the capital city. The Hebrew word *Chebar* corresponds with the Syriac *Kabara*, which means "the great digging." *Kabara* is the noun form of the verb "to dig." In other words, Chebar was the famous royal canal.

It was also the fifth year of the captivity of King Jehoiachin, which corresponded with the fifth year of Zedekiah, the last king of the nation of Israel. The city of Jerusalem was captured and destroyed in the eleventh year of King Zedekiah, so this setting in Chapter 1 was prior to the destruction. The ten-tribe kingdom was taken captive much, much earlier. Ezekiel was apparently taken to Babylon at the time of Jehoiachin's (Jeconiah's) captivity, the result of a Babylonian incursion into Judah. Thus the prophet was in Babylonian exile among the captives of Judah prior to the 70-year captivity that began in 606 BC.

It is very interesting that "the word of the LORD came *expressly* unto Ezekiel." In other words, the prophet was peculiarly selected and honored by God to receive the subsequent vision. At this time both Daniel and Jeremiah were alive, but Ezekiel is the one to whom the vision was given. Being in the capital, Daniel was only a few miles away from Ezekiel when the vision of Chapter 1 occurred.

"The hand of the LORD" was upon Ezekiel. It was like resting the right hand of approval on the prophet's shoulder. The point is that God thought highly of Ezekiel as an individual, and accordingly, He conferred a particular honor on the prophet. God put His Holy Spirit into Ezekiel's mind (and body even, as it were) in the experiences the prophet would have off and on during his ministry, but continuously as far as Chapter 1 is concerned.

Verse 4: And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

Verse 4 begins the narration of the experience Ezekiel had on this occasion. Before examining the detail, we will back off and look at the vision as a whole. What did Ezekiel first see? "A *whirlwind* came out of the north, a *great cloud*, and a fire infolding itself, and a

brightness was about it.” (The word “tornado” is not found in the King James Version.) Was the cloud “great” in the sense of being horizontally embracive, or did it come down to a relative focal point like a tornado? Based on later information this great whirlwind touched down on the earth. Ezekiel saw a great cloud in the distance that was approaching him from the north. Remember, he was near the capital where Daniel was.

The great cloud was “a fire infolding itself”; that is, it was a self-feeding fire—it fed on itself. We are reminded of the incident in Sinai with Moses and the burning bush. Moses noticed a bush in the distance that was burning furiously with a high flame, and yet the bush was not consumed (Exod. 3:2).

A “brightness” was about the cloud. The center part of the cloud was a vividly *glowing* presence of fire, but there was also a bright circumambient glowing or halo effect.

“Out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.” The fire that was cloaked inside the cloud was of such intensity that even though the cloud shrouded it, the fire exuded a glow or brilliance that Ezekiel likened to amber.

Verse 5: Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.

After seeing the cloud, Ezekiel next noticed “the likeness of four living creatures” coming out of the midst of the cloud. The word “beings” is more accurate than “creatures”: four living beings. “They had the likeness of a man”; that is, the body, or torso, of each of the living creatures resembled a human form, but the extremities—the head and the feet—were different, as later details will reveal.

This is a moving picture, a scenario. First, Ezekiel saw a very impressive cloud and then, dropping down or descending from the cloud, the four cherubim. In fact, they would even touch the earth with their wheels (verse 15). The prophet now became enthralled with the details of these beings and related matters. He next saw wheels and then a “likeness of the firmament [a platform] upon the heads of the living creature” (verse 22). The account clearly shows that the living creatures, the wheels, the platform, etc., were descending. Verse 26 states that on top of the platform that was over the heads of the cherubim there was a throne. The last verse reveals that the vision pertained to God Himself, to His glory. And that is the significance: This vision is a *symbolic* representation of *God Himself* in GREAT detail. And since it is a *vision* of the glory of God, the conveyance has nothing whatever to do with a literal mechanism or chariot. Now back to the detail.

Ezek. 1:6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.

Four faces surrounded the skull of each living being. There was only one neck stem but four faces on the skull instead of one. Moreover, every one of the living creatures had four wings.

Ezek. 1:7 And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.

Ezekiel noticed the peculiarity of the design of the feet of the living beings: “Their feet were straight feet.” Certain animals have feet designed anatomically by God for forward movement rather than for side movement. For example, cows plod forward. If they have to

suddenly turn, they cannot just step sideways but have to almost lift up their top two feet and wheel about.

“The sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot.” The thought is that the hooves were parted, cloven. In Leviticus the Law designated as clean food those animals that had a parted hoof and chewed the cud. Thus a cow, or calf, is a clean animal. “And they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.” The feet were sort of glorified but down here on earth. “Burnished brass,” which is highly polished and refined brass, resembles gold but, like copper, pertains to humanity and the earth.

Ezek. 1:8 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

Subsequent verses show the disposition of the hands under the wings. A human being has a pair of hands, which are joined, as it were, by going up the arm, through the shoulder, and down the other arm. The wings were also paired, as will be seen, and joined through the shoulder mechanism. The hands were not seen unless the wings were uplifted.

“On their four sides.” The living beings were positioned or stationed on the four sides of the base, the platform, of the symbolic chariot. Although Ezekiel was watching a moving scene, the movement was sufficiently slow for him to discern details. As the vision gradually unfolded, he noted the details. We will find out that each cherub had four wings that were paired—thus two sets of wings.

The account is emphasizing that the four living beings were identical. The peculiarity of one being was the same peculiarity of the other three beings.

Ezek. 1:9 Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

The pronouns “their” and “they” continue to refer to the cherubim. The cherubim “turned not when they went.”

This vision has a spiritual significance. What began to unlock the vision was the Harvest truth message. Bro. H. Mann first described the four living creatures as representing the four attributes of God’s character—a very unusual observation. Bro. Russell picked up and endorsed that clue immediately, frequently referring to the four attributes in his writings. He changed the meaning of two of the attributes to correctly identify the four as Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power. Bro. Mann’s clue was valuable because it showed that the four cherubim do not represent literal beings, either angelic or human, but characteristics. Even the world uses such representation. For instance, Justice is portrayed as a blindfolded individual. Thus it is not unusual for a sculpted statuesque being to represent a virtue or grace, but to identify the four living beings in Ezekiel as the four attributes of God fits the picture perfectly as we examine the contents of the vision.

The wings, which we subsequently find represent the Word of God, “were joined one to another” as the Old and the New Testament. The woman (the true Church) fled on the wings of an eagle (the Holy Scriptures) into the wilderness (a separate place or desert condition) for the 1,260-year period ending in 1799 at the time of the French Revolution (Rev. 12:14). In other words, the Scriptures comforted and sustained true Christians in their flight and solitude, enabling them to keep their faith.

The symbolism is verified later in the vision, but we are trying to spiritualize as we proceed in order to substantiate not only the literal aspect of the appearance of the vision but its symbolic representation. What about the hand under each wing? In the Old Testament God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets. His thinking, His direction, and His instruction were revealed through both Old and New Testament prophets. God's method is to speak to His people through *human* agencies. Therefore, it is fitting that the hand was coupled with the wing, for dispensational truth in particular was revealed in this way.

Ezek. 1:10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

Let us keep in mind that this is a vision. The words "likeness" and "appearance" indicate a *symbolic* picture of God and His method of procedural performance, especially pertaining to judgments down here on the earth. God does not in any sense actually look like these descriptions.

Each of the four living beings had four faces: "the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." In other words, the faces were diagonal in repose: northeast, southeast, northwest, and southwest. From Ezekiel's particular perspective he could clearly see all four faces.

The spiritual application of the faces is as follows:

1. Man was made in the image of God with a soft heart. (Sin brought in the stony heart, the calcification or hardening.) Therefore, the man's face symbolizes *Love*.
2. Scriptural applications have been given for the lion to represent either Power or Justice, but *Justice* is the correct interpretation here. Ezekiel 41:19 reads, "The face of a *man* [Love] was toward the palm tree [a symbol of victory] on the one side, and the face of a young *lion* [Justice] toward the palm tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about." Although one cherub on the Ark of the Covenant portrays that God is Love, the base of His four attributes, the foundation of His throne, is shown to be Justice because the Love cherub is attached to the Mercy Seat. The attribute that human beings are concerned with is Love—but Love being exercised in the phase of *Mercy*. It is God's Love that attracts the Christian. When one realizes he is a sinner but wants to have fellowship with God, the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, he is overjoyed to find out that God dwells with the repentant, the lowly, the humble. Awareness of that appealing quality draws the sinner to desire more fellowship with God. Therefore, the Love of God now, as far as mankind in weakness and imperfection is concerned, is Mercy, Pity, Sympathy, Tenderness, Approachableness, Compassion—all different phases of Love—but when perfection is reached at the end of the Kingdom, the attribute will be just Love. Mercy and Pity will no longer be needed in the way, way, distant future, in the endless ages of time when all is in harmony. Love will then be operative in its resplendent form, but at present other forms are needed.

The lion is associated with Solomon's throne (1 Kings 10:18–20). Lions on different tiers going down from the throne represent judgment. Thus the throne is a symbol of Justice. Power is there too, but Justice is the most appealing factor of government. A government

should be just and pure in its enactments. And so we find that Love and Justice must be reconciled. God, in His Love, could not just receive the sinner back to Himself but had to be just and the Justifier of the party seeking repentance. Justice was satisfied in that God provided a Redeemer, Jesus, to cover our sins and be our Advocate. Thus God could deal with the Christian during the Gospel Age in a sonship sense through Christ. Our prayers are directed to God but made acceptable through the merit of His Son. In the Third Temple, therefore, Justice and Love are shown facing a palm tree between them, brought to victory.

In Isaiah 42:1, we begin to read that story: “Behold my servant [Jesus], whom I [God] uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: *he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*” Unrepentant sinners are “Gentiles” in the sense of sonship, as it were, whether they are actually Jew or Gentile. But Jesus changed the situation with the addendum that judgment will be brought forth to victory: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, *till he send forth judgment unto victory [to the palm tree]*” (Matt. 12:20). Because Jesus is looking for the salvation of the individual, he will deal not brusquely but tenderly with the one who feels weak and has no confidence in himself. Thus the reconciliation of Love and Justice will be shown by the palm tree in the Third Temple. Justice formerly condemned, but Love found a way.

Another Scripture that proves the lion represents Justice is Ezekiel 43:15, “So the altar shall be four cubits; and from the altar [Hebrew *ariel* meaning ‘lion of God’] and upward shall be four horns.” The altar (a symbol of Justice) had four horns. Justice is pictured by the very name of the altar: *ariel* (lion). (*Ariel* means both altar and lion.)

3. The four horns (symbol of power) picture the disbursement of God’s Justice—the power of its distribution is to the four corners of the earth or to whomever the altar is dealing with in a particular setting. The horns of an ox, steer, bullock, or bull all represent *Power*. We even have the common saying “the strength of an ox.” Because of its strength, an ox was used to pull a plow.

4. The last symbol, the face of an eagle, pictures *Wisdom*, God’s farsightedness.

Ezek. 1:11 Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

The upper pair of wings was stretched outward and upward (“divided above” in the King James margin). In Solomon’s Temple the wings were stretched outward, and the two large cherubim in the Most Holy were pictured as standing side by side, their wings’ touching the wall. The positioning shows God’s intent, the ultimate outcome of His plan, which He knows in advance because He sees the end from the beginning.

The word “joined” is “kissed” in the Hebrew, indicative of the tender relationship between the Old and the New Testament, the two wings. The two witnesses embrace one another (Rev. 11:4). Those who speak not according to the testimony of *both* Testaments have no light in them. In one sense, the two tablets that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai represent the Old and New Testament (in another sense, they represent duty to God and duty to man).

“And two [wings] covered their bodies.” The upper two wings of each cherub were stretched outward, while the lower two wings covered the body. This disposition of the wings harmonizes with Isaiah 6, where the cherubim each had three pairs of wings; but here they

each had two pairs of wings. God's plans, thinking, etc., are both hidden in His Word and revealed in His Word. Some things are not meant to be understood. As the wings were lifted up, the arms ("hands") were revealed, thus signifying that prophecy is given in advance often through human agency.

Ezek. 1:12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.

The living beings do not deviate off course or deflect in another direction. When God's attributes go into action, when they are in pursuit of accomplishment, *nothing deters them*; they go direct to what is intended to be done.

Ezek. 1:13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.

Each living being had a fire lamp or lamp of fire. The up-and-down movement of the lamps pictures inspection. The revealment—the intellectual enlightenment or understanding—of God's Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Power comes from the lamp of God's Word. Stated another way, the attributes are understood through the medium of knowledge.

"Out of the fire went forth lightning." The flashes indicate that not only is God's Word revealed when the inspection process takes place but there are occasional moments of supernatural revealment. For example, sometimes in the Pastor's writings, he made comments that were out of this world, as it were—as if he were suddenly transported. In hymns, too, we sometimes see unusual perspectives. That type of brilliance comes off and on (if it were sustained, it would be too overwhelming for us in our imperfect state). For example, when angels appeared to men, the men had to be sustained with strength in order to receive the instruction and/or message. Otherwise, they would have been so overwhelmed that the communication would be forgotten.

Ezek. 1:14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

God's Word does not return unto Him void but accomplishes all that is purposed (Isa. 55:11). When God decides to go into action, nothing can deter His attributes.

Ezek. 1:15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.

One wheel was at the side of each cherub. A symbol of progress, the wheel represents the plan of God. Time progression is shown. Ages are sometimes depicted by semicircles, but those semicircles are emblematic of whole circles, that is, of the progression of time to an event. Based on the thought of a circle, God's Word goes forth, accomplishes its purpose, and returns. "The living creatures ran and returned" (verse 14), and the wheels accompanied them.

Ezek. 1:16 The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

"Beryl" should be chrysolite, the chrysolithos stone, the stone of gold, which is also a

symbol of wisdom. On the breastplate of the high priest, the chrysolithos stone (called “beryl” in the King James) in the bottom right corner (from the viewer’s standpoint) represented the tribe of Dan and wisdom.

“Their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.” Spokes (strakes) supported the outer rim. Normally spokes extrude from the hub of a wheel and attach to the rim so that the wheel and the hub move together. But here each wheel consisted of a larger outer wheel and a smaller inner wheel. The outer wheel pictures the great dispensations: the three worlds on the Chart of the Ages (the World Before the Flood, the World That Now Is, and the Everlasting World to Come). Inside large dispensations are smaller ages and activities: the Patriarchal Age, the Jewish Age, the Gospel Age, and the Kingdom Age.

Ezek. 1:17 When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.

When the cherubim on the four sides went, their wheels went also, and they turned not. Just as the living beings did not deviate from the purpose but went direct, so the wheel accompanied them and also did not deviate.

If this were a literal vision, we would expect the platform to collapse when the four cherubim who supported it simultaneously went out on errands. But the cherubim went out and returned so quickly—in a nanosecond, as it were—that we are not to even think along these lines. This is a spiritual picture, so we should try not to give it too much of a practical, mechanical application.

Ezek. 1:18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.

The rims of the outer wheels were so high they were awesome—they caused reverential awe. “Their rings [strakes, spokes] were full of eyes round about them four.” In addition to the chrysolithos stone of wisdom, the eyes are a symbol of intelligence. In other words, “How His plan His wisdom shows.”

Ezek. 1:19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.

Ezek. 1:20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

Ezek. 1:21 When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.

The living creatures and their wheels were inseparable, showing that God does not operate in a haphazard or random fashion. He knows the end from the beginning. There are no ifs, ands, or buts.

The wheels seemed to have an intelligence, a spirit, in them, and yet, on the other hand, a spirit was also in the living beings. While both seemed to have an intelligence, the source of that intelligence in a *modified* perspective was the living beings *below* the platform.

However, subsequent verses will show that the *real* source was *above* the platform and in the throne; that is, God Himself. (Ezekiel was describing the vision in the order of its revelation to him, and thus far he could not see the throne.)

Ezek. 1:22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.

The “firmament” or platform rested upon the heads of the living creatures, and on the platform were God and His throne. Of course God does not need angels or any literal support, for there was a time when He dwelled alone. This reasoning further confirms that the living beings represent the four attributes of God (and not literal beings) and that they are the foundation of His character.

Genesis 1:6–8 speaks of the “firmament” in connection with the Creative Days. The firmament is aerial space. In a more limited sense, it is the circumambient air or atmosphere that surrounds planet earth and/or earth’s solar system. In the larger sense the firmament includes the many stars we see at nighttime—the entire heavens.

Ezekiel saw that the firmament or platform was the color of awesome “crystal,” which is the Hebrew word *qerach*, also translated “ice” or “frost.” In other words, the platform resembled the aerial firmament but in a solidified transparent form, almost like glass.

Certain phrases are repeated in this first chapter of Ezekiel to let the subject matter sink down into our ears, hearts, and minds. This type of repetition is good, whereas our repetition is sometimes vain (Matt 6:7).

Ezek. 1:23 And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.

Each cherub and its upper pair of wings covered a complete side of the platform. When the wings of the living beings were stretched out to the corners of the platform, each wing touched a corresponding wing of another cherub so that the four cherubim were all embracive, completely covering the four sides of the platform underneath.

“Every one [of the four living beings] had two [other wings], which covered on that side, their bodies.” Each cherub also had a lower pair of wings that covered its body.

Ezek. 1:24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.

When the living beings went and their wings were activated, the wings sounded or functioned like amplifiers, for they broadcast the thinking and message of the One above. This verse is saying, in effect, that the wings were the Word of God, for they were the loudspeakers. When they expressed God’s thinking, they expressed it in the language of a host; that is, they did not just speak in English, Greek, Spanish, etc., for God communicates with His people in the language of the environment in which they reside—in the language they understand. He understands *all* languages and thus speaks in a distributive fashion. An illustration is the American Bible Society, which not only translates the Bible in all languages of earth but is trying to translate it into all dialects.

The noise of the wings was “the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host.” In other words, the sound was not babel or confusion, even though it was multitudinous and the noise of a host. It was the noise of “speech,” of *intelligence*. There was *meaning* to this sound.

“When they [the living beings] stood [still], they let down their wings [the lower pair of wings that covered the body].”

Ezek. 1:25 And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.

Ezek. 1:26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Ezek. 1:27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

The composition of the throne was like a sapphire stone. With sapphire being blue, we think of the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” In the sapphire are brasslike flecks, which are considered by the jeweler to be impurities, but they are actually part of God’s intentional design to correspond with the stars in the firmament of heaven.

“Upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and ... downward, ... the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.” Ezekiel now began to describe the throne and the One on that throne. Underneath the chair or throne was a glowing fire showing harnessed POWER. The personage seated on the throne appeared like a man in the sense that he had legs and the bottom half of his torso could be seen. From the appearance of his loins both upward and downward could be seen a glowing fire, a halo of brilliance. Who can dwell amidst the eternal burnings? “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Isa. 33:14) Only those who are humble and pure in heart can so dwell. This *purifying* fire will not destroy those who are in harmony with God, but it does destroy imperfections. The word “fire” comes from *purrhos* in Greek, which is related to the words “pure” and “pyre.” In a funeral pyre, a corpse is burned. God’s presence is purifying, and nothing imperfect or impure can be in that setting. God willing, we hope to be changed so that we can face God and be in His presence with our sins literally gone. Thus the fire is a welcome sign or experience for cleaning impurities in the one class, but it is destruction to the class who will not get life. In the distant future, no evil will be permitted.

Notice that God’s face, head, shoulders, arms, and chest—the upper part of the body—were not described, just His loins downward. Ezekiel could see just enough to realize a being was seated on the throne, which verse 28 reveals to be God.

Ezek. 1:28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of

one that spake.

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about [the throne].” We are reminded of the rainbow that appeared for the first time after the Flood. God said it represented that He would not destroy humanity *utterly* in the future, leaving only eight people as in Noah’s day. While judgments and cleansing would occur, a remnant—survivors—would be left, and they would be more than eight individuals. God, in His mercy, would save as many people as possible without interfering with their own freewill moral agency. The bow in the cloud thus becomes a symbol of God’s faithfulness and mercy and a covenant of promise.

Exodus 24:9–11 furnishes helpful information. “Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.” The account adds the interesting detail that they ate afterwards, as if to say, “After seeing the exalted, awesome vision, they survived!” This incident occurred after Moses had sprinkled the blood of bullocks and goats on the people. By inference God was seen seated on a throne, the foundation of which was a sapphire stone. The description “the body of heaven in his [its] clearness” ties in with the stone’s picturing the firmament of heaven. The surface of the platform appeared to be paved. Tile could be seen, as it were, but the tile was transparent with the body of heaven below.

For the next several chapters, the “voice of one that spake,” i.e., the voice of *God*, will speak to Ezekiel, giving him instruction about what would happen and details about judgments that would be fulfilled on the nation of Israel. In Chapter 10 Ezekiel had a repetitive or similar experience with a vision of the four living beings and God’s throne. The first chapter explains the principles of divine operation; it is a vocabulary or dictionary of the meaning of various symbols that God uses in His Word. With all the particularity of detail that describes the glory of God, Chapter 1 does not tell what He is doing. No deeds are mentioned. Chapter 1 just gives the basis of the vision, whereas in subsequent chapters, God begins to act, a voice instructs Ezekiel what to do, and the prophet sees many things. When we get to Chapter 10, the Holy Spirit assumes we already know what the symbols represent, so it then shows a separation between the platform and the living beings. Thus there is additional information in the tenth chapter.

Ezek. 2:1 And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee.

Ezek. 2:2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.

Why did God address Ezekiel as “son of man,” and why did God speak to him only after he had stood up on his feet? “Son of man” was a term of humility to remind Ezekiel of his position and to keep him from being exalted as a result of seeing the glorious vision. It was a privilege to see the vision, but he was not selected because he was better than anyone else. As a result of the awesome vision, Ezekiel fell prostrate on his face and retained no strength (Ezek. 1:28). He was almost in a state of shock and needed strengthening. Although he heard the words, they were meaningless. Not until God strengthened him to stand on his feet did the message make sense and penetrate. At that point the Holy Spirit entered him.

Jesus and Daniel were also addressed as “Son of man,” although Jesus was “*the* Son of [*the*] man [Adam].” The title was used *repeatedly* for Ezekiel, and he was honored more than any of his contemporaries, even Daniel, in being given a vision of the *glory of God*. However, Ezekiel did not compare to Daniel, for Daniel, Job, and Noah were especially singled out, and Daniel was called “beloved” (Dan. 9:23; 10:11,19; Ezek. 14:14,20). Nevertheless, Ezekiel was the fittest man among the group that was to be addressed. (He dwelled among the captives, or more common Israelites, whereas Daniel was in the king’s court in Babylon.)

“The spirit entered into me when he [God] spake unto me, and set me upon my feet.” The influx of the Holy Spirit strengthened Ezekiel, and he associated the strength with God’s talking to him. What is the lesson for the Lord’s people now? The Bible is the Word of God. If its precepts are received into a good and honest heart, the individual is strengthened for God’s purpose. The Holy Spirit also enabled Ezekiel to hear (*understand*). Even the communication itself was a miracle.

Ezek. 2:3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.

Ezekiel was being sent on a special authorized mission to the children of Israel. A strong message was necessary because of their rebelliousness.

The term “rebellious nation” is in the plural in the Hebrew: nations, *goyim* (a derogatory term used in Israel for the Gentiles). The plural includes the two houses of Israel (the ten tribes and the two tribes). Although Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon with King Jehoiachin and some from Judah, the word “nation” is plural because some of both tribes were in captivity at this time, and later still others of Judah would also hear his message. To address the Israelites as *goyim* meant God was rebuking them. He was addressing them as Gentiles because they were in a measure alienated from Him through rebellion and transgression.

Ezek. 2:4 For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.

The Israelites were impudent (“hard of face” in the Hebrew) and stiff-hearted. In other words, they would resist Ezekiel both in countenance and in their hearts.

Ezek. 2:5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

Whether the Israelites accepted or rejected Ezekiel’s message, they would know (*ultimately*) that there had been a prophet of God among them. Ezekiel would be vindicated when his prophecies came true, and shame would befall his previous detractors.

Ezek. 2:6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

God told Ezekiel not to fear the leaders and influential personages or their words. Ezekiel dwelled among briers and thorns (the common people) and scorpions (those who were more influential). Briers and thorns are discomfiting, but they are not poisonous and

deadly like scorpions. God was informing Ezekiel that his message would be very unpopular; that is, his daily life would be continually criticized by those of no value. He would feel the hurt in proportion to the influence and prestige of the attackers.

God was telling Ezekiel in advance: "Though I give you this message, it will not be accepted. In fact, the populace as a whole will reject it, but preach the message nevertheless, and do not be afraid of their looks." Because of his strong denunciations, Ezekiel was called "the Moses of the captivity." Christians who utter uncompromising proclamations of truth also have the experience of dwelling among briars, thorns, and scorpions, as it were. The feet members will have a parallel experience at the end of the age.

Ezek. 2:7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.

Ezek. 2:8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.

"Thou shalt speak my words [to the rebellious house of Israel]... hear what I say." In other words, "Listen again; I am repeating." As in verse 4, God was telling Ezekiel to speak His words unto the rebellious Israelites, to speak with a "Thus saith the Lord GOD." Moreover, Ezekiel was told to open his mouth and "eat that I give thee," meaning he was to *assimilate God's message*. The opening of the mouth indicates a lack of prejudice, a receiving of the Word with all readiness of mind. For example, the Bereans of old "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"; they "ate," or analyzed, the Word (Acts 17:11).

Ezek. 2:9 And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;

Ezekiel was instructed to "eat" the "roll of a book"; that is, he was to absorb the message of the scroll God gave him. The "hand" came from one of the living creatures (a hand was under each wing—Ezek. 1:8). Ezekiel represents the Lord's people. In Ezekiel 40:3,4 a "brass" man (brass or copper shows human nature) gave a message and instruction to Ezekiel (to the Lord's people) to declare to the nation of Israel.

In Isaiah 6:1–8, the prophet saw the Lord and seraphim in vision. In witnessing the vision, Isaiah felt he was not worthy. Not only did he feel undone, but he dwelled in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Then a seraph flew to Isaiah with a live coal from the altar, laid it on the prophet's mouth and lips, and said, "Thy sin is purged." Instead of being badly burned, Isaiah found the coal had a cleansing effect—a purging and strengthening effect. The coal (or message) helped prepare Isaiah for his ministry.

The previous chapter (Isaiah 5) contains some pertinent warnings. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isa. 5:20). "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their *own* [not the Lord's] sight!" (Isa. 5:21). "Woe unto them that ... justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (Isa. 5:22,23). Now we can see why Isaiah said (in Chapter 6) that he dwelled in the midst of people with unclean lips. There are similarities in Isaiah's and Ezekiel's getting the commission of a message from the Lord.

Ezek. 2:10 And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

The hand spread out the scroll before Ezekiel. Writing was on both the front and the back: “lamentations, and mourning, and woe.” (In Revelation 5:1, Jesus was given a similar scroll with writing on the outside and the inside.) Perhaps Ezekiel saw just a title on the outside. At any rate, the scroll contained a STRONG message of lamentation, mourning, and woe for others—and also for himself in meeting opposition when he delivered the unpopular message. The message was like a two-edged sword (Rev. 1:16). When Ezekiel read the scroll, he saw mostly problems and trouble, although the last nine chapters of the Book of Ezekiel are very comforting in regard to the restoration of Israel.

Ezek. 3:1 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

Ezek. 3:2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

Ezek. 3:3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

Ezekiel was instructed to “eat” the scroll and then go speak to the house of Israel. God “caused” (helped) him to literally eat the scroll (like celery) until it was wholly consumed. While Ezekiel was eating, the scroll was sweet as honey in his mouth, but as it went into his belly, his bowels were *filled* with the message. The prophet both literally and mentally assimilated the message. He read, perceived, and thoroughly digested the scroll so that he could deliver a strong message to the house of Israel.

We are reminded of Revelation 10:8–11, where the John class is told to eat dispensational truth, which is sweet as honey in the mouth but then becomes bitter in the belly. In the near future the feet members will have to give a *strong* message of truth to nominal Christendom, the theme being one of impending judgment—of lamentation, mourning, and woe. The coal in Isaiah’s mouth similarly purged and strengthened him (Isa. 6:6–8).

Why or how was the scroll sweet as honey in Ezekiel’s mouth? Just as our appreciation of a sweet dessert is first apparent in the mouth, so Ezekiel, being a righteous man, liked the message when he first heard (ate) it. When we initially hear and come into present truth, we love the harmony and symmetry; we have an intellectual appreciation. Subsequently we realize the responsibility to consecrate. In order for us to get the full value, the mouth of our belly has to open—we must accept the responsibility of the truth and of consecration.

Back to Ezekiel’s experience and the sensation of sweetness in his mouth like honey. Prior to the “hard” message to come, Ezekiel was given a magnificent “sweet” vision of the glory of God (Chapter 1). Having chosen him to be a prophet to the Israelites, God opened his insight to things not humanly possible to discern, but there was a price to pay. A similar principle operates when we consecrate. For a time we are favored with sunshine, gentle rain, nice grass, and comforting messages of the Kingdom, restitution, the high calling, etc. We need milk and nutriment to develop as a babe, but later on we find there is a cost to pay. We are given understanding to instill hope and encouragement, but we must also live a Christian life. As we mature, we are supposed to be Christian soldiers and fight *battles*. It is a fight of faith and a fight against powers and principalities. If we react favorably to these

tests, they develop us and help to crystallize our characters.

Ezek. 3:4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

Ezek. 3:5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel;

Ezek. 3:6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee.

Ezek. 3:7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted.

The “people of a strange speech and of an hard language” for communicating were the Chaldeans. They were a tough people, but if Ezekiel had spoken to these barbarians, they would have accepted his message. The principle was the same when Jesus said to those of the Galilee area, “If the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had seen the miracles done here, they would have repented” (Matt. 10:15; 11:23,24). Thus we often find it difficult to communicate with those in Babylon, the professed nominal Church. Not only will they not listen, but they will not give us the opportunity to speak. Opposition will occur and we must be prepared for it. But there is another aspect too. The suggestion is that many of our trials may be closer to home. Such a trial could develop in the *true* Church, for nominalism can creep into our midst, and we will have experiences trying to combat that influence. Ezekiel was in the *midst* of the captives (the consecrated in antitype). They spoke the *same* language; hence they were not Babylonians.

God told Ezekiel in advance that the house of Israel would not listen, for they were all “impudent and hardhearted.” What a strong indictment! The vast majority (great and small) would not receive the message. However, there were *individuals* here and there who responded favorably to Ezekiel’s message.

Ezek. 3:8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads.

Ezek. 3:9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house.

Ezekiel’s face and forehead were made strong and harder than flint against the Israelites’ faces so that he would “fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks.” This suggests that the Israelites’ faces and foreheads were also hard (they were upset, angry, and displeased), but God made Ezekiel’s face and forehead even harder—like adamant stone (such as the diamond) and thus harder than flint. He would be stern and unyielding in matters of principle, and in the message he had to discharge, he would not be cowed or affected in the least by the reaction of the people.

Flint is inflexible. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had *strong* messages. In fact, *all of the prophets* had strong messages. Consider Ezra, for example. He must have been a forceful character to make the Israelites separate permanently, with no communication, from their heathen wives and children.

In fighting, the forehead plays a prominent part in goats, moose, and similar animals. A psychological warfare precedes the actual contact. In the favorable sense, the forehead is symbolic of intellectual understanding. The 144,000 will be sealed in their foreheads (Rev. 7:3,4). In the unfavorable sense, the mark of the beast is in the forehead (Rev. 13:16,17). Thus the forehead is indicative of either boldness of sin or boldness of righteousness depending on whether it is used unfavorably or favorably.

Ezek. 3:10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears.

Ezekiel was told to receive and hear *all of God's words—no exceptions*. He was to hear with his ears and receive into his heart *everything* God would tell him.

Ezek. 3:11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

“Get thee to them of the captivity.” Ezekiel was already among captives by the river Chebar, but he was to go to other captives, to those of the larger ten-tribe captivity.

Ezek. 3:12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place.

Ezek. 3:13 I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing.

Ezek. 3:14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.

Thus far Ezekiel was given a vision, a scroll with a message, and then a commission to deliver the message to those in captivity. Next “the spirit” lifted him up and took him to the other captives. In other words, he was *literally translated* to Tel-abib in Syria (verse 15). One of the living creatures seemed to transport him. (Compare Acts 8:39,40 where Philip was translated to Azotus.)

Not only was Ezekiel caught up in the Spirit and taken away, but he heard behind him “a voice of a great rushing,” that is, a sound of great rushing. He heard also “the noise of the wings of the living creatures” and “the noise of the wheels.” (The wings made noise when the cherubim were moving.) The voice said, “Blessed be the glory of the LORD.” Ezekiel heard behind him the sound of the chariot being lifted up from its place into heaven and about to operate. (The hand of the cherub that had given him the scroll could also have lifted him up in translation.) As revealed in Chapter 1, “the spirit” of the cherubim was in the wheels. When the cherubim were lifted up by “the spirit” or will of God, the wheels were also lifted up. The *same* spirit lifted up the cherubim, the wheels, and Ezekiel.

The prophet, greatly enthused, went with the vision while the message from the scroll was hot in his veins. He heard the sound of the wings of the living creatures as they touched one another. This was a *gentle* sound of the wings kissing each other, as it were, showing perfect harmony between the Old and New Testaments. Next Ezekiel heard great activity of the wheels. The inner whirring wheel was discerned as operating. In other words, *Ezekiel was there*—it was a contemporaneous event; the experience was happening to him. The wheel made a tremendous noise like the revving up of a motor, and yet the louder sound

of the wheel was intermingled with the gentler sound of the wings kissing each other. Of course the wheels pertained to the plan of God, and now it was part of God's plan for Ezekiel to deliver a *hard* message.

The revving up of the wheels had a counterpart effect in Ezekiel. Being stirred up, he went "in the heat" of his spirit to deliver the message. Lesson: We need *God's strength and grace* to deliver an unpopular truth. As will be seen later in the judgment message to be delivered to natural Israel, God foretold, through Ezekiel, the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem. The destruction would be a great judgment of lamentation, mourning, and woe. As the live representative of the Lord God, Ezekiel felt the emotion of the message of judgment. Hence he went in the "bitterness" and "heat" of his spirit.

The message "Blessed be the glory of the LORD" is a reminder of Revelation 4:8, where the four living beings rested not day or night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." God's four attributes are always in harmony with His Word and with the time and order of His plan. The noise of the wings was His declarations, and the wheels showed the progress and development of His plan.

Ezek. 3:15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

Ezekiel came to the other captives, who were on the same river Chebar but at Tel-abib, which was about 200 miles north of Babylon. Tel-abib (Tel Aviv) means "hill of green ears." The Chebar was a tributary of the Euphrates River.

When the spirit translated Ezekiel from the site of the vision of the glory of God and set him down at Tel-abib, he sat down immobile, in a state of shock, for seven days. He had eaten (absorbed) the lamentation-mourning-woe message, and now it was his mission to broadcast the message among the captives. But before he could deliver the message, he sat like stone for seven days. He was so filled with emotion that he was silent and in meditation. The seven days of sitting are a reminder of Noah, who waited seven days in the Ark before the rains came; the comforters of Job, who initially sat with him in silence for seven days; the consecration of the priesthood outside the Tabernacle door for seven days; and the silent circuitings of Jericho by Joshua and the Israelites until the seventh day (Gen. 7:4; Job 2:13; Lev. 8:35; Josh. 6:12–16).

It was helpful for the Israelites to see Ezekiel in this state, for they thus *knew* that something had happened. As the days passed, the people got more and more curious, for his condition attracted an audience. Hence God's providence arranged that Ezekiel's astonishment would attract attention and work for good.

Ezek. 3:16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

At the end of the seven days, the word of Jehovah came to Ezekiel. Verses 17–21 show that God appointed Ezekiel to be a watchman, and in that capacity, the prophet had a responsibility to two classes: to the wicked and to the righteous. Today the "righteous" are the consecrated, and the "wicked" are the world. Thus there is a double responsibility of witnessing.

Ezek. 3:17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore

hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.

God said, “Ezekiel, I have made *you* a *watchman* to Israel. *Warn* the people.” The seven days indicate the *end of the age* in antitype.

Ezek. 3:18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

There is a responsibility to warn the wicked of their evil ways. God was telling Ezekiel (the Lord’s people): “Warn the wicked that they will die if they do not repent. If you do not warn them, you will die too.” Those who know us should know where we stand.

Ezek. 3:19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

God continued to charge Ezekiel with the responsibility of warning: “If you warn the wicked and they do not repent, they will die in their sin, but you will live.” Like Noah the consecrated are responsible for being preachers of righteousness, especially the *leadership*. The elders are to be watchmen; they are to warn the sheep and guard them when a wolf in sheep’s clothing is around. If Ezekiel (the elders) keep quiet, they will reap the same reward as those who require warning. God had already told Ezekiel the people would not listen, but he was to preach boldly regardless. (See Ezekiel 33:1–19.)

Ezek. 3:20 Again, When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Ezek. 3:21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These two verses suggest that a righteous element did exist in the disobedient mass, and the righteous were responsible. When Ezekiel warned them, they were to respond and obey. But whether they did or not, Ezekiel had to discharge his duty—or else he would be held accountable.

Many do not realize this is God’s principle. If the righteous turn to iniquity, they die. Much of *man’s* philosophy is mixed into religion today, even in the Truth movement. Brethren think of the works one has done as overriding gross sin. The works may have been commendable, but faithfulness is to be *unto death*. When a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, his righteousness is forgotten (Ezek. 18:24).

The same principle is shown with one who took the Nazarite vow. If he subsequently became unclean, he had to cut off all the hair that had grown and start over again, for the uncleanness negated his past righteousness (Num. 6:1–9).

How does the Lord “lay a stumblingblock” before a righteous man? A test is put to the individual. All of the true Church of God *must be tested*. It is impossible to develop crystallization of character without testing. If the test is favorably received, it becomes a *stepping-stone*. If not favorably received, it becomes a *stumbling* stone. God does not tempt

man *with* evil or *for* evil—that is not the motive. When a test arises, the responsibility is not with the Lord but upon the individual.

Ezekiel's responsibility was to describe the nature of the test—how it would be a stumbling block—because many would not consider the test to be a stumbling block at all. The prophet had the responsibility of enlightening the righteous as to what the situation was. The righteous might not fully understand the issue or principle(s) involved, so Ezekiel had to instruct them as to what an action could lead to. Ezekiel represents the Christian. Therefore, the Christian who does not give the instruction or warning will suffer the same fate.

Ezek. 3:22 And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee.

Ezek. 3:23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.

Ezek. 3:24 Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house.

God took Ezekiel out onto the plain, purposely separating him from the others, in order to give him a message and instruct him privately. There Ezekiel saw the same vision of the glory of God that he had seen by the river Chebar (Ezekiel 1). Again he fell on his face, but then the spirit entered into him (like electricity or power), setting him on his feet, and told him to go and confine himself in his house.

Ezek. 3:25 But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them:

Ezek. 3:26 And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they are a rebellious house.

Who would “bind” Ezekiel? Probably the binding was done by the holy angels who assisted him to do certain things. His tongue was made to cleave to the roof of his mouth so that he would be dumb. Ezekiel did not cause his own dumbness—it was done by an outside force. The result was that the prophet could not speak or communicate until he was permitted to do so. Another example of the use of angelic power being used to assist the righteous occurred in Sodom (Gen. 19:1–11). Two angels struck the sinful men of the city with blindness so that they could not find Lot's door. The holy angels are called “watchers” in Daniel 4:13,17,23. Ezekiel 4:8 is another verification, where God said to the prophet, “Behold, I will lay bands upon thee.”

Ezek. 3:27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

The people would realize that something had happened to Ezekiel, for he could not speak, but when he opened his mouth, out came a message from God. Hence his dumbness was discerned as supernatural. Whenever his tongue was loosed, out came a “Thus saith the Lord,” for God was speaking through him. As Ecclesiastes 3:7 says, there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Ezekiel had a reproving message to deliver, but sometimes, in God's judgment, the situation was not propitious. The Christian, too, may have a responsibility to discharge, but it should be done as the Lord overrules the circumstances. When Ezekiel's

mouth was loosed, God was saying, in effect, "It is all right now for you to give the message." As Christians, we speak and act as moved by the Holy Spirit, and those who want to hear will hear. Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. 11:15).

Ezek. 4:1 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it the city, even Jerusalem:

Ezek. 4:2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about.

Ezek. 4:3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel was told to take a tile and draw upon it the city of Jerusalem. If two-dimensional, the drawing was an outline with perhaps "Jerusalem" written on it. The tile would have been very large so that spectators could watch the prophet act out in pantomime the coming siege, capture, and destruction of Jerusalem (and of Judah, the entire two-tribe kingdom). Ezekiel worked out in the open so that others could watch.

Ezekiel also had to "set the [enemy] camp" besieging the city and battering rams. He first took the part of the aggressor, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Then, starting with verse 4, he changed sides and took the part of the nation of Israel. Notice that he hid behind an "iron pan."

What was the purpose of this pantomime? to "be a sign to the house of Israel," to dramatize what would happen to Jerusalem.

Ezek. 4:4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity.

Ezek. 4:5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel.

A day for a year was the principle, so that 390 days signified 390 years. Ezekiel was instructed to lie on his left side for 390 days to remind Israel of their iniquity and then on his right side for 40 additional days (verse 6) to bear Judah's iniquity.

The Period of the Kings covered 513 years in the chronology of the nation of Israel. The 390 years were a unit of time within the 513 years, as follows:

513	years in Period of the Kings
-120	years (40 + 40+ 40 years for reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon)
<u>-3</u>	years (Rehoboam reigned 3 years before Jeroboam took the 10 tribes)
390	years

After King Solomon's death, there was national dissatisfaction with Rehoboam because he followed bad advice and put burdens (taxes) on the people. When Jeroboam heard of the dissatisfaction, he returned to Israel from exile in Egypt, and the nation was subsequently divided into two kingdoms: the ten-tribe kingdom and the two-tribe kingdom. At this

point in time the 390 years began. In other words, Rehoboam was the king of the entire nation for only three years. When Jeroboam divided the nation, God started the judgment against the ten tribes. Jeroboam set up rival places of worship at Dan and Bethel to wean the people away from Jerusalem. As a result, those in the ten tribes were estranged from God, for not worshipping at Jerusalem constituted disobedience.

The vast majority of the ten-tribe kings were assessed as evil, whereas Judah, the two-tribe kingdom, had both good and bad kings. Especially in the ten tribes, the practice of Baal worship was incorporated, although both kingdoms were held accountable. The ten tribes picture Catholicism; the two tribes, Protestantism. Roman Catholicism has adopted more heathen practices than Protestantism.

Ezek. 4:6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

For the first 40 years of his ministry, the Prophet Jeremiah warned Judah of an impending disaster or judgment. The 40 years, which coincided with the reigns of several kings, are calculated as follows. King Josiah of Judah reigned 31 years, and Jeremiah began his ministry after 13 years of Josiah's reign had expired; hence 18 years remained of Josiah's reign (31 - 13 = 18).

18	years of Josiah's 31-year reign
+11	years of Jehoiachim's reign
<u>+11</u>	years of Zedekiah's reign
40	years

The separation of the nation into two kingdoms began in the fourth year of Rehoboam.

996	BC
<u>-390</u>	years
606	BC

Jeremiah's ministry began in 646 BC.

646	BC
<u>-40</u>	years
606	BC

Note: The 40 years ended *at the same time* as the 390 years—in 606 BC with the destruction of Jerusalem. When news did finally come that Jerusalem had been taken and destroyed, Ezekiel's mouth was loosed so that he could again speak normally, not just on the command of the Lord. Thus his dumbness was a sign to the people of Israel that his prophecy was accurate. (In the New Testament, Zacharias was struck dumb until John the Baptist was named.)

Ezek. 4:7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.

Ezekiel lay on one side and raised the other arm. For his arm to be uncovered meant he showed a fist, which signified God's displeasure, judgment, fury.

Ezek. 4:8 And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

Invisible "bands" were put on Ezekiel so that he would stay on the proper side all day long. In other words, God assisted Ezekiel with a paralysis, as it were, and, at the same time, kept the flesh from atrophying, yet the forceful lesson was conveyed. The bands also helped the

prophet hold out his uncovered arm. Thus the Lord helped Ezekiel from a physical standpoint to endure the days of immobility without physical harm or deterioration.

Ezekiel lay on his side during daylight hours only, from sunrise to sunset. He was bound anew each day for 390 consecutive days and then for 40 days. The people going to and from work saw him in the same posture day after day and realized the whole scene pictured a judgment against the nation of Israel. The left side, which portrayed Israel's iniquity for 390 years, showed more disfavor. The right side, symbolizing Judah's iniquity for 40 years, showed less disfavor. Thus Ezekiel's pantomiming was symbolic; it was a sign. The prophet lived a life of sacrifice.

Ezek. 4:9 Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof.

Ezek. 4:10 And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it.

Ezek. 4:11 Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink.

Ezek. 4:12 And thou shalt eat it as barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight.

Ezekiel ate during the 390 days of lying on his side, but even his partaking of food was a sign. Six grains (wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and fitches) were put in a vessel, ground into flour, and made into barley cakes or bread (like "pancakes" but a little thicker with a mound). The bread illustrated the harsh conditions of the coming siege when food would be rationed. At that time all of the storehouses in the city were emptied into a common spot, and the grain was doled out evenly. Incidentally, "fitches" were a simple grain, almost like grass, with tiny seeds.

Ezekiel baked the bread out in the open. He baked enough for the 390 days *before* he began to lie on his left side. In other words, he baked 390 cakes in advance. Then, at the weight of 20 shekels a day, or about two thirds of a loaf, he ate the bread throughout the day, little by little. Since the bread was coarse, it would be difficult to eat all at one time. Therefore, the instruction to eat "from time to time" was a merciful provision. Moreover, because the tough, dry bread was difficult to swallow, water was permitted, but that too was rationed and was drunk throughout the day, little by little. The daily portion of water was one-sixth part of a hin, or about a pint a day.

One other point: The bread was to be baked with human dung. In other words, human manure was used for fuel.

Ezek. 4:13 And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them.

Because the bread was baked with human dung, it was unclean and was a symbol of humiliation. It portrayed the pollution of the children of Israel.

Ezek. 4:14 Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from

my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth.

Ezekiel's conscience bothered him in regard to the human dung. All of his life he had been careful to observe the Law and eat only clean animals. We are reminded of the Apostle Peter's reaction to the dream of a sheet let down from heaven with clean and unclean animals (Acts 10:10–14). In order to comply, Ezekiel would need a pile of human excrement near him to do the baking.

Ezek. 4:15 Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith.

God accommodated Ezekiel's conscience with the special provision of allowing him to use cow's dung instead of human dung. However, the cow manure was representative of human manure. The substitution to ease Ezekiel's conscience is a lesson for us that we should not try to get another to act opposite to his conscience.

Since barley was the harlot's food, the preparation of the bread as well as the bread itself symbolized spiritual pollution (Num. 5:12–31). Remember, at this time Ezekiel was immobile, he was curtailed in speech, and he ate unpleasant, rationed food.

Ezek. 4:16 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment:

Ezek. 4:17 That they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

In the siege, the people would experience scarcity of food and lose weight. Not only would bread, water, and fuel be scarce, but the people would use their own dung for baking. They would "drink water by measure, and with astonishment ... and be astonished one with another." The words "astonishment" and "astonied" indicate "as stone," that is, no gaiety, no mirth. All would be sullen, morose—the people would be like zombies.

In summary, Chapter 4 was a forceful demonstration of what the city of Jerusalem would undergo, and it was an indication of subsequent trouble and hardship in Babylonian captivity.

Ezek. 5:1 And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair.

Ezek. 5:2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.

Ezek. 5:3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts.

Ezek. 5:4 Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

The setting of this chapter was right after the fulfillment of the 430 (390 + 40) days that

Ezekiel lay on his left and right sides. During all that time his hair grew. Now, at the end of the 430 days, Ezekiel was instructed to cut off all the hair on his head and beard—that was a lot of hair!—and divide it into three parts by carefully weighing it. Ezekiel’s treatment of the hair demonstrated how those of Judah would die in the coming literal siege of Jerusalem, for the hairs represented the people. There was a sufficient quantity of hair to make this demonstration dramatic. Ezekiel ended up bald.

One third of the hair was burned with fire in the midst of Ezekiel’s portrayal of Jerusalem. This action showed the city would be destroyed by fire and people would die in the fire. Another third of the hair was chopped with a knife, portraying that people would be slain in the violence of the war. The final third was scattered in the wind. As the hair was scattering, Ezekiel ran after the hair with a sword and slashed at it in the air, showing people would be pursued and killed as they tried to escape from Jerusalem, ran out for food, or ran out to actively defend the city.

Remember, the Israelite captives there in Babylon by the river Chebar were observing Ezekiel’s dramatizations. And burning hair has a stench just like burning bodies, so the odor was also apparent.

Of the original pile of hair, a pinch was taken and put in Ezekiel’s apron. The apron was then folded to retain the few hairs while he weighed out the rest by thirds and enacted the pantomime. Of the few hairs in the apron, Ezekiel next took some and cast them into the fire and burned them. The point is that *only the very few remaining hairs* in the apron represented the survivors of the 606 BC trouble, for 99.9 percent of the Israelites in Judah were destroyed. The hairs from the apron that were cast into the fire represented the Israelites who fled to Egypt. When King Nebuchadnezzar defeated Judah and destroyed Jerusalem, he left vine dressers in the land under the leadership of Gedaliah, a puppet governor, so that the land would not become completely sterile. However, instead of submitting and being thankful that they were left in the land, the few Israelite vine dressers assassinated Gedaliah. In anger Nebuchadnezzar sent his general to Israel to kill them. When they heard that Nebuchadnezzar’s men were coming, the Israelites, including Jeremiah and Baruch, fled to Egypt. The king of Babylon pursued them to Egypt and killed them all except *a very small remnant* of which Jeremiah was one.

The people considered Ezekiel a dreamer and a fanatic until his prophecies began to come true. Then he was regarded as a true prophet.

Ezek. 5:5 Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.

Ezekiel now paused to give an explanation of his actions—that they were an object lesson representing the Lord’s displeasure in Israel. (The destruction of Jerusalem would also be an object lesson to watching Gentile nations.) The prophet called attention to the drawing of Jerusalem on the tile (Ezek. 4:1). Jerusalem was strategically situated and thus was geographically important. Since activities there had a greater influence than elsewhere, the conduct of the Israelites should have been more exemplary.

Ezek. 5:6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.

What a scathing denunciation! The Israelites should have known better because they were the Lord's people and greater favor brings greater responsibility, but *very few* really benefited and were faithfully on God's side. The *vast majority* were in the wrong. With greater responsibility on Israel, there was also greater condemnation.

Ezek. 5:7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you;

Ezek. 5:8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

God would make Israel an example in the sight of other nations.

Ezek. 5:9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations.

God would do things to Israel that had never been done before. In the past the reference was especially to the AD 69–70 Roman siege, but in the near future the reference will apply to nominal spiritual Israel.

Ezek. 5:10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds.

Conditions would become so extreme that the fathers would eat their sons and vice versa. And God would scatter the Israelites "into all the winds." This was partly true in 606 BC and more true in AD 69–70 and the Diaspora.

Notice that *God* assumed the responsibility for the destruction in which the fathers ate the children and the children ate the fathers. We should *understand* the principle here. Contrary to what the human heart would think, we must be in sympathy with the *judgments* and say "Amen!"

The French Revolution was a prototype of the anarchy that will occur at the end of the Gospel Age. Similarly, what happened in 606 BC was repeated—only worse—in AD 70. In both cases the lesson was not learned the first time, so a future devastation had to occur.

Ezek. 5:11 Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity.

The needed judgment would also come because of a defiled sanctuary: diseased animals, wrong practices, etc.

Ezek. 5:12 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

Again the punishments were prophesied. One third of those in Judah would die through

pestilence and famine, especially in Jerusalem; that is, they would be consumed by disease and hunger. (The punishment of pestilence and famine was represented by fire in Ezekiel 5:2.) One third would die by the sword. Defenders of the city, the fighting force, would be killed by the sword of the enemy encompassing them. (Here the description of the three parts varies slightly because the reference is to the *city of Jerusalem*.) One third (the escapees from the city) would be scattered and a sword drawn out after them. (Verses 3 and 4 show a *small* number being *temporarily* spared and a *few* of those individuals being taken captive and thus *actually* spared.) The judgments were repetitively expressed to make sure the entire nation was apprised of Ezekiel's words.

Ezek. 5:13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.

The God of *love* also possesses fury and wrath. In other words, the love of righteousness and the corresponding hatred of iniquity are merely love operating under two different circumstances.

Ezek. 5:14 Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.

Ezek. 5:15 So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken it.

Surrounding nations would view the judgment as Israel became a reproach, a taunt, and a byword. Those nations knew that the Red Sea had miraculously opened, that the walls of Jericho had fallen, etc., and now they would see what appeared to be *total* destruction of the Israelites. These judgments would be told to children and posterity, especially the destruction in 606 BC. Surrounding nations saw the *glorious* Temple of Solomon get destroyed.

Down through history many Gentile nations have been anti-Semitic through reading the Old Testament. However, not only did the nations forget about the future promises of blessing, but they did not realize God was dealing with a select few (such as Daniel, Micaiah, and Jeremiah). All of the prophets gave *reproofs*, and so do the Gospels. Disciplines are necessary for the faithful as well as the unfaithful.

Notice the *repeated* words in Chapter 5, all referring to God: fury/furious, judgment, anger, and zeal.

Ezek. 5:16 When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread:

Ezek. 5:17 So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it.

Evil beasts were included in the judgments. Even the animals would seem to be against the unrighteous.

Ezek. 6:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 6:2 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them,

Ezek. 6:3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places.

Ezek. 6:4 And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols.

Ezek. 6:5 And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

Ezek. 6:6 In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished.

Ezek. 6:7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Chapter 5 told of the experiences of the people inside the city of Jerusalem. Now Ezekiel was telling of the coming utter destruction of the high places of false worship outside the city and throughout Judah. A thorough housecleaning of the nation was coming. All cities, not just Jerusalem, would be laid waste. At the end of the age, in our day, there will be a similar judgment and destruction of everything outward to do with false religion. Prominent religious edifices, both Catholic and Protestant, will be looted and despoiled. Mystic Babylon will fall *with violence*.

In review, the time setting is about 612 BC, that is, shortly before the desolation of 606 BC. From captivity in Babylon, Ezekiel was told to prophesy about the coming destruction. When God said, "Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them," Ezekiel literally turned and pointed his face toward Israel and Jerusalem and then foretold the coming doom. Since he had been providentially struck with dumbness, the Lord now loosened his tongue so that the people could hear these important utterances.

Ezek. 6:8 Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.

Back in Ezekiel's day as well as in the near future, there is a remnant. Since even the remnant back there was not 100 percent faithful, they needed disciplinary experiences, and there is a general correspondency to the Great Company at the end of this age. They will be searched out to see if they really do love righteousness.

A little review will be helpful. In the fifth chapter, Ezekiel had to cut his hair, divide it into three parts, and treat each part differently to demonstrate the various ways those in Jerusalem would be killed. The hair was weighed to show judgment; that is, the people were found wanting and God's wrath was upon them. Moreover, Ezekiel's food and water were rationed to picture the food situation in the coming siege. Of the cut-off hair, Ezekiel tucked a very small portion into the fold of his garment to show that a remnant would be

spared and/or protected. However, Ezekiel 5:4 tells that even of this little remnant some would be destroyed. Thus, in the final analysis, a *very small remnant* was spared.

There were three captivities of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar, as follows. (1) In the captivity of 617 BC (11 years prior to 606 BC), Ezekiel, Daniel, and King Jehoiachin were taken to Babylon. Although 2 Kings 24:12–14,16 describes this captivity and states the number of captives to be 10,000, Jeremiah 52:27–30 shows that only 3,023 actually arrived in Babylon, for the usual practice was to slay many of the enemy after the battle ended. (2) A remnant of only 832 captives were taken to Babylon in the second captivity. (3) In the third captivity, Nebuchadnezzar carried off even fewer captives to Babylon: 745. Therefore, *out of the millions* of inhabitants in Judah, the two-tribe kingdom, a total of *only 4,600* were taken captive to Babylon.

$$\begin{array}{r} 3,023 \\ 832 \\ \hline 745 \\ \hline 4,600 \end{array}$$

Ezek. 6:9 And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a-whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

Ezek. 6:10 And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

Those in captivity—and later, by implication, those in the Diaspora—would realize the hand of the Lord was upon them in judgment. In fact, the “seven times” of Israel’s punishment began in 606 BC (Leviticus 26).

The prophecy was that the remnant “shall loathe themselves.” The *faithful few*, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Baruch, are not treated here. “They that escape of you shall remember me among the nations whither they shall be carried captives.” In their captivity, the people would remember God. In the spiritual picture, the Great Company will “loathe themselves” for a while after the Church is complete and also “remember” God.

Ezek. 6:11 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.

Ezek. 6:12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.

Verses 11 and 12 give a summary of the three types of destruction: pestilence, sword, and famine. “He that is far off shall die of the pestilence.” Those who tried to escape the Lord’s judgment died by disease. “He that is near shall fall by the sword.” Those who tried to fight in the city died by the sword. “He that remaineth [in the city] and is besieged shall die by the famine.”

When Ezekiel gave the message, he *dramatized it with emphasis*. For example, he might have smashed one fist into his other hand. Thus he showed his conviction that the prophecy

was true and that it would be fulfilled.

In this sixth chapter, Ezekiel was talking about the judgments and experiences that would come on the cities and land outside of Jerusalem, that is, in the rest of the nation. Pestilence would stalk them.

Ezek. 6:13 Then shall ye know that I am the LORD, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.

There are two lessons. (1) As the various peoples come forth from the tomb in the Kingdom, they will hear of their past history from *eyewitnesses*. Eyewitness accounts will be given of important events in history. (2) The spared remnant back there, who had a measure of guilt but were repentant, were led captive to Babylon, walking on foot in shame. As they walked along and saw the multitude of slain corpses and broken-down high places, they realized that Ezekiel was a true prophet and that they should have listened to him. In other words, as the few survivors left Israel, they saw how far-reaching the destruction was and thus were impressed with their own salvation as being by *God's grace*. They carried these memories with them to Babylon, where they could attest to the veracity of Ezekiel's prophecies.

Ezek. 6:14 So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath, in all their habitations: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Diblath was near Saudi Arabia. For the land of Judah to be "more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath" meant it would be more desolate than a desert—and hence without inhabitants. In fulfillment of prophecy, the land had to lie desolate for 70 years (2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10).

Ezek. 7:1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 7:2 Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land.

This chapter was directed primarily to Judah, to those not in captivity (although of course those in captivity shared in the guilt). "An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land." An end was to come upon the homeland. The repetition suggested a complete end, a final judgment. The term "four corners of the land" meant the judgment would embrace the *whole* land. This message, which was given about 612 BC, approximately six years before the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, would have been uttered with expression. "Israel" was really Judah at this time, and the coming judgment included the "[whole] land" in the sense of the 70 years of *desolation* because of the failure of the people over the years to properly observe the Jubilees.

The "four corners of the land" are a reminder of the four winds in Revelation 7:1. There is a relationship between the impending doom of natural Israel back there and the impending doom of nominal spiritual Israel in the near future. The words "an end, *the end*" indicate *final judgment*.

Ezek. 7:3 Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will

judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.

Ezek. 7:4 And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Though there would be suffering and agonizing, God would not spare them. God would have no pity, for guilt had reached the point of no return where judgment must come. The sins of Manasseh were especially “abominable” to the Lord (2 Chron. 33:1–9).

Ezek. 7:5 Thus saith the Lord GOD; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come.

Ezek. 7:6 An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.

Verses 5–9 are explicit and emphatic. Notice that the words “end” and “evil” are repeated in verses 5 and 6: “An *evil*, an *only evil* ... is come.... An *end* is come, *the end* is come.” “An only evil” means the *final* evil.

“It watcheth for thee”; that is, the *judgment awakeneth*. The evil forces were going to receive a judgment.

Ezek. 7:7 The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains.

“The morning is come”; that is, the sun rises—but in an unfavorable or evil sense that indicated judgment. As the sun comes over the horizon, so the judgment would come for the evil.

“Not the sounding again [the echo] of the mountains.” Ezekiel’s words were not empty and hollow—God was warning them that *real trouble* was coming. In fact, the king of Babylon was probably already beginning to muster his forces. Jeremiah was also prophesying at this time but in the homeland. Thus the same message was being given in both places. However, the people did not really listen, for Ezekiel’s words seemed like a repetitious sounding. People today react similarly to our message that the end of the age is imminent. Just as in the story “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” the people ignored the cry that was authentic, so the Israelites considered the prophet’s message to be empty. But the warning was “not the sounding again of the mountains.”

Ezek. 7:8 Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.

Ezek. 7:9 And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth.

When, a few short years later, the people saw the armies approaching, they realized that Jeremiah and Ezekiel were true prophets and that those who had spoken “peace” were false prophets. The people also realized they would lose the war.

Ezek. 7:10 Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.

Ezek. 7:11 Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither shall there be wailing for them.

The rod was a symbolic scepter of rulership or authority, but what was Ezekiel alluding to with the terms the “rod [that] hath blossomed” and the “rod of wickedness”? When Korah felt that Moses and Aaron should share their authority, 12 rods were laid up in the Most Holy. The one that budded would indicate who was in charge. Of course Aaron’s rod budded, justifying Moses in civil matters and Aaron in religious affairs. In that incident the budding rod was one of *selection and election*; here the blossoming rod was one of *rejection*. Because of corruption from top to bottom, with evil especially entrenched in government, Israel’s authority was rejected. The nation having passed the point of no return, judgment was ripe and irrevocable; the conflict was irrepressible. Today, too, there is a blossoming of the rod of iniquity in Christendom and this country.

Ezek. 7:12 The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

Ezek. 7:13 For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, which shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.

“Let not the buyer rejoice.” Buyers could not take advantage financially of the troublous times, for they would not be able to hold on to possessions long enough to profit. For example, some might sell their land in panic over the prophecy of the coming trouble. However, the buyers would not have time to enjoy their purchases.

“Let not ... the seller mourn.” The seller would suffer as well. Buyers and sellers will be similarly affected in the coming great Time of Trouble.

How extensive would the trouble be? “For [God’s] wrath is upon *all the multitude* thereof ... for the vision is touching the *whole multitude* thereof.” The buyer, the seller, the pauper, the prince—the whole nation would be affected. They would not be able to lead the same pattern of life. Self-preservation and the storing of food would be to no avail.

“Neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life.” This statement was a jibe at the accumulation of wealth, a caution against having false confidence in money. The people would not be able to protect their ill-gotten goods.

“The seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive” at the time of the next Jubilee, for the judgment and Babylonian captivity would be long-range.

Ezek. 7:14 They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.

Verse 14 is presented in the *negative*. In Ezekiel’s day none prepared for the battle. Although some were crying for military preparedness, few listened and false prophets spoke peace. Even today some are so concerned about the future that they make noise and voice dangers; however, the majority do not listen. The governments of our day will desire to put down the rebellion and trouble, but the time is coming when the soldiers will refuse to obey orders. Weapons will be used for personal gain and self-preservation, adding to the anarchy. Police forces and fire departments will cease.

From a *spiritual* perspective, the feet members will have a crucial period of testing and trial. They must prepare for the impending conflict. They will be praying in advance to know when to fight the spiritual battle against the ecumenical forces, who will try to pressure them to join in fighting the forces of evil.

Ezek. 7:15 The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

Outside Jerusalem were fighters, who would die of the sword. Those inside Jerusalem would die of pestilence and famine.

Ezek. 7:16 But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.

Those who would escape and live through the trouble (both back there and in the future) would be greatly humbled. Instead of opposing the Lord's necessary judgment, these mourners stayed out of the conflict and prayed and repented. A *minority* had the proper attitude, being "on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity." "Mountains" signify a place to commune with God alone. These repentant ones properly mourned in regard to their relationship with God.

In Ezekiel's day those who escaped were displaced and taken captive to Babylon. Even though some of the Israelites prospered in Babylon, those who had the right heart condition mourned like doves and were homesick for their homeland. (Doves make a doleful cry, especially when unhappy.) They mourned primarily for their iniquity and secondarily for the loss of their land.

We are reminded of the remnant of Gentiles who will live through the coming Time of Trouble. The advice to the world is to "seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zeph. 2:3).

Ezek. 7:17 All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.

Fear paralyzes in time of great trouble. Accordingly, when the people would see the magnitude of the enemy, their knees would knock together and become like water. The psychological advantage lay with the intruder.

Ezek. 7:18 They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.

The custom was to shave the head and dress in sackcloth as a sign of mourning. By humbling themselves in this manner, the people thought the Lord would be more willing to hear them.

Ezek. 7:19 They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity.

Silver and gold would be useless, for there would be nothing to buy or sell. Some would try

to bargain with their wealth to pacify the enemy, but to no avail. This reaction would be an improper “mourning” for *self*-preservation.

Although Ezekiel was addressing the captives in Babylon, the message got back to Judah. Jeremiah addressed those in the homeland, but his words reached the captives in exile. Thus anyone with a hearing ear had opportunity to hear.

Ezek. 7:20 As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them.

God’s beautiful “ornament,” Solomon’s Temple, was set in majesty and purity, but corrupt practices defiled it.

Ezek. 7:21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it.

Ezek. 7:22 My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

Notice the contrast here. First, God said, “*They will pollute* my secret (true) place.” Then He added, “*I will make* their pomp to cease, and their holy places will be defiled.” King Nebuchadnezzar would loot the Temple and Jerusalem and take the spoils back to Babylon.

In the spiritual counterpart or antitype, the Church was set in beauty in the Ephesus period with the apostles (“Ephesus” means “desirable”). Subsequently the “secret place,” the Church, became corrupt, and the corruption occurred more and more as time went on, first in the nominal Church and then even among the true Church. “Robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.” Robbers would dishonor “dignities,” rob *principles*, etc. (2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8,10). God will turn His face away from those who are *merely* professedly His.

In antitype the “strangers” who loot the spiritual Temple will be those not under religious restraint, a radical element not identified with the nominal system, as shown by the Jehu picture and the eunuchs who threw Jezebel out the window. The “strangers” will be an outside nonreligious force right in the land (in Christendom).

Back to the literal account. Ezekiel uttered this prophecy about six years before Israel’s desolation and used future tense to show a further pollution back there. He used *future* tense (amidst the mention of *past* sins) to show that pollution would occur *just before* the judgment. In other words, in addition to *past* defilement, there would be a further *future* defilement.

Ezek. 7:23 Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence.

Ezek. 7:24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled.

The land, especially Jerusalem, was full of violence. Therefore, as a judgment, “the worst of the heathen” came in and humiliated the people.

“Make a chain.” Ezekiel used sarcasm: “Go ahead and make a chain to stave off destruction! It will be ineffectual in stopping the judgment.” “Make a chain of fortresses” is the thought. In other words, “Try to organize yourselves into a tight-knit body to repel the foe, and cordon off the enemy, but your efforts will be to no avail.”

Similarly in antitype, the confederacy at the end of the Gospel Age will not restrain the trouble. Christendom’s cry will be “Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us,” but the “confederacy” will be fruitless (Psa. 2:3; Isa. 8:12).

How will the “worst of the heathen” defile or spoil the “holy places” of Christendom? In the natural application, this will be done in several ways. For example, in World War 3, forces *outside* the normal pale of Christendom will invade Italy and destroy the Vatican before they go down to the Holy Land. The “worst of the heathen” *within* Christendom would be a criminal element with no inhibitions or moral compunctions. The “holy places” (plural) refer to not only the Vatican but large cathedrals, images, relics, etc., for the buildings themselves will be torn down. In the spiritual application, we have seen a lowering of standards in both the nominal Church and the true Church.

Ezek. 7:25 Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.

“They shall seek *peace*, and there shall be *none*.” The peace through their confederacy will be short-lived and of no lasting benefit. Hear the assessment of the Prophet Isaiah (8:9,10): “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be *broken in pieces*; and give ear, all ye of far countries: *gird yourselves*, and ye shall be *broken in pieces*; ... Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall *not stand*: for God is with us.” We must stand *separate* from the coming Church-State union.

Ezek. 7:26 Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.

When the destruction of society is threatened, the people will desire an explanation of the events that are taking place. So great will the extremity of the future be that unless those days are shortened, no flesh will be saved (Matt. 24:22). However, before the great trouble comes, the people will seek advice from *their* priests and ministers; they will seek answers and get *none*.

In the *First Volume*, the Pastor said that the practical advice given by John the Baptist in his day is to be given to the world in the near future as the great Time of Trouble draws near: (1) Repent, (2) be satisfied with your wages, and (3) live peaceably with all men.

Ezek. 7:27 The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

When the people are experiencing the trouble, they will sense that the judgment is from *God*. Generally speaking, people know their lives are out of harmony with the Bible and holy precepts, and they know they have not given much thought to the Lord. *Worldwide* trouble will awaken them and cause them to reflect seriously on the wasted time of the past. They will then realize this is a *divine* judgment (Isa. 8:21). Of course they will more

fully understand after the Kingdom is established, but first comes this consciousness of the evil they have done.

Ezek. 8:1 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me.

The time setting was now about 611 BC, the sixth year of Zedekiah, or the sixth year of Jehoiachin's (Jeconiah's/Coniah's) captivity. As the elders of Judah were seated before Ezekiel in his own house, honoring him and wanting his counsel, a trance seized the prophet. This chapter, recorded later, is the record of what he saw.

The expression "the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me" signifies favor, a special and abrupt message. By starting the account abruptly, Ezekiel showed the source was extraneous (i.e., God). In other words, Ezekiel was the channel for the message about to be given. (Remember, the *only* time Ezekiel could talk was when the Lord so directed him.) When Ezekiel got this spirit, he felt a change take place in him—an illumination, a surging power. The purpose of this suddenness was to alert the listeners that the message was from God.

Ezek. 8:2 Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber.

The vision began with a representation of God, the One seated on the throne. It was like the earlier vision by the river Chebar (Ezek. 1:1). Ezekiel saw the form of a man with fire concentrated on his lower half and brightness on the upper half. No head was seen, just light. In other words, Ezekiel could see only the torso, not below or above. He could tell a figure was there, but the glory and brightness were so great that he could not see the personage.

Purity and judgment are suggested. Again, as in the earlier vision, we are reminded that "our God is a consuming fire," "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (Heb. 12:29; 1 Tim. 6:16). A message of vengeance is here but hope also, as indicated by the rainbow in Ezekiel 1:28. "Amber" was like burning or gleaming brass, like fire, a gleaming in the sense of light and brightness.

Ezek. 8:3 And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.

A hand lifted up Ezekiel by a lock of his hair to a position between heaven and earth and took him to Jerusalem. As we have already seen, Ezekiel, the son of a priest, represents the truly consecrated dwelling in the "Holy" condition. This was a vision, but to the prophet it seemed like jet travel to Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. Ezekiel was about to see things and hear God speaking to him, yet he would be unobserved by those in the Temple. He would get an insight into the abominations committed by God's nominal or *professed* people.

The expression "image of jealousy" is based on the account in 2 Kings 16:10–18. King Ahaz of Judah went to Damascus to meet with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria and remained

there for a month or more. While there King Ahaz so admired the heathen Assyrian altar that he sent a model of it back to Jerusalem, telling Urijah, the high priest, to fashion an altar like it for the Temple of Solomon. Moreover, King Ahaz wanted the altar to be finished when he returned, so the high priest had people work feverishly. Because King Ahaz habitually went around the kingdom and prayed at various altars in the high places, he was considered a religious king by the people. He even acted like a priest and did the sprinkling. *How disobedient!*—for the Law *was explicit* as to how and where offerings were to be made. And Urijah was remiss for not objecting to the king's practices and his order to build the heathen altar for the Temple. This counterfeit idolatrous altar was an "image of jealousy" in that it provoked God to jealousy for His holy name.

The Brazen Altar in Solomon's Temple was 30 feet wide by 30 feet long by 15 feet high, and stairs led up to it (2 Chron. 4:1). The Damascus altar was not necessarily larger, but it was *much more ornate*. King Ahaz wanted the new altar (the copy of the Damascus altar) to go where the original Brazen Altar was. Hence the old altar was *moved aside* (a tremendous task because of its size), and the new heathen one was installed in its place. Now years later, long after King Ahaz had died, when Ezekiel was translated to Jerusalem in vision, the heathen altar was still in place, and Zedekiah was the king.

Ezekiel was taken to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem and placed at the door of the Inner Court gate that faced north, but instead of seeing the Lord's Brazen Altar, he saw the heathen altar straight ahead. In other words, he was strategically placed to see the image of jealousy. To add to the insult, King Ahaz had designated the heathen altar as the people's altar, and he had *personally* offered on that altar. Then he used the old altar, the true Brazen Altar, as his private altar for daily worship. Imagine!—and the people *did not cry out!* In fact, another reason for the title "image of jealousy" is the failure of the people to cry out. The account shows that *very few people* are righteous. We must be loyal to the Lord, the truth, and the *true* brotherhood. Incidentally, Ezekiel saw a *vision* of a *reality*, for the altar truly existed.

Let us consider in more detail how the prophet was transported in vision to Jerusalem. Why did the man (on the throne of God, as it were) lift Ezekiel up by a lock of his hair? Based on the Nazarite vow, hair is a symbol of consecration, for the hair that grew during the period of the vow was considered holy and it represented strength (Num. 6:2,5). Ezekiel could actually *feel the power* of being lifted up. Why does the account say he was taken "up *between* the earth and the heaven"? Through God's power (hand) and Ezekiel's consecration (hair), he was lifted up to where the consecrated are (between heaven and earth). Thus the vision is related to the consecrated. Although Ezekiel was only *mentally* transported out of captivity, the experience seemed very real. Similarly, Satan transported Jesus in vision to a very high mountain and to Jerusalem when he was really in the wilderness for the entire 40 days (Matt. 4:1–10).

From another standpoint (and especially from the perspective of the antitype), the "seat of the image of jealousy" that Ezekiel saw as he looked through the gate toward the north was the *false* altar, which stood at the forefront of the Temple. (When a person wants to give his heart to the Lord, he goes north to divinity.) Here the blockage caused jealousy in God, who had declared, "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God" (Exod. 20:5). In antitype the blockage is the man of sin, Satan's artifice. This man-made institution (or image) set up by Antichrist is the Papacy, "where was *the seat* of the image of jealousy"; that is, the doctrine of *the mass*, or *transubstantiation*, negates the doctrine of the Ransom sacrifice of our Lord (Dan. 8:11–13;

11:31; 12:11; compare Heb. 9:28; 10:12,14).

Ezek. 8:4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain.

The glory of God was in the Temple. In the earlier vision on the plain by the river Chebar, Ezekiel saw the glory of God in connection with the cherubim and the wheels.

Ezek. 8:5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry.

An added thought about the image in the gate that faced north is that the image was aligned with the altar. In Ezekiel's Temple, the people will have to enter at either the north or the south gate so that they will see the Altar. Those who enter the north gate must exit through the south gate, and vice versa.

The altar was intended for true sacrifice, the continual or daily sacrifice. The Prophet Daniel said that an evil religious system would take away from the continual sacrifice by setting up its own false sacrifice in a more prominent place. "They shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate" (Dan. 11:31). In other words, the false religion was put between the viewer and the true religion (the altar). The type pictures Satan's method of deception especially through Papacy and the Doctrine of the Mass, or Transubstantiation, the "abomination of desolation" (Matt. 24:15).

Ezek. 8:6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

The Temple was purportedly built in God's honor, but He was showing Ezekiel the necessity for its destruction because of sins and abominations that crept in. No doubt Ezekiel felt shock, and he would be able to impart this shock to others later.

Those of Judah who were born under these conditions—that is, the image of jealousy—would not recognize them as sin unless they diligently studied Scripture. There was some excuse and yet no excuse. To be ignorant is not necessarily a way out, for we are responsible for what we *could know* but *refuse to look into*.

Ezek. 8:7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall.

Another experience began. Ezekiel was brought to the door of the Inner Court where he beheld a hole in the wall. The Temple wall was thick—over *100 feet* thick but not solid. Although the wall was actually a building, it also acted as a divider. The wall was used by a *preferential* class who had access to its series of chambers or rooms. The common people could not enter these chambers in the Inner Court wall.

Ezek. 8:8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door.

Ezek. 8:9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do

here.

God told Ezekiel to look at the hole in the wall and dig into it. Ezekiel obeyed, but in doing so, he dug into a dead end: a door. God then told Ezekiel to open the door and enter. Through this method God exposed the error. The hole in the wall was an error, a flaw, a weakness. *God* revealed the error, but *Ezekiel* had to do the digging; that is, he had to *exert extra effort*. Ezekiel had a responsibility, and God was telling him to get busy and look into the matter. For his efforts Ezekiel was given secret insight into the happenings in the Temple.

A “door” is a symbol of privacy. In obeying God’s instruction, Ezekiel dug into the wall, opened the door, and entered. Another significant factor is that the door was a *secret* entrance not in the original design. God instructed Ezekiel to enter so that he could see the secret worship of other religions. For example, many religious leaders do not accept the Bible as inspired and/or consider it infallible.

Spiritual lesson: The only class who see Antichrist are those who delve into the matter and search for it. With personal observation comes a greater realization of the depth of the evil.

Ezek. 8:10 So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.

Ezek. 8:11 And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censor in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up.

What did Ezekiel see when he entered? A lot of people—70 men or important personages, one of whom he recognized as Jaazaniah. The chamber walls inside the big, thick wall were covered with imagery (as in Egypt): insects, animals, and creatures. (The walls in Egyptian tombs are embellished with creatures.) The drawings represented *abnormal* worship, and accordingly, the 70 (the Sanhedrin, the elders of Israel) were worshipping *creatures*. In addition, the 70 had incense, so there was smoke and an aroma in connection with worshipping the creatures on the wall.

The censers are a reminder of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, who “offered strange fire [incense] before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1,2). They are also a reminder of Korah’s rebellion (Numbers 16). The room was filled with smoke from the censers. In antitype this illustrates the sanctimonious impression given by the false religions. The 70 men were ostensibly the worshippers of Jehovah but in reality were false.

Ezek. 8:12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

God asked Ezekiel, “Do you see what the ancients of Israel are doing in the dark? Each of the 70 is worshipping a favorite image. They say, ‘God does not see us; He has forsaken the earth.’” The 70, *supposedly men of faith*, uttered such things and worshipped creatures. What is the antitype? Ostensibly the “ancients” are priests and ministers of the Lord, but they *imagine* things (every man was in the “chambers of his imagery”) instead of adhering to the instruction and the principles of the Word of God. They have a “God is dead” attitude by walking according to their *own* counsel and imaginations.

This vision helped Ezekiel speak with *conviction and authority*, and from *knowledge and experience*. Thus he was *forceful*.

Ezek. 8:13 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do.

Ezek. 8:14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz.

Ezekiel was brought back to his first position where he had seen the image of jealousy, but now the scene had changed to women weeping for Tammuz. In Israel's history the women got as close to the Temple proper as was permissible, although in this scene the women were actually in the Inner Court, which was not permissible.

Why were the women weeping? Tammuz pertained to Molech worship and the burning of *live* firstborn children (male and female) supposedly to appease God's wrath. To repeat, *live* human babies were sacrificed. The Tammuz practice has other names as well.

There is another view, although the one just presented is preferable. Numbers 25:1–9 tells of Baal-peor worship. The incident, which occurred near the end of the 40 years in Sinai, was a test for the Israelites based upon Balaam's advice to King Balak. To weaken Israel, Balaam had advised intermarriage of heathen women with Israelite men, and Numbers 25:9 tells the result: 24,000 Israelites died in a plague. When Moses saw that the Israelites were succumbing to the temptation, he told the judges to exterminate the unfaithful Israelite men. (The judges were responsible for such punishments.) Accordingly, the men were beheaded and their heads publicly displayed to face the "sun," which represented God in this case. And that is an important point: The God we worship, who is a *GOD OF LOVE*, instructed this punishment. The slaying of the unfaithful stayed the plague, but 24,000 died first. Wives and children were weeping for their loved ones who had *sinned*, whereas they should have realized the slaying was *proper* punishment. *While all of these things were occurring*, and the women were weeping, an Israelite man *had the nerve* to take a Midianitish woman—in the eyes of the nation—into his tent for intercourse. Phineas rushed over to the tent and thrust a spear through the bodies of both while they were sinning. And what was the result? Moses was pleased and the Lord approved. This incident is a sober lesson on how easy it is to succumb to temptation, which in this case was along the lines of sex.

Weeping for Tammuz has deeper implications. Nimrod and (later) Osiris worship were practiced under various names. Osiris was slain, but in time there was a fantasy that he was revived. Tammuz was a male, and in later variations of this worship, Adonis (also a male) was the leading one. The custom was to have two festivals, at the two ends of the year, to mark his going into the underworld and then his arising. In weeping for the loss of this male symbol, the women assumed lewd and obscene practices in the Temple arrangement. Some scholars associate this history with the "weeping for Tammuz" in verse 14, but Molech worship seems to be a more fitting tie-in.

Ezek. 8:15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these.

Ezek. 8:16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and

twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.

Ezekiel was again brought into the Inner Court. God's presence was in the Most Holy, but instead of worshipping toward God, toward the west, the 25 men (the priesthood) turned their hindquarters to Him and worshipped toward the sun. (In the Tabernacle, the entrance was on the east, and progression was shown by moving westward, ending up in the Most Holy.)

In each case after showing Ezekiel an abomination—that is, in verses 6, 13, and 15—God told the prophet He would reveal still “greater abominations.” The thought is not that each sin was exceeded by the next but that the sins were *accumulative*. Each sin was *in addition to* the previous one. It was a heaping up of evil.

The sins can be viewed in still another way. There were four terrible sins, as follows:

1. The image of jealousy was a *wrong altar* (an object or piece of furniture).
2. The worship of creatures in the dark was wrong worship by important personages in the wall in secret—hence *secret sins*.
3. Women weeping openly in the Inner Court for Tammuz was also wrong worship but *open sins* this time.
4. Men worshipping the sun with their backs to the Lord was the *priesthood in false worship*.

These abominations were practiced in Israel before the destruction of the Temple in 606 BC. The antitype or counterpart during the Gospel Age has been false practices in the professed Church, namely, (1) the Doctrine of the Mass, (2) the Doctrine of the Trinity, (3) the Doctrine of Eternal Torment, and (4) Papacy and/or the worship of the pope. We will consider these one by one.

1. The image of jealousy pictured the Doctrine of the Mass, or Transubstantiation (verse 5). In Israel this practice took away from the daily sacrifice. In the Roman Catholic Church it takes away from Jesus' Ransom sacrifice and his ever efficacious *one* sacrifice.
2. Seventy men (the Sanhedrin, which was involved in civil matters) worshipped animals that were painted on the walls (verses 10 and 11). The key to the counterpart in the Christian age is the “chambers [rooms] of his imagery [idolatry],” that is, the worship of other gods (verse 12). The Doctrine of the Trinity is included under polytheism.
3. Women (plural) wept for Tammuz (verse 14). As part of Nimrod worship, there developed the Book of the Dead, which concerned the occult and the worship of the dead. The Christian counterpart is the blasphemous Doctrine of Hellfire, or Eternal Torment, which distorts God's character as being vindictive and cruel. Four places were devised for the dead: Hell, Purgatory, Limbo, and Heaven. The Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul is also involved.
4. In practicing sun worship, the 25 men (priests) turned their backs on the Temple—and thus on God (verses 15 and 16). Because they were concerned with *religious* matters, it was more serious for them to go astray than for the Sanhedrin, which handled civil

matters. The Christian counterpart is the pope. Why is Papacy (and the pope) the worst? Because the system (the pope) takes the place of God and thus breaks the First Commandment. In Israel the individuals were more interested in sun worship than in the worship of God. In Christianity the parallel is even worse. As in the true (favorable) heavens the sun represents the gospel light or Jesus, and the moon is the Law, so in the false (unfavorable) heavens the sun is the pope, and the moon is papal canon law. Sincere followers, whether clergy or the lowliest communicants, consecrate and dedicate their whole life to the Catholic Church. Papacy has posed—and is posing—as an *angel of light*.

The 24 courses for the priesthood set up by David were based on the lunar year of 360 days, a priest for each half month. In time the Jews had a second high priest—that is, an extra one—in case the anointed one got sick at the time of the Day of Atonement. Thus the 25 priests mentioned in verse 16 and the two high priests were changes made by the Israelites over the years.

Ezek. 8:17 Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose.

Ezek. 8:18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Still in the Temple at Jerusalem in vision, Ezekiel saw that the coming destruction on Judah was necessary, for disease was in the very fabric of the nation. Like a leprous cloth that could not be cleansed and thus had to be burned, the nation had to receive judgment.

The clause “they put the branch to their nose” should be translated “they put the branch to *my* [God’s] nose.” The professed people of God, especially the leaders, were trying to appease God’s wrath (His nostrils). Nostrils are a symbol of wrath, as in a snorting bull, and a branch is a symbol of peace. When the dove brought back an olive branch to Noah after the Flood, the signification was that God’s wrath had been appeased. Jesus is the “branch” in antitype.

“They ... have returned to provoke me to anger.” What hypocrisy to perform God’s rituals in complete disobedience! A counterpart in the Gospel Age is the Confessional in the Roman Catholic Church. To tell one’s sins to the priest and then repeat the same sins over and over does not bring forgiveness.

“Therefore will I also deal in fury.” God was saying that the coming destruction of the Temple was proper, necessary, and inevitable. The *whole* house was to be torn down—with violence and physical destruction.

Ezek. 9:1 He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.

Ezek. 9:2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.

Ezek. 9:3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

In Chapter 8 Ezekiel was transported in vision to the Temple in Jerusalem to see the abominations occurring there. Now Ezekiel was going to have an additional vision with the setting still being Jerusalem and the Temple. God's glory was transferred from the cherubim to the threshold of the Temple, that is, to the door or entrance rather than to the juncture between the Holy and the Most Holy. Incidentally, this ninth chapter is presented from the standpoint of the enemy, from the standpoint of those who are opposed to the message.

God told *Ezekiel* to *cause* the six men who had charge of Jerusalem, each with a destroying weapon in his hand, to draw near. Here Ezekiel represents those of the Lord's people who were (and are) associates of the man with the writer's inkhorn. In what way did these six men with slaughter weapons have a "charge" over Jerusalem? They had the responsibility of a message then due. Each of the six had a particular responsibility, a particular charge to fulfill. Somehow Ezekiel was to cause the six men to discharge the message(s).

The "six men came from the way of the higher gate," which was toward the north. Since judges sat in the *gate*, we know this scene will be related to *judgment*. The six were proceeding from the *north* into the city, into the Temple arrangement; that is, they came from the north where God resides, from the seat of judgment. Hence the six men with slaughter weapons were of *divine* appointment and *divine judgment* is indicated.

A seventh man among them was clothed with linen and had a writer's inkhorn by his side. Notice, there is no mention of a slaughter weapon in this man's hand. Presumably he had a quill or pen to dip into the inkhorn as he performed the priestly (white linen) duties of a scribe.

Once again Ezekiel was seeing a moving vision, a vision with motion. The six men plus the one man came in the north gate and went to the Brazen Altar in the Court. The man in linen with the writer's inkhorn represents a human being in the *present life*. What are the clues that it is the present life? (1) White linen pictures righteousness, that is, the robe of Christ's righteousness worn on this side of the veil by the consecrated. White *sacrificial* robes were worn by the Levitical priesthood. (2) The inkhorn is a natural item, an *earthly* item. (3) All seven stood by the Brazen (copper) Altar in the Court, and copper pictures *humanity*. Thus far, then, we know that this human servant with the writer's inkhorn was of divine appointment, and he was standing in the midst of six men who had slaughter weapons and a charge over Jerusalem.

Let us consider the thought of having charge over the city. Who would have charge of the city in a *judgment* scene? Those in charge would be the *executioners*, not the priests or the Sanhedrin. Six executioners with slaughter weapons stood with a human servant robed in white linen who had a writer's inkhorn by his side. And who would that human servant be—an individual who was not a priest but who was getting instruction from God in the Inner Court in the vision? He pictures Pastor Russell, who, from the standpoint of the nominal Church, is not recognized as being ordained.

Coming from the "higher gate" shows emphatically that what was coming down was from the Lord. The seven men with the slaughter weapons were standing by the altar, waiting

for orders from God. Not only was the judgment foreknown and the seventh individual handpicked and chosen especially by the Lord, but the judgment and the slaughtering were to be done on nominal Christendom, pictured by Jerusalem. The six men with slaughter weapons represent six messages related to the seventh man or *messenger*, Charles Russell.

Although these sayings benefited the Jew and had some natural application, they are mainly for this end of the age, to be understood in a progressive sense. These visions were locked, even to the apostles except for Paul, until the time of the end.

The six men with the slaughter weapons represent the six *Volumes of Studies in the Scriptures*, written by the seventh man, the one with the writer's inkhorn, Charles Russell. To justify this application of the six men representing messages or *Volumes* and the seventh man being a living personality—that is, six abstractions plus an actual individual in the same setting—we have a Scriptural precedent in the Throne Scene in the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation. There God is seen sitting on His throne, and four cherubim (His attributes), who look like living beings, support the throne. Also part of the scene are 24 elders, who portray the 24 books of the Old Testament, emblematic of the entire Word of God.

Lesson: The *Volumes* bless one class but are a curse to another class in various ways. In the 15th and 16th chapters of the Book of Revelation, the *Volumes* are called “plagues.” The plagues of Egypt, which were *of God*, liberated the Israelites but afflicted the Egyptians. God instructed Moses (picturing Jesus) and Aaron (representing primarily Pastor Russell and secondarily those associated with him in the ministry). Like the other six messengers to the Church down through the age, the seventh messenger was a *mouthpiece*; the seven messengers each had to deliver a message.

The slaughter weapon was powerful, for it was the Sword of Truth. Truth that separates the wheat is like a plague to the tares. To those who accept the truth, the gospel is a life-giving message, but it is a death message to those who do not accept it.

Ezek. 9:4 **And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.**

The writer was instructed to put a mark on the foreheads of those in the city who sighed and cried because of all the abominations being committed there, the implication being that the individuals who were so marked would not be struck with the slaughter weapons. (The marks were put on the foreheads *before* the slaughter began.) In other words, whether or not one received the mark depended on attitude—to get the mark, the individual had to be sighing and crying for the abominations in the Temple and the city (Christendom). Hence the mark was favorable. Those not marked did not cry over the abominations; that is, they *agreed* with the conditions that existed in Jerusalem (Babylon, Christendom). The marked individuals were sad and mourned about conditions there.

The duty, then, of the man with the writer's inkhorn was to mark everyone in the forehead who sighed and cried for all the abominations in the midst of Jerusalem. In antitype the sighing is over the iniquities and abominations being done in Christendom. Those who receive the mark receive the truth; that is, they *accept* the truth. Dissatisfied with the nominal Church, they are satisfied with the truth. The marking on the forehead in the true or favorable sense is the seal; in the false or unfavorable sense it is the mark of the beast

(Rev. 13:16,17). The forehead indicates boldness—that the one getting the mark, whether false or true, is adamant.

In the type, God was pleased with those Jews who mourned in exile in Babylon over being removed from Zion, showing their dissatisfaction. On the other hand, those who acclimated and adjusted to life in Babylon were just like those who remain in the nominal Church (mystic Babylon). During the Harvest, generally speaking, those with present truth have come from mystic Babylon in obedience to the call “Come out of her, my people” (Rev. 18:4).

Ezek. 9:5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

God addressed the six men with the slaughter weapons: “Go through the city following the man with the writer’s inkhorn. Smite and slay all who do not have the mark. Do not spare or pity.”

Ezek. 9:6 Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

The slaughter work was to be *progressive*, starting with the “sanctuary” (the inner core of the Temple arrangement at the Brazen Altar) and working outward into the city. In antitype the slaughter begins with those who are religious, and then the message of truth goes out for all. Some accept it; some do not.

The elderly, the women, and the children were not to be spared. In other words, the message affects family members differently. Some accept the message and get the mark, while others close to them reject the message and it bypasses them. The comprehensive slaying shows a total judgment of all in Christendom. Just as all segments—young and old, male and female—reject the truth, so the reverse is true; namely, all segments accept the truth. Those who accept the message are *alive* to the truth. Nonresponders, those who reject the message, are *dead* to the truth, cold to it, dying to a condition where they could get life. The slaying and death are figurative.

Many stay in Babylon because they feel they are doing a good work there. This type of rationalization causes them to miss their privileges and responsibilities in regard to truth.

Ezek. 9:7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.

The slaying took place. In antitype the defilement is spiritual or figurative, not literal. Originally, Solomon’s Temple was the “house” of God, but it became defiled. The defilement was a responsibility of both the priesthood and the people. Solomon’s Temple pictures the Temple of the Gospel Age, which also became defiled and hence was rejected in 1878. Thus another Temple is needed in the future: Ezekiel’s (the Third) Temple.

Solomon’s Temple was already defiled, but Ezekiel was told to defile it further. In antitype, when those in the nominal system hear the truth, they think we are heretics and without authority; that is, they think we are defiling their sanctuary. The reaction at the First Advent was similar—the scribes and Pharisees did not think that Jesus, who was only in

his 30s, had any authority.

Ezek. 9:8 And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?

Ezekiel's falling down and crying, "Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel?" is a reminder of Abraham and the destruction of Sodom where only a handful survived. It is also a reminder of Elijah, who thought he was the only one left when 7,000 had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:14,18).

Ezek. 9:9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.

The world's attitude is, "The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not." Most of the world does not believe in a revealed God, including ministers who do not believe in the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. Not understanding the permission of evil and God's refraining from visiting instant judgment upon the sinner has encouraged those without faith to render evil.

Ezek. 9:10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.

Ezek. 9:11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

"I have done as thou hast commanded me." The man with the writer's inkhorn reported that he had finished his work; the six *Volumes* were complete. But notice, the account does not state that the six men with the slaughter weapons had finished their work. Why is the account silent about the six men? Although the Pastor has died, his writings continue to do a slaughter work, repelling some and attracting others. Those who do not accept present truth when given the opportunity experience turmoil of conscience. Those firmly wedded to the nominal system do not like to hear the message because it tells of many improper and/or erroneous doctrines and practices. An example is receiving honor of men with titles such as Reverend. Another example is the pope's being carried on a seat by staves held by men; this blasphemous practice copies God's being carried, as it were, in the Ark of the Covenant back in Israel's history. Two palms are held toward the pope to resemble the cherubim wings in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle.

The Pastor was divinely appointed to write *six Volumes only*, yet he originally thought there would be *seven* and the Scriptures so indicate. (The 15th and 16th chapters of the Book of Revelation discuss *seven* plagues.) In other words, the expectation was right, but the Pastor's personal work stopped with the *six Volumes*. He had intended to write *Studies in the Scriptures* in *seven Volumes*. Incidentally, how do we know that the seven plagues had to do with *messages of truth*? The two witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) have power to call down plagues (Rev. 11:3,6).

This vision came to Ezekiel in the sixth year of captivity, that is, only five years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 606 BC (Ezek. 8:1). *Millions* of people literally died at that time. As prophetically represented by the few hairs that remained in Ezekiel's apron, the spared remnant was *very small* indeed—as if they were handpicked (Ezek. 5:1,3,4).

Hence the few survivors from Judah would have thought their escape from the slaughter of Nebuchadnezzar's armies was because God had "marked" them for survival. To a certain extent that may have been true, although the real intent of this vision is for *our* day.

Ezek. 10:1 Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

The prophet's vision continues; it began in Ezekiel 8:3 when he was transported by a lock of his hair to the Temple in Jerusalem. Hence the vision was long. Chapter 10 is similar to Chapter 1.

Ezekiel had this vision experience while at his house in captivity in Babylon. The ancients of Israel sat before him. In other words, he was carried away in *vision only*, for he remained where he was *physically*.

Later, after Ezekiel came out of the trance, he recorded the details of the vision. God similarly favored Moses with a vision and gave him tremendous information—all the parts of the Law, including the Tabernacle construction. In both cases, God helped their memories so that they would have perfect recall.

On the firmament above the cherubim heads was God's sapphire stone throne (blue being a symbol of faithfulness and an indication that behind God's judgments are a blessing). The firmament was like a platform, and on the platform was the throne. Stated another way, the "firmament" was like frozen sky or atmosphere, and on top of the firmament was the sapphire throne. In Exodus 24:10, pertaining to the vision God gave to Moses, the "firmament" is called "a paved work." Moses and a select few went up into Mount Sinai and there saw a symbolic representation of God.

Ezek. 10:2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. And he went in in my sight.

God spoke to the man clothed in linen: "Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub [Justice], and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city." Ezekiel, in vision, was on the ground, looking up at the *huge* wheels that touched the earth. The "coals of fire" (plural) were related to *judgment*. The man with the inkhorn, described now as being clothed in linen, had stood beside the Brazen Altar earlier (Ezek. 9:2). He had put a mark on all those in the city who did not cry and sigh regarding the abominations. Now he was instructed to go *under* the throne between the wheels. There was fire both under the throne and above it—even a bright glow in the appearance of God on the throne. As narrated in Ezekiel 1:4,5, the prophet had seen a whirlwind come out of the north. In the midst of the whirlwind was a self-feeding fire. Hence the fire was extensive.

Why was the man clothed in linen told to go in between the wheels? What is the significance? Wheels are a symbol of progress, ages, and time sequence, and the huge wheels represent large epochs and dispensations. Therefore, God was instructing Ezekiel to go in between the ages. The Pastor wrote in the Harvest, which is a little loop of time *between* the ages or, stated another way, in the overlapping of the Millennial and Gospel ages. (Ages can overlap but not the Creative Days or the worlds.) As the Gospel Age is

phasing out, the Millennial Age is slowly being ushered in.

The coals of fire that were to be scattered over the city (Babylon, Christendom) picture a *worldwide* message. The Ezekiel class, the feet members, are to give a *strong, burning, purgative message with a judgment feature*. Knowing that the coals of fire placed on Isaiah's lips signify a message helps to unlock the meaning of the coals here in Ezekiel (Isa. 6:6–9).

Ezek. 10:3 Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court.

Ezek. 10:4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD'S glory.

God's glory departed from the cherubim and went over the threshold of the Temple of Solomon. In other words, the throne of God moved over the threshold, and the Temple was filled with smoke. (Of course Ezekiel saw only the legs in the representation of God, but the narration gives some idea of the size of the vision from the prophet's standpoint.)

Ezekiel Chapters 43 and 44 provide background information; in fact, Ezekiel 43:1–5 furnishes the key to understanding Chapter 10. Chapters 1, 10, and 43 are connected. The Lord came in by way of the east gate. "The glory of the LORD came into the house [Temple] by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east.... and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house" (Ezek. 43:4,5). Ezekiel went in vision into the Inner Court to see the resplendent glory where God had entered. Ezekiel 44:1,2 states that God Himself shut the Temple east gate, which represents the closing of the door forever to the high calling. God will enter into and accept His Church and formalize the acceptance. The world will be unaware of this momentous event until later.

The happenings in Ezekiel pertaining to the shutting of the east gate are related to the shutting of the door in the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. In the parable the foolish virgins knock to get in, but the door has already been shut. After the door is shut and the high calling ceases, the cherubim depart from the Temple (Ezek. 10:18,19). The east gate portrays the way of sacrifice, the way of entering in. In the final picture it is the way of the kings of the east (Rev. 16:12).

This change of position by the Lord represents that the Church is complete and glorified, and God's acceptance is shown when the cloud fills the Temple. Likewise, upon completion of the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple, a cloud filled the structure to show God's acceptance.

Ezek. 10:5 And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard even to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh.

Like a loudspeaker, the wings magnified God's voice to the Outer Court (the *world*), saying "Peace, be still." The Lord's voice came through the wings, through the loudspeaker. In other words, God spoke with *authority*.

As soon as the Lord stood over the Temple, it was filled with smoke, and a tremendous luminescence shone out and filled the Inner Court. Next God spoke powerfully so that His voice was heard in the Outer Court.

Ezek. 10:6 And it came to pass, that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels.

Ezek. 10:7 And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that was between the cherubims, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen: who took it, and went out.

Although the man clothed in linen went in between the wheels to get the coals of fire, the coals were actually handed to him by the *Justice* cherub.

The account goes back and forth, *reviewing* how the man clothed in linen got the coals of fire. Other books of the Bible (Daniel, Revelation, etc.) use this same technique of review. Usually the retracing picks up the thread at another point. In other words, the man clothed in linen went in between the wheels prior to the appearance of the glory of the Lord. This is a flashback to what happened to the man with the inkhorn. The coals of fire are a review of the work already accomplished by the six men with slaughter weapons (that is, with the *Volumes*). The review confirms the interpretation of a condemning message on Babylon. *Individual* nominal Christians, as well as the nominal *systems*, are to be tried and judged.

Q: Chapter 9 keeps referring to the man clothed in linen with the writer's inkhorn, whereas Chapter 10 just says the "man clothed with linen." Was the inkhorn detail omitted because the writing was complete, but the written work continues to perform its function?

A: Yes. Even though the vision seems to indicate the author is doing the action, it is the *writing* that is accomplishing the function. The coals of fire picture the work of the writing. To state the matter another way, that which at one time did not make much impression on the world *will do so at a future date*. The writing will be much more meaningful when the people are *forced* to face serious issues in the near future. For example, Jeremiah predicted what would happen in great detail. Although the people did not believe him, they remembered some of his sayings because of the peculiar way he delivered them. However, when things *began to happen subsequently*, the people knew Jeremiah was a true prophet. It was the same situation with Noah's predictions of the Flood. The people laughed and jeered—*until the rain started*. Then they knew they were the fools and Noah had spoken truth. Some of the people even tried to get in the Ark, but the pitch and/or slime on the outside prevented their climbing and entering. Noah was sealed as a prophet when the Flood came. Daniel was sealed as a prophet when Jesus came in fulfillment of the 70-week prophecy. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were sealed when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Q: Do the coals of fire tie in with the seven thunders of Revelation 10? Are the seven thunders a condensed portion of the writings that were spread out over a period of time in the *Volumes*?

A: Yes. In other words, when Jeremiah mentioned in advance what would happen, the people did not remember all the details, but they did remember the *essence* of what had been said, namely, that the city was to be destroyed and the land was to be left entirely desolate.

Ezek. 10:8 And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings.

The “hand” is indicative of a human servant.

Ezek. 10:9 And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl stone.

As already explained, “beryl” is “chrysolite,” the stone of wisdom, which was gold in color.

Ezek. 10:10 And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel.

Ezek. 10:11 When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went.

Chapter 1 explained that whenever the wheels were lifted up or went down, the cherubim went up or down too and vice versa. The spirit in the wheel was like the spirit in the cherub; that is, the same motivation, energy, or will was in both. Now verse 11 adds an interesting detail: When the chariot moved and the wheels went, they went “whither the head looked.” The particular cherub *face of intent* assumed the forefront position on the head stock of each cherub. Then the cherub went straight forward—with no deviation—in the direction the head looked.

Ezek. 10:12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels that they four had.

Each entire cherub, plus its wheel and wings, was covered with “eyes,” a symbol of wisdom and intelligence.

Ezek. 10:13 As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel.

The wheels are called “whirring wheels,” a term that gives the thought of *movement*—that the ages are *progressing*. Especially the smaller inner wheel (verse 10) was “whirring.” Since Ezekiel was getting an accelerated view of events, the little inner wheel seemed to be turning rapidly. However, both the larger and the smaller wheels were coming *to the same terminus*. The inner wheel was more active, but the outer wheel was moving too. God had given prophecies of the coming destruction through Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other prophets, but nothing seemed to be happening. In regard to the end of this age, when the trouble starts to occur, events will happen *quickly*; an aspect of the trouble will be *sudden*. When the Flood came, the first long dispensation or “world” ended, but also the smaller “120-year” age ended; that is, both terminated together. At the end of the week when Noah went into the Ark, everything ended: the first 1,656-year world, the 120 years, and the 7-day week. All things came to a focal point and significant time of judgment.

In antitype who will see the whirring wheels? The Ezekiel class, the feet members, will discern them. The smaller wheel moves fast enough to be seen plainly—action is indicated—whereas the larger wheel is seen by faith.

Q: Since Ezekiel was watching the man clothed in linen, wouldn’t this indicate that the feet members will have to recognize present truth in order to take the proper stand?

A: The feet members will have to recognize present truth but not necessarily in the same

manner. Although they will have to come to the same conclusion, they will come from different backgrounds. Therefore, some will get an acceleration of information that will seem amazing.

Comment: The understanding would have its seeds with the Pastor's writings, but the details of dispensational truth clarify as the light shines brighter (Prov. 4:18).

Back there Ezekiel's message was helpful and faith-strengthening to those who heard it. Ezekiel would have been aware of Jeremiah's message and vice versa. The influence of these two prophets in different areas had a very encouraging and enlightening effect. But the different spheres of influence in their ministries are only a picture of something much more significant at the end of this dispensation.

Ezek. 10:14 And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.

Each cherub had four faces. The "face of a cherub" should be the "face of an ox," as in the vision by the river Chebar in Chapter 1. The four faces were of an ox, a man, a lion, and an eagle. Thus the Bible corrects itself. This error was permitted to creep into the text to stumble those who do not look for internal evidence. Revelation 4:7 also shows the face to be that of a calf or an ox.

Ezek. 10:15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar.

Ezek. 10:16 And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them.

Ezek. 10:17 When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

Verses 16 and 17 emphasize the *oneness* of the wheels and the cherubim. They acted alike; the *same spirit* was in both. The character of the wheels is being emphasized in relation to the cherubim. Since the wheels represent ages, the wheels-cherubim relationship shows that God moves according to a plan. Stated another way, God's attributes operate in harmony with a predetermined plan.

The action of the wheels so impressed Ezekiel that he realized the same spirit was in both the cherubim and the wheels. Each wheel and each cherub had a spirit, and their spirits acted in unison. They moved together because the same spirit motivated both.

Ezek. 10:18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims.

Ezek. 10:19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them, and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD'S house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

Now the posture of Jehovah changed. The glory of the Lord, which was seated on or over

the Temple, returned to its normal position on the platform above the cherubim. In other words, the glory of God first departed off the cherubim platform, then went to sit on the Temple, and now returned to the platform.

This scene took place in the rather spacious Inner Court. The east gate was the way into the Inner Court (as were the gates on the north and south sides). Here, in regard to *Solomon's* Temple, God temporarily got out of the chariot, sat on the Temple, and then went back to the chariot; next the chariot moved to the east gate and paused there. In regard to *Ezekiel's* Temple of the future, the glory of the Lord will enter by way of the east gate, and the east gate will be shut (Ezek. 43:1–4; 44:1). The Temple will then symbolically be God's residence.

Ezek. 10:20 This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims.

Ezek. 10:21 Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings.

Ezek. 10:22 And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

Every cherub (with its wheel) went “straight forward” when in motion. First, the heads swiveled to the appropriate attribute for the action about to take place, and then the cherubim moved in that direction.

“The likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar.” The discrepancy in the faces in verse 14 is corrected here by the referral back to the vision in Chapter 1. Obviously, all four *cherubim* had *cherub* faces, so the “face of a cherub” should be the “face of an ox.”

Verses 15, 20, and 22 all state that these are the same cherubim that were by the river Chebar in Chapter 1. Because the vision is important in *all* of its detail, many of the facets are repeated (wings, wheels, faces, etc.). This is a vision of *Almighty* God's character, movement, and operation. The Scriptures contain four or five descriptions of God from different standpoints. Isaiah 6:1–4 is one description, as follows.

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.” Here, too, God was seated on the Temple. His “train,” or robes, filled the Temple. The “seraphims” (cherubims) each had six wings versus the four wings of the Ezekiel living beings.

What is the significance of the statement “And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke”? When Isaiah saw the vibration and shaking of the posts, he was frightened, saying in verse 5, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.” The destruction of the spiritual professed Church or Temple of the Lord and the indwelling of the Spirit of the true Temple of the Lord are somewhat coincidental. The professed nominal Church of this age will be replaced by the true Temple. The smoke that fills the Temple is usually associated with the completion of

the Church and the dedication of the Temple or Tabernacle. Thus it is a *holy* smoke. The moving posts suggest removal and yet institution. Babylon's fall will be an evidence that the Church is complete. As Babylon, the professed Temple of this age, is removed, the true Church will be instituted. The fact that no man could enter Solomon's Temple until the smoke of God's acceptance subsided means that the service of the priesthood on behalf of the *world* will not start until the true Church is complete and glorified (1 Kings 8:10,11).

The true Church will be gone by the middle of Babylon's rise to power or hour of power. The half hour of silence that follows will be terminated by Babylon's fall. During that half hour—or at least by the end of the half hour of silence when Babylon falls—the Great Company will realize the Church is gone.

In Chapter 1, Ezekiel saw judgment coming upon *fleshly* Israel. Now, in Chapter 10, the prophet saw judgment coming on *spiritual* Israel.

Ezek. 11:1 Moreover the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD'S house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.

Chapter 11 is a continuation of the Ezekiel 10 vision. Ezekiel saw God get off the Temple and enter the chariot, and then the chariot went to the east gate. Next Ezekiel was miraculously lifted up and brought over to the east gate of Solomon's Temple. There he saw 25 men below him at the east gate. However, the 25 men could not see either Ezekiel or God's glory because the latter were *above*. God was talking to Ezekiel. Of the 25, only Jaazaniah and Pelatiah, "princes of the people"—and thus of the *civil* aspect—were mentioned by name. These two were singled out because they were the ringleaders in wickedness and wrong counsel. (The 25 men mentioned earlier in Ezekiel 8:16 were priests and hence were not the same 25 Ezekiel saw here.)

Ezek. 11:2 Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city:

God was saying to Ezekiel: "See those 25 men down there. They devise mischief and give wicked counsel."

Ezek. 11:3 Which say, It is not near; let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.

The 25 gave false counsel, saying, "Do not worry, for the trouble is a long way off; it is not near. Jerusalem will not be captured." Thus they flatly contradicted the message of the true prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who indicated the time for judgment was at hand. "Let us build houses" shows the degree of their unconcern and disbelief in the coming captivity. We are reminded of Noah's day, before the Flood, when the people scoffed at the warning. They carried on the normal activities of life, completely unconcerned. Jeremiah had advised the people to give themselves up, to go into captivity voluntarily, and to build houses there—in other words, to submit to the captivity because they could not avert it. Thus this verse is sarcasm and a play on words.

"This city [Jerusalem] is the caldron, and we be the flesh." A "caldron" is a pot for stewing and cooking. The 25 were boasting of their fortification, feeling that they were protected

inside a strong metal “caldron,” as it were, and that the trouble would not reach them. They were saying the city was like a caldron because the walls were of iron and completely defensible. “The flesh” would be the people, who were seemingly protected inside the arrangement. They felt that the natural defense of Jerusalem was like an iron kettle and that they were protected inside.

An alternative interpretation is that the 25 men *mockingly* said, “This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh.” Ezekiel had prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed, including the Temple and the people. Instead of saying, like Ezekiel, that the people would be cooked, the 25 mocked him: “We will *not* be the caldron.” Ezekiel and Jeremiah both used the word “caldron” (Ezek. 24:1–14; Jer. 1:13). Jeremiah’s prophecy was uttered earlier, and now the 25 were discrediting and mimicking it. They were saying, in effect: “We are secure and having a delightful time! Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we are *supposed* to die—ha!” Similarly, in the days of Noah, the people pursued their *normal* activities and business (Matt. 24:38).

The definitions of the two names Jaazaniah (“God is determining”) and Pelatiah (“God delivers”) fit the antitype. The *civil* aspect (the dragon), united with the religious aspect (the beast and the false prophet), will give forth a false religious message, claiming that God is on their side (Rev. 16:13,14).

There may be a connection between Jaazaniah and Hananiah in Jeremiah Chapter 28. The two, both *false* prophets, were sons of Azur. Hananiah, who spoke earlier, was aggressive towards Jeremiah, prophesying in the name of the Lord that the rest of Judah would not be taken captive and that the yoke would be broken off all nations under Nebuchadnezzar so that they would be free.

Ezek. 11:4 Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man.

God told Ezekiel, who was above the 25 men, to prophesy against the children of Israel. (The 25 were unaware of Ezekiel’s presence.) Thus, in a sense, God was inspecting the scene, especially the wrong advice being given contrary to the true prophets’ advice. The repetition indicates that God spoke with *animation*: “PROPHECY!” The animation emphasized that the message was one of *judgment*. God used the impersonal term of address “son of man” because of His great office as Emperor of the universe.

Although Ezekiel was in Jerusalem *in vision*, when he “returned” to those in Babylonian captivity, he was to actually prophesy these words (see verse 25). Ezekiel was taken into God’s confidence.

Ezek. 11:5 And the spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.

God was aware of what was going on.

Ezek. 11:6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.

How did the wicked multiply the slain in the city? They were already responsible for many “deaths” through slander, malicious accusations, and legal persecutions, and now they

were multiplying the slain with their counsel to build houses and not obey Jeremiah's advice.

Ezek. 11:7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.

God knew the evil thoughts and mischief of the Israelites. The 25 men, the leadership, gave wrong counsel, and their false words would result in judgments and the slaying of the people. God was saying, in effect, "You may be laughing and joking now, but judgment and the sword *will come* because of your evil teaching and wicked ways." The leadership was responsible for their teaching. The city was the caldron and the people would be cooked in it.

There was some sort of communication between Ezekiel and Jeremiah. News went back and forth. Those in Judah were interested in news from those in captivity in Babylon and vice versa.

Ezek. 11:8 Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 11:9 And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you.

Ezek. 11:10 Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 11:11 This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; but I will judge you in the border of Israel:

Ezek. 11:12 And ye shall know that I am the LORD: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you.

Those who tried to escape were slain outside the city. These were the leaders, the rulers, those in positions of authority, who were purposely taken to northern Israel for judgment and execution. The "border" of Israel was Riblah, where Zedekiah's eyes were put out and his sons were slain. Many were executed and some were taken into captivity.

Solomon's Quarries, underneath Jerusalem, are extensive and contain many nooks and crannies. According to tradition, an exit led in the direction of Jericho.

God was telling Ezekiel to prophesy against the 25 men who had mocked earlier. Now God was mocking them: "True, you will not be in the city cauldron. You will escape—*seemingly*. But you will be taken up north and, by the hands of strangers, be executed there." The leadership would suffer for the bad counsel they gave. In fact, the 25 princes would receive an even worse judgment than the people, for they would be slain by the sword on the edge of Israel in *public humiliation*. With their executions taking place outside the city, a stigma attached to their death, for *criminals* were customarily put to death outside the city. For example, Jesus was purposely crucified outside the city because the scribes and Pharisees regarded him as a criminal. According to Jewish Law, a person was defiled by touching a dead body. It was thought that Jerusalem would not be defiled if the executions took place

outside the city. In summary then, the rulers died *outside* the city (Riblah was even outside the nation), and the people died *within* the city. The people were slain, but the princes suffered a worse fate.

Ezek. 11:13 And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

Ezekiel had this vision shortly before 606 BC. The vision seemed very real—in fact, so real that Ezekiel was emotionally affected by what he saw and wondered if all would die. Two possible interpretations are as follows: (1) Pelatiah died subsequently, that is, when the vision was over and Ezekiel was repeating these things to his fellow exiles. (2) The vision was like a dress rehearsal in the sense that Ezekiel was prophesying and seeing exactly what the results of his words would be. God was saying, “Ezekiel, you say such and such, and subsequently you will see what happens.” The events were not actually taking place *in the vision*, but when the vision ended, Ezekiel would find out that Pelatiah had died at the time his death was prophesied in vision.

Ezek. 11:14 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 11:15 Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.

Verse 15 is an insight into the attitude of those in Judah. They wanted to take over the land of those in exile, for they felt that land was being providentially given to them. The people in the homeland felt pride as they compared themselves to those in captivity. Considering themselves to be more righteous, they tried to acquire the part of Israel that was formerly possessed by those now in captivity. Instead they should have viewed the captives as brethren and family and desired their return. Yet, strangely, after the 70 years’ desolation, the exiles who returned to Israel were almost totally from the original captives of Judah.

Jeremiah’s advice to those still in the homeland was to make themselves captives. “Do not fight the captivity, for it is an irrevocable judgment from the Lord. Submit and allow yourselves to be taken.” (The land had to be desolate for 70 years.) Some of Judah was already in captivity. God’s instruction was to multiply and have large families in Babylon, for they would be there for many years. The attitude of those still in Judah—that is, not yet in captivity—was described by Ezekiel to those already in exile in Babylon. The two-tribe kingdom told the ten-tribe kingdom, “Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.” They were only too ready to assume the land of those in captivity.

Ezek. 11:16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.

Ezek. 11:17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.

God said, “Yet will I be to them as a *little sanctuary* in the countries where they shall come.” In other words, God would make His presence felt to the exiles. Ezekiel’s prophecies were one example, for they were an encouragement to those in exile. In *great* detail he

prophesied of a new city and Temple. King Jehoiachin's release from prison was another encouragement; he was taken to the king's table as a contrite man. If sufficiently interested, the exiles were getting a lot of instruction.

Actually these words were a slap in the face to those still in Israel. Compared to the glorious Temple of Solomon with those back in Israel, the modest sanctuary of the exiles was more pleasing to the Lord. After the 70 years' desolation, God would give Israel to the exiles, not to those still in Israel at this time. The 25 men, the wicked princes, were comparable to the leaders of Christendom today.

Ezek. 11:18 And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence.

Ezek. 11:19 And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:

Ezek. 11:20 That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

When the Israelites came back from captivity after the 70 years, it was noticeable that they were a *contrite* remnant who had put aside the worship of false gods. No more would Molech be worshipped. Hence it was as if they had a new spirit. Jeremiah Chapter 31 tells especially about the future, about our day, when God will put His Spirit in the hearts of the people of Israel and "make a new covenant" with them, but Ezekiel was talking about a more immediate contrition. The remnant exercised faith in leaving the houses they had built in Babylon to return to Israel. The Lord was preparing a people for the First Advent.

Ezek. 11:21 But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own heads, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 11:22 Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above.

Ezek. 11:23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.

The glory of the Lord (on the platform over the cherubim and the wheels) was lifted up and went and stood over the Mount of Olives. Jesus sat on that very mount to give his great prophecy of Matthew 24. When the Kingdom is established, the "feet" (the authority) of Jehovah will stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4; Isa. 52:7).

Here in verse 23 the picture is of the Lord's favor being *removed*—the "wheels" of *judgment* were moving. Three time periods are thus suggested: (1) *Removal* of favor in 606 BC. (2) *End* of favor in AD 33, the turning point of the Jewish double of 1,845 years of favor. In that very year Jesus wept over Jerusalem because Israel's favor had ended and it was time for judgment (Luke 19:41–44). (3) *Return* of favor, yet future, with the deliverance of the Holy Remnant and the establishment of the Kingdom (Zech. 14:4).

Ezek. 11:24 Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me.

Ezek. 11:25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had shown me.

The vision covered Chapters 8–11. Now Ezekiel was returned in vision by the Spirit of God to Chaldea in Babylon, to the exiles, and he would tell the things he had seen. He had a dress rehearsal earlier, and now would come the actual narration to those in captivity.

Ezek. 12:1 The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 12:2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

Ezek. 12:3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

Ezek. 12:4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity.

Ezek. 12:5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby.

Ezek. 12:6 In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

Ezek. 12:7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight.

This enactment was a forceful object lesson to the eyewitnesses there in captivity. In addition, word would reach those back in Judah. Ezekiel started to move valuables, food, clothing, and other belongings out of his house in preparation for fleeing. Most of the drama occurred during the day. Items were moved next to a wall, which he dug through or under. As if secretly trying to get out of the city of Jerusalem, he took things piecemeal through the wall at twilight to the other side.

What was the purpose of Ezekiel's enactment? He was portraying Jerusalem under attack in 606 BC and how King Zedekiah would try to secretly escape at night with enough food and valuables to survive. The prophet was told to cover his face so that he could not see the ground. (He probably put some sort of blindfold on his eyes, although he had to see sufficiently to carry out the enactment.)

Verse 2 is a reminder of words spoken by Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Jesus (Jer. 5:21; Isa. 6:9,10; Matt. 13:15). The Israelites had eyes to see, but they saw not, and ears to hear, but they heard not, because they were a "rebellious house." Notice that Ezekiel was "a sign unto the house of Israel."

Ezek. 12:8 And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

Ezek. 12:9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?

Ezek. 12:10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

Ezek. 12:11 Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity.

Ezek. 12:12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes.

Ezek. 12:13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

Ezekiel had acted in complete silence. The following day he explained his actions when God opened his mouth to speak, temporarily lifting his dumbness. He had prophetically portrayed the fate of King Zedekiah and a few others when they would try to escape from Jerusalem. They would be captured and taken to Riblah, where Zedekiah's children would be slain in his sight and his eyes put out (he would be blinded). Hence the seeming conflict was explained—that he would go into captivity but not see the land.

A confirmation that Zedekiah was being referred to is the word “prince” in verse 12. He was also called a “prince” in Ezekiel 21:25–27. “And thou, profane wicked *prince* of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown.... I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

The baggage represents those things that would be taken by the few remnant survivors who went to Babylon. Jeremiah was given a choice by Nebuchadnezzar: Go to Babylon with the survivors or stay behind with Gedaliah and a skeleton crew of vine dressers in Israel. Jeremiah chose the latter and eventually ended up in Egypt.

The Chaldeans were mentioned because they were more brutal than the others in Babylon (verse 13). Hence they were well suited for bringing the harsh judgment on Judah.

Ezek. 12:14 And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

Ezek. 12:15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

Ezek. 12:16 But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Those scattered “toward every wind” were the Israelites who tried to escape and then were caught and killed with the sword. The Israelites who went orderly into captivity were dispersed in different areas of Babylon.

“But I will leave a few men ... that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen ... and they shall know that I am the LORD.” God would leave a remnant in the

type, in the 606 BC trouble on Judah. We are reminded of Ezekiel 5:1–4, where the prophet cut off his hair. Most of the hair was disposed of in one way or another, leaving only a small portion that was spared.

Ezek. 12:17 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezek. 12:18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;

Ezek. 12:19 And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.

Ezek. 12:20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel now enacted how forcefully and carefully food would be measured, rationed out, and eaten in Jerusalem when the attack, the siege, was in progress. Notice that he ate and drank with shaking and trembling. The land had to be desolate for 70 years. The Revised Standard Version is helpful for these verses.

This enactment is a good example of how the Lord gave signs to Israel in the type. Today we are not to be theatrical and dramatic in our witnessing, but in Jacob's Trouble God will again operate along natural lines—and perhaps afterward, in the Kingdom, as well.

Up to this point in time, Ezekiel's sufferings for the Lord included:

1. Lying on his right side and on his left side for a total of 430 days
2. Eating a rigid diet baked with dung
3. Not being able to speak in ordinary conversation (he was dumb and could only speak as God's mouthpiece)

Also, we should keep in mind that three of the major prophets were contemporaries:

1. Daniel was in the king's palace in Babylon.
2. Ezekiel was among the captives in Babylon.
3. Jeremiah was back in the homeland with the two-tribe kingdom.

Ezek. 12:21 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 12:22 Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?

This verse is a reminder of Habakkuk 2:3, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it [seem to] tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." The people had little or no confidence in prophecy. Pertaining to the Second Presence, 2 Peter 3:3,4 uses similar language: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." The same thoughts (or spirit) were entertained by the world in the days of Noah.

Ezek. 12:23 Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to

cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.

The clause “the days are at hand” is a reminder of John the Baptist’s words “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” and John the Revelator’s announcement “the time is at hand” (Matt. 3:2; Rev. 1:3; 22:10). The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon was at hand, for the time setting was just a few years prior to 606 BC. King Nebuchadnezzar was probably already mobilizing his forces.

Ezek. 12:24 For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

“Vain” means false, hence a vision *from* men or *of* men. “Flattering divination” would be predictions by the entrails or organs of an animal. These predictions were what the people wanted to hear. Divination was also done through astrology.

Ezek. 12:25 For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.

Again, for verses 21–25 the Revised Standard is good. The people were saying that the prophecies would not be fulfilled, that they would come to naught, but Ezekiel was to tell them that God would bring the judgment to pass and thus cause the proverb to end. The fulfillment was “at hand”; false visions would cease. False divination promised *peace*, but the true prophets said there would be *trouble*. God would perform and/or fulfill the prophecies in the days of those Ezekiel was addressing.

In Isaiah 55:11 God said, “My word ... shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Ezekiel’s prophecy of the judgment to come in 606 BC was so close to the time of fulfillment that more than 90 percent of the Israelites exiled in Babylon would live to see the fulfillment.

Ezek. 12:26 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezek. 12:27 Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.

Ezek. 12:28 Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD.

The people were saying that the trouble was a long way off, that it would come after their lifetime, but it was *IMMINENT*—less than six years away.

Ezek. 13:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 13:2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

Ezekiel’s message originated from God, whereas the prophecies of the false prophets came from their own minds and imaginations. Generally speaking, true prophets give judgment messages, and false prophets give pleasant messages (although, of course, the Lord’s Word

is often sweet).

Ezek. 13:3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

This verse applies not only to the false prophets of the past but to all who are dabbling in *occult* predictions today.

Ezek. 13:4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

“Foxes in the deserts” are crafty, cunning, and deceptive. Song 2:15 warns about the “foxes,” which have a nibbling, destructive effect: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” Here in verse 4 the “vine” would be faith, true security. Like foxes, the false prophets vitiate true prophecy, the Word of the Lord.

Ezek. 13:5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

This verse shows the importance of sermons on prophecy, for the false prophets did not prepare the people for the coming trouble. *To be forewarned is to be forearmed.* “Gaps” were breaches or holes in the wall of Jerusalem.

Ezek. 13:6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

The false prophets had followers. Often their air of confidence, which in reality was based on nothing, gathered followers who put their trust in the false prophets.

Ezek. 13:7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?

False prophets professed to speak in the name of the Lord but really spoke from their *own* minds and imaginations. They gave flattering and vain hopes of *peace*, contradicting Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

Ezek. 13:8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD.

God said the false prophets had “spoken vanity, and seen lies.” The false prophets did not just believe they were right but were *confirmed in their error*. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

Today the world is filled with “vanity” (delusion)—vain, empty, transitory things. To be directed in proper channels of service and of study, it is essential for the Christian to pray for the Lord’s providence, for the heart is deceitful.

Ezek. 13:9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

God opposed false prophets for their lies. False prophets *will not be* (1) “in the assembly,” (2) “in the writing,” or (3) in “the land of Israel” because of misleading the people. What were the lessons for *natural* Israel back there? The false prophets (1) would not be taken into God’s confidence for good messages later, (2) would have their names expunged from the record of Israel’s lineage, and (3) would not be in the group returning to Israel after the 70 years’ desolation. What is the antitype for *spiritual* Israel? The false prophets of today (1) will not be in God’s “assembly” or congregation of the future (will not get life in any of the strata in the pyramid under Christ, from the Little Flock down to the world of mankind), (2) will not be in the book of life (they will go into Second Death), and (3) will not be in the Kingdom.

This *powerful* verse reminds us of Revelation 22:18,19, which tells of the responsibility for, and penalty attached to, willfully adding to or taking away from the Word of God, “the words of the prophecy of this book.” There is great responsibility in teaching the Lord’s Word. Adding to the Bible would be exaggeration, which is easier to do unintentionally than taking away from the Lord’s Word. Those who add carelessly are punished, but those who subtract die the Second Death. It is better wisdom to remain silent than to speak and nullify the Lord’s Word. With prophecy, subtraction is worse than addition—from Genesis to Revelation.

The phrase “[to] be in the assembly of my people” refers to those who receive either a spiritual or an earthly salvation. The false prophets will be weeded out and thus lose their positions of honor. They will be exposed for hypocrisy and false teachings.

Ezek. 13:10 **Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:**

God’s words to Ezekiel show that “prophecy” is very important both in a predictive sense and as instruction. False divination will become more and more serious a sin as the Time of Trouble nears. Here at the end of the age, our message should include the declaration of *vengeance!*

“One built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.” Ezekiel was speaking of a figurative “wall.” In other words, the false prophets whitewashed the truth, backing each other up in sectarian ways. Jesus likened the scribes and Pharisees to “whited sepulchres” in Matthew 23:27. The false prophets, who proclaimed a message of peace that the trouble would not come, disagreed strongly with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, giving contradictory advice.

The false prophets put whitewash (a nice white covering) over what should have been exposed. They were not proper watchmen (1) on the wall, (2) in the tower, and (3) in repairing the holes in the Lord’s hedge. Stated another way, they built false walls and did not fill the gaps in the hedge.

The popular message was, “Peace! Be quiet and do not rock the boat.” Sepulchres were commonly whitewashed to look better, but they still contained dead men’s bones.

Ezek. 13:11 **Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.**

Ezek. 13:12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?

When the wall falls, the people will ask the false prophets where they were. Both back there in Ezekiel's day and in the future when the "great hailstones" shall fall, the clerical element will be called on the carpet for their previous advice. In other words, just as the fulfillment in 606 BC revealed the truth of Ezekiel's prophecy, so the truth of the message of the feet members will be seen after their death.

"A stormy wind shall rend it." Hail and wind are related to judgment—figuratively in 606 BC on natural Israel and spiritually (or antitypically) on Christendom in the future.

Ezek. 13:13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.

Ezek. 13:14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 13:15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;

Ezekiel used figurative language. Why were wind, overflowing rain, and hailstones used to destroy or consume the "wall" (Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple)? Designed as a means of protection, the wall represented security. Thus the people dwelled behind the wall in unwarranted and unjustified confidence and in false security. When the wall was broken down in 606 BC, the people realized the fulfillment of prophecy. Because untempered mortar (like a whitewash) had been used, the wall was unstable and the wind breached or rent it, blew it down. If the false prophets had used the proper binding agent in God's Word, the wall would have remained. Instead the rain washed off the whitewash (removed the pretty facade) and exposed the foundation underneath. At the same time, hailstones pulverized the wall. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was the Lord's agent (avenger) in doing this work. He breached the wall and leveled both the city of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. After the 70 years of desolation, Nehemiah returned and rebuilt the wall—*properly*.

Ezek. 13:16 To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.

We are reminded of 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." The future counterpart of the false prophets in Ezekiel's day would be the false prophets of Christendom, especially Papacy with its boast that the gates ("walls") of hell will not prevail against the system and that the Roman Catholic Church will "not sit as a widow" (Isa 47:8). The condemnation applies to Protestantism as well, that is, to Christendom in general. The future prophecy of peace will occur particularly when the three unclean, froglike spirits (demonic doctrines) are uttered by the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet during the hour of power (Rev. 16:13,14).

The literal time setting for Ezekiel's words was 611 BC, or about five years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was prophesying in Israel while Ezekiel and Daniel were active in Babylon.

Ezek. 13:17 Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them,

In verses 1–16, Ezekiel prophesied against the *male* false prophets of Israel. Now he was told to direct his message against the *female* false prophetesses. Just like the males, the females prophesied out of their *own* hearts. However, the difference was that the prophetesses did not teach publicly but through occult practices such as witchcraft and fortune telling.

How could a consecrated sister do this today in principle? She could adversely influence her husband who is an elder. Similarly, Jezebel manipulated her husband, the weak King Ahab, even though he had the position of authority. Moreover, sisters can teach privately in conversation and in correspondence. They can teach in fellowship at conventions, with guests at their homes, and so forth.

Ezek. 13:18 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?

As indicated by the “pillows” sewn to armholes, a false sense of security and false hopes were being engendered. For “pillows” the Revised Standard Version has “magic [arm]bands.” Cloths and bracelets were used to provide a sense of protection.

In the spiritual counterpart in the Roman Catholic Church, some communicants wear armbands, or cloth scapulas, that are supposed to possess magic charms. Also, cloths are sometimes sewn to underwear to ward off sickness. Some worshippers place statues on the dashboards of their cars. The false Church is pictured as Jezebel, a woman, and charms, witchcraft, fortune telling, etc., were practiced by women. Thus both within and without the pales of orthodoxy, witchcraft has been practiced.

The hunting of souls is based on the wrong principle of proselytizing to enlarge the coffers and influence of nominal churches. For example, the belief has been encouraged that the welfare of one in Purgatory depends on monetary contributions (the doctrine of the Mass, Novenas, etc.). The false priesthood proclaims control over the destiny of the deceased ones. As Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees, when they found a convert, they confined him more to *gehenna* because of the beliefs they forced on him (Matt. 23:15). The false prophets castigated and ridiculed the true prophets like Ezekiel and Daniel. That is also true today. Organized churches castigate the Lord's people and thus, in a sense, affect their lives.

Ezek. 13:19 And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?

These practices were done for a price, for a profit. Barley and bread were the rewards given to the prophetesses for their work. In fact, so widespread were the practices that they were done for barley instead of wheat. The influence of the prophetesses was damaging; it had a backward or reverse effect of hurting the righteous and aiding the wicked. These practices

in the nation of Israel, which cheapened and commercialized religion and God's forgiveness, have a counterpart in the Roman Catholic Church.

The principle in antitype also occurs when consecrated sisters give wrong advice and influence others against those who take a right stand; for example, sisters might say an elder is too harsh and/or not loving. Half-truths are dangerous. We must be careful not to misrepresent any of the brethren.

Verse 19 is strong. For rewards, the false prophetesses "*slay* the souls that should *not die*, and ... *save* the souls alive that should *not live*." They did this with lies, which the majority accepted as truth.

Ezek. 13:20 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.

Ezek. 13:21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 13:22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

Ezek. 13:23 Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

The false prophetesses made "the heart of the righteous sad" and strengthened "the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way." *Beware* lest we should fall into that category! *Watch*, for those telling "lies" do not realize their condition. In their eyes they are right, yet they see black as white and vice versa. Proverbs 14:12 bears repeating: "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." When a person's conscience is sensitive, when he is learning truth and trying to develop principles, he is aware of wrong. But some people stifle their tender conscience; they "quench" the Spirit. Every time they suppress a twinge of conscience, they harden that conscience. Those who do this repeatedly over a period of time correspondingly lose the discernment of right and wrong. Ezekiel 12:2 says they "have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house." We must keep the conscience tender. It needs to be regulated and instructed by Scripture.

The Apostle Jude speaks of a natural-minded class who go into Second Death. Some of these make a valid consecration but lose their spirit-begetting because of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. By denying conscience over and over, they lose the Holy Spirit. (There are other ways of losing the Holy Spirit too.)

And there is another principle: The wicked will "not return from his wicked way, by promising him life"; that is, the wicked will not return from their wicked way *if they are promised life*. By promising only good things in the future and not telling of judgment and justice, we can encourage one to continue in wrongdoing and wait for the future Kingdom. Blanket forgiveness of sins will not be extended in the Kingdom, for there will be *retribution* as well as opportunity. Life proffered in the future is conditional, based upon works (justification by works). We should not give a false hope of life by failing to stress

repentance. By promising good things in the future and not telling of justice and judgment, we can be guilty of encouraging disobedience now.

Another way of falsely promising life is to say, "Your consecration was not accepted; therefore, you are not subject to Second Death." Caution: Do not daub on whitewash! Do not suppress conscience! Keep the conscience tender.

The nominal Church has strengthened the wicked in their ways by promising life even, for instance, in the case of well-known Mafia leaders. The danger is in a liberal message that requires little or no sacrifice. The attitude is, "As long as you are a member of the recognized party (or church), your wrongdoings will be winked at."

In the days of the apostles, pieces of material from their clothing were used to cure people. As the apostles fell asleep in death, the power cure of the material decreased. During their lives, the people learned of God's Word directly from the apostles themselves. After their death, the people had to turn more to the Scriptures. Today some false religious leaders with profit motives "cure" through pieces of material from the one who wants a cure. Crosses have been used the same way. The seed thought has been taken out of context and modified to bring profit and feed the ego.

Ezek. 14:1 Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

Some of the elders went to Ezekiel and sat down, waiting to see if he would speak and what he would say. (They would have checked periodically.)

Ezek. 14:2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 14:3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

God spoke to Ezekiel: "These men have idols [false gods] and have set up images. Should I be inquired of by them? Should I give them information through you, Ezekiel?" Because of their idols, the elders had no right to inquire. A principle was involved.

Ezek. 14:4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

The guilt was proportionate to the number of idols. Also, a multitude of answers is implied; that is, the elders got confusing responses and hence did not know which answer was right.

Ezek. 14:5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

Even though they were being punished, the general condition of those in exile (the ten-tribe kingdom and some from the two tribes) was that they were estranged from God because of their false gods and images.

Ezek. 14:6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your

abominations.

God's message to "Repent" was not what the people wanted to hear. They wanted information instead.

Ezek. 14:7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

Ezek. 14:8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 14:9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.

With both classes—with the prophets as well as with the common people—if idols were in their hearts, the reward would be the same. God would "set ... [His] face against that man" and would cut him off and destroy him. The account keeps repeating the sin: having a literal statue and worshipping and adoring that statue as if it were a god.

Guilt was proportionate to hypocrisy. The elders wanted information from Ezekiel, a prophet of the true God, but at home they worshipped idols (false gods). This mixture provoked the Lord so that He would take action. He would cut off false prophets and such individuals (including proselytes) and make them a sign and a proverb, that is, a public example.

What would be the antitype of the statement "If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet"?

Comment: Even though verse 9 refers to just the prophet, it is a reminder of Matthew 24:24, which indicates that all will be deceived except the Very Elect. It is as if to say that at a certain point in time, if there is not a sufficient degree of faithfulness, God will do (or *permit*) something to happen to *increase* that deception.

Reply: Yes, at the end of the age, froglike doctrines of demons will come forth out of the mouths of the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet to deceive the nations. God will put the thought in the hearts of the nations to follow the deception. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17). In the final analysis, the deception will be successful in weeding out the undesirables.

Ezek. 14:10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him;

Ezek. 14:11 That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

Those who went to the false prophets, as well as the professed prophets themselves, would

be punished.

Ezek. 14:12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,

Ezek. 14:13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:

Ezekiel's message was originally addressed to certain elders, then to individuals, false prophets, proselytes, and now the land (the nation). All would be held accountable—the leaders and the led. Man and beast would be deprived of the land in the 70 years of desolation. The first judgment would be famine.

Ezek. 14:14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.

Three notably righteous men were singled out: Noah, Daniel, and Job. Even if these three were there in Israel, only their *own three souls* would be saved, not even the souls of their families. We are reminded of Abraham's desire to have Sodom spared if some righteous persons could be found there—but to no avail. Sodom was destroyed.

Comment: The outstanding characteristics of Noah, Daniel, and Job are characteristics the feet members will need. Daniel was called "greatly beloved" because of his love for *prophecy* (even though much of the answer was withheld from him). Noah was a preacher of *righteousness*. Job *patiently endured* through much suffering and affliction and even "persecution" from his so-called friends.

All three of these men were rescued or saved. Noah was brought through the Flood but not the people. Daniel was saved out of Israel and taken to Babylon in exile, whereas the majority of Israelites were slain. Subsequently the mouths of the lions were stopped from hurting him, but his accusers were thrown into the den and devoured. Job's family perished (except his wife), but he was spared. Eventually Job not only was allowed to live but was given twice as much as he had previously.

Moreover, all three were men of *faith*. And faith works righteousness, justification. Noah was faithful in the midst of a perverse generation, and so were Daniel and Job.

Daniel was alive at this time, and it was unusual for a commendation to be given while the individual was still living. The commendation occurred relatively early in Daniel's life. The time was now about 611 BC, so Daniel had already been elevated and honored. By this time he had refused to eat the king's food, choosing instead to stay on a vegetarian diet to avoid eating unclean meat. He had also interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the great image. His praying three times a day toward Jerusalem was another example of his righteousness.

Since the commendation occurred early in Daniel's life, it was given from the same standpoint that Abraham's was. "And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" (Gen. 18:17,18). In other words, "Seeing that Abraham will be faithful, shall we hide from him the destruction of Sodom?" God *knew* how faithful Daniel would be—in future as well as in past tests. Incidentally, it is

interesting that the elders went to Ezekiel for information when Daniel was there in Babylon too, right in the king's court.

The fact that Job is one of the three singled out here is another clue that he represents the Church, not the world of mankind. In fact, Noah, Daniel, and Job all represent the Church.

Ezek. 14:15 If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts:

Ezek. 14:16 Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.

Wild beasts would be the second judgment. The expression "the land shall be desolate" sounds like Jeremiah's words.

Ezek. 14:17 Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it:

The sword would be the third judgment.

Ezek. 14:18 Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.

Q: God could have named one, two, five, or more individuals as being righteous. Would the naming of three be another proof that the feet members will come from three different backgrounds?

A: Possibly.

Ezek. 14:19 Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast:

Ezek. 14:20 Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.

Ezek. 14:21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?

Notice the repetition of the names of the three righteous men: Noah, Daniel, and Job. The purpose of the repetition was to ingrain their names in the minds of the people.

Pestilence would be the fourth judgment. Thus the "four sore judgments" were (1) famine, (2) wild beasts, (3) sword, and (4) pestilence. Noah, Daniel, and Job were mentioned in connection with all four. Famine would encourage the wild beasts to attack the people.

Ezek. 14:22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.

When the four judgments would come upon Judah, resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem, only a very small remnant of handpicked survivors would be taken into captivity. The remnant consisted of a righteous class of both males and females (“sons and daughters”). Those who returned to Israel after the 70 years no longer worshipped idols, for idol worship was purged. Factors in the purging of idols were (1) the incident of the Three Hebrew Children regarding the god Bel and (2) the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and Jerusalem, which deeply affected the remnant.

Although the city of Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed, those already in exile would see the good fruitage in the remnant and say the trouble was worth it. The same principle applies to the end of the age when current institutions will be destroyed and the true saints will be recognized.

Ezek. 14:23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.

When the remnant would reach Babylon, those already in exile would get a valuable lesson. “They shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings.” The exiles would realize that those comprising the remnant were handpicked and protected by the Lord because they would be a changed people: humble, contrite, chastened, and devout.

The handpicked remnant would be a comfort to the more faithful exiles. The remnant would truly be brethren with those in exile, whereas previously the attitude in Israel was to consider the exiles more wicked. The remnant and the exiles of the ten-tribe kingdom would be unified.

A good principle back there and again in the future Time of Trouble is, “Ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done ... saith the Lord GOD.” God will be seen as justified in allowing and precipitating the trouble. The four sore judgments would purge the nominal mass.

Ezek. 15:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 15:2 Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?

The “trees of the forest” were the other nations.

Ezek. 15:3 Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?

Ezek. 15:4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?

Ezek. 15:5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?

Verses 1–5 are a series of rhetorical questions, to which the answer was “No!” The vine, the nation of Israel (specifically, the inhabitants of Jerusalem), was too crooked to be used for building, and it brought forth no fruit. Hence it was not good for either lumber or food.

What is the antitype? The “vine of the earth” will be thrown into the fire and burned (Rev. 14:18,19). The vine harvest is compared with the wheat harvest. In the latter, the wheat is gathered into the barn, but the vine, with its harvest of grapes, goes into the fire of the wine press of God’s wrath. Incidentally, a vine is actually a tree that crawls on the ground. It grows or gravitates *earthward*, as opposed to the Christian, who develops *heavenward*.

Ezek. 15:6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Ezek. 15:7 And I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them; and ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them.

The vine (the inhabitants of Jerusalem) would “go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them.” Was the vine good for any work when it was whole? No! Then how much more worthless the vine would be when it was not whole and it was burned! The vine burned at both ends, and then the middle was charred (verse 4). Jumping from one fire to the other may be based on this illustration. Ezekiel was giving a sarcastic message to the people regarding their condition. They were not stable or straight enough to be used for anything except “fire.” How sad when the analogy is presented elsewhere that originally they were a vineyard planted by the Lord! They were God’s chosen people.

Q: If we think of the two ends of a scroll as the religious union and then liken them to the two ends of the vine, can we think of the middle of the vine as being the civil element, which falls after the religious systems—especially since a literal stick burns at both ends ahead of the middle?

A: The thought fits the illustration, but we do not know that the vine was meant to teach such a lesson. It is an interesting observation, however.

Ezek. 15:8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 16:1 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 16:2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,

The word of God came to Ezekiel to “cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.” The fact that from captivity *in Babylon*, Ezekiel was addressing those back *in Jerusalem* implies there was some kind of communication between the exiles and the homeland. Ezekiel would have sent a messenger to Jerusalem on behalf of the nation. Conversely, when Jeremiah uttered a prophecy in Jerusalem, it was carried by messenger to the exiles in Babylon.

Ezek. 16:3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.

Ezek. 16:4 And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

Ezek. 16:5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day

that thou wast born.

God was reminding those in Jerusalem that their birth and nativity were of the land of *Canaan*, but in what sense? Jacob, an Amorite, was considered to be the father of Israel, for his name was changed to "Israel," and at his death, his 12 sons became the 12 tribes; that is, as a result of Jacob's death, the nation was born. Jacob's origin was Canaan, but he died in Egypt. Hence the nation was born in Egypt, where no eye pitied them in their nativity period under the cruel Pharaoh and taskmasters. The weaning period of their development was in a hostile land.

The "mother" of Israel was Rachel, Leah, and their two handmaidens, all of whom were Hittites. (The Law had not been given yet with its commandment not to marry other peoples.)

The suggestion is that when Jacob and family entered Egypt, they were not all pure but had some pollution from the Amorites and the Hittites. Jacob entered Egypt with 70 (male) souls (Gen. 46:27). In addition, there were women and servants. From their background, heathen practices cropped up from time to time like a virus. God told the Israelites that their success in gaining the promises was contingent upon their closeness and fidelity to Him. If God had not cared for them, they would have lapsed back into their heathen condition.

In other words, (1) Israel had a mixed beginning (Hittite and Amorite), and (2) the reference to this background emphasizes the iniquity of the Israelites. Incidentally, the Amorites dominated the land of Canaan, and their iniquity had to come to the full before the land could be given to the Israelites (Gen. 15:16).

"Thy navel was not cut, ... thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled." Their navel was not cut in that they were still attached to their heathen background. In those days, salt was characteristically used on a newborn babe to reduce the possibility of disease or infection, for it was a purifying agent and an astringent. Moreover, swaddling clothes were utilized to clean off the mucus of the afterbirth and to keep the infant warm. The swaddling clothes were changed only once a week, but of course the bottom end remained open. Israel lacked this protective covering as well.

No compassion was shown to Israel after Joseph and that particular Pharaoh died. Male babies were even put under a death sentence. No other peoples were interested in the welfare of Israel, and the Egyptians kept increasing the labor and bondage. However, God soothed and comforted the Israelites with promises of a land, a covenant of their own, and deliverance.

Israel's "nativity" was the period of early infancy as well as its birth. During this time Israel was in hard bondage in Egypt and would have perished if God had not raised up Moses as the deliverer and intervened in regard to the edict to kill all male children. Although the Hebrews were given the choice land of Goshen in Egypt for their cattle, the Egyptians considered the shepherd occupation an abomination. In spite of the hardships, the nation multiplied rapidly through God's providence.

Ezek. 16:6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

Ezek. 16:7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.

Verse 6 and the beginning of verse 7 took place in Egypt prior to the Exodus, when the Israelites multiplied *exceedingly* from 70 souls to 2 million people in just 215 years. “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, ... Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great.”

The remainder of verse 7 is a picture of one who is maturing. Israel went from infancy to babyhood to adolescence (a teenager) to being a young woman to maturity. “And thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.” All of this took place over a process of time. In Sinai there was opportunity for growth and character development.

Ezek. 16:8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

At Mount Sinai God entered into a covenant with the Israelites, who replied, “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exod. 24:7). At that point “thou [the Israelites] becamest mine [God’s].”

“I spread my skirt over thee.” Both the Law Covenant and the cloud were like a skirt that protected the Israelites if they were obedient. The words also remind us of Ruth and Boaz.

Ezek. 16:9 Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.

Ezek. 16:10 I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

God’s protection was likened to a rich dowry for a bride. Here again is a reminder of the Tabernacle, a traveling “church” for the Israelites that was collapsible and transportable. The people went to the Tabernacle for prayer and atonement for sin.

The cloud was an *outer* physical covering that protected the Israelites from desert heat and storm. The Tabernacle and its services were an *inner* covering for the soul of the nation.

Ezek. 16:11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

Ezek. 16:12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

Symbols of marriage and a dowry continue. The nation of Israel was married *to God collectively*—as servants or friends. The nation was called to a *natural* blessing. Christians are espoused *to Christ both collectively and individually*—as brethren or sons of God. Theirs is a *spiritual* calling and blessing.

The jewel in the nose (see King James margin), earrings, bracelets, and chain on the neck are all symbols of the consecration and servitude of the nation of Israel. The consecration was *collective* but with voluntary worship depending on self-will. The crown, earrings, etc., were on the nation as a whole, not on individuals.

Let us consider the earrings separately. If a servant wanted to serve his master for life, he had his ear pierced by putting it against the side post of the entrance or front door of the master's house. Later the master's earring was inserted.

The crown was a symbol of the nation's potential for royalty, for being a kingdom of priests, if faithful. They were to be a royal nation. Israel's dedication to God in the beginning is shown by the various ornaments: the bracelets, neck chain, earrings, and nose ring.

Ezek. 16:13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.

This verse continues the progression of marriage and covenant relationship. Various gifts and endearments were given as tokens of God's love for the Israelites.

The zenith of Israel's glory was attained under Solomon in the period of the kings. At that time the Tabernacle condition was changed into the glorious stone Temple. Solomon was noted for his wealth and wisdom. When the queen of Sheba, who was Queen Hatshepsut, traveled to Israel to see the prosperity and wisdom for herself, she said, "I believed not the words, until I ... had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me" (1 Kings 10:7). She was very impressed with the staircase from Solomon's own residence to the Temple, as well as the whole Temple and Solomon's wisdom. Queen Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Thebes, Egypt, was her copy of Solomon's Temple with its various levels. Each higher level got nearer the sanctuary or temple proper and thus represented a higher plane. Incidentally, Ezekiel's Temple will have levels too.

"Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil." In other words, Israel was a land of milk and honey at that time with rich grain harvests and fertile land. Subsequent warfare and defeat led to the cutting down of all the trees, causing erosion of the soil.

In the period of the kings, "thou [Israel] didst prosper into a kingdom."

Ezek. 16:14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 1–14 embrace many centuries. The time period started in Egypt and included the Israelites' crucial testing period in the Sinai Wilderness, the 450-year schooling period of the judges, and on into the period of the kings with Solomon's reign. The "iron furnace" of affliction in Egypt and the "howling [desert] wilderness" of Sinai were also schooling periods (Deut. 4:20; 32:10).

"Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty." This portion of verse 14 refers to the queen of Sheba's visit to Israel to see Solomon and the Temple glory.

Ezek. 16:15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of

thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.

Ezek. 16:16 And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so.

Ezek. 16:17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,

Ezek. 16:18 And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.

Ezek. 16:19 My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 15–19 furnish an overall view. What God had given to Israel as blessings, they utilized to serve other gods and to seduce other nations. Israel played the harlot. Instead of getting gifts from her lovers, she dispensed them out of *pride*.

Initially Solomon was faithful. At the Temple dedication he offered a beautiful prayer. God commended him and said, “As long as you maintain that attitude and are obedient to me, the promise I made to your father, David, will be yours as a full inheritance; but if you disobey and your heart is weaned away, you will lose the inheritance” (1 Kings 9:1–9 paraphrase). Of course in time the riches spoiled Solomon. Among other things, he bought horses and built heathen temples for foreign wives. Israel was defiled as a result, and heathen sanctuaries on the heights detracted from the glorious Temple in Jerusalem. Solomon used “consecrated goods” for purposes other than dedication to the Lord; he enriched false religions.

Normally, a harlot is paid wages for her services, but instead Israel, the harlot, gave gifts and free illicit relations to other nations—both commercially and religiously. This figurative language shows how the heathen practices of other nations began to infiltrate the religion of Jehovah, diluting the proper services and sacrifices.

Israel’s condition can be summarized as follows. In playing the part of the harlot, Israel paid her lovers to commit the whoredoms instead of having the lovers lavish gifts upon her. In other words, she went out of her way to seduce whoever could be seduced. Although developed by God, the nation worshipped heathen idols and gods and tried to take what seemed “good” from the other religions. Pride under Solomon’s reign led Israel to desire more and more ornamentation. The climax was the slaying of their own children as an offering to heathen gods.

Ezek. 16:20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,

Ezek. 16:21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

Ezek. 16:22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in

thy blood.

Ezek. 16:23 And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)

Ezek. 16:24 That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.

Ezek. 16:25 Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.

Verses 20–25 are a strong indictment of Israel. Their children were offered to Molech, the fire god. Satan perverted the proper sacrifices of *dead animals* for the atonement of sin into abominable sacrifices of *live children*. In heathen practices, *live* children were thrown into the fire, that is, into the arms of Molech, whose image was actually a furnace. The screaming of infants was drowned out by deliberately played loud music. Both male and female infants were sacrificed to Molech, and the babies were often eaten after being burned alive. This practice was started by the Canaanites, the original occupants of the Promised Land. In fact, the word “cannibal” comes from “Canaanite.” The Jews today are generally not aware of this depth of degradation in their past.

An *unread* Bible in a home is a witness. The fact that no one opens the Bible, studies it, and prays for understanding incurs a penalty, a judgment, whether or not one realizes it. Such individuals cannot say in the future, “*If I had known, I would have done such and such.*” In other words, the people are *willingly* ignorant.

Heathen statues were on the streets of every town in Israel. The spiritual counterpart in the Gospel Age would be the proliferation of statues of Mary and the saints.

Ezek. 16:26 Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.

Ezek. 16:27 Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.

Ezek. 16:28 Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied.

Ezek. 16:29 Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

Ezek. 16:30 How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman;

Egyptian, Philistine, Assyrian, Chaldean, and Canaanite practices were incorporated into Israel. The Egyptians were “great of flesh” (verse 26); that is, they emphasized lust in their worship. For “the work of an imperious whorish woman” in verse 30, the Revised Standard has “the deeds of a brazen harlot.” Paraphrased, the verse reads, “How unstable is your heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing that you do the deeds of a brazen harlot.”

Ezek. 16:31 In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and

makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;

Ezek. 16:32 But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!

Ezek. 16:33 They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.

Ezek. 16:34 And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.

Israel's practices were worse than, and contrary to, the usual practices of a harlot, for Israel gave gifts instead of receiving them. The spiritual counterpart would be Papacy's borrowing and/or incorporating practices from pagan religions.

Ezek. 16:35 Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:

Ezek. 16:36 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;

Ezek. 16:37 Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.

Ezek. 16:38 And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.

Ezek. 16:39 And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.

Verses 35–39, which sound like Revelation 17 and 18 in regard to the destruction of Papacy, describe a stripping bare. In other words, in the natural picture, nominal fleshly Israel was the "harlot," and her lovers were heathen nations. In the spiritual picture, mystic Babylon (Papacy) is the "harlot" with the nations of Christendom. In the type the verses refer prophetically to the 606 BC destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the laying desolate of the land for 70 years. The nation of Israel was shorn of her "clothes" (God's favor) and her "fair jewels" (the Temple and the king's crown), as well as of her former honor and prestige (verse 39).

"I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy" (verse 38). The punishment to come on Israel in 606 BC would be one of violence and retributive judgment. "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God [for my name]" (Deut. 5:9). "The LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God" (Deut. 4:24).

An example of the "idols of thy [Israel's] abominations" (verse 36) occurred when Jeroboam promoted the worship of golden calves in Bethel and Dan. The worship was a carryover from heathen Egyptian practices (2 Kings 10:29). Moreover, the worship of Molech and Astarte (queen of heaven) were copied from surrounding nations (Jer. 7:18; Judg. 10:6).

In verse 37, Ezekiel prophesied of two categories that would see Israel's desolation:

1. "All them that thou hast loved" (Egypt and Syria).
2. "All them that thou hast hated" (Edom and the Philistines).

Under the Law both the adulterer and the adulteress were put to death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). The guilty parties were usually stoned, and then their bodies were burned so that no grave would be found. Not only did others have to participate in the judging, but other women had to witness the stoning. Nominal spiritual Israel will have similar experiences.

Ezek. 16:40 They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.

Ezek. 16:41 And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more.

Under the Law the adulteress was stoned to death. Israel was stoned with catapults in 606 BC, and battering rams were also used. Judgments were executed upon Israel "in the sight of many women [surrounding nations]" (verse 41).

Ezek. 16:42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

Justice would be satisfied and God's anger would be assuaged in the judgment. A future time of reconciliation is also implied when Israel's double or warfare would cease.

Ezek. 16:43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth , but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

"The days of thy youth" were the early days of favor when the Israelites were more dependent on God.

Ezek. 16:44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

"As is the mother, so is her daughter." The natural and spiritual applications are as follows:

	<u>Mother</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Daughters</u>
Type	Hittite	Amorite	Samaria, Sodom, etc. (surrounding cities)
Antitype	Catholicism	Papacy	Protestant churches

Primary lesson of Ezekiel Chapter 16: Israel self-righteously looked down upon the Amorites, the Hittites, the Sodomites, etc., as being pagan and abominable, but God was saying that Israel was, in a sense, no different.

Ezek. 16:45 Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

For verse 45, see the notes for verses 3-5. The influence and thinking of the Amorites and

the Hittites (that is, pagans) were manifested in later generations much the way genetics have an important bearing on some characteristics. The influence and thinking especially showed up in Israel's following other gods and deviating from the true religion.

In antitype the Christian has Canaanites in his old heart, which is deceitful and desperately wicked. We must battle against such Adamic weaknesses.

Ezek. 16:46 And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

The "elder sister" was Samaria, the ten-tribe kingdom. Sodom was the "younger sister"—younger in the sense of being lesser, smaller, and inferior from a materialistic standpoint.

Ezek. 16:47 Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.

Ezek. 16:48 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

In verses 44–48, three individuals, as it were, were introduced as a comparison: Judah, Samaria, and Sodom. Of the three, Judah was not only like the others but even *more responsible* because of having truth. "Thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways." Light and truth bring responsibility. In the Gospels, Jesus confirmed Israel's responsibility by stating that it will be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom than for Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum (Matt. 11:21–24).

Ezek. 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Ezek. 16:50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

The iniquity of Sodom is listed as (1) pride, (2) fullness of bread, (3) abundance of idleness, and (4) neglect of the poor and needy—and especially the first three. Pride, excess temporal provisions, and leisure can be dangerous conditions if not diligently fought against.

Sodom is used as a symbol of wickedness here, yet homosexuality is not mentioned. Thus we need other Scriptures to get the full catalog of sins. However, the "abomination" of verse 50 would include this sin, even though homosexuality is not specifically named. Jude 7 tells us that the Sodomites gave themselves over to fornication and went after "strange flesh." Verse 49 here in Ezekiel gives the conditions in which the sin of homosexuality prospered: pride, fullness of bread, and idleness (leisure).

Ezek. 16:51 Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.

The degree of enlightenment that Judah had made Judah more responsible, for her deviation from the standard seemed to justify deviation in those who witnessed her life

and behavior. In other words, Judah was supposed to be an example of truth and enlightenment. Thus Judah was *doubly* guilty in her deviations because of the light possessed. God condemns a standard of liberality and looseness.

Ezek. 16:52 **Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters.**

Judah had criticized her two “sisters,” Sodom and Samaria, but Judah was more guilty as God’s professed people. The same principle could apply to us versus those Christians still in Babylon. We find fault with them doctrinally, but if our moral standard drops, we are more culpable than they because of more light possessed. Truth is both moral and doctrinal, or stated another way, moral behavior is a part of truth. The Pastor said somewhere, “Given enough time, the truth movement would become a part of Babylon.”

Ezek. 16:53 **When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:**

Ezek. 16:54 **That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them.**

Ezek. 16:55 **When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.**

Verses 53–55 speak of the shame Israel will experience when the Jews come forth from the tomb in the Kingdom, yet we are told that salvation is first to the Jew and then to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16). How do we harmonize these two thoughts? Salvation will come first to the Holy Remnant, not to all Jews. The Holy Remnant, a repentant and contrite class, will be handpicked so that the Kingdom will start with a pure nucleus. And the Ancient Worthies, previously selected, will be the earthly leaders, judges, and princes.

“Captivity” (verse 53) refers to the prison house of death. God will “bring again [turn back] their captivity” in the resurrection, when all in their graves will come forth. At that time the people will go from Satan’s to Jesus’ captivity and receive life if obedient. Returning to “their former estate” refers to restitution (verse 55).

How will Judah be a “comfort” to Sodom and Samaria in the resurrection (verse 54)? Sodom and Samaria will know they did wrong and experience shame, but here the emphasis is on *Judah’s* shame. When Sodom and Samaria see that Judah is *more* guilty, they will say, “Well, at least we did not have the enlightenment and the instruction.”

Ezek. 16:56 **For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,**

The Israelites considered Sodom so evil that they did not even want to mention the name. That was self-righteousness and pride.

Ezek. 16:57 **Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines,**

which despise thee round about.

Judah's wickedness will be discovered in the resurrection. Israel's enemies (Syria, the Philistines, etc.) will see things in the proper perspective at that time. They will realize they were far astray from the Lord, but they will be comforted to realize also that Israel is even more guilty.

These Scriptures were discussing the nominal mass. In the Gospel Age counterpart, the nominal Christian Church has felt that all of the heathen go into a burning hell at death.

Today we are living in the Laodicean period with pride, fullness of bread, and leisure. Fullness of bread, which applies along both natural and spiritual lines, can lead to the erroneous thought that we are special. Having more understanding is not a proof of where we stand with the Lord, generally speaking. We should remember that there are sincere individuals in the nominal system—perhaps more sincere than we are—and thus not give a *carte blanche* condemnation, especially with our lack of knowledge as to what is going on. We live in our own little world, as it were.

“Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness [the joys of the truth] for the upright in heart” (Psa. 97:11). This principle is true on an *individual* basis, but there is a certain type of truth that we may acquire just from association. We are more enlightened because we have been blessed with the fellowship of truth. We were either born into the truth or brought by God into it when we consecrated. Thus we do not have truth through our own efforts. However, there is an additional standpoint where the Lord gives light to the faithful and obedient, and that truth is a different type of light than the others have. The point is that to a certain extent we, too, can be naked, poor, and blind (Rev. 3:17). We may be rich from one standpoint and poor in development along another line.

Ezek. 16:58 Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD.

Ezek. 16:59 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

Israel “despised the oath in breaking the [old Law] Covenant.”

Ezek. 16:60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.

“I will remember my [old Law] covenant with thee ... and I will establish unto thee an everlasting [New] covenant.”

Ezek. 16:61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

“I will give them [Sodom and Samaria] unto thee ... but not by thy [old Law] covenant.”

Ezek. 16:62 And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD:

“I will establish my [New] covenant with thee.”

Ezek. 16:63 That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 60–63 indicate that despite the disobedience of the past, Israel will be given a leadership role in the Kingdom. Israel (Jerusalem) will be the capital of the world, and the Gentiles will look to it for guidance.

Although the old Law Covenant was not successful in achieving the redemption of Israel, it did school the right-hearted, a minority, and bring them to Christ. Romans 11 tells that the casting off of Israel benefited the Gentiles, but when the scales are reversed—when the nation is reconciled to God and He has mercy on them—Israel will be the channel of blessing and mercy to the Gentiles. In the Kingdom, Israel will have no more pride, just gratitude for God’s mercy on them.

Ezek. 17:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 17:2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel;

Verses 1–10 pertain to a parable of two eagles.

Ezek. 17:3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

The first eagle, described as “great,” with great, long wings that were full of diverse-colored feathers, pictured King Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold in the “great” Babylonian Empire (Dan. 2:38). Wings are used for flight, speed, power, and coverage. The variety of color in the feathers represented the diverse peoples in the empire with a diversity of talent. Jeremiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, referred to the speed of the Babylonian army, saying it was “swifter than eagles” (Jer. 4:13). He also likened this enemy of Israel, which came from the north, to a lion and a “destroyer of the Gentiles.” Through Jeremiah, God told Israel that the judgment was coming and the enemy would be victorious. “I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant” (Jer. 4:6,7). The lion and the eagle symbolize ferocity and swiftness, respectively. In Daniel 7:1–4, the kingdom of Babylon is likened to a lion (king of the beasts) with the wings of an eagle (king of the birds). An eagle spreads its wings to paralyze its prey; a lion roars.

Ezek. 17:4 He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants.

Ezek. 17:5 He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow tree.

Nebuchadnezzar took of the “seed of the land” (the common people of Israel) and the “highest branch of the cedar” (the elite). In other words, the king of Babylon took as hostages and captives to Babylon the best of the common people as well as the best of the nobility, the royalty. Specifically, the “highest branch” of verse 3 was King Jehoiachin.

Babylon was “a land of traffic,” “a city of merchants,” and “a fruitful field ... by great waters.”

The king took the best talent back to his own land and honored them according to their obedience.

Ezek. 17:6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

2 Chronicles 36 furnishes information on the reigns of the three last rulers of Judah, all of whom were puppet kings:

1. Jehoiakim, placed on the throne by the Pharaoh of Egypt, reigned 11 years and was then taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.
2. Jehoiachin reigned only three months before he was taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.
3. Zedekiah, put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, made an oath in God's name and reigned for 11 years.

The first eagle (Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon) cropped off the highest branch and twigs of the cedar tree (Israel); that is, Nebuchadnezzar took the cream of the crop of Israel to Babylon. Among those in this earlier captivity prior to 606 BC were Daniel, the three Hebrews, and Jehoiachin. The Israelites prospered in captivity in that Daniel and the three Hebrews were elevated to positions of authority. Nevertheless, in spite of their honor, which was the exception, the "spreading vine" (Israel) was of "low stature" in that it was captive and submissive.

Ezek. 17:7 There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.

The second eagle, which came on the scene after the first, pictured the Pharaoh of Egypt. "This vine," Israel, bent its roots toward Pharaoh so that "he might water it by the furrows of her plantation." In time Nebuchadnezzar overcame Egypt, and Israel no longer had an alliance with Egypt then. King Zedekiah broke his covenant with Babylon, and the Lord punished him and the nation as a result.

Ezek. 17:8 It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

Ezek. 17:9 Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

Ezek. 17:10 Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

The faith Israel put in her alliance with Egypt did not prosper. Twice it was pulled up by the roots.

Ezek. 17:11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 17:12 Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof,

and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon;

Ezek. 17:13 And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land:

Ezek. 17:14 That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

After giving the riddle and agitating the Israelites' minds, the Lord provided an interpretation through Ezekiel. The first eagle (Nebuchadnezzar) cropped off the highest branch (royalty) of the symbolic tree (Israel). The king of Babylon took Jehoiachin and princes to Babylon as captives. The common people were taken as hostages so that they would not rebel. However, before being taken captive to Babylon for 70 years, the last kings of Israel made an alliance with Egypt to get arms and power, but their efforts were fruitless.

Nebuchadnezzar set up Jehoiachin as a puppet king in Jehoiachin's stead. Subsequently, after Jehoiachin had reigned only three months, Nebuchadnezzar took him as a hostage to Babylon. When the cream of the crop were taken to Babylon, Israel was intentionally left without much leadership material to minimize the likelihood of an uprising. Next Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah, another king of his choosing, on the throne at Jerusalem.

Ezek. 17:15 But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

Ezek. 17:16 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

What did Israel do under Jehoiachin? The king rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar by sending secret ambassadors to Egypt in an attempt to get Egypt as an ally to break Nebuchadnezzar's yoke of bondage. Ezekiel says, "Do not think you will get away with enlisting aid from Egypt. The Babylonian captivity is a lesson from the Lord, and hence you cannot get out from under the burden."

Nebuchadnezzar had made Zedekiah promise to be his vassal by Jehovah's name, by an oath. Judah should have respected the oath because it was made in *God's* name.

Ezek. 17:17 Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounds, and building forts, to cut off many persons:

Ezek. 17:18 Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.

Ezek. 17:19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

Ezek. 17:20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

Ezek. 17:21 And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that

remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

Zedekiah hoped that Egypt would deliver Israel from Nebuchadnezzar, but a net was spread to snare Zedekiah. When he tried to escape, he was captured. The “fugitives” who fled with Zedekiah were all killed, including his sons, who were taken to Riblah on Israel’s border and executed. After Zedekiah saw his two sons get killed, his eyes were put out and he was taken, blind, to Babylon. Remember, these verses were a prophecy—Jerusalem had not been captured yet. Later, when the series of events had transpired, not only was Ezekiel exonerated in the eyes of the people, but Zedekiah realized that Ezekiel’s prophecy was a true one and that he was being punished for breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, made in God’s name.

The point is that a covenant made in God’s name must be kept. The same principle applied with the Gibeonites in Joshua’s day (Josh. 9:3–27). Although the Gibeonites obtained a covenant through deceit (stale bread, worn-out shoes, etc., to prove they came from a far distance), the covenant had to be honored because it was made in *God’s* name.

Comment: The same principle applies to one who consecrates but with reserve. That agreement stands. One cannot say later, “My consecration was not accepted.”

Ezek. 17:22 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent:

The “highest branch,” Jehoiachin, was already in Babylon when blind Zedekiah was taken there. Thus there were two kings of Judah in Babylon for a while. There Zedekiah died in prison, but in the 37th year, Jehoiachin was raised to the king’s table. Matthew 1:11 shows that Messiah came through his lineage (“Jechonias” is Jehoiachin/Jeconiah). When eventually Cyrus issued the decree to permit Jews to go back to Israel, the returnees were primarily of Judah, and Messiah’s lineage is traced through them.

Ezek. 17:23 In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.

God planted the returned exiles from Babylon in the “mountain of the height of Israel.” They prospered and Israel revived. Out of the cut-down, dried element came forth the tender branch of Messiah.

This chapter contains a double allegory. The two eagles pertain to natural Israel. This last section pertains partially to natural Israel, out of which came a remnant prepared to receive Messiah.

Ezek. 17:24 And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

Eventually the seedling (returnees) planted on the mountaintop of Israel will become the Kingdom. At the First Advent, the fruit of Messiah and the apostles was produced. From the same area will come forth the Kingdom, in which all the nations (trees) will do obeisance to God. Hence verse 24 is a promise of restitution.

Jesus said at his First Advent, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31). From a position of exaltation, Israel was abased, exalted, and abased—and will be permanently exalted in the Kingdom.

Ezek. 18:1 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

Ezek. 18:2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

The proverb is a true saying, but God was finding fault with Israel's use of this proverb to try to *justify* their wrong course and their willful sin; they blamed those who lived before them (the "fathers" *plural*). Moreover, they were blaming their punitive experiences on the sins of their predecessors.

Certain principles are enunciated in this chapter. Taken from a positive standpoint, they show why a person will get life. Various categories of sin are listed. Stated simply, if a man avoids these, he will get life.

Ezek. 18:3 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

No longer would Israel be allowed to blame their sins on their forefathers.

Ezek. 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

All souls belong to God. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" proves the soul is not inherently immortal. Each person is accountable for his own willful sins on the principle that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

An outline of Chapter 18 breaks down as follows:

Verses 1–4: Fathers (plural)

Verses 5–9: Righteous father

Verses 10–13: Unrighteous son

Verses 14–18: Faithful grandson

Verses 19–23: Wicked one turns from evil ways to righteousness

Verse 24: Righteous man becomes evil

By listing several generations, God was showing that He judges the *individual*.

Ezek. 18:5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right,

When verses 5 and 9 are combined, the thought is that "If a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, ... he shall surely live [out his normal life]." The word "lawful" means to *know* what is right; the word "right" means to *do* what is right. Therefore, if a man *both knows and does* what is right, he will surely live out his normal life.

Ezek. 18:6 And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,

"Eaten upon the mountains" refers to offerings made to idols in the high places, especially

the offering of cakes to the queen of heaven.

Ezek. 18:7 And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment;

“Hath restored to the debtor his pledge” means to pay back money to the one who loaned it. The Christian is to *owe no man anything* but love (Rom. 13:8).

“Hath spoiled none by violence” means that physical injury was not inflicted when the matter could be settled another way.

Ezek. 18:8 He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

Loaning money for usury was prohibited by the Law and brought death, for the Israelites were not to take advantage of someone in dire straits. Being under the same covenant with God, the Jews were considered “brethren” and hence were not allowed to loan money and expect interest. (However, they could loan money voluntarily.) By extension, the same principle applies to Christians. Hence we should not loan money to brethren anticipating an increase. “Neither hath taken any increase” implies, further, that we should not accept interest from brethren even if they insist.

“Hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity” signifies not participating in iniquity, shady deals, wrong conduct, etc.

“Hath executed true judgment between man and man” means being a true witness and following *God’s* judgments according to the Law, not one’s own emotional response or way.

Ezek. 18:9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 6–8 are a list of sins to be avoided. Since they were covered in the Law, the Israelites were responsible to obey, yet *few* indeed would not have succumbed on at least one of these points. “Hath *walked* in my statutes” was the *practice* of doing what was right, not just doing right now and then. “Hath *kept* my judgments” would be accepting responsibility by *taking action* according to what someone else has done.

Many would feel they had *tried*, to the best of their ability, to do all of these things. Of course the gospel is much deeper. For instance, a young man said to Jesus, “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” (Matt. 19:20). Therefore, “he shall surely live” would mean in the sense of living out a normal life, for if certain infractions were committed under the Law, the guilty one was penalized or put to death. Examples of penalties were illness, crop failures, or being attacked by a wild beast.

Many feel that they have not done the vile things and thus they are “good.” And it is commendable to the extent one does live in harmony with God’s right standards. However, when the *whole* Law is considered, an honest person admits he has failed in at least some of the more minute points, and if he disobeys “in *one* point, he is guilty of *all*” as far as getting everlasting life is concerned (James 2:10).

Ezek. 18:10 If he beget a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things,

Ezek. 18:11 And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife,

Ezek. 18:12 Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,

Ezek. 18:13 Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.

Verses 10–13 pertain to a disobedient son. If a son commits any *one* of the sins listed, let alone more, “he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him.” In fact, several of these sins required immediate death under the Law.

After the statement in verse 2 that “the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,” the chapter goes through several members or succeeding generations of a family, some being righteous and some unrighteous, to show there is *individual* responsibility. A person cannot blame his sins on his forebears. Even though there may be *some* truth to the matter, one can refrain from gross willful sins.

If a parent had a son who committed these sins and the parent did not act, he would incur responsibility himself. This principle applies with Jew to Jew as well as with Christian to Christian (that is, the consecrated have a measure of responsibility for the conduct of *each other*—we are our brother's keeper to that extent). Under the Law, a father was to report a son's misconduct to the authorities for punishment. A negligent father became liable himself. Brethren have a responsibility when gross sin occurs among the consecrated, particularly at the local level.

Ezek. 18:14 Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like,

Ezek. 18:15 That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife,

Ezek. 18:16 Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

Ezek. 18:17 That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

Ezek. 18:18 As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity.

Now comes a reversal: A son saw the evil of his father but chose to do *right*. Moreover, the son would have reported the father according to the requirements of the Law. In other

words, father and son (parent and child) had a reciprocal responsibility to call attention to the sin or evil committed. Verse 18 states the penalty to be death for the father who is guilty of willful gross sin.

There are many kinds of “pledge” (verse 16). Examples are marriage vows, vows to the Lord, vows in connection with Temple worship, and a contractual (or commercial) pledge for the performance of services.

The righteous individual “hath [not] taken off his hand from the poor.” The point is that it is better to lend less money and not to be agitating for its repayment than to lend more and be impatient.

Ezek. 18:19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

Ezek. 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Ezek. 18:21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Ezek. 18:22 All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

Ezek. 18:23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?

What a man sows, he will reap (Gal. 6:7). We should not assume “like father, like son” in matters of judgment and punishment. Each should be considered individually.

In the Kingdom Age, which is the ideal circumstance, each person will be dealt with personally. And “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” We are reading about the days of Ezekiel, not the days of Moses. When the Law was initially given and read every seven years, the Israelites were quite familiar with it, but by Ezekiel’s day, the average person was ignorant of the Law’s requirements in regard to all the detail. The situation did not excuse the people, but they were not living as they should because their teachers were not proper instructors. The time setting was now almost 606 BC when Jerusalem would be destroyed. In that holocaust, the Israelites were to interpret the judgments as coming from God—that it was His will as to who was killed and who was spared. Hence there was some allowance for *reform* because of the negligence of the instruction.

Q: How could the Israelites have thought a son was guilty for his father’s sins (verse 19)? A righteous son does not bear the iniquity of his father.

A: The Jews were not accustomed to this type of reasoning, and thus they would have raised this question. With the *heathen*, sometimes God’s command to the Israelites was to kill every man, woman, and child. Therefore, they might have drawn the lesson that *all* were responsible if one was guilty, and then applied this principle to their own nation in matters of personal grudges. In the Inquisition during the Dark Ages, Papacy often

exterminated a whole family or village for the “heresy” of one or a few. The son who betrayed his “heretic” father was shown favor. Papacy justified all these deeds by the *Law*. Lesson: We must be careful lest we misuse the principles of the Law.

Q: At times in Israel’s history, the punishment for a father’s sins was visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. How can we harmonize this with Ezekiel 18?

A: *God’s* judgment of a matter is one thing, and *our* interpretation of His judgment is another thing. When the Law clearly stated what should be done in a given situation, it *was to be done*—period. When Adam sinned, the “father” did eat the sour grape and the penalty of death did come on the human race. Hence the human race was born *without* the right to life; i.e., Adam’s son, his son’s son, etc., etc., never had the right to life. The fallen heredity factor was also transmitted, so Adam’s offspring were not perfect. From this standpoint, the whole human race is guilty before God. Therefore, none can rightfully ask, “Why does such and such happen to me?” From God’s standpoint, the human race is condemned.

Note, however, that Ezekiel 18 gave a more liberal code of ethics with the promise that if a person obeyed all of these things, he would live out his normal life. But theoretically, all are condemned, for “there is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10).

Q: We usually think of “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” as applying to Second Death, but wouldn’t it just mean here that an individual who disobeyed would not live out his normal life? How does the Second Death principle fit the context?

A: Death would be the death of the soul—in *whatever age*. In other words, a soul is not immortal. Anyone who dies is truly dead. The dead figuratively “sleep” until awakened, but they are still *dead*. Therefore, both Adamic death and Second Death would fit this condition of the soul that sins being dead (and not alive somewhere). The death principle applied to Israel in the past regarding *Adamic* death, it applies to the Christian in the Gospel Age regarding *Second* Death, and it will apply to the world in the future regarding *Second* Death. In each case—but especially for the Christian now and for the world in the Kingdom—a person is *individually* responsible for his own sin. In the Kingdom, there will be no excuse for ignorance, for even a fool will be informed (Isa. 35:8).

With the Kingdom application, the comparison will be everlasting life for the obedient and Second Death for the disobedient. With Israel in the past, the comparison was between living out one’s normal life and dying sooner. Hence certain lessons are taught between the lines.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). This text pertains to *character*. Habitual unconsecrated gross sinners will have to pay a penalty when they come forth from the tomb; they will not receive carte blanche forgiveness. Whatever a person has done to others along heinous lines, he will probably have to experience *himself*—and without the need for anyone to be murdered, for example. How, then, will the retribution be accomplished? It will be done genetically. The perpetrator of violence will have put into his brain (his “computer,” as it were) the experience of the one to whom the injury was rendered. The guilty one will thus get all the same sensations that his victim felt years earlier. The Law teaches the principle of an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth (Exod. 21:23–25). Sins committed against the “spirit” *must* receive stripes. This “spirit” is not the Holy Spirit but *understanding*, that is, *knowing* what

one is doing and doing it *willfully*—without an extenuating circumstance such as insanity, which would mitigate responsibility and take away the premeditated aspect. *Deliberate* gross wrongdoing will receive stripes—without the spilling of blood. Experiencing the sensation in the brain will be as real as the original event itself.

When a wicked one *repents and keeps the statutes*, his former transgressions are forgotten by God. But *others* might continue to mention the transgressions and remind the one who repented. Reminding is wrong because it could discourage the one who has repented. This is particularly true of those who have given their hearts to the Lord, and it is particularly true of sins committed prior to consecration. However, sins committed *after* consecration should be pointed out *if they will do damage to the individual and to others*.

We are reminded of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). The father forgave the prodigal son, who had squandered his inheritance and lived in sin. The other son lived righteously and expected more, but the father welcomed the prodigal son joyously. The same principle applies here to the whole nation.

Ezek. 18:24 **But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.**

A righteous man who turns to iniquity *dies* in his sins. We will discuss the Gospel Age application now, for the Kingdom and Jewish ages have already been treated and would, of course, also be applicable here.

With the consecrated, there is a *dividing line for sin* depending on whether the sin was committed *before or after* consecration. At consecration, one's *prior* sins are forgiven. If the individual lives a "righteous" life henceforth, he will get life. The New Testament gives the requirements for *retrieval* for certain types of sin, should they occur after consecration. In the Kingdom, there will be *perfect* teachers, which we do not have at the present time, and that is a big factor. The Christ will be the mediators and instructors. Moreover, the world will be rewarded with *health* for obedience; they will be mentally, physically, and morally strengthened for every act of obedience. Hence certain allowances are made in the Gospel Age for the Christian that will not occur in the Kingdom. In the Kingdom, man will be judged *according to his works*. Although works are a factor in the Gospel Age, for "faith without works is dead," current works must be a result of an *active and living faith* (James 2:17). Therefore, we should not equate obedience in the Gospel Age with obedience in the Kingdom Age. Also, Satan will be bound in the future.

If one who is consecrated transgresses and becomes evil, if he *practices* sin, committing acts worthy of Second Death, he *dies* in his sin. The Apostle John instructs us not to pray for that individual, and generally speaking, we should be able to discern such a situation (1 John 5:16). It is NOT "love" to desire to be blind to such situations. *False* love does NOT cover a multitude of sins (James 5:20). We should consider such Scriptures in context and not use them as slogans for life.

A brother wrote a booklet that demeaned Jesus and the Law. At his funeral, it was said, "Let us remember him as he was several years ago," the implication being that we should forget his more recent actions. Verse 24 is NOT advocating that attitude. We are to *walk* as

“children of *the day*,” and our judgment day is NOW. Hence we should not use for those who are consecrated the laws of liberality that applied *prior to consecration*, that is, the laws that apply to the world *at present*.

The “abominations” of verse 24 are all those sins listed in Ezekiel 18 *plus others just as bad*. This chapter gives *general* good behavior rules but not all the specifics.

“All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned.” If a brother or sister goes into gross sin at the end of his or her life, we are not to mention the former “righteousness” from the standpoint of *excusing* the sin, of trying to suggest that maybe he or she is not so bad, of trying to counteract the sin. But we certainly could mention the individual as an example of *what to avoid* or as an example of how one can be very zealous and loyal and then turn and commit the *unpardonable* sin.

Comment: The Nazarite vow taught this principle too. The hair could have been growing for a long time, but if the taker of the vow became contaminated with a dead body or whatever, all of his hair had to be cut off. In other words, *grievous sin*, unrepented of, can negate *years and years* of faithful consecration and right doing.

Comment: One who says, “Let us remember the brother as he was” (that is, “Let us *forget* the dreadful thing that has happened”) incurs responsibility, especially if he is an elder. When shown *from Scripture* that his statement and thinking are wrong, the elder should apologize to the brethren and make the situation right lest he fall into the Second Death category too. Obstinate refraining from correction is dangerous.

Many lay down certain statements in talks but do not make the line of demarcation between the consecrated and the unconsecrated. It is important to know if a sin occurred before or after consecration.

Comment: It was said to me not long ago, “Have you heard the brother’s side?” But, according to Scripture, the *act itself* was wrong, whatever the reason. To give comfort to the family is not justification for going contrary to the principles in Scripture.

Reply: The responsibility of an elder is a lot different from the understanding of just an individual. We judge wrong conduct but not the wrongdoer personally *until the sin becomes gross in nature*. We should give the benefit of the doubt as long as possible but not beyond that point. The grievous nature of the sin must be taken into account, for there are various *plateaus* of judgment in Scripture.

Evil communications corrupt not only good manners (*conduct*) but also good *doctrine* (1 Cor. 5:6; 15:33; Gal. 5:9). To parley with wrong doctrine makes adverse inroads into our consecrated walk.

Ezek. 18:25 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

Ezek. 18:26 When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

Ezek. 18:27 Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

Ezek. 18:28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Ezek. 18:29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

Ezek. 18:30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

In many ways the Israelites thought God was not “equal.” For one thing, they thought that He was too severe, that the requirements laid down were unreasonable. But this chapter is more lenient than the Law itself, for it is slanted toward the people coming forth from the tomb and having an opportunity for life. Another element, a *self-righteous* element, as pointed out in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, resented the thought that an iniquitous man could turn away from his sins and get life.

The *principle* about the fathers eating a sour grape and the children’s teeth being set on edge applies to Adam. In the Law, this principle applied to sin, for the results of sin followed down through generations. Yet now God was criticizing the Israelites for their reasoning. What was the problem? They were *justifying their own sin*. They misunderstood the principle to begin with. Make no mistake: God’s principle is righteous. It is God’s *grace and mercy* that provide a way of redemption for fallen man. By all being condemned in the one man Adam, all in Christ are redeemed by his one sacrifice.

Why did God bring up what He will do in the Millennial Age under these circumstances when Israel was in captivity? The reason is that the Israelites were a typical people. Also, a groundwork was being laid for the New (Law) Covenant in connection with Ezekiel’s Temple.

While all are condemned in Adam, it is still beneficial to the individual to view his life as a personal responsibility and to shun evil. It is dangerous for one to justify himself by thinking he will do what he wants now and then reform in the Kingdom. Such thinking damages character. Therefore, God gave the warnings in this chapter for the *benefit* of the Israelites’ *character*. A small remnant or righteous group would be spared in the coming captivity. In fact, in the three captivities of Judah, those who were spared were meek and handpicked by the Lord. They are listed in Jeremiah as follows: (1) In the Jehoiakim captivity, the remnant consisted of 3,320 individuals, among whom were Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, Abednego, and Ezekiel (Jer. 52:28). (2) In the next captivity, 832 comprised the remnant (Jer. 52:29). (3) In the third captivity, only 745 were spared (Jer. 52:30). Those in the remnant were the choice Israelites, whom Nebuchadnezzar took into exile to build up his empire. If the meek attitude of the handpicked remnant were maintained, they would return to Israel in 536 BC.

Ezek. 18:31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezek. 18:32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

God does not have an innate desire to destroy individuals—He destroys *only when necessary*

for the good of society as a whole. Although He has “no pleasure” in the death of individuals, the implication is that He will do it. He was saying, through Ezekiel, “Turn around and change your ways so that I will not have to destroy you.”

There are two types of sin: (1) Adamic and (2) willful. Adamic sin can be forgiven outright, whereas willful sin requires retribution. Paul stoned Stephen. As retribution, Paul himself was stoned and almost died. Although he was miraculously restored, he got the sensation of stoning. The same principle of retribution for *willful* sins committed will operate in the Kingdom. Incidentally, “all things work *together* [in their *accumulation*, in the *summation*] for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).

Ezek. 19:1 Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

The “princes” were “kings.”

Ezek. 19:2 And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.

The nation of Israel was likened to a mother “lioness,” that is, a mother among “young lions” (other nations). The “whelps,” or cubs, were the princes, Israel’s heirs apparent to the throne. The time setting was just before 606 BC.

Ezek. 19:3 And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.

Ezek. 19:4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.

“One of her whelps” was King Jehoahaz, who grew up into a powerful young lion. He reigned only three months, yet other nations heard of him. Probably his reputation was due to exploits that began prior to his short reign.

Why did Ezekiel use the analogy of a lioness among other lions? The analogy suggests that Israel adopted the practices and habits of the heathen nations around her. She became rapacious among the other rapacious nations. In Scripture the lion is used with special emphasis on the jaw, the tearing quality. King Jehoahaz raided other nations purely upon his own whim, that is, for no particular reason. He caught men. Although he was king for only three months, he began to practice evil immediately.

The order of the kings of Judah in this time frame is Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah. Josiah died in a battle with the Pharaoh of Egypt, who came up to Israel to fight a northern enemy. When Josiah went out to meet him, Pharaoh rebuked him for wanting to fight, but Josiah persisted and then died in the battle. Jehoahaz was put on the throne in Josiah’s stead by the people and by the Pharaoh of Egypt. Very shortly, however, Jehoahaz rebelled against the Egyptian yoke, and he was subsequently taken away in “chains” to Egypt. Ezekiel likened the capture of Jehoahaz to the capture of a lion who crashes through a trap (a pit covered with thin branches or a pit with bait at the bottom). Jehoahaz died in Egypt.

Ezek. 19:5 Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.

Ezek. 19:6 And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men.

Ezek. 19:7 And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring.

Ezek. 19:8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit.

Ezek. 19:9 And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

“She” (the lioness, Israel) waited for the return of King Jehoahaz. When he did not return, she took another whelp, not Jehoiakim, the successor of Jehoahaz, but the next king, Jehoiachin, as proven by verses 7–9. Although Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were both taken to Babylon and their voice was heard no more in Israel, the text here refers to Jehoiachin because the *past* tense is used and he was in Babylon at the time the words of this chapter were uttered. Zedekiah was on the throne now—about 610 BC.

Five kings reigned in Judah in a 22-year period, Josiah being the first. The following listing clarifies the use of their alternate names in Scripture:

Jehoahaz = Shallum	Jehoiachin = Jeconiah, Coniah
Jehoiakim = Eliakim	Zedekiah = Mattaniah
Jehoahaz was taken in chains to Egypt.	
Jehoiachin was taken in chains to Babylon.	
Zedekiah was taken prisoner to Babylon.	

Ezek. 19:10 Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

In verses 1–9, Ezekiel used the illustration of a lioness in regard to Israel’s history. In verses 10–14, he used the illustration of a vine for a prophecy concerning Israel. When Israel was peaceful, she prospered as a fruitful, flourishing vine.

Israel was a prosperous nation that was starting to burgeon. The vine began to have many branches that fragmented into scepters, showing that the kings, even though vassals, were starting to get strong militarily. In connection with prosperity and power, she was a “vine in thy blood”; in other words, there was much conniving with *ill-gotten* prosperity that was not through the Lord’s providence, as was Solomon’s.

Ezek. 19:11 And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

Ezek. 19:12 But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

Ezek. 19:13 And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

Ezek. 19:14 And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be

for a lamentation.

Israel had hopeful potential rulers throughout her history from David or Solomon on. Under Solomon, a period of peace, Israel reached her greatest height, stretching from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The nation had great potential, but her condition deteriorated and the promising talent came to naught as she became more warlike. Israel's rulers were likened to "rods," but the last few rulers were vassals or *puppet* kings. Instead of submitting, they rebelled and were, consequently, either taken captive or put to death. "Her branches" were the 12 tribes.

The nation went into a period of decay from its former fruitfulness with many rods and branches. Originally Israel was a green tree that showed great promise and luxuriant growth, but the tree was getting weaker and *dry*. Now the dryness portended coming judgment and doom. Ezekiel spoke of the future destruction and the 70 years' desolation of the land as a past event.

"The east wind dried up her [Israel's] fruit." The east wind in the Middle East is hot and dry with no moisture. Israel was violently and abruptly overthrown by an "east wind," a dry, consuming, unfavorable wind. (Ammon, Moab, Syria, and the Chaldean land were all on the east.) The "wind" plucked up the tree by its roots and the nation withered. Then Israel was planted in the wilderness. "Fire," instead of sap and water, went out of her branches.

The "dry and thirsty ground" was Babylon. Those who remained in Israel and then fled to Egypt died of famine, pestilence, and sword. Jeremiah told the people in Babylon to *submit* to their captivity. The captives were sad—hence the Book of Lamentations was written.

In a broad sense, Chapter 19 is a picture of the Church, which began as a white horse, as a virgin, as Ephesus. But instead of waiting for the Kingdom, the white horse went out conquering. Thus the Church began to copy other nations.

Ezek. 20:1 And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me.

Ezek. 20:2 Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying,

In the seventh year of the Jeconiah captivity or of Zedekiah's reign—that is, 610 BC—certain elders came to Ezekiel to hear the Word of the Lord. The time setting was four years before the destruction of Jerusalem and two years after Ezekiel began his ministry.

Ezek. 20:3 Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.

The elders of Israel wanted Ezekiel to give them a message from God, but God told them, "I will not be inquired of by you." Why not? because of their wrong heart condition and motives. The elders were a mixed group with mixed motives. First, the elders had to be made aware of the fact they were not worthy to receive an answer. Nevertheless, God did instruct them through the prophet. Again the prophet was addressed by God as "son of man." This characteristic form of address kept Ezekiel humble and showed others he was merely a *channel*. He kept himself in the background.

Ezek. 20:4 Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:

Instead of a question, this verse should be a statement. God judged the elders through Ezekiel: "Thou wilt judge them, son of man." In other words, "Speak *strongly* and *with authority* as my mouthpiece, Ezekiel. Judge them!" Ezekiel was to cause the elders to know what evil their fathers had done and how they were now perpetuating the evil.

God may open the door for service along a line that is not pleasing to our natural temperament. Here Ezekiel was instructed to give a judgment message, yet later, at the end of his life, he was allowed to give a favorable message about the Third Temple.

Ezek. 20:5 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I am the LORD your God;

Why did God use the term "seed of the house of Jacob"? Jacob lived many years in Israel until the famine, when he went to Egypt, and he died there in time. His 12 sons were in Egypt too—and also died there. In due time God lifted up His hand unto the Israelites by showing favor (He caused plagues to come upon the Egyptians and opened the Red Sea for the Israelites) to bring them out of Egypt. Moses was the instrument used. When he lifted up his hand with his rod, the sea parted; when he lifted up both hands, the Israelites were victorious in battle.

Ezek. 20:6 In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands:

At that time Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey; it was the "glory of all lands." God "espied" that land for the Israelites; that is, He looked out for it, He watched over it, He searched out a nice place to bring them to when He led them out of bondage. It would be a land of plenty, more fruitful than other lands. Today Israel is nothing compared to her glory of old. The desert is only *beginning* to blossom as a rose (Isa. 35:1). In the future Israel will extend up to Lebanon and up to the Euphrates.

Spiritually speaking, God has espied a nice "land" for His people in the Gospel Age too, namely, heaven. He left the land to His Son, who prepares it for us. The elect will have a beautiful home.

Ezek. 20:7 Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

While the Israelites were still in Egypt, God told them to purge themselves of the abominations of the land, idol worship, etc.

Ezek. 20:8 But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

Ezek. 20:9 But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

The Israelites did not respond as they should have. To be dramatic, God said, "I wanted to do away with them, but on second thought—no." In other words, to bring out the quality of mercy, He came down to *their* level of reasoning. To have destroyed the Israelites in Egypt, the land of their captivity, would have brought a blot on God's name. Hence He delayed the judgment until the Sinai Wilderness. From this perspective, the Wilderness was a place of trial. Israel was tried there and found unworthy. In the 40-year period, all of the older generation perished except Joshua and Caleb. God poured out His fury in Egypt with the plagues as well as in the Sinai judgments on those who did not respond to His advice to cast away idols and died as a result.

Comment: Looking ahead a few years, we see that in Sinai God even extended *new* mercy to the Israelites (such as the Law, sabbaths, and statues) before bringing the judgments. In fact, God did not just delay the judgments but gave the Israelites another chance.

Ezek. 20:10 Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness.

Ezek. 20:11 And I gave them my statutes, and showed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.

Ezek. 20:12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them.

"Sabbaths" were not just the seventh day but holy days such as Pentecost and the Day of Atonement. Judgments and statutes were given in connection with the Law. The Israelites had a ceremonial Law, a code of ethics, and much explanation of the principles of the Law.

Up until the Israelites got the Law at Sinai, the Bible does not specifically mention any dying in regard to their murmuring. Although there was a battle with Amalek and the Amalekites at Rephidim, where some would have died, death is not stressed (Exod. 17:8).

Ten times the Israelites tried God. Then He brought judgments in a pruning process: fiery serpents, quail, etc. The Sinai desert was a furnace of discipline. There God proved the Israelites whether they loved Him or not. The younger generation, who entered the land as adults, were a *tried* generation. For example, the discipline enabled 2 million Israelites to circuit Jericho *repeatedly without uttering a sound*. What remarkable obedience!

God was pleased with the younger generation who entered the land, that is, with those who survived the Wilderness experience. All of the complainers had died, even if some were of the younger generation. But when the Israelites, the survivors, entered the land of plenty, then the seeds of destruction sprouted. The genetic characteristics came out: "Your father was an Amorite; your mother was a Hittite" (Ezek. 16:3).

Ezek. 20:13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

“I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to [totally] consume them.” This verse has an emotional context. In obedience to God’s instruction to speak *strongly*, Ezekiel gave a tongue-lashing. This was an admonition to walk more circumspectly.

Ezek. 20:14 But I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.

News of God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt spread. Remember what Rahab the harlot in Jericho said to the spies: “We have *heard*.” News spread in regard to both their leaving Egypt and the Wilderness miracles. With others hearing about the plagues, the Red Sea opening, and the cloud, the Israelites’ reputation preceded them. Bedouin, who roamed the deserts, saw what happened and related it. Caravans of traders, who traveled the trade routes between cities, also saw and told.

Ezek. 20:15 Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands;

Ezek. 20:16 Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

Ezek. 20:17 Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.

The Israelites had to wander in the Wilderness for 40 years. Because of their disobedience, God would not bring them into the Promised Land right away, yet He did not make an utter end of them (verse 17).

Ezek. 20:18 But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols:

Ezek. 20:19 I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them;

Ezek. 20:20 And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.

Ezek. 20:21 Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness.

Ezek. 20:22 Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.

Ezek. 20:23 I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries;

Although God manifested His anger and judgments in the Wilderness period and *many* died, He did not pour out His fury in the sense of eliminating all in total destruction. The ones who died were the ones who committed the sins. The obedient Israelites got to the river Jordan and entered the land.

Ezekiel's sermon is leading up to a little different and *startling* perspective that is coming.

Ezek. 20:24 Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

Ezek. 20:25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;

God gave *perfect* statutes, but *imperfect* man could not keep them. Hence the Law itself was good, but fallen man was not. The Law showed:

1. God's high standard and principles
2. Imperfect man's inability to keep the Law (and hence that all are sinners)
3. God's purpose: to give the right to human life to the Logos as the perfect man Jesus

Because Jesus did not have children, he sacrificed the race that could have been born through him.

Ezek. 20:26 And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD.

"I polluted them in their own gifts." God polluted the Israelites by allowing them to follow their heart's inclination into sin, morass, and evil so that they would be punished and thus in the end know that He is the Lord. God was justified in doing what He did.

"All that openeth the womb" were the firstborn, male *and* female.

Ezek. 20:27 Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me.

Ezekiel now skipped to Israel's current situation, that is, at the time the elders came to him, which was shortly before 606 BC.

Ezek. 20:28 For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings.

The Israelites worshipped false gods on the high hills when they entered the land.

Ezek. 20:29 Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.

"Bamah," a play on words, was a place of notorious worship, a particular high place held to be very sacred. Ezekiel used the name to prove that the present generation were as evil as their fathers.

Ezek. 20:30 Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations?

Israel was committing the same sins that their fathers had done in Egypt and in the Sinai Wilderness.

Ezek. 20:31 For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.

The people passed their firstborn through the fire in their false worship. Because this practice was especially abominable, God said He would not be inquired of by the elders (see verse 3). Then how do we harmonize the fact that God did answer through Ezekiel? The people expected an answer in accord with the *false prophets'* "smooth" and comforting messages of peace (compare Isa. 30:10). Ezekiel responded instead that they would have troubles, trials, and problems. The elders had the wrong heart condition.

Ezek. 20:32 And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Israel was not satisfied with God's commandments. The people wanted to be magnanimous and show their interest in other religions. Although they did not forsake God, they acted perfunctorily, and their hearts were not in their sacrifices. In addition, heathen practices were incorporated into their religious ceremonies. Papacy has done likewise by adopting and/or intermingling paganistic and Oriental practices with Old Testament and Christian practices.

"We will ... serve wood and stone." Israel (and Papacy in antitype) worshipped statues. Offerings were made in front of statues and "totem poles."

"That which cometh into your mind shall not be at all." The Israelites wanted to lose their identity as the peculiar people of God, but God would not let them be assimilated. Their attitude was similar to the New Creature's temptation of wanting to get out of the responsibilities of the consecration vow.

Ezek. 20:33 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you:

Verse 33 has been used to try to prove that the reign of Christ has begun, the word "rule" being considered the key. Such reasoning is wrong, for the context is *Israel*, and Israel must undergo severe experiences before the Kingdom is inaugurated.

Verses 33–44 pertain to Israel in our day and future, not in the elders' day about 610 BC. As a result of Jacob's Trouble and the purging process, God *will rule* over Israel. Verse 33 will take place after verses 34–38, which are also future.

Ezek. 20:34 And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.

The Jews were scattered in the Diaspora of AD 70 and 135. From the Diaspora God brought them "out from the people" (the Gentile nations) "with a *mighty* hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with *fury* poured out," that is, with judgment and discipline. For example, Hitler's persecution had a purging effect; the Jews were brought back through the "hunters" and the "fishers" (Jer. 16:16). First, God scattered the Israelites; then He gathered them.

The “gathering” of Israel continues today. No Jew could buy any property in Israel until 1878. But even if land were purchased, the Jews were sitting ducks for the enemy. Hence there was only a small colony (Petatikva) in 1878, but at least a legal presence was established there by the Jew. When General Allenby defeated the Turks and Ottoman rule was broken in Palestine as a result of World War 1, another step of progress was made. The problem was that the Arabs still owned and occupied the land. When Jewish settlers bought land from the Arabs—large tracts of *swamp* land—the Arabs thought they had pulled a fast one! However, the Israelites drained the swamps by sending in suicide squads who caught malaria and died. Once drained, the land was very fertile. In 1948 statehood was proclaimed, but when *God* gives the Jews the land in the future, it will be on a completely different basis.

Thus God’s purpose is to gather the Jews out of the countries where they were scattered. Although hunters and fishers have already been sent (Russian pogroms, Hitler, Zionist movement, the Hadassah movement, etc.), there will be other persecutions, and the Lord’s fury still has not been fully poured out. Israel will experience another holocaust before the Lord delivers them from Gog and Magog. Jacob’s Trouble is yet future and will be even worse than the gas chambers of Germany.

Ezek. 20:35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.

Ezek. 20:36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.

The “wilderness of the people” is the land of Israel. God was saying that He will deal with the people of Israel in the future as He dealt with their fathers in the past. The fathers went into Egypt and after much affliction there were called out by God into the Wilderness of Sinai for a 40-year testing period. Much later the Israelites were scattered in the Diaspora. Subsequently, in our day, God called the Israelites back to their land, but their problems have continued. Thus Israel was scattered, then gathered into the “wilderness of the people.”

Just as the Israelites were brought out of Egypt into the Wilderness of Sinai, so in recent times, they were brought *collectively* out of Europe to a land that was desolate (the “wilderness of the people”), which ultimately will blossom like a rose (Isa. 35:1). Jews went back to Palestine under terrible conditions but with a right to purchase land. In that land God will yet “plead” with Israel as He did with their fathers in Sinai. He will plead *selectively* (“face to face”) in Jacob’s Trouble, when Israel passes “under the rod” and the rebels are purged out (see verse 37). In other words, these verses refer to a *future individual* pleading.

There are to be two regatherings: one prior to Jacob’s Trouble, one after. After Jacob’s Trouble the Gentiles will ship the remainder back to Israel, bag and baggage. The Gentiles will help just as the Egyptians finally, after the last plague, helped the Jews leave Egypt. The regathering to date is only *token*; the great regathering is *future*. All Jews will then be forced back, for the people of the world will see God’s hand in Israel. The *complete* regathering includes both the nucleus currently there and the future great regathering.

The Jews in Israel today are still in the “wilderness of the people.” When they began to return, Israel was a *real* wilderness and *still is today compared to what it will ultimately be*.

“Wilderness of *alienation*” is the thought. Anti-Semitism continues, hence alienation. In fact, the design of the Diaspora was for alienation. In the parable the rich man, cut off from his former estate, was crying out for a drink of water in his wilderness of alienation (Luke 16:24). Now many Jews have returned to Israel, but anti-Semitism remains. Jews feel the enmity of other nations. They still cannot rest in their land and put down their arms.

When God pleaded with Moses face to face, the ground shook, thunder sounded, and smoke arose. How did the people react? They were fearful when brought face to face with God through Moses.

God does not recognize the nation of Israel today as a rebirth, but when He inaugurates the Kingdom, it will be so recognized. At present Israel is still a “wilderness.” Many Gentiles were happy to *dispose* of the Jews by giving them a land. A comparable situation was the flight of the true Church into the wilderness, for they were misfits in organized religion during the period of Papacy’s power. Israel is a “wilderness” in two senses: (1) Wherever the Jews are now, they have many enemies and are a marked people. (2) The nation is in a trial state with the Arab situation, rejection by the United Nations, etc.—it is like being “outside the camp.” While in this condition, the Lord will deal with the Jews face to face both in Israel and in other lands wherein they are scattered.

Ezek. 20:37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:

The “rod” is based on the practice of tithing under the Law. As the animals passed by, every tenth one was pulled aside by a rod. Like that method, God will make the Jewish people pass under a figurative rod, and He will select the ones to comprise the Holy Remnant.

“I [God] will bring you [Israel] into the bond of the [New] covenant” (Jer. 31:31). As the Jews pass under the rod, God will select those (the Holy Remnant) who are to be brought into the New Covenant. Hence the “rod” is not only a counting device but a *disciplinary* rod, a rod of *judgment*. Those who successfully go through the experience will enter the bond of the New Covenant. *All other Jews will die—temporarily.*

In the past some who tithed gave the worst to God. Others were overly conscientious. Thus the rod was used, and every tenth animal that passed under it was selected. In the future the entire nation will pass under the rod, and no Jew will survive the Time of Trouble except handpicked ones who are very contrite. All who are handpicked will be brought into the bond of the New Covenant.

Ezek. 20:38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

God will use the rod to purge out the rebels and those who sin against Him. He will bring the rebels “forth out of the country where they sojourn,” that is, out of *Israel*. All kinds of Jews have gone back to Israel, the “wilderness of the people,” as “sojourners.” Out of the sojourners, God will select those who will *stay* in the land.

“They shall not enter into the land of Israel.” Probably 75 percent of the Jews in Israel today have little or no faith. This agnostic and atheistic element will be purged out.

Many Gentiles are not sympathetic to Israel because their experiences with Jews have been with those who have offensive traits or actions. Hence the Gentiles cannot see that God could deal with the Jew. But God will *handpick* the Jews who survive Jacob's Trouble. Moreover, those who are spared will be a humble, contrite element every bit as much a changed people as the converted Christian.

The screening to select those who enter into the New Covenant will take place in Israel itself. Isaiah 4:2–4 shows that the trouble *in Israel* will pass over those who are handpicked by God for survival: the “escaped of Israel,” those “left in Zion,” those who “remaineth in Jerusalem,” everyone who is “written among the living in Jerusalem.” God will wash away the filth “of Zion” and purge the “blood of Jerusalem” with *judgment*. Clearly the screening will take place in the Holy Land. No unholy Jew will live through Jacob's Trouble. God is keeping a book in which He notes those worthy to abide in Israel when Jacob's Trouble occurs (compare Dan. 12:1). The Holy Remnant will be a chastened group who loathe themselves (Ezek. 20:43; 36:31). The Kingdom government will begin as an unleavened lump. Note: The Jews should be told of these Scriptures so that they are *forewarned*.

Those who survive (the Holy Remnant) will be a “beautiful,” “glorious,” and “holy” people (Isa. 4:2,3). Of this class Zechariah 8:23 speaks: The Gentiles will “take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew” and say, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.” When it is apparent that the spared Jews are humble, contrite, and sorry for their past behavior, the attitude of the Gentiles will be, “Those Jews are better than we are.”

Regarding the Time of Trouble, the advice to Gentiles is, “Seek righteousness, seek meekness: it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger” (Zeph. 2:3). However, the right-hearted, holy Jew has an ironclad guarantee: He *will survive* the Time of Trouble. Advice to the Gentiles was also given by John the Baptist (Luke 3:9–14). “He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.... Exact no more than that which is appointed you.... Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” Gentiles who stay out of the way of the Lord's steamroller will be more likely to survive than those who become violent for their needs.

By implication the Jews in Gentile lands who survive Jacob's Trouble will also be handpicked, for there are *two* regatherings to Israel: one *before* Jacob's Trouble and one *after*. Holy Jews will be *individually* selected for survival throughout the world. Why? because the nucleus of the Kingdom has to be *holy*. The Jews will pass under the rod *in whatever country* they reside, but especially in Israel. In other words, those Jews who will be transported back to Israel right after Jacob's Trouble will also be handpicked (Isa. 66:20).

When combined, Isaiah 4:4 and Ezekiel 20:33,34 are powerful for the Jew: God shall wash away the filth of Zion, and purge the blood of Jerusalem; He shall rule over them with a mighty hand, with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out. This corrective, purging judgment is described as the “spirit of *judgment*” and the “spirit of *burning*.”

Isaiah 4:5 continues with a comparison of God's dealings with Israel in the past: “And the LORD will create upon every dwellingplace of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence.” Just as God led the Israelites to Canaan by means of a cloud that did not depart (until they entered the land) and was *visually seen* not only by them but by others, so it will be manifest to Gentiles then living that the spared Jews are a contrite, changed

people. The Ancient Worthies will be *seen*. God's "cloud" will be over Israel, and others will recognize this favor and prosperity. Gentile lands will be in disarray from famine, disease, war, hunger, abolition of governments, etc., but Israel will be *orderly*. The Gentiles will say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain [arrangement] of the house of the LORD, to the God of *Jacob*. He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:3 paraphrase). In other words, the desire of the people will be for peace, life, and happiness.

Ezek. 20:39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.

Ezek. 20:40 For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

The fulfillment of this verse is yet future, for it describes the *whole* house of Israel as being holy. Again the reference is to the selected, handpicked, thoroughly converted remnant who will be spared at the time of Jacob's Trouble. In addition, verse 40 indicates not only that the Temple will be rebuilt but that some animal sacrifices will be reinstated.

Ezek. 20:41 I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

God has not yet been sanctified in the Jew before the "heathen" (Gentiles), but He will be sanctified in the spared remnant. He will be glorified in the sight of the Gentiles when His fury is poured out in the judgments on Gog in Jacob's Trouble and the Holy Remnant is delivered. The surviving Gentile eyewitnesses of Israel's miraculous deliverance will return to their homelands to give testimony.

All of verse 41 should be considered together. (1) The Jews were dispersed. (2) They were gathered back to Israel as sojourners. (3) They will be purged. (4) The survivors will be God's people under the New Covenant. Verse 41 is comparable to verse 34. Both refer to the Diaspora, a gathering, and finally a purging. This is a *process* resulting in an *end product*: the Holy Remnant, the nucleus of the Kingdom. The *sanctification* will take place *in Israel* (compare Ezek. 38:23). Hence this verse does not refer to the regathering of Jews to Israel after Jacob's Trouble.

Ezek. 20:42 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers.

Verse 42 partially repeats the thoughts in verse 41.

Ezek. 20:43 And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.

Realizing they were spared from the *intense* trouble, the delivered Jews will "*loathe*" themselves in their "*own sight*" and mourn *greatly* as for an only son (Zech. 12:10). The reaction of the Holy Remnant following their deliverance will be comparable to the

sinner's coming to Christ at the time of initial conversion. Depending on background and circumstances, conversion to Christ can bring *radical* changes of behavior. Gentiles will admire the repentant, changed Jew.

Ezek. 20:44 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

Jews are not innately better than any other people. They will be spared because of God's *mercy*—and for “the fathers' sakes” (Rom. 11:28; Neh. 9:31).

Incidentally, a little before Jacob's Trouble, the fallen angels will materialize. The havoc they cause will be especially evident in Israel, for “the enemy shall come in like a flood” (Isa. 59:19). In fact, the fallen angel “flood” will be even more devastating than the Gog “flood.”

Chapter 20 should probably end with verse 44. Chapter 21 will explain the parable given in verses 45–49.

Ezek. 20:45 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 20:46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field;

Ezek. 20:47 And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein.

Ezek. 20:48 And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched.

Ezek. 20:49 Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

Called the Parable of the Forest, verses 45–49 are a change in time setting to 606 BC. From captivity Ezekiel was to turn to the *south* to give his message. He spoke, “Forest of the south, Hear the word of the LORD!” And what was the message? “Behold, I [God] will kindle a fire in thee.” But the south was the Negeb, a *desert*, where no forest grew. As verse 49 indicates, the elders were confused, for they remarked that Ezekiel spoke in parables.

The “fire” took place in 606 BC when green trees (righteous people) as well as dry trees (unrighteous people) were kindled. Ezekiel 21:4 confirms this thought: “Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north.” (In contrast, the future trouble will destroy only the *unrighteous* element.) Only a very *few* individuals were spared in 606 BC.

Why did the fire consume backwards from south to north? The ten-tribe kingdom had been located in the northern part of Israel, while Judah was in the south. Of course the ten tribes had already been taken into captivity. Therefore, the judgment of God would deal with Judah first and then with the Samaritans, who now occupied the northern part of the land, for the land had to be desolate so that the sabbaths could be fulfilled.

“All flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it.” All Jews contemporary with Ezekiel knew when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 606 BC.

Chapter 21 explains the Parable of the Forest.

Ezek. 21:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

In verses 1–7 God gave Ezekiel instructions on what to say and do. Of course the destruction of 606 BC was still a few years off. At that time news would come forth that the very trouble described in these verses was a past event (see verse 7).

Ezek. 21:2 Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel,

Not only was Ezekiel to give a judgment message to the people, but he was instructed to turn and face Jerusalem (the south) and “the holy places” (the Temple area). In other words, the prophet was to speak audibly in the direction of Jerusalem and the Temple and demonstrate visually as if events were taking place at that very time.

Ezek. 21:3 And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.

Notice that *both* the righteous and the wicked (*both* the green and the dry trees of Ezekiel 20:47) would be affected by the trouble, although a small righteous remnant was spared and taken to Babylon. This trouble of 606 BC reminds us of the trouble at the *end of the age* when God will purge out the rebels (Ezek. 20:38). However, in 606 BC the *land* was left empty and desolate.

Ezek. 21:4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north:

Ezek. 21:5 That all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more.

Principle: God’s Word does not return unto Him void but accomplishes its purpose (Isa. 55:11). Only then will the sword go back into its sheath.

Ezek. 21:6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy loins; and with bitterness sigh before their eyes.

Ezek. 21:7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel was told to groan and to sigh *so deeply* that each time his body would contract or double over. The “breaking of thy loins” was done realistically. What was the purpose? to arouse curiosity. When asked what he was sighing about, he was to reply, “Oh, the news, the terrible news about Jerusalem! The trouble is coming. It is on its way.” Parts of his

anatomy were involved to demonstrate that the people would react with great grief and great fear when the armies of Babylon arrived. (Ezekiel did dramatic things on other occasions as well, for example, building a fort and lying on first one side for 390 days and then the other for 40 days.) He then told of the dreadful things that would happen to Judah, to those not yet in captivity and exile.

Ezek. 21:8 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 21:9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished:

Ezekiel was told to say, "A sword! A sword is sharpened and polished" (paraphrase). He actually prepared a sword to dramatize the prophecy. The glittering, or reflection, of light against the polished sword would strike fear in the enemy. Even from a spiritual standpoint, a sharp doctrine strikes fear and discourages debate, causing the hearer to feel he is against an expert.

Ezek. 21:10 It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter; it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree.

This verse is difficult to understand. The sword, or rod, was one of *correction*; the judgment was designed to have a *beneficial* effect upon the nation. "Every tree" meant *all* of the people, the wicked as well as the righteous. The sword was upon every tree. Judah needed punishment and correction. The King James margin reads: "It is the rod of my son, it despiseth every tree."

In Jacob's Trouble, the Assyrian (Gog in the Book of Ezekiel) is called the "rod" or "axe" of God's anger (Isa. 10:5,15). In regard to the axe, the thought is, "Shall he that wieldeth the axe not realize that the *Lord* is doing the work?" The Assyrian will think his success against Israel is due to his *own* strength and not realize that the success is based on God's providence in *allowing* him to visit the judgment. In other words, the Assyrian will get *heady*. God will ask, "Don't you realize who is doing the sawing [destructive] work? It is *I* who have been helping you." The sword is to have a repercussive effect, bouncing back on itself.

"Should we then make mirth?" The people may actually have been complacent and jovial. Therefore, the question was a rebuke against them and against the false prophets, who spoke smooth (peaceful) things. The mirth was unbecoming, for it should have been a time of sackcloth and ashes. In principle, as John the Baptist said at the First Advent, "The axe is laid unto the root of the trees" (Matt. 3:10). When a tree is to be cut down, the axe is laid against the tree, then pulled back and swung into that spot. In other words, the judgment was determined.

Ezek. 21:11 And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer.

The sword was prepared and then given "into the hand of the slayer," that is, into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his army. Note: In antitype the "slayer" will be Gog/the Assyrian. The pictures must be kept separate. "Again" in verse 8 means "on *another* occasion."

Ezek. 21:12 Cry and howl, son of man: for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all

the princes of Israel: terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh.

Ezekiel actually cried and howled in the dramatization, for the trouble would come upon *all* those in Judah. Then he smote his thigh. All of Ezekiel's actions and words were intended to *intensify* the bad news.

Ezek. 21:13 Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord GOD.

The "sword" hated the "rod" (the rule) of the Israelites. The rule would be no more. The judgment was set; it could not be revoked.

Ezek. 21:14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers.

Ezek. 21:15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied: ah! it is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter.

Ezekiel smote his hands together to attract attention. Three times he clapped with anger, dismay, and disgust and then repeated the action, again smiting his hands together three times. When he smote his thigh (verse 12), the purpose was to emphasize his grief over the coming bad news. Here the clapping of his hands was more *symbolic*. The sword's being "doubled" indicated a corresponding portion, that is, a total of three judgments. The third judgment would be the worst.

In other words, the clapping was *doubled*: 1, 2, 3—pause—1, 2, 3. Ezekiel smote his hands *three times—twice*. There was a significance in Ezekiel's day, and there will be a prophetic significance in our day in the near future.

The *first* clapping of three times was a judgment by the "slayers" Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Judah's kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah received judgments. The third clap, Zedekiah, would occur shortly.

"It is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers." "Privy chambers" would be a smaller chamber within a chamber, for example, a closet in a room or a bathroom. The point was that no matter how or where the people tried to escape the judgment, the sword would find them. They would not be able to hide from the coming sword.

Ezekiel was trying to instill in the captives in Babylon the fear that those in Judah would have upon seeing the enemy come down. The enemy would stand at every gate ready to slaughter any Israelite who attempted to escape.

"Ah! it [the sword] is made bright, it is wrapped up for the slaughter." The sword was "wrapped up for the slaughter" by being *sharpened* (King James margin). After the sword was sharpened and polished, it was protected to keep it sharp. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Ezekiel was probably a very powerful actor.

“The sword [was set] against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their ruins be multiplied.” The sword was set against *all* the gates in the sense that there would be no escape. The preparedness and strategy of the enemy was thus indicated.

Note: See additional commentary under verse 27.

Ezek. 21:16 Go thee one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set.

In other words, whichever way the sword would point—whether to the right or to the left—it would do damage. It was to smite on all sides. (Verses 18–24 provide a further explanation.)

Ezek. 21:17 I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said it.

The *third* time God would smite His hands together would be the *last*, for His fury would then be satisfied. In the natural picture back there, the reference was to Zedekiah’s defeat. That was one level of interpretation.

Comment: In verse 10, which is part of the picture with an *antitype*, the question was asked, “Should we then make mirth?” The question seems to be a reminder of Belshazzar’s feast at the time when the nations feel secure and are having a celebration in Christendom. A warning will go out by the feet members that trouble is coming. To state this comment in more detail: The antitype of the sword being “doubled the third time” would be World Wars 1, 2, and 3—wars against Christendom that weaken the *Gentile* nations. Just prior to World War 3 would be the time for the feet members to give “Ezekiel’s” warning. “Should we then make mirth?” seems to be a reminder of the festivities of Belshazzar’s feast, which will take place as the Church-State coalition comes into power. The feet members will warn: “Your arrangement will not work. It is not the Kingdom of God. The Time of Trouble is coming.”

Q: The answer to the following question depends on what is meant by the word “rod,” which can be a symbol of rule (verse 13). Could the thought be as follows? “It [the sword] contemns [despises] the rod [rule] of my [professed] son [the nominal Church in the hour of power], every tree [every leader in Christendom, especially every religious leader].” In other words, the Assyrian (or Gog) force will hate the rule of the professed son [Christendom]. Hence they will come down and bring a judgment in the future just as back there the sword of Nebuchadnezzar hated the rule of natural Israel.

A: That thought has just as much merit as the one already expressed. It seems to have value and sounds good in certain respects.

Ezek. 21:18 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

Ezek. 21:19 Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city.

Ezek. 21:20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced.

Ezek. 21:21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.

Ezek. 21:22 At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mound, and to build a fort.

Ezek. 21:23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken.

Ezek. 21:24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand.

Just as earlier Ezekiel's actions punctuated his remarks, so now he would dramatize the prophecy of verses 18–24, which gave the route of invasion. In “appoint[ing] ... two ways,” he probably drew a “Y” on the ground. One of the two upper points of the “Y” pointed to Rabbath, the capital of the Ammonites, and the other pointed to Jerusalem. The point in the “V” neck—that is, the fork in the road—was Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar came to a junction and stopped to use divination to determine his direction. An animal was cut and its liver examined, and the king also used teraphim (images).

When the divination kept pointing to Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar thought it was false divination—until the Lord brought to mind some of Israel's disobedience and rebellion. Then the king got angry and decided Israel did need punishment and judgment. The Holy Spirit called to Nebuchadnezzar's remembrance the covenants of obedience that were made with the vassal kings Jehoiachin and Zedekiah and how those covenants were broken. Then Nebuchadnezzar regarded the divination as true. God helped him remember Israel's iniquity.

Verse 22 tells that King Nebuchadnezzar's army would use battering rams and utter a united battle cry, a rhythmic chant with gusto. “To cast a mound” means to build the earth higher, that is, to make an inclined road from which they could go over the wall.

Ezek. 21:25 And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end,

The “profane wicked prince of Israel” was Zedekiah. The cumulative guilt of the nation demanded judgment, and the time was drawing near. Probably Nebuchadnezzar was already mustering his forces to go down to Judah. He had thought he would go to Ammon first and to Judah second—until the repeated divination and the recalling of Israel's sins changed his mind.

Ezek. 21:26 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.

The word “diadem” is used elsewhere in regard to the Church to show glory, honor, and emolument of office. The Church will be a diadem in the hand of the Lord (Isa. 62:3). The “crown” represents the prerogatives of office, the prerogatives of ruling. Usually a diadem is worn by a woman and a crown by the king.

“Remove the diadem, and take off the crown.” God was saying, through Ezekiel, that the favor shown to Israel in their having kings who theoretically sat on the throne of the Lord would cease with Zedekiah’s dethroning. He was taken captive to Babylon, his eyes were put out, and his sons were slain. A diadem, which is a jeweled headband, is more resplendent and more an ornament of beauty. However, in verse 26 the “diadem” was a turban or miter like that worn by the high priest.

“Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high.” Jeconiah was exalted by being brought out of prison in Babylon and eating his meals at the king’s table. Zedekiah was abased by his removal from office, humiliation, blinding, and death in prison in Babylon.

Messiah’s lineage went through both Jeconiah and Nathan. Nathan’s line was exalted and the Solomonic line debased. Since both Nathan and Solomon were sons of David, Messiah came from the Davidic line.

Ezek. 21:27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.

When Zedekiah, the last king, was removed from office, a *void* was left: “It shall be no more, *until* he come whose right it is.” The period of kingship was terminated temporarily; it was suspended.

David was told that one of his lineage would always be selected as the representative of Israel—but the individual would not necessarily be in Israel sitting on the throne. Zedekiah was taken to Babylon blind. The succession of regal office was subsequently traced through Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) down to Messiah (Matt. 1:11).

“It shall be no more” in the sense that *Israel* was no longer a state on its own but was a captive or vassal state, subject to the whims of alien powers.

“I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it [the typical kingdom].” The first overturning occurred in 606 BC when Zedekiah was removed from the throne, the inhabitants of Judah were taken to Babylon, and the land was left desolate. It was a *real overturning*, not just a change of rulership.

Daniel dreamed of five universal empires. Four pertained to earthly dominions: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The fifth will be Christ’s Kingdom. The four empires, *Gentile* powers, have dominion *before* the Jewish nation is fully restored under Messiah. But these *four* do not equate with the *three* overturnings. Hence the “overturning” does not mean that another enemy came in and took over (as Media-Persia took over Babylon, for example). Some Jews returned to Israel, but the *land* was not overturned—the Jews simply went back. The Jews returned and stayed there for about 600 years, from 536 BC until AD 70, when the second overturning occurred. The Jews were under alien dominion, but they were in the land until AD 70, when the Romans did a radical overturning, slaying many and dispersing the rest throughout the Roman provinces. At that time Jerusalem and its environs were destroyed. The third overturning was in AD 135 under Hadrian, who gave Jerusalem a new Roman name and forbid the Jews to even be in eyesight of the city. From then until Messiah would come at his Second Advent (“until he come whose right it is”) and have the Kingdom given to him—a *long* period of time—the kingdom of Israel was suspended. The Jews, being back in their homeland now after all these years, will never

again be entirely uprooted. They will be defeated and some taken into exile, but an overturning like in the past *will not again occur*.

The point is that *three* overturnings had to be fulfilled before Jesus could assume the rulership at his Second Advent. At that time God would “give it [the Kingdom to] him [Jesus].” Jesus *secured the right* to rule at his First Advent, but the *exercising of this right* pertains to the Second Advent—to sometime after the end of Gentiles Times, hence 1914 or thereafter. The long period of void from AD 135 “until he come whose right it is” is likened to Gentile Times. It is also likened to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in which the rich man wanted a little water to cool his tongue, and to the Parable of the Pounds, in which Jesus said a nobleman went away “into a far country [heaven] to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return” (Luke 16:19–31; 19:12–27).

The following distinctions are to be noted:

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Crown	Prerogatives of rule
Diadem	Honor and glory of office
Scepter	Legal right to rule

Let us consider verse 14 again: “Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time.” The three overturnings were radical and violent—and they pertained to *Israel*. They were three judgments. In addition, the Gentiles are to have three judgments: World War 1, World War 2, and World War 3. The *three* World Wars are shown by the sword’s being used *three times*. Just as back in 606 BC, so in the future the trouble will come on both the righteous and the wicked. *Whole* nations were (and will be) involved in the wars, with no discrimination being made between good and bad.

The advice for the future for Gentiles is, “Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger” (Zeph. 2:3). Notice that there is no guarantee to the Gentiles. John the Baptist also gave advice: “Do violence to no man. Do not get in the way of the Lord’s steamroller. Do not bear false witness. Be content with your wages” (Luke 3:10–14 paraphrase). John was giving *general* advice as to what course to pursue to be less likely to experience the fierce judgment to come. On the other hand, the Jews will be handpicked for survival. To be of the Holy Remnant, they must be humble and repentant. If in the proper heart condition, they *will be spared*.

Ezekiel’s smiting his hands three times is a symbolic picture, as follows:

1. Jewish historians back there equated the smittings with the puppet kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. That interpretation had a practical benefit for the Israelites, but it was not the real picture.
2. The use of the sword three times can be equated to the three overturnings: 606 BC, AD 70, and AD 135.
3. The three uses of the sword prophetically symbolize the three World War experiences and/or judgments of the Gentiles.

Ezek. 21:28 And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD

concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn: for the slaughter it is furbished, to consume because of the glittering:

Previous verses show that King Nebuchadnezzar, through divination, fought against Judah first. Now he returned to visit judgment on the Ammonites, as he had originally intended to do first. The time had come for him to do battle against the Ammonites. The sword had been drawn for Judah and would not be sheathed until the Ammonites had also received the Lord's judgment.

Ezek. 21:29 Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end.

Even though King Nebuchadnezzar had gone to Judah first, he would also pursue the Ammonites, creating a mass grave ("to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain"). "Whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end." The repetition shows the finality of the Ammonite punishment. Similar language was used in regard to Zedekiah in verse 25.

Ezek. 21:30 Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity.

The sword would not be sheathed until the Ammonites had been judged, and they would be judged where they were "created," in the land of their "nativity." Both the Moabites and the Ammonites were descendants of Lot. (After Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, his daughters bore sons, Moab and Ammon, through their father.) Not only were the Moabites and the Ammonites related, but they were closely situated—and both disliked Israel. God was reminding the Ammonites of their morally questionable origin to point out that they had no right to condemn Israel.

Ezek. 21:31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy.

"I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath." Extra air (oxygen) creates a rapid, intense heat. In other words, the Lord was *indignant* with the Ammonites. The "brutish men" were the Babylonians, who were known for their lack of sympathy for their enemies. Moreover, they spoke a crude, hard language that was vulgar and brutal.

Ezek. 21:32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered: for I the LORD have spoken it.

The Ammonites "shalt be no more remembered" (verse 32). That was true, and Jordan, the Hashemite Kingdom, has since been established by the League of Nations.

This verse is a reminder of when Ezekiel cast a third of his hair into the fire—an action that represented the destruction of the people. The hair (or people) was like fuel for the fire. "[Spilled] blood [great violence and slaughter] shall be in the midst of the land." The suggestion is that the shed blood was payment, or retribution, for blood the Ammonites had previously shed.

Ezek. 22:1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Verses 1-12 show that Jerusalem's and Israel's transgressions were numerous and of all kinds.

Ezek. 22:2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt show her all her abominations.

The "bloody city" was Jerusalem (mystic Babylon in antitype). Blood (iniquity) had come to the full, and time was ripe for judgment.

Ezek. 22:3 Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols against herself to defile herself.

"The city ... maketh idols against herself to defile herself." Judah defiled herself by worshipping idols and thereby hastened judgment.

Ezek. 22:4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries.

Ezek. 22:5 Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed.

The principle of retribution is shown: shed blood is requited by spilled blood. "Thou ... art come even unto thy years"; that is, "Thou art come to maturity in iniquity." The habitual practice of iniquity led to judgment.

Judah would be a "reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries." In view of previous favor and deliverances by God, Judah would now be left alone and fall mightily. "Those ... near, and those ... far from thee, shall mock thee." Both God's favor and God's judgment on Israel were known near and far. For example, King Nebuchadnezzar hesitated to go to Jerusalem first because it was known as "the defenced" city (Ezek. 21:20).

Ezek. 22:6 Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood.

The leadership was chiefly responsible for winking the eye, the notable exception being King Josiah.

Ezek. 22:7 In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.

Ezekiel continued to enumerate the people's sins. There was little respect for parents. The people took advantage of strangers' lack of guile and their lack of knowledge of the customs of the land. In addition, leaders took advantage of orphans and widows by seizing their possessions.

Ezek. 22:8 Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.

Sabbaths were profaned by commercial activities.

Ezek. 22:9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they commit lewdness.

The people bore false witness and lied, bringing harm to others. They ate cakes in idol worship on the mountains.

Ezek. 22:10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness: in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.

Offspring committed adultery with their mother, thus discovering "their father's nakedness." Under the Law a woman was to be set apart when her time came, a few days each month, but this command was ignored.

Ezek. 22:11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.

Adultery and incest were commonly committed.

Ezek. 22:12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.

The list of sins went on and on. Contracts were paid for murder. Loan sharking (exorbitant interest rates, usury) flourished. Blackmail and the unreasonable demand for mortgage payments were examples of extortion. The Israelites forgot God by forgetting what the Law specified.

Ezek. 22:13 Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.

Much of verses 6–12 pertains to greed, dishonest gain, and even bloodshed and violence. Now God said, "Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain [greed for money]." In clapping His hands together and remonstrating, God gave us an insight into His character. He spoke almost like a Jew at times and even used a degree of emotionalism. Moreover, He came down to the level of the people to reason with them and to exhort them to sanity. In other words, He did not just coldly read a document but took the time to transmit a word picture about His feelings. The continued warnings reflected God's concern for the people just as a parent would show concern for a child by admonishing him. Lesson: Under the *proper* circumstances, a Christian can be angry and should not be ashamed of his emotions. Love being gentle is the *general* rule, but there are exceptions. 1 Corinthians 13:5 states that love "is not *easily* provoked," but under certain circumstances love *can be provoked*.

Ezek. 22:14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, and will do it.

God was asking, "Can you endure when I deal with you?"

Ezek. 22:15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee.

This chapter was addressed to Judah and Jerusalem, and verse 15 was telling what God would do when He dealt with them. The purpose of punishing and scattering the people was to cleanse their filthiness. How did God accomplish the purging? Through many deaths and the frequent separation of families in the dispersions, the organized graft and corrupt businesses were disrupted. This verse went beyond the Babylonian captivity and was a prophecy of the Diaspora.

Ezek. 22:16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

In the days of her favor, the nation of Israel was called God's people, God's inheritance, etc., but now her inheritance would be in herself. Israel would feel separated and cut off from God. They professed to be God's people, and other nations knew it, but their practices profaned His name and His typical kingdom. When the escaped remnant was scattered in other lands, the heathen would point to them and stigmatize: "That's a Jew!" The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus shows Israel's estrangement and feeling of being forsaken.

Ezek. 22:17 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 22:18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver.

Ezek. 22:19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem.

Ezek. 22:20 As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you.

Ezek. 22:21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.

Ezek. 22:22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

In the refining of silver and precious metals, a furnace is used to smelt the rough ore so that the dross (brass, tin, iron, and lead) can be separated. In the analogy God would gather the inhabitants of the land into the furnace (Jerusalem). God said, "I will ... blow upon you in the fire of my wrath." Supplying oxygen to a fire increases the heat. In other words, the people would flee to Jerusalem to *defend* it, but Nebuchadnezzar would put a siege around the city.

Notice that the purpose was to punish the "silver" too—the good (the green tree) as well as the bad (the dry tree). See Ezekiel 20:47. (In *contrast*, in Jacob's Trouble a remnant will be *specialy* saved—a contrite remnant.) Except for a handful such as Jeremiah and Baruch, the "remnant" had already been taken to Babylon in an earlier captivity. The cream of the crop who were taken into captivity earlier included Daniel and the three Hebrew children. (There were three notable captivities of Judah during this period of Israel's history, the last being 606 BC. Only small numbers were taken in each of the captivities.)

Q: Can Armageddon be substituted for the antitype of Jerusalem's being gathered into the

furnace and smelted?

A: In some respects, what happened in 606 BC was a minipicture of what took place in AD 70. Similarly, what happened in the French Revolution was a minipicture of the great Time of Trouble yet future (Armageddon). Therefore, the gathering into the furnace in 606 BC was a type of the French Revolution, and AD 70 is a type of Armageddon. However, if the 606 BC picture is considered by itself, the principle is something like that in Armageddon. In other words, it is symptomatic of conditions at the end of the Gospel Age.

Ezek. 22:23 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 22:24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation.

“Her” would be Judah, Jerusalem (Aholibah of Chapter 23). The judgment was now irrevocable and captivity was certain. Individuals had to be consumed so that the land could be cleansed.

The land would not be “rained upon in the day of indignation.” No spiritual blessings or instruction would be provided just prior to destruction. In addition, the land may have actually experienced a lack of rain so that it was not cleansed in this manner either.

Ezek. 22:25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof.

The false prophets, who spoke peace and said the judgment would not come, were like ravening, *hungry* lions. “There is a conspiracy of her prophets”; that is, the false prophets all *agreed* and gave false testimony. Their “conspiracy” is a reminder of the end-of-the-age prophecies of a religious conspiracy through the civil governments (through the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon). Unwittingly, they will gather the people to Armageddon. Jeremiah 6:13,14 is pertinent: “For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.” False prophet and priest alike will claim the trouble will be averted and say, “Peace, peace.” Isaiah added: “Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (Isa. 8:12,13). A “confederacy” (conspiracy) will be made on a false premise.

A “roaring lion ravening the prey” plays with, teases, and paralyzes its prey with fear; then, with violent, ravenous appetite, it gulps its prey, not taking time to assimilate the food. Similarly, the false prophets “devoured souls.” At the First Advent Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees for taking advantage of widows and leaving them penniless (Matt. 23:14). Not satisfied to be reasonable, they gulped widows’ possessions. In antitype Papacy makes merchandise of men’s “souls” through the Mass, novenas, etc. (Rev. 18:13).

Israel’s false prophets took “the treasure and precious things.” Balaam is a classic example of a prophet who looked for monetary reward. “They have made her many widows in the midst thereof.” In other words, Israel was estranged from God because her leadership was faulty.

Principle: We must provide *necessities* for our own household first; then we can give money to the Lord and His service.

Ezek. 22:26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shown difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Instead of reprimanding disobedient people, the priests winked the eye. Their cardinal duties should have included explaining moral values (showing the “difference between the holy and profane”), giving proper doctrines (showing the “difference between the unclean and the clean”), and providing for fellowship and congregation (the “sabbaths”). The priests looked the other way and did not expose the wrongs and the commercialism.

Ezek. 22:27 Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

The “princes” (civil rulers) were likened to ravaging, *hungry* wolves.

Ezek. 22:28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

“*Untempered mortar*” is brittle and thus is not a good bonding agent. From one standpoint, in times of stress an improper blend will crumble. From another standpoint, “*untempered mortar*” is a whitewash, an agent that covers only superficially and has no lasting effect as a bonding agent. It hides the blemishes but does not impart strength.

The false prophets were guilty of “seeing vanity, and divining lies.” In other words, they rendered perfunctory and superficial service, making conditions sound good but not telling the truth or strengthening the wall. Accordingly, the false prophets whitewashed lies to appear as truth. Instead of properly repairing the walls, an inferior surface covering was applied that would not hold. The false prophets spoke as seers—as if they had a true “Thus saith the Lord.” Jeremiah, who told the truth, was persecuted as a prophet *of doom*.

Principle: We must search the Scriptures for a “Thus saith the Lord” before we accept and believe a matter as truth.

Ezek. 22:29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

Verses 25–29 show that all levels of society, from top to bottom and especially the leadership (civil and religious), were contaminated. Princes, prophets, priests, and people—all were responsible. The people were responsible for encouraging and supporting the leadership. (Incidentally, notice that there were three *separate* leadership roles or elements: prophet, priest, and prince.)

Like the dishonest leadership, the people were reprimanded for their everyday deceitful and corrupt practices, crimes, and sins. The rich “vexed the poor and needy” by indiscreetly flaunting their wealth and thus inciting jealousy. They were guilty of an ostentatious display of wealth and waste (wantonness). Generally speaking, the rich cannot put themselves in the shoes of the poor. The Apostle James warns not to give a preferred seat

to the rich in the congregation (James 2:1–4).

This pervasive unholy condition existed four or five times in Israel's history and also in the Gospel Age as periods of special darkness and spiritual decay.

Ezek. 22:30 And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

What about Jeremiah? Couldn't he have stood in the gap so that the land would not be destroyed? No, because he was in prison and thus could not do much. Instead circumstances forced him to write the prophecies and then Baruch to read them in Jeremiah's name. Zedekiah, the reigning king at the time, befriended Jeremiah but imprisoned the prophet anyway.

Jeremiah 5:1 reads similarly: "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." And Isaiah 63:5, the Bozrah picture, is similar in principle in regard to the end of the age. "And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me." Jesus says he will act alone because "there was none [of the people] to help." When the salt of the earth is removed, wherewith shall it be salted (Matt. 5:13)? Armageddon will come when the salt class is gone.

To "stand in the gap" means to plead for the people or for the land. During the period in the Wilderness of Sinai, Moses filled the gap when the people made a golden calf. God could have destroyed them all, but Moses offered himself—he stood in the gap as a sacrificing spirit. Likewise, the Apostle Paul offered his life for the enlightening and the salvation of the people of Israel (Rom. 9:1–3). In addition, Joshua and Caleb stood in the gap after the other ten spies gave an unfavorable report (Numbers 13). And Abraham stood in the gap for Sodom and Gomorrah.

Ezek. 22:31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

The past tense was used as if the destruction had already been accomplished; that is, the judgment was a *future* event at the time Ezekiel spoke, but he reported it as a *past* event. The point was that the judgment was set and irrevocable. God's mind was made up: The judgment *would come to pass!*

Ezek. 23:1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezek. 23:2 Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother:

Ezek. 23:3 And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity.

Ezek. 23:4 And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister: and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names; Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.

Ezek. 23:5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours,

Ezek. 23:6 Which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.

One mother (the nation of Israel) had two daughters: Aholah and Aholibah. Aholah was Samaria, the ten tribes, Ephraim, the older sister, the larger of the two, the one who was defeated first—and hence Papacy in antitype. Aholibah was Jerusalem, the two tribes, Judah, the younger sister—and hence Protestantism in antitype. The “one mother” in antitype is the *faithful* early Church.

When in Egypt for 215 years, the two daughters committed whoredoms by engaging in heathen religious practices. Then followed the Wilderness of Sinai experience, the conquering of the land of Canaan, the period of the judges, and the period of the kings. The time setting was now the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, just two years before the 606 BC captivity.

The name “Samaria” was used derogatorily here. The ten-tribe kingdom was sympathetic to Assyria, doting on the Assyrians and admiring their uniforms and horsemanship. However, commercial and religious intermingling resulted in Samaria’s loss of favor and of the close relationship with God and in being taken captive by the Assyrians. In other words, the relationship backfired, for the Assyrians later victimized the ten tribes and took them into captivity.

Why was Aholah the elder and Aholibah the younger sister? (1) Jerusalem was not conquered from the Jebusites until David’s day, so from that standpoint Samaria was the older of the two kingdoms. (2) Not only was Jacob called a Syrian (Deut. 26:5; compare Gen. 28:5), but the ten-tribe kingdom liked to call Jacob their “father.” When the Samaritan woman talked with Jesus, she said that Jacob drank from the Shechem well (Nablus today), and she called Jacob the “father” of the Samaritans (John 4:12).

Ezek. 23:7 Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself.

Ezek. 23:8 Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her.

Ezek. 23:9 Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.

Ezek. 23:10 These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

Ezek. 23:11 And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms.

Ezek. 23:12 She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed

most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men.

Ezek. 23:13 Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way,

Ezek. 23:14 And that she increased her whoredoms: for when she saw men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermillion,

Ezek. 23:15 Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity:

Ezek. 23:16 And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.

The danger for Israel was their desire for the ornate religious structures and ceremonies that the Gentile nations (Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon) had. The same principle applied with Israel's desire to have a king *like other nations*. God indulged their desire by giving them Saul, and the nation reaped the consequences.

In antitype the danger is the desire for ornate cathedrals, choirs, robes, religious ceremonies, and titles. Protestantism succumbed to the same evils that Papacy practiced. True worship is *simplicity*—without man's ingenuity and innovation.

"When ... Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she [Aholah], and in her whoredoms more than her sister" (verse 11). Judah should have learned a lesson from what happened to the ten-tribe kingdom. Instead of learning obedience and humility, Judah wanted to take over the land vacated by the ten tribes when the latter went into captivity. God reprimanded Judah for the wrong attitude toward the ten tribes. Judah's attitude was similar to that of the Israelites toward the Samaritans and that of the Pharisees toward the publicans and sinners.

Ezek. 23:17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them.

Ezek. 23:18 So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister.

Ezek. 23:19 Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.

Ezek. 23:20 For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

Ezek. 23:21 Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

The Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians are all brought into the account. Depending on the period of history under discussion, Israel polluted herself with a particular Gentile nation, but the damage started in Egypt, where Israel was pictured as a virgin. Both the ten and the two tribes were unfaithful because of their affinity for heathen nations. Their religion became contaminated, resulting in their alienation from God.

The ten-tribe kingdom was taken captive by Assyria about 150 years prior to 606 BC. Just as the ten tribes doted on the Assyrians and the Assyrians ended up taking them captive, so it was with the two-tribe kingdom and the Babylonians. The two tribes admired Babylon, and Babylon ended up taking them captive.

Since horses were the main part of the army back there, they became a symbol of putting trust in implements of warfare rather than in God.

Ezek. 23:22 Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side;

Ezek. 23:23 The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses.

Ezek. 23:24 And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments.

Ezek. 23:25 And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.

Ezek. 23:26 They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels.

Ezek. 23:27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more.

Ezek. 23:28 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated:

Verse 23 shows that the Babylonian army comprised a mixed company. The army would ruthlessly plunder and rip off clothing and jewels and take other spoils of war including metals from the Temple. Ears and noses were literally cut off so that the captive Israelites would get only the most menial of tasks (verse 25). And figuratively speaking, the nation was humiliated by its "nose" (the Temple) being cut off. Hence both individual and national humiliation occurred when Nebuchadnezzar came in 606 BC. Notice that Aholibah's former lovers would become her destroyers (verse 22).

Egypt

Let us consider Egypt from both the natural and the spiritual standpoint.

1. *Natural standpoint.* When the Israelites were in the Wilderness of Sinai for 40 years, the entire older generation except Joshua and Caleb died and hence did not enter the Promised Land because of disobedience and lack of faith. The younger ones, who were not liable to death, were pleasing to the Lord.

2. *Spiritual standpoint.* As Christians, we were formerly *in* the world and *of* the world, but when converted to Christ, we were born to a new life. However, we still carry in our bodies the seeds of the disease of Adam. Propensities of evil remain even though they are covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness. If we are careless in following the Lord, then characteristics and mannerisms manifested *before* consecration can again take over. If there is no battle, the old mind can overtake the new mind. That is the lesson here in Ezekiel 23: *not to adopt past habits.* When delivered through the Red Sea, the Israelites were very joyous to serve the Lord. "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do" was their attitude (Exod. 19:8). They made a bona fide commitment—they meant business—but shortly thereafter their disobedience surfaced and God had to punish them ten times.

When the Israelites entered the land, Joshua warned them that if they were not careful, the same thing would happen to them as had happened to their fathers in the Wilderness. The Israelites were agreeable and did many exemplary things. For example, as God had instructed, when the Israelites were encircling Jericho, not a person spoke for *seven days*—that was obedience! However, much pruning had occurred prior to this level of obedience. Nevertheless, both Moses and Joshua predicted that the people would subsequently deflect.

The point is that a Christian, to maintain his stand, must be very diligent. "Keep thy heart with *all diligence*; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). If one strays after consecration, the fault lies with the individual. We are in a *marathon* race.

While we are reading about the history of the people of God and their shortcomings, we should keep in mind that there were some exceptional characters such as Abraham.

Ezek. 23:29 And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare: and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Ezek. 23:30 I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone awhoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols.

Ezek. 23:31 Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thine hand.

Ezek. 23:32 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.

Ezek. 23:33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria.

Ezek. 23:34 Thou shalt even drink it and suck it out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 23:35 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Ezek. 23:36 The LORD said moreover unto me; Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations;

Ezek. 23:37 That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons, whom they

bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them.

Ezek. 23:38 Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths.

Ezek. 23:39 For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.

More information is supplied on Judah's deflection. Judah would be punished like the ten tribes but even more so because of *more responsibility*. The people "caused their [firstborn] sons ... to pass ... through the fire" in sacrifice to heathen idols. Moreover, they offered their children to Molech the *same day* they worshipped at the Temple. The sabbaths were profaned through heathen worship and commercial work.

Comment: Usually we think of Samaria as representing Papacy and Jerusalem (Judah) as picturing Protestantism.

Reply: Yes, because both Judah and Protestantism had more light. Jeremiah, who was the prophet not only *to* Judah but also *in* Judah, gave a scathing denunciation. Judah had spiritual pride, for the people thought they were better than the ten tribes. Judah had laughed at her "sister's" judgment and now she, in turn, would be laughed to scorn.

Aholibah would have to drink the same cup as her sister Aholah earlier. Papacy was somewhat judged when the pope was humiliated by Napoleon, but Protestantism has not yet been so judged. Its judgment will come in the great Time of Trouble. As verse 34 shows, the contents of the cup will be so dreadful and bitter that Protestantism will take the cup and smash it to "sherds" (pieces).

Ezek. 23:40 And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came: for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments,

Ezek. 23:41 And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.

Ezek. 23:42 And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads.

Ezek. 23:43 Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them?

Ezek. 23:44 Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.

Judah had illicit religious intercourse with nations that did not recognize God. "Sabeans from the wilderness" were even more outlandish.

A messenger was often sent to make a treaty with other nations. Usually Israel was under bondage to either Egypt or Assyria, and to gain relief from the bondage, she often compromised.

Ezek. 23:45 And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands.

Ezek. 23:46 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled.

Ezek. 23:47 And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire.

Ezek. 23:48 Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.

Ezek. 23:49 And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Since stoning was the penalty for adultery under the Law, the reference in verse 47 to stoning indicated the coming defeat and captivity were a judgment for Judah's adultery. The houses would be burned with fire to prevent any reoccurrence of the lewd practices.

Protestantism is in sad shape; deterioration is setting in. The systems and the people are responsible because of the light they were blessed with originally.

Comment: Warnings to Israel were numerous and repetitious. Since the Pastor's day, not many warnings have been given to the nominal systems. There has been a sleepy condition. Consequently, strong warnings will have to be given in the future.

Reply: A parallel exists between the mother and two daughters here in Chapter 23 and the mother and her harlot daughters in Revelation 17:5.

Ezek. 24:1 Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD come unto me, saying,

The time setting was the ninth year, tenth month, tenth day—close to the destruction of Jerusalem in 606 BC.

Ezek. 24:2 Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day.

Ezekiel was told to mark the day and record it in writing. Why? because that was the very day Nebuchadnezzar set the siege against Jerusalem. Since Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon, he would have no way of knowing about the event without the Lord's informing him. Hence this was miraculous information. By writing it down, Ezekiel would be recognized as a true prophet eventually. Verification of the date is given in 2 Kings 25:1 and Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4.

Ezek. 24:3 And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it:

Ezek. 24:4 Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones.

Ezek. 24:5 Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein.

Ezekiel was told to utter a parable, and in doing so, he had to ceremoniously set a pot over the fire. Water was poured into the pot and animals pieces were added to make a stew, as it were. Choice pieces such as the thigh and the shoulder were used: “every *good* piece,” “*choice* bones,” the “*choice* of the flock.” The contents were to “boil well” (furiously) so that the bones would “seethe.” Ezekiel actually enacted the parable but did not explain what he was doing. Meanwhile the people watched. At the climax he uttered the words the Lord had given him, and a moral lesson was obtained. The “pieces” and “bones” represented the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the “choice” ones being the principals or leaders of the city, so that all, down to the common people, were included in the symbolism.

Ezek. 24:6 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it! bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.

Ezek. 24:7 For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the top of a rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust;

Ezek. 24:8 That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance; I have set her blood upon the top of a rock, that it should not be covered.

Ezek. 24:9 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great.

Ezek. 24:10 Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones be burned.

Ezek. 24:11 Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed.

The blood of Jerusalem was set upon the top of a rock instead of being poured upon the ground and covered with dust. In fury and vengeance, the Lord would now do the same to Jerusalem (and Judah). What was the significance? Blood guilt was piling up and the Lord, in retribution, would return death and slaughter upon the city (upon its inhabitants and leaders). The “bloody city” was responsible for the death of innocent ones. Jesus expressed the same principle when he said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets” (Matt. 23:37).

Blood on the *rock* suggests not only that blood was spilled but that the violence was *brazenly* committed and that iniquities were done with great effrontery and with no shame attached. Verse 7 is a reference to the Law, which required that spilled blood be poured on the ground and covered over with dirt for sanitary reasons such as keeping away flies (Lev. 17:13). The “rock” suggests an altar. Hence the blood of the holy prophets was spilled as sacrificial lambs, as it were, because the people thought they were doing God a favor by executing the prophets who had condemned them. The *false* city viewed the *true* prophets as *false* prophets and executed them brazenly and openly with no shame. Whereas the blood guilt piled up cumulatively, the retribution would occur in a much shorter time.

Verses 9 and 10 pertain to the siege of Jerusalem. “Scum” (verses 6 and 11) would be the scum of society, those who conformed to animal or baser instincts, the criminal element. Just as a dead body figuratively pollutes those in contact with it, so this element contaminated those they associated with.

“Bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.” Water was put in the pot, and choice meat and bones were added. After the water boiled furiously, the pieces were extracted one by one. How would the casting of lots be out of place here? None of the inhabitants were to be spared—this was a picture of general extermination. The pieces were slaughtered indiscriminately with no favoritism being shown. Those who were taken out of the pot and/or managed to escape (Zedekiah, for example) were captured outside the city walls and dealt with.

Ezekiel 11:3,7,11 provides a little review. “I [God] will judge you in the border of Israel.” At Riblah lots were cast to see whether Nebuchadnezzar should have his army go to Ammon or to Jerusalem. The king desired the former, but the signs indicated Jerusalem. Therefore, he stayed behind with the princes and the notables while his general went to Jerusalem and captured it. The captives were brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, where he executed them. In addition, the escapees were caught near Jericho and taken to Riblah for judgment by the king. It was there that Zedekiah’s sons were slain (plus others who tried to escape) and the king’s eyes were put out. As far as we know, Zedekiah was the only one spared and taken to Babylon—he went to Babylon but did not see it (he was blind). Meanwhile, King Jehoiachin, already in Babylon, was honored in the 37th year of the captivity.

Ezek. 24:12 She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her: her scum shall be in the fire.

Combining verses 6, 11, and 12, we see that water remained in the pot when the pieces were extracted. Subsequently the water was emptied and the pot was put on the fire again to steam and get molten hot to vaporize any possible impurities left by the choice flesh.

The Ammonites and the Edomites and other peoples on the surrounding hills viewed the destruction of Jerusalem. From that vantage point, they could see over the city walls. It was as if God had put Jerusalem’s blood on a rock to be seen by her enemies. The Jews had brazenly slain innocent blood, and now the retribution was done openly to be an “eye for an eye” (Exod. 21:24).

Under the Law, if a container came in contact with death or leprosy, the following had to be done. Wood vessels were burned, consumed; clay containers were broken; metal ones were scoured. Here the pot was scoured in an extreme fashion—with white-hot heat.

Ezek. 24:13 In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.

Ezek. 24:14 I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord GOD.

In past punishments Israel was not purged, so now God would bring a *great* punishment that would accomplish the purging. Israel had not learned lessons, and the die was now

cast. In past punishments God, in His mercy, did not go to the utmost extreme. The Israelites were given opportunity to repent and reform, but they continued in disobedience. Now God's fury would "rest" (stay) on them until they perished.

Those who later returned from the 70 years' Babylonian captivity did not worship false gods. Hence the punishment was effective along certain lines. They were a people prepared for Messiah at his coming.

Ezek. 24:15 Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 24:16 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.

Ezek. 24:17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men.

Ezek. 24:18 So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

God told Ezekiel that his wife ("the desire of thine eyes") would die suddenly ("with a stroke") and that he was not to mourn or weep. Ezekiel was a priest, and he was to wear his priest's turban as if everything were normal. He was not to mourn or rub ashes into his hair. Neither was he to go barefoot or wear the traditional sackcloth of mourning. In other words, as the desire of Ezekiel's eyes would die, so would the desire of Judah die.

"Cover not thy lips." Lepers were required to put a cloth over the lip and cry "Unclean, unclean" to anyone approaching. In a period of mourning, the handling of a dead body made one unclean. Shortly after the burial, the individual was clean again.

"Eat not the bread of men." The Revised Standard has "eat not the bread of *mourners*." When the Israelites left Egypt, the unleavened bread they ate in haste was called "the bread of affliction" (Deut. 16:3). The point is that there was to be *no public display of mourning* by Ezekiel for his wife. (His mourning had to be done privately at night in his home.)

Notice the emphasis on morning, evening, morning. Ezekiel spoke to the people in the morning, his wife died in the evening, and he displayed no emotion the following morning. Instead of being distracted and postponing the parable about the pot when he was informed that his wife would die, he uttered the parable and enacted it. That night his wife died. In other words, he *obeyed* God and went ahead with his work instead of spending the last day with his wife. What strength of character! Ezekiel was faithful like Abraham. A *mature* Christian gets such a test—a crucial Abrahamic test, a supreme test.

Ezekiel displayed no visible grief. In a similar incident but with a character difference, Aaron and his two sons Eleazar and Ithamar were forbidden to mourn the death of the other two sons Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–7). Aaron and his two surviving sons were not to mourn because Nadab and Abihu had been *disobedient to God*. Lesson: If we *love* righteousness and *hate* iniquity, we will not mourn the death of those who *willfully* disobey God. No matter how dear the person was to us, if he or she sins the sin unto death or even commits a grievous sin, we are not to let down the standards of the faith by commiserating with such a one in connection with that deed. Of course if the sinner repents and follows

Scriptural procedures, that is another matter. When Nadab and Abihu were *suddenly* consumed, half of Aaron's family was instantly gone. Aaron's not mourning showed his *complete reverence* for God. Since God saw fit to execute such a judgment, Aaron was, as an example to others, *not to mourn*. The punishment upon the two iniquitous sons was *just*.

Under the Law, if a son's disobedience required stoning to death, the parents were not to mourn. Moreover, a high priest whose wife died during the Day of Atonement had to continue the service and not mourn.

In Ezekiel's case, there was no indication that his wife was unfaithful. Hence his not mourning was for a different reason; that is, it was to be a typical lesson or sign to the nation. The people knew that Ezekiel's wife had died, so when he did not mourn but behaved normally the next morning, they were rather shocked and asked why. Their question afforded Ezekiel an opportunity to present the lesson God had instructed him to give. Ezekiel's not mourning indicated the seriousness of the coming calamity. His actions signified that many people would be slain—so many that the dead would not be mourned. Death would become so common and rampant that the people would lose their sensitivity. In other words, a person's own suffering can numb him to the suffering of others. Although God had married the nation of Israel and loved the people dearly, He had to punish them, and He showed no emotion.

Ezek. 24:19 And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?

Ezek. 24:20 Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 24:21 Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.

Ezek. 24:22 And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men.

Ezek. 24:23 And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another.

Ezek. 24:24 Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel could grieve *inwardly* but not *outwardly*. In neither his clothing nor his behavior was he to display grief. "Tires" (verse 23) were very decorative turbans or bandannas that the men took pride in wearing.

As regards the people, Ezekiel's not mourning was a "sign." He was saying that a time would come when they would be inured to emotion because of frequent and widespread death. They would be drained and like zombies when the city was besieged. The "desire of your eyes" (their sons and daughters) would be killed. Some even ate their own children. In other words, Ezekiel's experience would be the people's experience in the 606 BC destruction.

Notice that in verse 24 Ezekiel was called by name instead of “son of man.” Except for the third verse of the book (1:3), which was not a direct address, this is the only time in the entire book that his name was used.

Ezek. 24:25 Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters,

Ezek. 24:26 That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?

Ezek. 24:27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb: and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Some Israelites were already in captivity with Ezekiel, for the ten tribes had been taken captive about 150 years earlier and subsequently others were taken from the two tribes in the Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin captivities. Among the captives were Daniel, the three Hebrews, Ezekiel, and Jehoiachin. When captives of the two tribes were taken, many family members were left behind.

An escapee from Judah got to Babylon with the news that Jerusalem had been captured. The siege began in the tenth month of the ninth year and lasted until the 11th year; that is, it was more than a year before Jerusalem was destroyed. When the destruction occurred, one individual escaped and ran to Babylon with the news. The journey took some time, but when the escapee got to Babylon and gave the message, Ezekiel’s dumbness was removed.

In antitype what is the significance of the death of Ezekiel’s wife? What is the significance of the removal of Ezekiel’s dumbness? These are two separate pictures.

Antitype of Wife’s Death

Ezekiel’s wife (picturing the Church) died prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (Christendom). In fact, her death occurred when the siege of the city began. In other words, the type shows that the Church (the feet members) will be taken away *before* the fall of mystic Babylon. The hour of power will occur because of the threatening condition seen to be developing, and the feet members will go off the earthly scene at the *midpoint* (at the *half* hour) of the hour of power. In this picture Ezekiel represents the risen Lord.

Antitype of Ezekiel’s Dumbness Being Removed

In the John the Baptist picture, which is a parallel type, the dumbness of Zacharias was removed when John was born. The sequence represents that when the Church is complete, Israel’s blindness will be removed. “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ... that blindness in part is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*” (Rom. 11:25). Here, too, the removal of Ezekiel’s dumbness represents Israel’s blindness being taken away. When Babylon falls, the Great Company class will be rescued, as Lot was, to receive enlightenment and give a message to Israel. This experience of the Great Company will take place between the fall of Babylon and the removal of Israel’s blindness. Initially, after Babylon falls, the Great Company will be sorrowful that they failed to win the prize. Later they will be strengthened and get Elijah’s mantle to give a message to Israel. The Great Company will be enlightened that the door to the high calling is shut, that the Elijah class is gone, that Babylon has fallen, and that they are to give a message to Israel,

which will enlighten the Holy Remnant. All of these events will happen in a relatively short period of time—a little over a year in the type (compare Ezekiel 24:1 and 26:1).

The instruction given to Ezekiel to utter the parable about the boiling pot, his being told he would lose his wife, his wife's dying, and his not mourning for her death all occurred in a 48-hour period. However, his dumbness was not removed until Jerusalem had actually been destroyed and a runner got all the way to Babylon with the news—a distance that required at least a month's travel. "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten" (Ezek. 33:21).

9th year, 10th month, 10th day = siege of Jerusalem began

12th year, 10th month, 5th day = escapee reached Ezekiel with news of Jerusalem's fall

Difference: 3 years minus 5 days

In antitype the escapee represents the Great Company, who will declare a message that results in the awakening of the Holy Remnant. No unclean Jews will survive Jacob's Trouble. All of the survivors will be handpicked.

The Great Company have to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb before they give a message to Israel. When they are forced out of Babylon, they will ask, "Where do we stand? Are we even Christians?" They will have to review their life and their thinking. Various Scriptures will encourage them that even though they lost out on the chief prize, they will be blessed to come to the marriage supper (Rev. 19:7–9). They will yet rejoice and give a witness to Israel (Hab. 3:18).

Ezekiel's wife (the Church) died in the *evening*, the time of day that pertains to the marriage and ties in with the updated interpretation of the Wise and Foolish Virgin Parable. "Behold the *bridegroom*" is the cry at *midnight* (the evening), and those who are ready (the feet members) will go in to the marriage. The five wise virgins hear the cry at the *very end* of the age—a future event. In another picture, Isaac saw Rebekah coming at "*eventide*," at which time she alighted off her camel (Gen. 24:63–67).

Note: The following additional information was presented a week later. Again it should be stated that in the antitype there are two separate pictures, and they must be kept separate.

Antitype of Wife's Death and the Destruction of Jerusalem

Verses 1–14: Ezekiel was told to prophesy that Jerusalem was like a pot with scum that the Lord would have to deal with drastically. The fire would be very hot.

Verses 15–18: Ezekiel was also told that his wife would die and that he was not to mourn or display his feelings. Hence, as instructed, he prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem during the day, knowing his wife would die that evening. The next day he had to explain to the people why he was not mourning outwardly.

In antitype Jerusalem is to be destroyed and the filth burned out of it. Natural and spiritual applications follow.

1. *Natural picture:* Literal Jerusalem will be captured by Gog and Magog at the end of the age, and half of the people will be taken into exile before God fights for them. In the experience

the Jews will be purged, and only a small handpicked remnant will survive.

2. *Spiritual picture*: Jerusalem represents Christendom, the professed people of God. Ezekiel's wife, picturing the Church, will die before Christendom's fall—and before Jacob's Trouble. The escapee from the destruction of Jerusalem went to Ezekiel in exile and declared that the city had been destroyed (a little *time* would have elapsed). When the escapee got to Ezekiel, the prophet's dumbness was removed.

Antitype of Ezekiel's Silence (Dumbness) Being Broken

1. *Spiritual picture*: During the half hour of silence (Rev. 8:1), all the host of heaven will be present at the marriage ceremony. Hence the Great Company class remaining down here will be temporarily cut off from communication through prayer. The end of the marriage ceremony will coincide with the end of the half hour of silence, that is, the end of the hour of power. The Christ will then deal with the Great Company and finally with Israel. "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer [The Christ], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26).

There are four "actors": Ezekiel, his wife, the fall of Jerusalem, and the escapee. When the nominal religious systems are destroyed, the Great Company will escape; that is, they will be providentially rescued so that they can wash their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Hence the escapee represents the Great Company. That portion of the Great Company who escape out of Babylon will experience confusion, terror, disappointment, and anxiety for a time, but then communication will come to them from The Christ. A message from heaven will inform them that even to attend the marriage *supper* is a blessing. Accordingly, they will rejoice and be glad following their disappointment. The revelation, the communication, will come to the escaped class, breaking the silence of The Christ, pictured by Ezekiel. The death of Ezekiel's wife (a woman) represents the completion (dying) of the Church. Ezekiel (a man) pictures The Christ.

2. *Natural picture*: The escapee of literal Jerusalem represents the Holy Remnant. Ezekiel's mouth being opened to the Holy Remnant suggests that *after* they survive Jacob's Trouble, they will understand the message given *previously* by Ezekiel (the feet members). The blindness will then be removed.

Ezek. 25:1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezek. 25:2 Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them;

Ezek. 25:3 And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity;

Ezek. 25:4 Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk.

Ezek. 25:5 And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 25:6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of

Israel;

Ezek. 25:7 Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Verses 1–7 were directed against Ammon. Rabbah was the capital of Ammon. Ezekiel was told to prophesy about the attitudes of the Ammonites when they would watch, from surrounding hills, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. (The future was spoken of as the past.) The Ammonites would gloat and regard Israel's troubles as entertainment, being gleeful and happy over the humiliation. They would clap their hands, stamp their feet, and rejoice over Israel's destruction and especially over the destruction of the Temple. Verse 3 in the Revised Standard says, "Because you said, 'Aha!' over my *sanctuary*." How great was the hatred for the Jew!

After Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 606 BC, he took the other fork in the road and defeated the Ammonites. His original intention was to go to Ammon first and then to Jerusalem, but examining animal entrails, etc., convinced him to reverse the order.

The term "men of the east" (verse 4) refers to the Babylonian army. The Chaldeans were especially dominant as a people in Babylon. "They [the Babylonians] shall set their palaces in thee [in Ammon]." Hence Ammon would be garrisoned and under control of the Babylonian Empire.

In uttering the prophecy, Ezekiel turned his face toward Ammon; that is, he faced slightly left of the direction the Israelites turned when they prayed toward Jerusalem (verse 2). Because of the Ammonites' wrong attitude in regard to Judah, they would, in turn, be the object of God's wrath.

"I will make ... the Ammonites a couching place for flocks" (verse 5). In other words, the cities would be leveled and those who subsequently lived there would have to be shepherds. Verse 7 indicates the Ammonites would be reduced to their original humble state.

Ezek. 25:8 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen;

Ezek. 25:9 Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,

Ezek. 25:10 Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations.

Ezek. 25:11 And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Next Ezekiel gave a prophecy against Moab. (Ammon and Moab were brothers originally, being the children of Lot and his daughters.) While first the northern ten-tribe kingdom (Israel) and then the two-tribe kingdom (Judah) experienced defeat, God also foretold the destruction of surrounding heathen peoples (Ammon, Moab, and Philistia). All would be taken captive and join the Israelites already in Babylon. (From north to south in what is

modern-day Jordan, the sequence was Ammon, Moab, and Edom.)

Ezek. 25:12 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;

Ezek. 25:13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.

Ezek. 25:14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 12–14 comprise a prophecy against Edom. Babylon would be the instrument of punishment for Ammon, Moab, and the Philistines, but Israel would punish Edom (after the return from Babylonian captivity in 536 BC). Incidentally, there was another Teman and another Dedan besides the ones in Edom.

Ezek. 25:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred;

Ezek. 25:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast.

Ezek. 25:17 And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Lastly, Ezekiel prophesied against the Philistines, another traditional enemy of Israel. “*Great vengeance*” and “*furious rebukes*” would be executed on them. Later on in the Book of Ezekiel, a judgment was again prophesied against the Philistines, but that judgment is still future, to take place about the time of Jacob’s Trouble.

Today Philistia is the Gaza Strip, and Tyre and Sidon are in Lebanon. The Arabs will be dealt with in the future. Psalm 108:9 lists three traditional enemies in a prophecy to be fulfilled in the Kingdom: “Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.” Israel will not entirely occupy these lands, for some respect will be given to these peoples territory-wise. Of the 2 1/2 tribes east of Jordan, one tribe occupied the northern half of Moab. Hence the southern half, immediately adjoining Edom, will not be taken by Israel. Ammon, Syria (but a little more restricted), Egypt, and other nations will retain their identity in the Kingdom.

It is interesting that in the days of Shem, the builder of the Great Pyramid, God dealt favorably with the Philistines, yet his territory was disparagingly called Philistia. The Philistines were involved with Samson in the Period of the Judges, and David challenged Goliath, a Philistine, in the Period of the Kings.

Ezek. 26:1 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 26:2 Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is

broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste:

Ezek. 26:3 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.

Ezek. 26:4 And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.

Ezek. 26:5 It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations.

Ezek. 26:6 And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

This chapter is a prophecy against Tyre (Tyrus), a significant maritime city back there that was situated north of Israel on the Mediterranean Sea where Lebanon is today. The prophecy was fulfilled in a remarkable way by Alexander the Great and also earlier when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Tyrus on the mainland. In other words, Tyre was destroyed twice: (1) Nebuchadnezzar executed judgment to the city on the *mainland*. (2) Alexander the Great later destroyed the *reconstructed* Tyre out on a small *island*. He cleverly captured the city by scraping or bulldozing, as it were, masonry and rubble from the ruins of the first Tyre to use as fill to build a causeway out to the island for his army (verse 4). God said, "I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock."

Protected by water and boats, the inhabitants of Tyre had been very confident of their secure position. The reconstruction of the city of Tyre corresponds to the rising again of Papacy in the hour of power in the near future (Rev. 17:12).

The time setting is the 11th year, first day of the month, of Jehoiachin's captivity—that is, 606 BC, the same year that Zedekiah was dethroned and Jerusalem was destroyed. (The account does not state which month, but probably it was the first.) The siege had been in progress around Jerusalem since the ninth year (almost 1 1/2 years). Although Tyre would not be destroyed for some time, the destruction was described as a *past* event. Alexander the Great's destruction of Tyre would occur long after Ezekiel's decease. The same principle was used with regard to Elijah's prophecy about Jehu. Jehu was given the message after Elijah's translation, and then following the slaying of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel, Jehu said, "This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah" (2 Kings 9:36).

The "gates of the people" (verse 2) were the gates of Solomon's Temple. As the religious center of the nation, Jerusalem was a symbol of Israel. Hence the destruction of Jerusalem was the destruction of the nation. Moreover, Tyre was replenished with the destruction of Jerusalem in that it got additional revenue.

Jerusalem was inland, off the trade route, and protected by terrain, whereas Tyre, a trading city and the center of sea trade routes, was known for its harbor. In other words, Tyre became a maritime city because of its location.

In this type, Jerusalem pictures the true Church and Tyre the false Church. (Rome, the capital of Papacy; Tyrus; and Babylon all represent Papacy.) In its early history Papacy tried to get rid of the Jews—to wean them from Jerusalem to Rome. Likewise, true Christians were bitterly persecuted by Papacy. Just as Tyrus said "Aha" and gloated over the destruction of

Jerusalem, so Papacy rejoiced over the persecution and death of true Christians, particularly during the Holy(?) Inquisition.

Verse 3 is saying that Tyre was near the sea: “as the sea causeth his waves to come up.” Verse 5 describes the menial lot of the former great city following its destruction: “It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.”

Verse 6, which was not fulfilled in the type, emphasizes the destruction of the Protestant denominations. “And *her daughters* which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the LORD.” A completely prophetic verse, the symbolism is as follows. The “field” is the *nominal Christian world* (Luke 17:31,36). The “sword” is the sword of truth and enlightenment. The people will see that Protestantism is similar to Papacy.

Ezek. 26:7 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.

Ezek. 26:8 He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field: and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee.

Ezek. 26:9 And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers.

Ezek. 26:10 By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach.

Ezek. 26:11 With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground.

Ezek. 26:12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.

Ezek. 26:13 And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard.

Ezek. 26:14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 7–14 are a prophecy of the destruction by King Nebuchadnezzar of the first Tyre, when the city was on the mainland. Verse 13 sounds like Revelation 18:22,23 in regard to the destruction of Papacy, mystic Babylon. Revelation 16:12 mentions the Euphrates River in connection with the city of Babylon, and Tyre was situated on the waters of the sea. The noise of Tyre’s songs would cease; the sound of harps would no longer be heard.

What a dramatic prophecy! When King Nebuchadnezzar’s army inundated Tyre, the noise of the chariot wheels could be heard, causing the inhabitants to be tremendously fearful. A wild melee of confusion—bedlam—resulted. In antitype the people of mystic Babylon will view the anarchistic mobs similarly, with great fear, realizing the confusion means death to the system. The tares will be burned up (Matt. 13:30). Just as Nebuchadnezzar, a king of

kings, used his army, so Christ, as King of kings, will use the Lord's great army (Joel 2:11).

Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen king, came from the *north* to destroy Tyre. Cyrus, a heathen king, came from the *east*, to destroy Babylon. There is a difference in the antitype. The attack from the *north* on mystic Babylon will come from anarchistic mobs and communists. In the attack from the *east* against mystic Babylon, Jesus and the Church will do the destroying (Rev. 16:12). In other words, the *same* destruction on the *same* system is viewed from two *different* standpoints, both bringing divine judgment: (1) anarchistic mobs on the earth and (2) Jesus and the Church from heaven. The "much people" (verse 7) indicates that the force to destroy mystic Babylon will be varied (labor, anarchists, etc.).

The Book of Revelation shows mystic Babylon's *fall from favor* as well as the *actual destruction*. Revelation 18:2 treats the fall from favor: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Revelation 18:21 treats the destruction: "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." The beast will go down into the abyss, into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Following that event, there will never again be a religious deception. (It is the dragon that will be chained during the Kingdom and loosed at the end of the thousand years.)

Note: Elsewhere Tyre is a picture of Satan, but here Tyre represents the *nominal religious empire*.

Ezek. 26:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?

Ezek. 26:16 Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee.

Ezek. 26:17 And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it!

Ezek. 26:18 Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.

Ezek. 26:19 For thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee;

Ezek. 26:20 When I shall bring thee down with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living;

Ezek. 26:21 I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord GOD.

Just as with Jeremiah Chapters 50 and 51 certain details were not fulfilled in the *literal* destruction of Babylon, so it was with the destruction of Tyre. The unfulfilled details are clues that there is an antitype with Papacy. Natural and spiritual Tyre were discussed together, and so were natural and spiritual Babylon. The literal cities of Tyre and Babylon are both in *ruins* today.

God said, "I shall bring up the deep upon thee." Water, the resource of Tyre, made her a great maritime power, but ironically, the very resource that made her great caused her downfall and destruction. The same was true of the river Euphrates and literal Babylon, and the same will be true in the antitype. The "waters" (peoples) will turn against Papacy, an international system. The harlot, that great city Babylon, the "mother of harlots," sits upon the waters, but the waters (her support) will dry up (Rev. 16:12,19; 17:1,5). Both typically and antotypically, the "waters" that are the protection will become an avenue of destruction. What happens to the nominal religious systems will portend the destruction of the merchants (the "kings of the earth"); there will be lamentation (Rev. 18:9,10). "And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her [mystic Babylon, Papacy], shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." As in the French Revolution, the merchants and kings (civil rulers and leaders) will try to disguise themselves and their background, but they will not be able to lose their identity (Zech. 13:4,5). In antitype the "isles" of verse 15 are those associated with Papacy who do commerce with the system.

In this type the king of Babylon was the instrument of destruction of Tyre (Papacy). Hence the king of Babylon represents ungodly forces that *do the destroying work*. In other words, in Scripture and depending on context, Babylon sometimes represents *Christendom* and sometimes that which *destroys Christendom*. If Babylon represents the destroying force, then Christendom is pictured by another city, which in this case is Tyre. The distinction shows the *care* that must be taken in understanding types. We should not be too hasty in our interpretations.

Comment: Jeremiah 25 has been used to try to prove that Babylon will be destroyed *after* Jacob's Trouble. The king of Sheshach will drink the cup last (Jer. 25:26). But there, as here in this chapter, Babylon represents the *ungodly destroying* forces. Jeremiah 25 and Ezekiel 26 are good companion chapters for having two witnesses. In these chapters Babylon pictures a communistic atheistic element described as Gog in Ezekiel and the Assyrian in Isaiah.

The "pit" of verse 20 is comparable to the "lake of fire" in Revelation 19:20; 20:10—both picturing complete, permanent destruction. The papal beast is rising out of the bottomless pit only to go into destruction again.

God said, "I shall set glory in the land of the living" (verse 20); that is, Jehovah will set glory in the New Jerusalem, the new heavens (Rev. 21:2; 2 Pet. 3:13). Papacy will be utterly destroyed, and in its stead will be the glory of the Kingdom.

"I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: ... thou [shalt] never be found again, saith the Lord GOD." Although the nominal religious systems will never come into

existence again, their memory will never be completely expunged. Their destruction will forever be an object lesson.

Ezek. 27:1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezek. 27:2 Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus;

Like Chapter 26, this chapter is a prophecy of the destruction of the city of Tyre (or that power or government) because of past actions, particularly their attitude toward Israel in the 606 BC captivity. Ezekiel 27:1–25 is a word picture of the tremendous wealth of both Tyre and the papal system.

Ezek. 27:3 And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty.

A maritime power, Tyre was strategically located “at the entry of the sea”; i.e., it was a good harbor on the Mediterranean coast. Since the Mediterranean Sea is very stormy at times, harbors must be large and adequate. Not many harbors were of that caliber; Haifa and Tyre were two.

Notice Tyre’s high-mindedness and vanity: “I am of perfect beauty.” In other words, “I will not age; I am indestructible.” The parallel is Papacy’s high-mindedness: “I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow” (Rev. 18:7).

Ezek. 27:4 Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty.

Ezek. 27:5 They have made all thy ship boards of fir trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee.

Ezek. 27:6 Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim.

Chapter 27 pertains to ships and the construction of ships. Beautification of the city of Tyre depended upon importing or procuring from neighboring and distant places the necessary materials.

In the spiritual picture, Tyre represents Papacy, the leading power in Christendom and Satan’s masterpiece of deception and counterfeiting. Proof of this representation is as follows: Tyre (1) had a boastful attitude, (2) derived its revenues from the seas (waters/peoples), and (3) was an international city with goods coming from all nations. Babylon and the river Euphrates in Revelation Chapter 16 correspond to Tyre and the seas. Both cities were situated on the waters (peoples), having control and acquiring wealth thereby.

“Senir” is Mount Hermon. The cedars of Lebanon, noted for their stature, were used for ship masts. Tyre was world-renowned for its ships. Chapter 27 tells the origin of the various raw materials needed to construct the ships. Incidentally, the residents of Tyre were sometimes called Phoenicians depending on the period of history.

“Bashan” was across the Jordan River to the north. The “isles of Chittim” were in the Mediterranean Sea, not too far away. Tyre was like the capital of a mariner people. The

“Ashurites” may be the Assyrians.

The description in verses 4–6 is a little clearer in the Revised Standard Version: “Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders made perfect your beauty. They made all your planks of fir trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of oaks of Bashan they made your oars; they made your deck of pines from the coasts of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory.” The materials and craftsmen came from many locations; hence Tyre was an *international* power.

Ezek. 27:7 Fine linen with brodered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee.

The “isles of Elishah” were also in the Mediterranean Sea. Fine linen came from Egypt. Ships were the primary means of transportation to obtain the various materials.

Ezek. 27:8 The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots.

Zidon (Sidon) was close to Tyre—they occupied the same area. Tyre afforded employment to neighboring peoples. Zidon and Arvad provided mariners; that is, they were the crew. But those who *steered and guided* the ships and *made decisions* were from Tyre itself. The correspondency to Papacy is remarkable, for orders come from *Rome*, the centralized authority, and decisions are made in *Rome*, whereas cardinals, priests, etc., are scattered around the world.

Ezek. 27:9 The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.

The Book of Genesis gives the origin, the progenitors, of some of the peoples listed in verses 9–15. However, we should keep in mind that Ezekiel, in speaking of these various parties, was talking of *contemporaneous* peoples. And we should not confuse Ezekiel 27 with Ezekiel 38 and 39. The latter are *prophecies* of conditions *thousands of years hence*. Some of the nations referred to in Ezekiel 38 and 39 were not in existence at the time Ezekiel wrote. In speaking of things *way future*, Ezekiel was limited to using the peoples of *his time*.

The antitypical caulkers are those theologians who help the pope to rebut so-called heresies.

These verses paint a picture of a great power. Just as the wealth of the nations was brought to Tyre, so the Papacy has been given great gifts of art, buildings, jewels, etc.

Ezek. 27:10 They of Persia and of Lud and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness.

Ezek. 27:11 The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect.

Ezek. 27:12 Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.

“Persia” is Iran. The Lud and Phut of verse 10 were in Turkey (as opposed to the Lud and

Phut in Africa). Tyre had those who lived closer to the city provide fortifications (Lud, Persia, Phut, and Arvad). This way Tyre could be sure there were no traitors. In antitype Papacy has Swiss Guards (especially an elite guard for the pope) to protect it.

The term “Gammadims” is used only once in Scripture and its meaning is uncertain. *Young’s Concordance* defines the term as meaning pygmies, warriors, giants, etc., but the definitions are just a guess.

How well built this ship was! Tyre’s very wise ambassadors and pilots correspond to St. Jerome, Ignatius, and others of Papacy. By reason of its riches, Papacy has attracted great minds.

“Tarshish” is Spain in this context. Tyre traded all around the Mediterranean basin, and Spain was known for its mineral wealth.

Next are listed Tyre’s mineral wealth and implements of war, which indicate a league with civil power. Like Tyre, Papacy is only a tiny state but very wealthy, powerful, and strategically located.

All of these places existed in the days of the prophet, and each was noted for particular goods. It is not important to look for an antitype here. The narrative is simply showing a worldwide maritime power that corresponds to the universal Roman Catholic Church.

Ezek. 27:13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

In this context “Javan” is probably Greece, and “Tubal” is in eastern Turkey, north of Mount Ararat. Hence Tyre dealt commercially with peoples on the Black Sea too, going through the Dardanelles.

“They traded the persons of men.” Slave traffic was carried on. In fact, there were far more white slaves down through history than black ones. Greeks and Jews were made slaves, for example. Spiritually speaking, trading with “the persons of men” corresponds to Revelation 18:13, for the Babylonish whore, the Roman Catholic Church, has made merchandise of the souls of men.

Ezek. 27:14 They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses and horsemen and mules.

“Togarmah” was in Russia near Mount Ararat, in Armenian territory.

Ezek. 27:15 The men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony.

“Dedan” was probably in Africa rather than in India. Almost all of the forces that went down against Israel during her history as a nation are mentioned in this chapter.

As Tyre (Papacy) got richer, those who traded with her also gained in wealth.

Ezek. 27:16 Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine

linen, and coral, and agate.

Ezek. 27:17 Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

Ezek. 27:18 Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool.

Damascus was north of Israel (presently in Syria). For these land routes, camels were used. Damascus is considered by some to be the oldest city; others think Jericho is the oldest. Helbon was near Damascus.

The King's Highway went from Egypt through Sinai and north on the other side of the Jordan River all the way up to Damascus; that is, a main highway went from Egypt to Damascus. The other route, or highway, went from Egypt to Damascus by following the coast up through Gaza and Israel.

Wheat, honey, oil, and balm were traded by Israel, the "land flowing with milk and honey" (Exod. 33:3). Papacy adopted the "wares" of Judaism: robes, candlesticks, incense, prayers, coals of fire, etc.

Ezek. 27:19 Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market.

This "Dan" was not the tribe of Dan, and this "Javan" was different from the Javan of verse 13.

Ezek. 27:20 Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.

This "Dedan" was different from the one in verse 15.

Ezek. 27:21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they thy merchants.

Bedouin were in the tents of Kedar.

Ezek. 27:22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold.

The Sabeans came from this "Sheba," and Raamah was related to Sheba.

Ezek. 27:23 Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, were thy merchants.

Ezek. 27:24 These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and broided work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise.

Ezek. 27:25 The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market: and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Again "Tarshish" was Spain. With its mercantile fleet, Spain controlled the Straits of Gibraltar at that time.

Antitype: The Roman Catholic Church has been doing *worldwide* commerce. Businesses, craftsmen, cathedrals, robes, incense, etc., are all part of a universal religious empire with *natural* dealings that have resulted in the prosperity of many people. Revelation 18:11–16 shows that when the system goes down, the kings and merchants who benefited financially from the Roman Catholic Church will mourn.

Ezek. 27:26 Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

Verse 26 is prophetic; it begins to paint a picture of doom. In the type the “wind” coming from the east brought destruction to Tyre twice, once at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and once by Alexander the Great of Greece. Babylon was to the east, and Alexander approached from the east.

The “rowers” brought Tyre into stormy waters. The undertow can drag a swimmer out to sea or hold him under water until he cannot reach shore. Accordingly, the multitude of merchants and wealth caused Tyre to be out of control. The rowers overextended themselves in quest of greater commerce.

In antitype the “east wind” is the “kings of the east,” that is, the glorified Church, who will divert the waters from mystic Babylon (Rev. 16:12). The direction “east” is used because the Tabernacle was entered from the east. In Ezekiel’s Temple, no one will be able to enter the east gate—it will be locked to show that the Church is complete. The people will enter the Temple through the north and south gates.

Ezek. 27:27 Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.

Ezek. 27:28 The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots.

Ezek. 27:29 And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land;

Ezek. 27:30 And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes:

Ezek. 27:31 And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing.

Ezek. 27:32 And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?

Verses 30–32 prophetically describe the wailing and mourning that took place when the city of Tyre was destroyed. The antitype will be similar.

In regard to the fall of literal Babylon, Cyrus and his army entered the city through the dry bed of the river that had been the source of revenue, protection, and commerce. Thus the very river that had enriched Babylon was the means of its downfall. The principle was the same with Tyre. Moral deterioration occurred because of affluence; riches corrupted the

system.

When mystic Babylon (Papacy) falls, the people will desert the system. The desertion is shown by the continued symbolism of ships. All of the rowers and pilots on the ships deserted their posts. Those on board came up on deck and raced for land as fast as possible.

The “suburbs” of verse 28 are the Protestant churches and others related to the nominal religious systems. Waves and ripples (repercussions) will extend out to the suburbs. In reality the “cry” is the cry of doom.

Ezek. 27:33 When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.

As the fall of literal Tyre adversely affected many from an economic standpoint, so it will be with the fall of Papacy.

Ezek. 27:34 In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall.

Ezek. 27:35 All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance.

Ezek. 27:36 The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more.

Tyre “never shalt be any more.” Likewise, Papacy will go down like a millstone never to rise again (Rev. 18:21). By a comparison with its days of former glory, the Tyre of today is nothing; its power and opulence are gone.

“Their kings” will not just mourn—they will be “sore afraid.” Moreover, “they shall be troubled in their countenance.” The wording indicates the picture is changing to the antitype. Not only will riches be endangered, but more than that, the “kings” class associated with Papacy will realize their destruction is next. After the religious systems fall, the civil governments will go down.

“The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee.” The very merchants who were employed by the Roman Catholic Church will turn and “hiss” at it. The lamentation will turn to bitterness.

The international system will go down, taking all the wealth and employment with it: corporations, real estate, builders, etc. Verse 34 is a reminder of Samson. The Temple of Dagon was supported by two pillars, picturing the two divisions of the religious world: Papacy and Protestantism. When Samson pulled down the two pillars, the house collapsed. When Roman Catholicism and her daughters go down, all of Christendom will fall.

Ezek. 28:1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezek. 28:2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:

The “*prince of Tyrus*” is Papacy, the man of sin, and not Satan for the following reasons:

1. The nations will destroy the “prince” (verses 7 and 9).
2. The “prince” is described as a “man” (verse 2).
3. The “prince” sits in the seat of God (compare 2 Thess. 2:4).
4. Papacy is Satan’s “seat” (Rev. 2:13).

This verse sounds like Isaiah 14:13,14, which does refer to Satan. What is the distinction? Ezekiel 28 is showing that the spirit of Papacy is the *spirit of Satan* himself; his spirit is reflected *in his system*. Satan and Papacy have the same ambitions.

The prince of Tyrus sits “in the midst of the seas.” Revelation 17:1 states that the “great whore” sits on “many waters.” In both instances, the “waters” refer to peoples.

In the Book of Ezekiel, Papacy is represented as the city of Tyre and the prince of Tyre. In the Book of Revelation, Papacy is addressed as a woman, a beast, and the city of Babylon.

Ezek. 28:3 Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee:

What sarcasm! Papacy has an international, a worldwide, spy network with representatives throughout the so-called Christian world. Papacy is not wiser than Daniel in the *true* wisdom. The United States restored diplomatic relations with the Vatican in the 1980s. One reason for the restoration was to obtain information that even our CIA does not have access to.

“There is no secret that they can hide from thee [Papacy].” Just as Daniel, the number two person in the Babylonian Empire, the interpreter of dreams, was wiser than the other wise men and no secret troubled him, so Papacy, the international underground system, has “no secret” because of its many informers (Dan. 4:9).

Ezek. 28:4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:

Ezek. 28:5 By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:

Tyre, a seaport city, had a mercantile fleet that brought riches. Papacy, too, has great riches. Just as it is with a human being who acquires great wealth, so it is with the papal system. With the riches comes a feeling of power, influence, and pride. Examples of Papacy’s “treasures” are manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, icons, architecture, and jewels. Many have donated personal fortunes to the system, adding to its wealth. Although the Vatican has little ground, its *power is enormous*.

Ezek. 28:6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;

This verse sounds like Satan, who aspired to mount the sides of the north so he could be like God (Isa. 14:13,14). The characteristics of Satan can be seen in the papal system.

Ezek. 28:7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile

thy brightness.

Ezek. 28:8 They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.

In the near future, following the hour of power, God will bring “the terrible of the nations” against Papacy, that is, a communistic, atheistic element. This reference to the Babylonians in the past with literal Tyre is a reference in the future to a non-Christian, foreign element.

The destruction will be literal; the Vatican will be sacked and destroyed just before Jacob’s Trouble. God will then put hooks in the jaws of Gog, turning the forces back from destroying Europe to go down against Israel (Ezek. 38:4). In other words, Russia will invade Europe and despoil the Vatican. Then, through certain circumstances, the attention of Gog will be turned backward to Israel.

Ezek. 28:9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee.

The pope claims to represent God. When the pope is slain and the Vatican is completely destroyed, as well as other churches, it will appear as if God has failed in protecting His (supposed) representative Church.

Ezek. 28:10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

The term “death of the uncircumcized” means the system will end in an unforgiven condition of disgrace and humiliation; it will not be given a decent burial, as it were. Papacy’s mortality will be very apparent. For example, when Jezebel died, dogs ate her so that there was no identifiable place for her remains (2 Kings 9:10,30–37). Death, or the “pit,” is where the entire system will end up (Rev. 17:8).

Ezek. 28:11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 28:12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Note the distinction between “king” and “prince” (verse 2). The “king” of Tyrus is Satan, whereas the “prince” of Tyrus is Papacy, Satan’s masterpiece.

For the sake of comparison, the following parallel texts in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are set forth. Note: Some of the Ezekiel citations refer to Satan and some to his system, the Papacy.

Ezekiel 28

“I am a God” (verse 2).

“I sit in the seat of God” (verse 2).

“Thou art a man” (verses 2 and 9).

“They shall bring thee down to the pit” (verse 8).

Isaiah 14

“I will be like the most High” (verse 14).

“I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north” (verse 13).

“Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?” (verse 16).

“Thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (verse 15).

“Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom,
and perfect in beauty” (verse 12).

“I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee
before kings, that they may behold thee”
(verse 17).

“O Lucifer [shining one, bright morning
star], son of the morning!” (verse 12).

“How art thou cut down to the ground! ...
They that see thee shall narrowly look
upon thee” (verses 12 and 16).

When originally created, Lucifer was a glorious spirit being, beautiful to behold and perfect. As an archangel, one of the two morning stars, he was “full of wisdom,” that is, wily and very wise. “*Thou sealest up the sum ... of wisdom, and ... beauty.*” In other words, as expressed in the superlative, when Lucifer was created, he was not just perfect but he had beauty and wisdom *in abundance*.

Ezek. 28:13 **Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.**

“Eden the garden of God” is heaven. Just as Adam was created a beautiful, perfect human being in a paradise spot here on earth, so on a larger scale, Lucifer was created a glorious spirit being in the great heavens. Stated another way, there was a spiritual Eden in heaven as well as a physical Eden here on earth. Both Lucifer and Adam were *created perfect and subsequently sinned and fell*.

We do not have a description of the Logos and his surroundings, but they would have been like those here in Chapter 28. The two archangels, the two morning stars, roamed the heavens. The Logos (Michael) was similarly distinguished, although he occupied a more important but less understood role.

“Lucifer,” meaning “bright shining star,” was Satan’s title when he was created, that is, before his fall (Isa. 14:12). As a morning star, he was a “light” of knowledge and beauty. Being superior to the other angels, he enjoyed privileges as an archangel. His only rival was the Logos, the firstborn, who was God’s spokesperson.

“Every precious stone was thy covering.” There were ten precious stones in all, “ten” being a picture of completion. Ornamentation and beauty and various perfections and personality traits are represented by the stones. Lucifer had them in abundance.

Q: Is there a further distinction when the figurative language switches to “pipes” and “tabrets,” musical instruments?

A: Perhaps Lucifer had musical capability, a singing voice as well as the ability to play instruments. The Revised Standard Version reads, “Wrought in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared.” There is no mention of musical instruments. The RSV carries forward the thought of the high priest’s breastplate, where the stones were set in ouches of gold. It is saying that Lucifer’s gold settings were rich ornamentation, elaborately engraved, whereas they were plain in the breastplate. In antitype everything in Papacy is embellished: statuary, ceremonies, etc.

Ezek. 28:14 **Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.**

“The anointed cherub that *covereth*” means that Lucifer could roam the heavens freely. As an archangel, he had certain privileges above those of the other angels. The “holy mountain of God” is another reference to “Eden the garden of God” *in heaven*.

As an “anointed cherub,” that is, an archangel (a chief angel), Lucifer was a companion and brother of the Logos, as it were, but the spirit of jealousy, vainglory, and pride in personal glory went to his head. The Logos, or Michael, had all of the same qualities but in the sense of *good* character. The fact that Lucifer was “anointed” means he had an office—a *very high office*.

Jesus was still an archangel when here on earth *as far as rank was concerned*, but he was literally a *human being* to pay the Ransom price. The Logos merely came to earth on an errand. When here, he still had the authority to call *legions of angels* to his defense. Hence he was superior in rank and authority, though limited by the flesh.

Lucifer and the Logos were *both* archangels. Let us consider them one at a time.

The following texts prove that Lucifer was an archangel:

1. Lucifer was an “anointed cherub that covereth” and a “covering cherub” (Ezek. 28:14,16).
2. Isaiah called him, “O Lucifer, son of the morning!” (Isa. 14:12).
3. Lucifer fell as “lightning” (as a “*bright shiner*,” Greek *astrape*) from heaven (Luke 10:18).

The following texts prove that the Logos was an archangel:

1. Jude called him “Michael the archangel” (Jude 9).
2. Jesus returned at his Second Advent with the “voice of the archangel” (1 Thess. 4:16).
3. Michael was “one of the [two] chief princes [*plural*],” that is, the Logos and Lucifer (Dan. 10:13).
4. Job said, “When the morning stars [*plural*] sang together [the Logos and Lucifer], and all the [other] sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

Lucifer was “born” into his role when he was created. He and Michael were both created as “adult” spirit beings, not babes, and were endowed with these benefits. Spirit beings do not age and grow old as humans do. Adam, too, was created as an adult, being an adult when only one day old. Having great brain-power (wisdom) capabilities, Michael and Lucifer were young only in experience. Michael *loved* God and daily communed with Him, thus imbibing the Father’s spirit. He was fully submissive to the Father’s will and always trying to learn from Him (Prov. 8:30). Lucifer, on the other hand, used his great talents for *vainglory*.

How did Lucifer walk “*up and down* in the midst of the stones of fire”? He moved among the various universes and planes of being. Hence he walked both *vertically* (among the planes of being) and *horizontally* (among the planets and stars). He could go from the “top” all the way “down” to materialize as a human being.

God is very great in size. With one step He goes through *universes*. Normally, the angels are tremendous in size. When they come to this tiny planet, they have to shrink to enter earth’s atmosphere. They probably need more time to get from the space around earth down to earth itself than to cover the trillions and quintillions of miles to get to earth’s outer ionosphere. Here is an analogy: It can take three hours to get to the airport and only two hours’ flight time to travel a *much greater* distance, say, 2,000 miles. Angels travel faster

than the speed of light. God walks leisurely on clouds.

Comment: It is rather incredible that, with these *vast* realms of the heavens and all this glory, Satan *chose* to live down here on earth.

Reply: He chose to do so because he saw the potential. He was wise enough to see intellectually that God was beginning something new. *Miniature* human beings were like the *gigantic* spirit beings. Since the universe was to be populated by such miniature physical beings, Satan wanted to be like God—completely in control of *all* the physical beings. Also, Satan had no fear of death and thought he was immortal because no angels had died.

Originally, as a covering cherub, Satan had a great range of communication with God and covered a large area unhampered, being free to roam. The Logos also had great strength, beauty, and wisdom, but only the Logos was the “spokesman” for God. The other angels had to go through the Logos because God was the Emperor and Creator of the universes and the glory of His office and personage was too awesome to be readily intruded upon in prehistoric times. Also, the angels had not yet been tried (not until the years prior to the Flood). Common sense would indicate that the other angels deferentially stayed at a respectful distance from the divine presence unless invited to come closer. Materialization in itself was not wrong for the angels, but to stay here—to leave their first estate—and not uplift humanity, as was their mission, was wrong. Satan and the other fallen angels were not imprisoned in *tartaroo* until the Flood. However, because of their disobedience, they might have been prevented from returning to heaven during the 1,656 years *prior to* the Flood. When the Flood came, they fled earth but found themselves locked into earth’s atmosphere (*tartaroo*). God’s will has always been done in heaven; it is only here on earth that evil has been permitted. In the Lord’s Prayer we pray for God’s will to be done on earth as it has *always been done in heaven*. Incidentally, the Church will judge just the fallen angels, for the holy angels have already passed their test and will live forever (1 Cor. 6:3; Luke 20:36).

Ezek. 28:15 **Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.**

Iniquity was found in Satan when he lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden; he was a liar from the “beginning” (John 8:44). *Outwardly*, his conduct might have seemed exemplary, but God could read his thinking; that is, *before* Satan tempted Eve and then Adam, he conjured up certain thoughts in his mind. But as soon as he expressed himself and deceived Eve, he had *sinned a sin*. Sometimes sinful thoughts go through our heads. If we harbor and feed on such thoughts, acts are the result. Those acts are the committed sins, and such acts incur great responsibility. However, *fighting* the thoughts in the mind can be meritorious—and is fighting the fight of faith. Fight them with prayer and fasting.

Satan possessed the serpent so it would look at the forbidden fruit. Then the serpent ate the fruit—and lived. Watching the serpent, Eve reasoned, “I am flesh and blood too. Therefore, I can eat the fruit and will not die.” Satan thus used artifice and deceit before speaking to Eve. He was softening her up with doubts. Previously Eve had thought the food was poisonous. Knowing now that it was good for food, she entertained some doubts about what God had told her. Satan reinforced this thinking by telling her the opposite: “Ye *shall not* surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Angels should be strictly *messengers*, doing God’s bidding. Satan deflected from this role.

Ezek. 28:16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

To whom or what does the pronoun “they” refer? The reference is to Satan’s merchandise. He attempted to add beauty to beauty, possessions to possessions; he took certain liberties. God’s instructions should be neither added to nor subtracted from. Self-aggrandizement was Satan’s *modus operandi*.

A correction in the tense is needed. “I [God] *cast* thee as profane [corrupt] out of the mountain of God: and I *will destroy* thee.” Satan is no longer in the garden of God, no longer in heaven in the presence of God, but is confined to earth’s atmosphere or *tartaroo*. Satan is called the “prince of this world,” the “prince of the power of the air.” His domain is down *here* (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2). When cast out, Satan was prohibited from walking amidst the planets (“stones of fire”).

“By the multitude of thy *merchandise* they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned.” The RSV reads, “In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned.” Satan’s former wisdom, beauty, power, and prerogatives were corrupted.

Ezek. 28:17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Lucifer became the epitome of pride. His beauty and wisdom went to his head. His wisdom became *perverted* wisdom. “The fear [*reverence*] of the LORD [*Jehovah*] is the beginning of wisdom,” and obedience is the end (or completion) of wisdom (Prov. 9:10).

Ezek. 28:18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.

“I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.” “I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee.” “The people shall be astonished at thee.” Right down here on *earth*, in the *sight* of people, Satan will be actually and literally destroyed. When Satan goes up to the camp of the saints at the end of the Kingdom, the suggestion is that servants of Satan, *both human and spiritual*, will be deceived (Rev. 20:9). At that time, when Satan leads the opposition, he will be destroyed. The suggestion is, further, that Satan may materialize when he is loosed in the Little Season (Rev. 20:3). Then he will be reduced to ashes—*destroyed*, not bound—in the sight of all those who behold him.

During the Kingdom, mankind will be tutored in righteousness and self-control. Those who pass the test at the end of the age will be raised to the status of “kings” (as Adam was)—which is *true* nobility. In perfection and maturity, they will be kings. Stated another way, the earth will be given to the children of men.

“Thou [Satan] hast defiled thy sanctuaries.” Satan defiled the position or office that he had. Hence he was demoted to earth’s atmosphere where he has been the deceiver, and the

other fallen angels are with him. In *tartaroo* Satan has not manifested any repentance; in fact, he has gotten worse. In Eden he used *words*, but as time went on, he got so defiled that cruelty and violence developed as well as sexual aberrations, as manifested in the days of Noah.

Satan was not confined to *tartaroo* until the Flood. For 1,656 years he was allowed relative liberty in regard to mankind, and during that time he did not desire to return to heaven. His love and interest were on earth. He and the other fallen angels left their first estate, came down here, materialized, and married women. Apparently, they did not realize, until the Flood, that they could not return to heaven. They were enjoying living here, but when the Flood came, they dematerialized and found themselves locked in *tartaroo*, an area in earth's stratosphere.

Satan became defiled by the iniquity of his "traffic." In other words, what he was doing defiled him. He became more and more corrupt in his ways, yet his powers did not diminish.

In the two years of human perfection before Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden, only the Logos was in charge. The Logos walked and talked with Adam and Eve. "And they heard *the voice* of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8). Then, in the first dispensation (from Adam's fall to the Flood), the holy angels tried to restrain evil. Hence there was *some* buffer between mankind and the forces of evil. But human beings were fallen and weak. When the holy angels were not given a charge over the present evil world, the fallen angels could freely operate—but through spirit obsession, hypnotism, etc.

Comment: It would seem to be great wisdom for something *visible* to happen when Satan is destroyed and to have it occur down here. Otherwise, some might think he was just in prison again.

Reply: Satan no doubt materialized at least once in the first dispensation as Beelzebub, the prince of demons; that is, he was once in a physical form (Matt. 12:24). Therefore, he may literally appear as an angel of light at the end of this age and then be instantly removed and put in a spiritual prison as a spirit being until the Little Season at the end of the Millennium, when he will be loosed again (Rev. 20:1–3,7,8). In other words, there is a precedent for his materializing in the near future. Here in Ezekiel 28, we read that he will also materialize at the end of the Kingdom. And it would be in that materialized *physical* form that he would be put to death, and thus his death would be visibly seen.

"Therefore will I [God] bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee." A "fire" in this context is unlawful ambition, an unquenchable desire for power. The "fire" could also be a literal means of destruction that would reduce Satan to ashes. Compare Revelation 20:9, which says that a "fire" will come down from God out of heaven.

Ezek. 28:19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

Those who "know" Satan at that time will be in a proper heart condition and thus regard him as *abhorrent*. In contrast, those who go up against the camp of the saints will regard Satan as a champion of their cause (Rev. 20:9).

Through Satan's manipulations, Jesus, the righteous One, was made a spectacle when put

to death on Calvary. In retribution, Satan will be made a spectacle when he is destroyed. Since this event will probably be filmed, it would be appropriate for Satan to be put to death in a physical form. God will not be seen on film, but to see a *materialized* physical form of a superior being is a different matter.

“Never shalt thou be any more.” Satan will be destroyed *forever*—with no possibility of a reoccurrence.

Ezek. 28:20 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 28:21 Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it,

Ezek. 28:22 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her.

Ezek. 28:23 For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Chapter 28 should have ended with verse 19, for verse 20 starts a prophecy against Zidon. This prophecy will have a future fulfillment against *Sidon*, the modern name for Zidon. A maritime power like Tyre, the city is on the Mediterranean coast near the site of Tyre in Lebanon. Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut are strongholds of different factions of Muslim power that hate Israel. Although a past destruction was experienced, the future one will be recognized as a judgment from God (“they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her”). The judgment will occur about the time of Jacob’s Trouble.

Ezek. 28:24 And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Zidon will no longer be a “pricking brier” because it will be absorbed by Israel.

Ezek. 28:25 Thus saith the Lord GOD; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob.

Ezek. 28:26 And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the LORD their God.

When God fulfills this judgment on Sidon in the future, the people will know that He is *Israel’s* God. God “shall be sanctified in them [Israel] in the sight of the heathen” (compare Ezek. 39:27).

Verse 26 sounds like Ezekiel 38:11. Israel will be dwelling with unwalled villages when Gog and Magog come down. However, there is a difference in the two verses. Verse 26 is describing the *final* dwelling safely—*after* the Kingdom has been established and Israel has

been *delivered* from Gog and Magog, *after* God's judgments have been executed.

Ezek. 29:1 In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 29:2 Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt:

In the 10th year, 10th month, and 12th day of the Jehoiachin captivity, God told Ezekiel to utter a prophecy against Egypt. The timetable of various chapters in the Book of Ezekiel considered thus far is as follows:

Chapter 1:	5th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (or Zedekiah's reign)
Chapter 8:	6th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (or Zedekiah's reign)
Chapter 20:	7th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (or Zedekiah's reign)
Chapter 24:	9th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (or Zedekiah's reign)
Chapter 26:	11th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (or Zedekiah's reign)
Chapter 29:	10th year of Jehoiachin's captivity (or Zedekiah's reign)

Ezek. 29:3 Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

Ezekiel likened the Pharaoh of Egypt to a "dragon" (the crocodile, which was prolific in the Nile River in ancient times). Pharaoh boastfully said, "My river [the Nile] is mine own, and I have made it for myself." The crocodile is much more vicious than the alligator. It "lieth in the midst of his rivers"; that is, it lies quietly, without fear, in control of its habitat.

Ezek. 29:4 But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

God would put hooks in the crocodile's jaws and draw it out of the rivers. A captivity is suggested. Egypt would experience a captivity similar to that of Israel, Ammon, and Moab.

"I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales." Scales are like a protective armor plate to fish and especially to the crocodile. The Lord was saying that those who relied on Egypt for protection (her allies) would share in her fate; they, too, would be punished.

"All the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales." The polity of Egypt would be broken up. Egyptian history contains blanks. A line of Pharaohs is recorded and abruptly terminated. Then suddenly a new set of Pharaohs appears with no explanation of time or circumstance. Thus these events are not recorded in secular history.

Ezek. 29:5 And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven.

Those who fled into the desert wilderness would die. (The crocodile cannot live without water.) "Rivers" (plural) refer to tributaries in the Nile Delta. There were seven branches previously, but most have filled up with silt so that only two or three remain today.

“Thou shalt fall upon the open fields.” If a crocodile is thrown on the land too long, he will die. Zechariah 14:18 is a prophecy about Egypt’s not receiving rain, showing that even after the Kingdom is established, that country will be somewhat recalcitrant. The time period is different, but the withholding of water is similar.

When the Israelites left Egypt and went into the Wilderness, they were likened to a helpless suckling babe whom the Lord nurtured. Here Egypt was to receive a form of retribution for her attitude toward Israel.

In prophecy Egypt pictures either the world of mankind or Christendom. But when Israel and Egypt are pictured side by side, then Israel represents the saved world of mankind, and Egypt represents those who go into Second Death. In addition, the *firstborn* of Egypt, who died in the tenth plague, picture those of the consecrated who go into Second Death during the Gospel Age. The *firstborn* of Israel, who were spared, represent the Little Flock.

In this prophecy of Egypt, the antitypical “dragon” is the pope, who is the center of his empire and feels secure but will be removed from his element. He will be removed from those who support him (the waters or “rivers”). “Water” is used with pictures of Babylon, Tyre, and Egypt, all of which pertain to Papacy in the antitype.

Ezek. 29:6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

Other nations, including Israel, sought help from Egypt when pressed by an enemy, but Egypt had only her own interests at heart. Israel has been likened to a buffer between Egypt and the kings of the north. Sometimes Israel sought Egypt as an ally, and sometimes Israel turned to the kingdoms of the north. That tiny nation is a land bridge between two continents.

Ezekiel likened Egypt’s support of Israel to a reed, meaning not much support. Instead of support, Israel got a shaft between the ribs. The reed broke and cut Israel. God had warned His people not to seek help from Egypt, but Israel disobeyed and would now be punished. Egypt would also receive punishment for being a treacherous ally. Principle: Those who bless Israel God will bless; those who curse Israel God will curse. Isaiah 36:6 tells that the “reed” (Egypt) was not sturdy. “Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.”

Verse 19 shows that Nebuchadnezzar would *humiliate* Egypt, and Egypt has been a common nation ever since. Incidentally, for 400 years under the Hyksos kings, Egypt did suffer and did know that God was the Lord.

Ezek. 29:7 When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Egypt was ruthless to Israel. The reed (Egypt) took hold of Israel and wrenched the arm from the torso. “Thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder ... thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.”

Ezek. 29:8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee.

The drawing of the great dragon (crocodile) out of the Nile and the fish that stuck to its scales would include beasts as well as man; that is, even the animals would be affected. The “sword” would be Nebuchadnezzar (see verse 19).

Ezek. 29:9 And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the LORD: because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it.

Again Egypt boasted, “The river is mine, and I have made it” (compare verse 3). The same attitude was displayed in the past by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30) and will be manifested in the future by Gog/the Assyrian (Isa. 10:12–15). Punishment follows. This verse shows that God does take cognizance of the arrogance of man. The judgment came because of Egypt’s *pride* and also because of that country’s *treatment of Israel*. The law of retribution takes effect to some extent even *before* the Kingdom.

Ezek. 29:10 Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

Egypt would be made “utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia,” that is, from Lower to Upper Egypt. Syene may be Aswan (in Upper Egypt). Part of verse 10 in the Revised Standard reads, “I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Ethiopia.” Migdol was on the Mediterranean (hence in Lower Egypt). Lower Egypt, on a level plain, was considered less defensible than Upper Egypt. Therefore, in time of war, the inhabitants would think they could flee to Upper Egypt and be safe, but the prophecy was telling them that such flight would be to no avail.

Ezek. 29:11 No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.

For 40 years—the last 40 years of Israel’s 70-year captivity—Egypt would also be taken captive and the land left desolate and uninhabited. In other words, Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon first, before taking Egypt captive the last 40 years of the 70 years of Israel’s captivity.

Ezek. 29:12 And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

The 40 years of Egypt’s desolation are again emphasized. When Israel was allowed to return to her homeland under Cyrus, the other nations were also given liberties and allowed to return.

Ezek. 29:13 Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered:

At the end of the 40 years, the Egyptians were to be regathered back to their land. The regathering corresponded to the return of the Israelites to their homeland and also to the

return of other peoples held captive (Moab, Ammon, etc.). When the lenient policies initiated by the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures were made known to Cyrus, king of Persia, he made a declaration that the Jews could go back to their homeland and then saw that the other captives desired the same liberty. The peoples returned to a base state—much rebuilding was needed.

Ezek. 29:14 And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom.

Ezek. 29:15 It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.

“Egypt ... shall be the basest of the kingdoms.” Today we still see the results of this prophecy. Egypt, once a world dominion, never regained any degree of prominence. The statement “they shall no more rule over the nations” indicates there was a time when Egypt did rule over the nations. (Before 606 BC there were other great empires such as Assyria, Nineveh, and Egypt.)

In Egyptian history, only the victories were recorded on the monuments, not the defeats. With gross exaggerations the Pharaohs gloried in showing, for example, humiliated captives being taken with hands behind their backs and elbows hoisted.

Ezek. 29:16 And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

Ever since 606 BC, Israel has not looked to Egypt for help. Never again after this experience would Israel seek Egypt as an ally. From that time Egypt has remained a minor nation, not exercising power over any other nations.

Ezek. 29:17 And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

The 27th year was 16 years after Jerusalem was destroyed in 606 BC. In the 11th year of the Jehoiachin captivity, when Zedekiah was dethroned, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city.

Ezek. 29:18 Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

Sixteen years after the destruction of Jerusalem, God used Nebuchadnezzar to visit judgment on Tyre.

Ezek. 29:19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

Ezek. 29:20 I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.

In the 27th year also (16 years after the decimation of Jerusalem), it was announced that

Egypt was doomed for destruction; that is, Egypt would be taken captive 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. God promised that Nebuchadnezzar would get “wages” in destroying Egypt.

Traditionally, Nebuchadnezzar reigned 45 years, but for seven years, he was insane and could not reign. Therefore, 52 years are actually involved in his reign (45 + 7), for after the seven years expired and he came to his senses, he continued to reign. It was in this “after” period that he went down and visited judgment on Egypt. This very prophecy about getting wages (a reward) for plundering the wealth of Egypt may have encouraged him to do so.

Ezek. 29:21 In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The “opening of the mouth in the midst of them” refers to the granting of permission by Cyrus for the Jews to return to Israel. Israel would then “bud forth,” that is, be restored. The fulfillment of these prophecies was a verification that Ezekiel was a true prophet of the Lord.

Ezek. 30:1 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezek. 30:2 Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Howl ye, Woe worth the day!

Ezek. 30:3 For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.

In verses 2 and 3, the RSV reads: “Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’ For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near.” Notice the repetition. Verses 2 and 3 sound like an end-of-the-age prophecy, but the reference was primarily to Egypt and the visitation of *judgment* by Nebuchadnezzar, not just a military defeat. The day of Egypt’s reckoning was near. The expression “the day of the LORD” meant the *actual trouble*, not a long, drawn-out preliminary period. The use of that expression in our day has the same meaning; that is, it refers to the Time of Trouble *yet future*, and not to world conditions since 1874 or 1878.

The term “a cloudy day,” indicating trouble, reminds us of Joel 2:2, “A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness.” The expression “the time of the heathen,” meaning the time of the people, the time of the Gentiles, indicates a judgment not only on Egypt but also on the *world*, that is, the doom of the nations. Under Nebuchadnezzar’s empire, what he did affected the whole “world”—all the nations under his subjugation. Egypt was one of the latter nations he conquered.

Ezek. 30:4 And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down.

Ezek. 30:5 Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword.

Egypt and Ethiopia are situated close to each other, with Ethiopia bordering Egypt on the south. In fact, some of the headwaters of the Nile are in Ethiopia. At one time the two countries were enemies, but at this time in history they were allies. Being in league with

Egypt, Ethiopia would send some of its prime armed forces to support Egypt against Nebuchadnezzar. Libya (which borders Egypt on the west), Lydia, etc., would do likewise. Hence the doom that was upon Egypt would affect her allies as well. The perishing of all these peoples would cause mourning in the homelands. Egypt was the hub of civilization on the African continent, and now it would be destroyed.

Ezek. 30:6 Thus saith the LORD; They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.

“From the tower of Syene” is similar to Ezekiel 29:10 (RSV), “From Migdol [a town on the Mediterranean] to Syene [Aswan in Upper Egypt], as far as the border of Ethiopia.” In other words, the destruction would be *extensive*—from Lower to Upper Egypt, even to Ethiopia.

Ezek. 30:7 And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted.

Egypt would join the group of countries already made desolate (Israel, Moab, Ammon, and Tyre). Stated another way, Egypt’s visitation of judgment by Nebuchadnezzar would come a little later.

Ezek. 30:8 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed.

The expression “when I have set a *fire* in Egypt” again indicates *extensive* trouble. When King Nebuchadnezzar entered the land, the trouble spread from the point of invasion just as a fire spreads from a match. The destruction spread upon Egypt and her allies.

Ezek. 30:9 In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for, lo, it cometh.

“Careless” means the “unsuspecting” Ethiopians. Ethiopia is south of Egypt in the cataracts where an army usually would not go. Therefore, Egypt was like a buffer zone, and yet Nebuchadnezzar went through the heart of Egypt and up the Nile.

What is the meaning of this verse? It could be an abrupt prophetic insertion, or it could just mean that people going up the Nile to Ethiopia in boats would bring word of Egypt’s destruction.

Ezek. 30:10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument of Egypt’s destruction.

Ezek. 30:11 He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations, shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain.

“The terrible of the nations” were the Chaldeans, the stalwarts of King Nebuchadnezzar’s army. Now we can see the antitype. The king of Babylon and the Chaldeans, picturing the communistic, ungodly element of the near future, decimated Egypt and her allies

(Christendom). The king of Babylon will be the executioner of the Lord, destroying Papacy and Christendom.

Ezek. 30:12 And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken it.

“I will make the rivers [the Nile] dry.” All of the wealth and resources would be depleted, and the land would be left barren and desolate. Throughout early history Egypt was not a warlike nation but was satisfied with its own pomp, glory, and wealth. The country was protected from capture by the desert, and the Red Sea was also a natural barrier. The Nile, too, was like a natural fortification because at the time of the inundation, there were no roads, only islands.

For the rivers to be made “dry” means that at the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion, the Nile had much less water than usual. (When this happens approximately every 15 years, the people know a drought is coming.) The Nile is a remarkable river in that it flows for so many miles, from its headwaters to the Delta, without any tributaries. It divides, but it receives no water until it empties into the Mediterranean Sea.

The literal prophetic interpretation pertained to the Nile and its seven branches in the Delta area. The “rivers” (plural) would be made dry. Of the seven branches, only two have much water today.

Ezek. 30:13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.

“I will also destroy the idols.” Large cities are buried under Egypt’s sand. Much of the toppling of the idols in these cities was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar. “Noph” is another name for Memphis, where a tremendous statue of Rameses lies in the mud. Before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Memphis, it was the largest city in Egypt. And Egypt itself, once a huge center of civilization, is in squalor today. Many Jews were buried in Noph, and there is a prophecy to this effect.

“There shall be no more a prince [a Pharaoh] of the land of Egypt.” This prophecy did not mean there would never again be a Pharaoh in Egypt but just for the 40-year period. Egypt was to be taken captive for 40 years, but its former pomp and glory would permanently cease (Ezek. 29:13).

Ezek. 30:14 And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No.

“No,” in the Thebes area of Upper Egypt, was quite far up the Nile. Ancient Thebes is nonexistent today. Pathros and Zoan were both in the Delta region. Pathros was a large area or province (Ezek. 29:14). Zoan, or Tanis, was formerly an extensive area but not today.

Ezek. 30:15 And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No.

“Sin” usually refers to the Wilderness of Sinai. (The word “sin” is related to the moon, and Mount Sinai is related to the Law Covenant.) However, this “Sin” was probably near

Thebes.

Ezek. 30:16 And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily.

The three leading metropolises of Egypt at that time were all destroyed.

Ezek. 30:17 The young men of Aven and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity.

“Aven,” or “On,” is Heliopolis, now buried by Cairo.

Ezek. 30:18 At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity.

Tehaphnehes is where Jeremiah set the stone, saying that Nebuchadnezzar would come there and set up a temporary throne as his headquarters while he was attacking Egypt. The king had the people pass before him for judgment.

Ezek. 30:19 Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 30:20 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

The time setting was just prior to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Ezek. 30:21 Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword.

Ezek. 30:22 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand.

The king of Babylon was made the head of state of Babylon, but that did not mean Babylon *as a nation* started with Nebuchadnezzar as the first king. Nebuchadnezzar was the first king over a *world empire*, but his father and predecessor had been a ruler and gone down to Egypt earlier to visit a judgment—much earlier than 606 BC. However, Nebuchadnezzar’s father did not follow up and really subjugate the Egyptian people. Instead he returned to Babylon. Hence Ezekiel 30 pertains to the *second* invasion by Babylon, the one under Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, one “arm” had been broken previously under his father (verse 21), and before it was thoroughly knit, King Nebuchadnezzar would go down and break both the strong arm and the weak arm (verse 22). Egyptian history does not admit defeat; all of their hieroglyphics record *victories*.

Ezek. 30:23 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

Ezek. 30:24 And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh’s arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man.

Ezek. 30:25 But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.

Ezek. 30:26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Verses 23–26 are self-explanatory. The Egyptians ran helter-skelter and into other nations when King Nebuchadnezzar came. One hundred years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied what would happen to Egypt. Now Jeremiah was also prophesying.

In antitype, the expression “the terrible of the nations” (verse 11) represents communism, which will, at the end of the age, visit destruction upon Egypt (Papacy) and her allies (Christendom). Pharaoh is a picture of Satan. Satan’s arm was broken once when Papacy (the beast that had the wound by the sword and yet did live—Rev. 13:14) was wounded by the Reformation. However, the second blow will result in Papacy’s being cast alive into the lake of fire (the second arm being broken along with the first that did not fully heal or knit).

Ezek. 31:1 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

The prophecy against Egypt continues. Ezekiel uttered this prophecy in the 11th year of Jeconiah and Zedekiah, which was 606 BC, the very year Babylon would defeat Judah, capture Jerusalem, and destroy Solomon’s Temple.

Ezek. 31:2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?

Ezek. 31:3 Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs.

We should keep in mind that this chapter was a prophecy about “Pharaoh king of Egypt,” even though Ezekiel used Assyria as an example of pride and exaltation to high stature. Of course Assyria had already fallen at this time. At its height Assyria was like a cedar, and it embraced what is now Lebanon, a country noted for its tall, stately cedars. Cedars are known for their fragrance and often surround reservoirs; they cast shade.

“Whom art thou like in thy greatness?” In other words, “Who do you think you are?” Pride and boastfulness were being pointed out. Chapter 31 was a judgment on Egypt that used Assyria as an object lesson. In antitype the analogy pertains to both Satan and Papacy.

The “shadowing shroud” is called “wings” elsewhere. With outspread wings, a bird pictures an empire covering a large domain of many “feathers” (independent people who have come under the power of an empire). Assyria sheltered other nations. Other nations looked to her for protection.

Ezek. 31:4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.

The “waters” made the Assyrian great. Mountains were a source of water, and water running down the slopes kept the trees well watered. In other words, the tributary nations made Assyria great; their wealth contributed to Assyria’s wealth. The tributaries were like canals sending forth waters (revenues). We are reminded of Papacy.

Ezek. 31:5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth.

Again the thought is presented that the prevalence of water aided the development of the forest.

Ezek. 31:6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

The tree sheltered the fowls of heaven, and in the shade underneath were the beasts of the field. Verse 6 sounds somewhat like the Parable of the Mustard Seed, which pictures Papacy as a tree in which all the fowls of the air lodge (Matt. 13:31,32). Revelation 18:2 and Daniel 4:4 have similar wording.

Ezek. 31:7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters.

The greatness of Assyria was repeated.

Ezek. 31:8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty.

“The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him [the Assyrian].” In size and height, the others could not rival or equal Assyria. The Assyrian Empire, which predated Babylon as a universal empire, had a distinctive glory. Other “trees” (nations) supported and nourished the Assyrian Empire. Although the empire comprised many other nations, Assyria stood head and shoulders above the rest.

Ezek. 31:9 I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

In the trees of this mystical Garden of Eden (the “garden of God” figuratively), the Assyrian tree topped all of the others in foliage, height, etc. It was providential in some respects that Assyria acquired power—just as with Babylon and Cyrus, king of Persia. In *God’s time* these were allowed to prosper. (We are reminded of Papacy in some respects.) The other “trees” were envious of the Assyrians’ luxuriant prosperity, but “pride goeth before a fall”—and that is the history of all the great powers.

As Adam had dominion in the Garden of Eden, so Satan was a covering cherub and could extensively roam. As Adam was in his garden and Satan was in his garden—both originally perfect—so Assyria was in a “garden,” in a state of glory and power, supreme over all the other nations. Just as Adam and Satan fell, so Assyria would fall.

Ezek. 31:10 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in

height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height;

The tree, the cedar of Lebanon, represents Assyria. The backbone of Assyria came from the Turkish people, just as the Chaldeans were the powerful nucleus of Babylon. The top center part of the cedar represents the Turkish people—*pride*.

Ezek. 31:11 I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness.

God continued to address Pharaoh of Egypt under the analogy of the Assyrian. Because Egypt lifted up its heart in pride, like the Assyrian previously, Egypt would also be defeated.

“The mighty one of the heathen” was King Nebuchadnezzar. “I [God] have driven him out for his wickedness.” As Adam was driven out of the Garden of Eden, so Assyria was driven out of power.

Ezek. 31:12 And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.

Because of pride, the “tree” (Assyria) was felled; its branches were cut off. God allowed the Babylonian Empire (“strangers, the terrible of the nations”) to conquer. The tributary nations lost the protection of the Assyrian Empire; they were shattered and strewn beside the waters instead of being fed by them. We are reminded of Papacy’s fall in the near future at the hands of the ruthless Lord’s great army. Just as the tributary nations were affected by Assyria’s fall and went elsewhere, so the “kings of the earth” will stand afar off, watching the burning of mystic Babylon (Rev. 18:9,10).

Ezek. 31:13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches:

The fowls remained to feast on Assyria; that is, those who formerly supported Assyria (mystic Babylon in the near future) turned against her and tried to profit off her.

Ezek. 31:14 To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

Verse 14 shows condemnation on all nations comprising the Assyrian Empire. All of the trees would share a similar fate and go down into death (“to the pit”). Again the allusion is to the Garden of Eden. The judgment was on Adam, but *all* die as his children.

Note: This verse *does not say* that as the trees of the Garden of Eden *perished*, so these trees would perish. The analogy of the trees is to *Adam*—these trees would go into the pit *as Adam did*. The Scriptures show that the trees of Eden were preserved (Gen. 3:24). Ezekiel 28 is the key to understanding this chapter.

Ezek. 31:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning; I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and

the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

What is the meaning of the restraint (“I *restrained* the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed”)? With the fall of the Assyrian Empire came great mourning, and when mystic Babylon falls, the merchants will cry “Alas!” with great mourning (Rev. 18:10). It was as if *nature itself stopped*. Everybody profited by the prospering of the empire, and everyone would be affected by its fall.

Ezek. 31:16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

When a big tree falls, the ground shakes. Thus the nations will *shake* at Papacy’s fall. The expression “all the trees of Eden” refers to the nations of the “garden” (the Assyrian Empire).

Ezek. 31:17 They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.

In verses 10–17 God was saying to Egypt, “Look what happened to Assyria. The king of Babylon was allowed to capture Assyria because of Assyria’s pride. Now Babylon will come down and deal with you likewise. You should have profited by that example. Assyria went down into hell, darkness, the pit, oblivion, and that same fate awaits you.” Although Egypt did come out of oblivion, as it were, it was never strong again (Ezek. 29:15).

Supporting nations suffered under the Assyrian yoke, even though they were also nourished by the relationship. They would share the fate of Assyria, their only comfort being the knowledge that Assyria was undergoing the same experience. The common people were burdened under either universal empire.

Ezek. 31:18 To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

Chapter 31 ends with God’s answering the question of verse 2, and directing the answer to Pharaoh of Egypt: “Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?” Egypt would be made desolate like Assyria. It was as though the Lord threw on a mental screen, as a lesson to Egypt, the rise and fall of Assyria. In summary, Assyria in this chapter is a picture of Papacy, Pharaoh represents Satan, and Babylon (picturing communism, a godless element) will destroy Papacy.

God made the Assyrian great because that was the power to take the ten-tribe kingdom into captivity. Similarly, Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar was God’s instrument at a later date. The term “garden of God” is a figurative expression showing God’s plan for all of the nations.

Ezek. 32:1 And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

It was now the next year, nine months later. Jerusalem had just been destroyed.

Ezek. 32:2 Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers.

Egypt would be next even though a little time intervened before its defeat at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Meanwhile, Gedaliah was appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar and allowed to stay in Judah with some vine dressers, and of course Jeremiah was in the homeland too. But instead of submitting as instructed, the vine dressers assassinated Gedaliah and fled to Egypt, where Nebuchadnezzar pursued them and judged Egypt at the same time. (It is helpful to keep in mind that Jeremiah was alive and prophesying in Israel with the vine dressers at the same time that Ezekiel was prophesying among the captives in Babylon.)

Jeremiah predicted that Nebuchadnezzar would establish his throne temporarily in Egypt and have the captives brought before him one by one for each individual's fate to be determined. Most were killed; very few were spared and taken to Babylon.

Earlier, shortly before the 606 BC total destruction of Jerusalem, Egypt had sent an army to help Judah. The army was defeated and survivors returned to Egypt. This defeat was the other "arm" of Egypt that was broken (Ezek. 30:21). Egypt thought it had escaped a harsher judgment, but the prophecy was that both "arms" would be broken (Ezek. 30:22). The second defeat happened when Nebuchadnezzar pursued the vine dressers to Egypt.

In this chapter Egypt pictures the Christian world, and Babylon represents a dictatorial, nonreligious power. Note: When Babylon visits judgment on Israel or Egypt, it does not picture Papacy (for example, see Jeremiah 25).

Verses 2–10 are a general description of the greatness of Egypt coming to naught and to darkness. Egypt is described as being in a state of amazement. The experience of Egypt is a picture of Christendom's being ravaged by a communistic power.

"Take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou ... camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers." Papacy (like Egypt) has "fouled" the rivers. The picture is of cattle going to the river to drink and muddying the water. Just as those who follow the lead cattle have muddy water to drink, so there has been a symbolic pollution of truth by Papacy.

In this highly pictorial language, Pharaoh is likened to a young lion and a whale. A whale troubles the waters by moving its fins rapidly. From another standpoint, the whale is the king of the sea and the lion is the king of the beasts. Hence God, through Ezekiel, was showing Egypt's superiority. Incidentally, the tribe of Judah and Babylon were also likened to a lion.

Ezek. 32:3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net.

Ezek. 32:4 Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the

beasts of the whole earth with thee.

Ezek. 32:5 And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height.

In Chapter 31 the tree (Assyria) was fragmented; here Egypt was told she would be decimated and fall. Flesh is used here, as opposed to a tree in the previous chapter.

Ezekiel Chapter 28 pertains to a *personal* judgment on Satan. The difference is that Chapter 32 prophesies a judgment on Satan *and his empire* and on Papacy and its empire.

Ezek. 32:6 I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee.

Verse 6 shows bloodshed and death. The rivers would figuratively run with blood.

Ezek. 32:7 And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

Ezek. 32:8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 7 and 8 pertain to the ecclesiastical heavens. The people of Egypt worshipped the sun at that time. An eclipse may have occurred that would heighten the judgment in their eyes.

Ezek. 32:9 I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known.

God would vex the hearts of those who sought support from Egypt when they saw her destruction. The same will be true of Papacy's destruction. The next chapter shows that merchants as well as kings will mourn.

Ezek. 32:10 Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall.

"I [God] shall brandish my sword." The executioner (Babylon in the past in the type, communism in the future in the antitype) would act on behalf of the Lord. Every man would tremble for his own life in the day of Egypt's fall.

Ezek. 32:11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee.

The king of Babylon is identified as the one who would wield the sword, as ordered by God in verse 10.

Ezek. 32:12 By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them: and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed.

Babylon, the executioners, was described as "the terrible of the nations."

Ezek. 32:13 I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither

shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.

Men and cattle would be involved in the judgment. The upper crust of society fouled the waters, taking what they wanted and leaving the chaff to the common people.

Ezek. 32:14 Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD.

When the Nile was full, it was diverted for irrigation, but when the battle with Nebuchadnezzar occurred—and afterward—the irrigation stopped and the waters ran smoothly, no longer serving the nation. Therefore, as a result of the judgment, the waters of Egypt would no longer be fouled. In the natural picture the waters would no longer be muddy but would flow freely because with the land in desolation, the waters could not be diverted for irrigation. In other words, no longer would Egypt be able to “foul the waters” by conquering other nations (see verse 2). In antitype, after the downfall of Christendom will come the Kingdom and *no more polluting* of the waters of truth.

Ezek. 32:15 When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the LORD.

Ezek. 32:16 This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: they shall lament for her, even for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

The “daughters” were the other nations. We are reminded of Babylon, of Papacy and the daughter Protestant systems. When Papacy falls, the daughters will also fall.

Ezek. 32:17 It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

In verses 17–30 the Lord was saying to Egypt, “Get you down to the pit, into oblivion, where Asshur, Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, and Zion are.” Egypt was told of her fate as a *past event* because the judgment *was certain*. A figurative sepulcher arrangement was being described.

The time setting was still the 12th year and probably the 12th month, just two weeks later (see verse 1).

Ezek. 32:18 Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

Ezek. 32:19 Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised.

In a battle the dead were not usually given formal burial services. Either the bodies just rotted on the ground or there was a mass burial.

Ezek. 32:20 They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes.

“Draw her [Egypt] and all her multitudes” to the pit or grave. Ezekiel was addressing those

in the tomb (Asshur) and telling them to pull Egypt down. Egypt's beauty was marred, as was Babylon's (or Papacy's).

Ezek. 32:21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

Ezek. 32:22 Asshur is there and all her company: his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword:

Verses 22–30 are *powerful*, for Ezekiel was pointing out nations in the tomb. "There is Asshur!" "There is Elam!" (verse 24). "There are Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude!" (verse 26). "There is Edom!" (verse 29). "There are the princes of the north and all the Zidonians!" (verse 30). The gravestones in this cemetery were organized in a very orderly way.

Notice that Asshur, the nation, is feminine, but the ruler or leader of the nation is masculine. Asshur was built by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8–11).

Ezek. 32:23 Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living.

Ezek. 32:24 There is Elam and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit.

All of the powers that are named were the terror of the nations. After their destruction and humbling, they became insignificant.

In the beginning of Zedekiah's reign (or Jeconiah's captivity), King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took Elam captive (Jer. 49:34). Elam was once related to Persia.

Ezek. 32:25 They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain.

Ezek. 32:26 There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living.

Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39 pertain to the destruction of Meshech and Tubal at the end of this age. Moscow is a derivative of Meshech, and Tubal was another Russian city formerly. This destruction is future, even though Ezekiel spoke of it as past.

Ezek. 32:27 And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

Ezek. 32:28 Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword.

Notice a difference from the nations listed previously: Meshech and Tubal would go into destruction, but their weapons would not. Only the *bones* of Meshech and Tubal would go into hell. Zechariah 14:14 tells that Judah shall fight in a portion of Jacob's Trouble (although it is really the Lord who fights). Scavengers will be hired to pick up any bones that are left of the Israelites and bring them back for burial in Israel (Ezek. 39:14,15). The words "they were" are supplied in verse 27; the tense is not given in the Hebrew.

Ezek. 32:29 There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit.

Here Edom is not a picture of Christendom because Egypt is the central power, the main symbol in this chapter, and Egypt represents Christendom. A pat definition cannot be used for all prophecy.

When one is awakened from the tomb in the resurrection, he will not be conscious of time having elapsed regardless of how long he lay asleep in death. The individual will simply remember his dying and its cause as having just happened. Thus when these nations (people and leaders) are resuscitated, they will all have a common heritage of shame and humiliation. Hence some of the power of this prophecy will be experienced in the future.

The *highly figurative* language of these verses does not mean there is consciousness in death. The wrong conclusion could be drawn if all Scripture is not considered. Isaiah 14:4,9,10 is another example of highly figurative language: "Take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! ... Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?" The dead in the grave were figuratively surprised when Babylon was destroyed. The king of Babylon also went into the pit. In another example, just as Adam went into the prison house of death and will be loosed, so Satan will go into the pit and then be loosed at the end of the Millennium.

Ezek. 32:30 There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit.

The Zidonians, too, were in this figurative grave. All of these powers were subjugated by Babylon *prior to* the downfall of Egypt.

Ezek. 32:31 Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 32:32 For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

A place in the cemetery was allocated for Pharaoh, for he, too, would go down to the pit. Verse 32 concludes a two-chapter prophecy about Egypt, in which Papacy is the spiritual picture with Pharaoh or Satan being behind Papacy.

Satan prefers to work *openly against* Christ rather than to pose as an angel of light. The Adversary considered Jesus a rival, for both were sons of the morning or archangels. However, Jesus was humble, whereas Satan was ambitious and tried to usurp prerogatives. When Papacy is destroyed, Satan will revert to the dragon element and *openly oppose*. He infiltrated the Church in the days of Constantine and tried to take Jesus' place as Antichrist. In the future he will cause many problems for true Christians. After persecuting the feet members, he will go back to the civil aspect and oppose the religious nominal systems, being again an outright opponent of God. Ezekiel Chapters 31 and 32 tell of the fate of the religious element.

Ezek. 33:1 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 33:2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

Ezek. 33:3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

Ezek. 33:4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

God told Ezekiel to give a message to the people about the responsibility of the watchman over Israel—and of those who heard the watchman's warning. Notice that the watchman was selected by a congregational vote of the people. The people of the land were to take "a man of their coasts [boundaries]." Spiritually speaking, our watchmen (plural) are the elders.

Back in the prophet's day, a literal watchman was to warn when an enemy was making an incursion into Israel, whether secretly or openly. In warfare a watchman who failed to warn was held responsible; his own life was forfeited as a result. If he did warn properly, he was absolved of responsibility no matter what occurred. Implication: A proper warning could be given and then be ignored. It seems hard to believe that one would ignore a warning in *literal* warfare.

In the *spiritual* picture, there are two possibilities:

1. The watchman is sleeping soundly and/or is negligent, and thus fails to warn.
2. The watchman warns properly, but the people do not heed the warning.

A watchman, prophet, and/or shepherd who fails to warn is called a "dumb dog" (Isa. 56:10,11). Watchdogs are supposed to *bark*. "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." What a scathing denunciation!

Leviticus 5:1–5 lays down a principle. When one knows of a grievous sin, he is responsible to act. The person is guilty in some respects *even if he does not understand he has sinned*, but his *responsibility* is not incurred until he *realizes* his guilt. Just as a baby, for example, does not know right and wrong in regard to moral deeds, so it is with the babe in Christ. As the

Christian grows and tries to develop into the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, his responsibility grows in proportion as he discerns the wrong.

Leviticus 5:1 reads, "If a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity." Under the Law, if one heard or witnessed another person swear (a heinous sin), the hearer was responsible to take action. The Israelites had a responsibility to each other; they were their brother's keeper, and so are we to a certain extent. Whereas Ezekiel 33 pertains to elders, the principle in Leviticus 5 pertains to the brotherhood in general. This is true of a sin that takes place *after* consecration whether the sin is in ourselves or in another Christian.

If a person has done wrong, he must *confess* the wrong when he becomes aware of it. Back in the type the next step was to make an offering, and sometimes a penalty was attached. With us we (1) confess and (2) pray for forgiveness through the cleansing merit of Christ's blood. If we have wronged a party, we are to go to that individual and confess to him. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23,24). In other words, if a brother has aught against us, we are to go to him before we pray to the Lord.

Deuteronomy 13

Consider the principle in Deuteronomy 13:1–5. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee."

In this case the misleading (false) prophet arose *from the midst* of the people and prophesied something that *did come to pass*, but the sign or wonder was used to give force to his *wrong* teaching, that is, to serve other gods. The misleading prophet was trying to distract the people from serving the true Lord. He was taking the people out of the flock, away from the protection of the Lord. God could have stopped the false prophet, but He did not because He is testing His people, proving them, to know whether they love Him with all their heart and soul. Under the Law the false prophet was to be exposed and put to death.

Let us consider Deuteronomy 13 in more detail. Verses 1–5 are introductory; they concern one who arises "*among you*," among the brotherhood in antitype.

Verses 6–11 come closer to home, for they pertain to one *within your own family* who tries to lead or distract from the worship of God. The test is more severe when a husband, daughter, friend, etc., is the guilty one. It is harder to take a stand, but we must not let the close relationship blind us to proper duty.

“If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.” *Full* obedience was required, not a halfway step. Notice Step No. 1: “Thou shalt not consent unto him”; that is, the Israelites were to *criticize* him. Then came Step No. 2: “Neither shalt thou conceal him”; that is, they were to *expose* him. And finally, after a trial, came Step No. 3: “Thou shalt surely kill him.” What is the responsibility in the antitype? We are to negate that person’s influence, if possible, through *excommunication*, which is a *communal* responsibility. Under the Law the witness threw the first stone. In antitype one of the two witnesses is required to take a leading position to establish the guilt of the erring party.

Deuteronomy 13:14 states, “*If it be truth, and the thing [be] certain.*” Deuteronomy 17:2–4 uses similar wording: “*If ... thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing [be] certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel.*” The principle is that we should not act hastily when we are not certain about a matter and have not had time to search it out. We should beware of circumstantial evidence. Incidentally, there are two kinds of responsibility: individual and communal. Today the communal responsibility is lacking.

Verses 12–18 deal with *group* guilt. “If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again. And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.” A group becomes the “children of Belial” (Deut. 13:13). “Belial” contains the word “Baal”; that is, *by name* the worshippers of Baal were ostensibly the Lord’s, but *by deeds* they were far from Him. The deeds were an abomination, a serious sin. The responsibility to take drastic action was communal, for it would take a *group* to destroy a city.

This chapter of Deuteronomy shows we are *all* to be watchmen to a certain extent, watching ourselves as well as observing general conditions. The spiritual counterpart of a “city” is an

ecclesia. Lesson: A *serious* matter should be brought out into the open, even if bringing it up would *destroy* an ecclesia by causing a split. *Principles must be defended.*

Today there is a tendency where those who do wrong think they are doing right, and those who criticize the wrongdoers are accused of having the wrong spirit. Either way, we should examine ourselves in regard to the *motivation* of the criticism.

Ezek. 33:5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

Ezek. 33:6 But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

Ezek. 33:7 So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

Ezek. 33:8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

If the watchman sounds the warning, he is not responsible for what happens. However, if he fails to warn, he is responsible because someone or others (plural) *will fall* as a result of his neglect. The watchman incurs the *same penalty* for having stumbled others. "But whoso shall offend [stumble] one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6). A "millstone" death would be a disgrace in the eyes of the beholders, but that is a better fate (having resurrection possibilities) than the fate incurred (Second Death) when one is responsible for the falling of another individual. However, one who goes back into the world after consecration or turns to gross habitual sin might *unjustifiably* blame a consecrated brother or sister for his fall. Therefore, the Second Death responsibility would be from *God's* standpoint, not from the standpoint of an errant one.

If the watchman does not warn the people, he is held accountable and will be put to death. The responsibility of the watchman applies to the Christian Church. When the "enemy" is seen, the people should be warned. Elders are responsible, but they should not warn continuously, for they are not to be policemen. A warning should be sounded, for example, when a wolf enters the flock (Acts 20:29). William Miller properly used this chapter as a basis for warning about the Second Advent.

Caution: Not one of us has 100 percent of the truth. Therefore, we should not fault each other on minor areas of doctrine. If we take the advice in this chapter too strongly, we will warn on every little point. The wicked are recognized by their evil fruit

This is a somber subject—one we need to *think* about. Ignorance of such subjects is *no* excuse.

Ezek. 33:9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

Ezek. 33:10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them,

how should we then live?

Ezek. 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Ezek. 33:12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth.

Ezek. 33:13 When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

Sins committed prior to consecration are forgiven at consecration and one starts with a clean slate, but these verses are a different situation. The whole nation of Israel made an oath to follow God at Mount Sinai, and instructions were given subsequently. Moreover, the Law was read every seven years. Jews born in succeeding generations, including up to today, may not have made a special individual consecration to God, but as the people of God, they have a measure of responsibility. However, when one consecrates, he becomes "righteous," and the responsibility is greater.

There are two different perspectives in regard to a wicked person who turns from his wickedness: (1) One who never consecrated but is familiar with truth turns *against* God. This individual becomes so cold that he begins to question God. The watchman should warn such a one, even though the individual is not consecrated. If the individual responds so favorably that he consecrates, then the former sin was a stepping-stone instead of a stumbling stone. (2) If one who is consecrated (and is thus "righteous") turns and commits grievous sin, his former righteousness is not remembered. The watchman should warn such a backslider.

The point is that one who commits sin cannot rely on his former righteousness. The natural heart, which is deceitful and desperately wicked, might think, "I have done many, many works, some openly and some secretly," and thus rest confidently in past works while making allowance—as from a credit account—for the committing of sins. For this reason Paul raised the hypothetical question "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" What was his reply? "God forbid!" (Rom. 6:1,2). Ezekiel was referring to this situation. When one who has been consecrated ("righteous") for many years begins to backslide, he is to be warned, for all of his former righteousness will be forgotten unless he changes. In other words, *past good deeds* do not cancel out *current misdeeds*. "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression" (verse 12).

The standard for the high calling is very high indeed, so it is a serious matter when one who is consecrated commits gross sin. *Even if that individual sincerely repents*, it is doubtful that he or she can make the Little Flock. The individual can get life, however. Moreover, a *momentary fall* into grievous sin is different from a *habit of transgression*. One goes into Second Death if gross sin becomes a part of his character.

There are different types of sin. *Presumptuous* sin is sin with full knowledge and then

presuming on God's grace for forgiveness. Presumptuous sin is willingly entering into sin while thinking *in advance*, "God will forgive me." We have *natural* bodies. The new creature starts as just a seed and develops and develops to, hopefully, come forth to a successful birth, meaning that *at death* one makes his calling and election sure. From this perspective the fetus illustrates the lifetime of the Christian.

We should not mix the fetus picture with the picture of the babe who is out of the womb. First picture: The fetus development represents the full development of the Christian life from conception to birth. Second picture: The person is out of the womb as a baby and grows and develops to manhood.

Comment: Presuming to sin, presumptuous sin, is really no different in principle than indulgences, whereby one paid money *in advance* for sins to be committed sometime in the future.

Uzzah's sin was presumptuous in another direction (2 Sam. 6:1–7). God had given specific instructions about how the Ark of the Covenant was to be transported, one instruction being not to touch it. Also, the Ark was to be carried manually with staves, not pulled by oxen in a cart. In antitype some feel that if they do not do something to steady the Ark of God, there is the possibility of failure, but God's plans and purposes will be accomplished *no matter what we do*. If we develop the attitude that we are indispensable to the success of God's program and that His program depends on us, we would be trying to steady the Ark. If we manually try to rectify the situation when we see the Ark in a dangerous condition, we would also be steadying the Ark—*even if we meant well and our intentions were the best*. However, the responsibility to warn is another matter. That is blowing the trumpet of alarm. To keep from steadying the Ark, we should always remember that God's program *will not fail*. The full 144,000 will be found regardless of what we do.

Ezek. 33:14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

Ezek. 33:15 If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Ezek. 33:16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

Those who are wicked *before* consecration but maintain faithfulness *after* consecration will live. The condition of repentance in verses 14–16 reminds us of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). If restitution is made as far as possible and one continues in righteous ways, he is forgiven.

Ezek. 33:17 Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.

Ezek. 33:18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

Ezek. 33:19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

One cannot have a *habit* of wickedness and be in the truth, but prior to consecration is

another matter. One who is consecrated cannot keep committing gross sin and expect to be forgiven 490 times (70 x 7) (Luke 17:3,4).

If the wicked one changes his course in life completely, he shall live. If the righteous one turns and pursues wickedness, he shall die. We should not distort the meaning—it is a comparison of *extremes*.

Ezek. 33:20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

When Ezekiel proclaimed these things, the people said (paraphrase), “The Lord’s ways are not just. They do not make sense.” The Pharisees had the same attitude when Jesus tried to teach repentance to the sinner.

The following saying is applicable: “Sow a thought; reap an act. Sow an act; reap a habit. Sow a habit; reap a character. Sow a character; reap a destiny.” The process is progressive, and it applies whether the resulting habit is good or bad. It starts with the heart and mind, then involves the mouth, and goes on to become a deed, a habit, a character, and eventually a destiny.

Ezek. 33:21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.

In the 10th month of the 12th year of the Jehoiachin captivity, an escapee from Jerusalem arrived in Babylon, where Ezekiel was in captivity, to announce the destruction of the city. Since the siege of Jerusalem had begun in the 9th year and the city was destroyed in the 11th year, it took the escapee about 1 1/2 years to get to Ezekiel. Of course the escapee had taken a roundabout route to avoid detection by enemy forces. Also, he had probably hidden for a while and then gone secretly to Ezekiel, confirming what the prophet had been predicting for years.

Ezek. 33:22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

Ezekiel’s mouth was opened to speak to the people the evening before the messenger arrived. In the morning Ezekiel’s mouth was opened for good; his dumbness was reversed. In other words, Ezekiel’s tongue was completely loosed from dumbness when the escapee came. The evening before, God had loosed his tongue only for a specific communication. Then his tongue was dumb again until morning, when it was completely loosed and liberated.

During the period of the prophet’s dumbness, the people could see he was speaking prophetically in a trancelike state under the influence of the Holy Spirit. But now he was speaking as a natural man. Ezekiel had told the people the dumbness was laid upon him by the Lord God until a messenger would come announcing the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek. 24:24–27). Ezekiel’s dumbness was a sign—similar to the dumbness that came on Zacharias many years later and was removed when his son was born and named “John” (the Baptist) (Luke 1:18–20). The signification is that Israel’s blindness will be removed with the birth of the John the Baptist class.

Verses 21 and 22 have a prophetic application. The smiting of Jerusalem pictures (1) the destruction of Christendom and (2) the trouble coming on Israel in the future at the hand of Gog and Magog (see notes for Ezekiel Chapter 24). What is the significance of the opening of Ezekiel's mouth in the morning? What the Ezekiel class (the Church) previously prophesies will be opened to the people when the destruction of Christendom occurs and will be opened to the Holy Remnant when God delivers them out of Jacob's Trouble.

Ezek. 33:23 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 33:24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance.

Basically, the prophecy of verses 23–29 was fulfilled in Ezekiel's day. The prophet, in exile, was told of conditions back in the homeland. Jerusalem had been taken and the people in the countryside mistakenly thought they were exempt from judgment.

“Abraham was one, and he inherited the land.” *According to promise*, Abraham was to inherit the land. The people were saying, “Abraham was only one individual, yet he had the land. Now there are many of us, so the land is ours.” In other words, the people did not really understand the promise. True, Abraham had been in the land *but as a nomad*. The only personal property deeded to him was his burial land in Mamre.

Ezek. 33:25 Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

The Israelites ate meat without draining the blood, and idols were in groves on the hills, in *prominent* places. Moreover, *righteous* human blood was shed. Jesus said they had shed the blood of all the prophets (Luke 11:47–50). As children of the evildoers of the past, those at the First Advent were responsible and received the bloodguilt.

“Shall ye possess the land?” The Israelites felt the land was theirs by squatters' rights, by possession, not realizing that Moses had laid down conditions. If they were disobedient, certain calamities would occur.

Ezek. 33:26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

Ezek. 33:27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

The point is that the people could not escape the judgment whether they were in fortified cities or in open country. Wouldn't it seem strange when wild beasts devoured them in the field? Normally, wild beasts are fearful of man, but now, suddenly, they would start to pursue man—contrary to nature but in obedience to God.

After the ten tribes were taken into captivity, alien people (the Samaritans) were moved into some of the land by the order of King Nebuchadnezzar. The Samaritans began to think the land was theirs, but the land had to be desolate for 70 years in order to fulfill its

sabbaths. Therefore, the judgment was on the Samaritans too, unless they submitted to captivity. Pestilence even reached those who were hiding in caves. The word “wastes” refers to the northern half of Israel then occupied by the Samaritans; they would die by the sword.

Ezek. 33:28 For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

Ezek. 33:29 Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

“Desolate” is a significant word in view of the required 70 years’ desolation of the land from 606 to 536 BC. The year 606 BC marked the beginning of the 2,520 years, the “seven [Gentile] times” of Leviticus 26:18,21,24,28.

Ezek. 33:30 Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

Ezek. 33:31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.

Ezek. 33:32 And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

Ezek. 33:33 And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

Q: Are these verses saying that Ezekiel actually sang, or are they saying that the biting part of his message did not penetrate the people’s hearts and minds?

A: Both are true. Isaiah said of the people (paraphrase), “Hearing, they hear not, and seeing, they see not” (Isa. 6:9,10; Matt. 13:14,15). A slumber came over God’s professed people in regard to their hearkening to His Word because they were not in the proper heart condition. Up to Chapter 33, very little of Ezekiel’s message would be considered a “pleasant” portion. Therefore, it would seem that Ezekiel, in addressing the people, had a remarkable voice and manner. The Israelites went to hear him because they were struck with his dynamic personality and his oratorical ability. Hence they went *for entertainment purposes*, feeling that his words were not true. A parallel example today is that most people will read fiction or watch a Western, a movie, or a mystery on television for relaxation, knowing these things are not realities. That is how the people back there regarded Ezekiel. Moreover, the prophet dramatized his message. For example, he stood and looked north, lay on his side for many days, made drawings, and carried baggage under a wall as if escaping. The people went to hear Ezekiel as a pastime and did not view his message as prophecy that would become fact.

Ezekiel’s voice must have been pleasant and sonorous to listen to, for certainly the content was often very biting, and the people did not get the lessons. And we see this today. Many read Scripture not as a “thus saith the Lord,” not as being divinely inspired, but as poetry or fiction. They select portions they like and do not really feel it is God’s infallible Word. The

statement in verse 32 should be taken literally: “Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument.”

The people noted Ezekiel’s seizures of dumbness, but except for a *small minority*, they did not attach proper respect to his dumbness. Hence, after the 70 years, only a relatively small percentage returned to Israel under the decree of Cyrus.

The King James margin corrects a portion of verse 30 to read: “Thy people still are talking *about thee*” or “*of thee.*” They said, “Come, ... and hear.” “They hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (verse 31). Even when Ezekiel’s dumbness was removed, the people continued as usual. They passed the word that he had a message, but they did not heed it.

Ezekiel is usually remembered for the hardness of his message, but verse 32 shows he gave a sweet message as well. The sweet message is partially recorded in upcoming chapters, for example, the rebuilding of the Temple and the freshening of the Dead Sea (Ezek. 40–48).

Ezek. 34:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 34:2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

Ezek. 34:3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

Chapter 34 is directed against the “shepherds,” the spiritual counselors of both natural Israel and nominal spiritual Israel. They took the wool and ate the sheep; that is, they exploited the sheep. The condition existed to a certain extent in natural Israel before the 70 years’ desolation as well as afterwards, up to the First Advent. Nominal religious leaders of Christendom who use their faith as a *business* are also being chastised here. Instead of having ulterior motives, they should be feeding the sheep and acting as God’s messengers.

Ezek. 34:4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.

Verse 4 is a comparison with verse 3. The leaders liked their positions. They slaughtered the best “sheep” (the righteous element, who were trying to serve the Lord), and they neglected the sickly rest. They catered to the “fat” sheep (the rich), whereas they should have been concerned with the sick and the lame. We are reminded of Jesus, the true and Good Shepherd, who came as a physician to heal the sick and find the lost sheep of Israel.

Ezek. 34:5 And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

Ezek. 34:6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

In the Diaspora the sheep were figuratively “scattered” in that true Israelites desired

reconciliation but did not receive proper instruction from the shepherds. Those who responded to Jesus' message at the First Advent were reprobates, for the most part, but their consciences bothered them and they wanted to get back into harmony with their Maker. Although the scribes and the Pharisees were critical of his communication with these fallen fleshly Israelites, the publicans, sinners, and Samaritans heard Jesus gladly because his message was constructive. Those who properly responded made a consecration and received changed lives. They recognized that they were sick and realized their need of the Physician (Matt. 9:12).

During the Diaspora there was a lack of true shepherds, a lack of proper instruction. Most counsel was *man's* wisdom, not God's. Verse 6, a reference to the Diaspora, suggests that few rabbis, relatively speaking, will be honored in the Kingdom.

Because the shepherds were careless and did not exercise proper watch-care, the sheep became a prey to the beasts of the field. This is a double picture: In natural Israel the sheep wandered throughout the country, and in Christendom the people wander throughout the world. The shepherds do not warn the people for fear of losing their friendship or money.

Ezek. 34:7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Ezek. 34:8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;

The condemnation was twofold: (1) the shepherds allowed the sheep to become lost, and (2) when warned, the shepherds did not even look for the sheep. They did not try to retrieve the sheep from their sinful ways.

Ezek. 34:9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

Ezek. 34:10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

Ezekiel used sarcasm here. The implication is that the shepherd was like a wolf. The sheep were captive in the shepherd's mouth.

In antitype the nominal spiritual Gentile shepherds in the Gospel Age were abusive and negligent toward Jews, calling them Christ killers. They were responsible for much persecution of Jews during the Diaspora.

Ezek. 34:11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out.

God has a *personal* interest in each spirit-begotten soul. Both the shepherd and the flock have a responsibility, but if they default, the Lord will succor and nurture the spirit-begotten.

Ezek. 34:12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places

where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.

Even if the shepherd did not scatter the sheep himself, he was responsible for regathering them, and the sheep would be delivered “in the cloudy and dark day.” The double picture continues. In the *natural* picture, when Jerusalem fell and the Temple was destroyed in 606 BC, all died except the righteous remnant. Wherever they were, and no matter how few, the Lord provided a sanctuary. (Jesus expressed the same principle in Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”) In the turmoil of that day, God was promising to watch out for the interests of the sheep.

The *spiritual* picture has two applications. (1) In the Dark Ages and throughout the 1,260 years, when Christians had to flee, the Lord watched out for their spiritual interests. (2) In the near future the feet members will have their time of trouble. Just as Jesus had his time of trouble from Gethsemane through his crucifixion—that is, *before* the nation had its trouble—so the Psalms indicate there will be a time of trouble for the Church before the world’s great Time of Trouble. “God is in her midst; she shall not be moved: God will ever help her, at the dawning of *her* morning [before the great Time of Trouble]” (Psa. 46:5—see Leeser’s translation).

Ezek. 34:13 And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

In regard to natural Israel, God promised that He would not leave the people indefinitely but that He would bring them back to their land. Those living in Ezekiel’s day applied the promise to their return from Babylonian captivity, that is, *until they were scattered again in AD 70*.

Ezek. 34:14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.

Verse 14 is a description of Israel’s dwelling without walls, in safety, prior to Jacob’s Trouble.

Ezek. 34:15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 34:16 I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Earlier in the chapter the shepherds were condemned for not doing the things the Lord says He will do here. Verse 16 shows that the proud and the self-sufficient are not the ones who will be delivered out of Jacob’s Trouble. (Of course God will feed the people and give them permanent rest in the Kingdom.)

Ezek. 34:17 And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.

Ezek. 34:18 Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet?

Ezek. 34:19 And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.

The “rams,” a more favorable term, refer to the leaders, whereas the “he goats” are an unfavorable term. The reference is to the gathering *after* Jacob’s Trouble, not to the gathering that has been going on for a 100 years. All Jews who survive the Holocaust of the future will be handpicked, whether in Israel or in other countries. In other words, the survivors will comprise the Holy Remnant. God will judge between those Jews who are fit to live through the Time of Trouble and those who are not. “Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.” See also Isaiah 4:24. The confused, shepherdless sheep will be regathered. *Discrimination* will be shown in the Time of Trouble, *especially with the Jews*. One class is assigned to death, the other to survival. The stronger he goat is stubborn and will fight, whereas the ram uses diversion and preoccupation to delay the enemy until the flock of sheep can be gathered together. Those who are weak in their own strength but strong in the Lord will be delivered. There is a contrast here between the weak and the strong.

Ezek. 34:20 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.

Ezek. 34:21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

Ezek. 34:22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

The same principle of discrimination continues.

Ezek. 34:23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

Verses 23–29 emphatically refer to the restoration of Israel. God will bring the blessings to the sheep, but He has “one shepherd,” even his “servant David,” the beloved Servant, that is, Jesus (verse 23). God, the Great Shepherd, will establish His Kingdom through Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Psa. 23:1).

Ezek. 34:24 And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.

Ezek. 34:25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

The “covenant of peace” is the New Covenant.

Ezek. 34:26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

Rain will be a special blessing. What has happened thus far in Israel is merely a sign or a token, for there is still much wasteland. The blossoming of the desert is future.

Ezek. 34:27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her

increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

The term “bands of their yoke” refers to the old Law Covenant. Under the New Covenant, the Israelites will have peace and blessing, even though it will be similar to the Mosaic Law Covenant. As the people try to obey, they will receive help (mentally, morally, and physically). Another “yoke” to be broken is fear.

Ezek. 34:28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.

Ezek. 34:29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.

“I will raise up for them a plant of renown.” In one application Jesus is likened to an herb coming out of dry ground to be “the branch,” or tree, upon which all will rally in the Kingdom. A second application pertains to the tree (or grove) of Eden, of which all the faithful will partake at the end of the Millennium.

Ezek. 34:30 Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 34:31 And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD.

Verses 23–31 tell about restitution (compare Isaiah 11 and 35). The wolf will literally lie down with the lamb. Fear of man will be reversed in the animals, so that conditions will be as they were in the days of Adam, when he was lord over the animals and wild animals were like pets. These verses are literal, spiritual, and figurative.

The entire chapter is an allegory with the “sheep” representing people under the Great Shepherd, God. False shepherds in both Israel and Christendom have preyed on their own people. When the Kingdom is established, the whole world will “know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord GOD.” As He expressed the matter in Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”

God will judge or make a distinction based on one’s worthiness (verses 17 and 20). He will select as the Holy Remnant those who will make proper subjects as the nucleus of the Kingdom under the New Covenant (verse 25). Unfit subjects will die in the trouble and come forth later in the general resurrection, after the Kingdom is established. “Cattle and cattle” implies the common people. God will judge both leaders and the masses.

General statements are made here such as that God will feed the Holy Remnant, grant them safe dwelling, make the New Covenant with them, and restrain wild beasts. Subsequent chapters show *how* God will do these things. After one more great holocaust, the Kingdom will be established, the Third Temple will be built, Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and no more Canaanites will be in the land. Chapters 40–48 tell the manner in which restitution will be brought about. Chapters 38 and 39 show that a dark and cloudy day will precede the establishment of the Kingdom. Chapter 37 introduces Ezekiel 38 and 39, showing how the scattered sheep will be brought back to the land.

Ezek. 35:1 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 35:2 Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it,

This chapter is a prophecy against Edom (Mount Seir, Idumea). Edom was the land of Esau, inasmuch as Esau conquered it. In antitype this prophecy is against (1) nominal Christendom and (2) the Arab population, who have an inbred hatred for Israel. The Jews and the Arabs are Shemites, or Semites (Semitic), so they are kinsmen. When the northern ten-tribe kingdom was taken into captivity, Edom rejoiced. When the two-tribe kingdom was later also defeated, again Edom rejoiced. That hatred persists to this day. In fact, the roots of the hatred occurred with Ishmael and Isaac and with Esau's attitude toward Jacob.

Ezek. 35:3 And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate.

Esau and Jacob were brothers, but the promise went through Jacob. Of the two, only Jacob was a Jew. When Jacob and the 70 went to Egypt, the promise went through his 12 sons. Although Esau was born first, Jacob (the "supplanter") replaced him in the promise (he grabbed Esau's heel at the time of birth). Esau, who represents natural Israel, sold his birthright, and natural Israel prefers the natural promises. Esau can also represent the Great Company and Babylon, that is, nominal spiritual Israel. Both natural Israel and nominal spiritual Israel sold their birthright.

Ezek. 35:4 I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

Ezekiel prophesied of calamities that would come on Mount Seir and make it desolate.

Ezek. 35:5 Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end:

Ezek. 35:6 Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: since thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee.

Because the Edomites had no compunction about shedding blood, the same fate would come on them. King Herod was an Edomite—like a "half-breed Jew."

Ezek. 35:7 Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth.

Ezek. 35:8 And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword.

Ezek. 35:9 I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Edom was never the same after this desolation.

Ezek. 35:10 Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the LORD was there:

The “two nations” were Israel and Judah, the two kingdoms. The inhabitants of Mount Seir thought they would possess the land of these two nations in 606 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar took Judah captive.

Ezek. 35:11 Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee.

Ezek. 35:12 And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.

The Edomites spoke “blasphemies” against Israel and Judah when they said, “They are given us to consume” and “Aha” (Ezek. 36:2).

Ezek. 35:13 Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them.

Ezek. 35:14 Thus saith the Lord GOD; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.

After Gog and Magog are defeated and when the Kingdom is established—when the whole earth rejoices—God will make Edom desolate. The very fact the other nations are rejoicing shows that a measure of restitution has been effected at the time setting of verse 14. In other words, not only will a portion of Egypt be recalcitrant in the Kingdom (Zech. 14:18,19), but the Edomites/Idumeans will be reluctant to recognize Israel. Their inbred hatred, deep in their hearts, will not be removed by God’s miraculous deliverance of Israel from Gog and Magog. In time, however, that hatred will cease in the *natural* picture, and the Edomites will be saved.

In the *spiritual* picture regarding Christendom, the *systems* will be destroyed, but the *individuals* who were part of those systems will be treated on a restitutionary basis. In the Kingdom, people will prosper according to their *obedience*. “When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9). The judgments will continue into the Kingdom.

From the spiritual standpoint, when the nations rejoice, the nominal systems will be desolate; they will have been destroyed utterly. With natural Edom, the hatred in the hearts of the Arabs will cease. Individual Arabs who refuse and resist a change in heart attitude will be cut off. Although it will be a bitter pill for the Arabs to accept the fact that Jesus and the apostles were Jews, that most of the Ancient Worthies are Jews, and that all of the Holy Remnant are Jews, they must do so if they would get life.

Ezek. 35:15 As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Verse 15 shows there is hope for repentance, for as a people, the Edomites will be ashamed of their background. It will not be a *complete* desolation of either the people or the land but a desolation of their pride.

Ezek. 36:1 Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD:

Ezek. 36:2 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession:

Ezek. 36:3 Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people:

Ezek. 36:4 Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about;

Ezek. 36:5 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey.

Ezek. 36:6 Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen:

Ezek. 36:7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame.

The time setting was the 12th year of the Jehoiachin captivity, and Jerusalem was destroyed in the 11th year, or 606 BC (Ezek. 33:21). Through Ezekiel God was addressing the Jew and prophesying what He would do to Mount Seir and others. The prophecy was directed *toward* the mountains, land, etc., of Israel but *against* the heathen and all Idumea (Mount Seir, Edom). Different heathen peoples such as Edom and Ammon had been delighted to see the destruction of Jerusalem.

The wording suggests this situation will exist again at the end of this age. God's purpose is to gather all the nations together against Jerusalem to battle, at which time He will pour upon them the fire of His indignation. Subsequent chapters of Ezekiel tell of events in this near-future time setting, when it will look dark for Israel in the last days of her extremity.

This future end-of-the-age application will be after Jerusalem is taken, that is, when the houses are rifled, the women are ravished, and half of the city goes into captivity (Zech. 14:2). What happened in Ezekiel's day against God's people will happen again at the end of this age. Verse 7 summarizes the previous six verses. In the past, right after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Moabites and the Ammonites—"the heathen that are about you [that is, around Israel]"—were defeated.

Jeremiah 49:7–22

Jer. 49:7–9 Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him,

the time that I will visit him. If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

Jeremiah prophesied about Edom in Judah while Ezekiel spoke the same kind of message in captivity in Babylon. Teman, Edom, Seir, Idumea, Dedan, Esau, and Bozrah are all related and reasonably synonymous terms. For instance, Teman was a rich district of Edom. (Incidentally, there were two Dedans: one in Edom and one in Africa.) Verses 7–9 show the desolation to be very comprehensive.

Jer. 49:10–13 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

Bozrah, the capital of Idumea, pictures Papacy, the capital of Christendom. There are a number of correspondencies between Edom and Papacy, some of which follow. Teman (verse 7) was noted for wisdom, and Papacy, the “little horn ... [with] eyes like the eyes of man,” is also noted for wisdom (in a symbolic negative sense). The inhabitants of Edom literally thought they could inherit the land of Israel and Judah. Symbolically, Papacy has been against both the true Christian and the Jew. Until recently Papacy used the Jews as scapegoats, and it has also sought to downgrade them and their roots for Christianity by changing dates and establishing traditions to make itself appear as the founder of Christianity. In a great master plan, Papacy wants Rome to be the Holy City, not Jerusalem.

Jer. 49:14–18 I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

Verses 14–18 show the menial inheritance of Edom since its judgment and desolation. The expression “the clefts of the rock” are a reminder of Petra (meaning “rock”), which was part of Edom. The inhabitants of Petra liked to go up high in the rocks and watch as an eagle for caravans that they could go down and raid. The “plagues” antitypically refer to the plagues that will come on mystic Babylon.

Jer. 49:19 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

Jordan was the habitation of lions because it was very lush, being filled with trees, and there are possibly still some lions there today. When the river overflowed its banks, the lions left their normal habitation and went nearer civilization.

When a lion approached the flock, the shepherd usually ran away, but a *good* shepherd stayed and tried to defend the sheep. Here the shepherds of Edom, instead of protecting their flocks, fled from the lion (Nebuchadnezzar), who rose up from the “thicket” (Jer. 4:7).

Jer. 49:20–22 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The fall of mystic Babylon is alluded to here. The Prophet Isaiah spoke about the slaughter of flocks in Bozrah (Isa. 34:6; 63:1). Bozrah and Christendom are both known as a sheepfold.

The “he” of “Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah” refers to Nebuchadnezzar, who would be looking for his prey. An eagle attacks its prey in the light of the sun as it rapidly swoops down. As a result, the prey has trouble seeing the eagle. Then, when the eagle puts on the brakes by beating its wings, it creates a shadow, paralyzing its prey with fear. As a lion paralyzes prey with its roar, so an eagle does likewise with its outspread wings, which create a shadow. Jeremiah was saying that like an eagle, Nebuchadnezzar would come after Edom.

The “noise ... in the Red sea” occurred when Pharaoh and his host were overwhelmed by the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus. In antitype, the Time of Trouble will be terrible and known worldwide. “At that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.” The heart of a woman in travail is faint; the heartbeat is affected.

Back to the study of Ezekiel Chapter 36.

Ezek. 36:8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come.

Ezek. 36:9 For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown:

Ezek. 36:10 And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded:

Ezek. 36:11 And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

The fulfillment of the promise of restoration is still future. “I ... will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” The restoration will exceed and be better than the typical kingdom under Solomon. Moreover, just as God was formerly their King and He selected those who were to rule, so in the Kingdom Israel will again have leadership as of old, chosen by God—the Ancient Worthies.

Ezek. 36:12 Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more

henceforth bereave them of men.

Ezek. 36:13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations;

Ezek. 36:14 Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 36:15 Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD.

God addressed the land as though it were a person. In verses 13–15 the word “nations” should be “nation” (singular), that is, Israel. See the RSV: “You devour men and you bereave your nation of children.” The history of Israel has been one of *sorrow* mingled with happiness.

Except for the few Israelites who went to Egypt, the small number of survivors were taken to Babylon. When those in Babylon were allowed to return under Cyrus’s decree 70 years later, those who did so thought this prophecy regarding the repopulation of the land, prosperity, and bountiful crops was being fulfilled at that time. Ezekiel had prophesied the destruction, and now he seemed to be prophesying the ultimate recovery. However, there are clues that this prophecy is *yet future* in its fulfillment. When this condition occurs, “the heathen [will not] any more” be able to berate and mock Israel (verse 15). The prophecy indicates a *permanent* condition when Israel will *never again* be put to shame.

In AD 69–70 Israel suffered another terrible destruction followed by the Diaspora of more than 1,800 years (contrasted with the 70 years earlier). Since 1878 the Jews have been returning to their land again. They do not like to think of another Holocaust, for they feel that they have had enough and that they were unjustifiably persecuted. They do not realize that Jacob’s Trouble lies ahead.

The regathering we see today is not the *full* regathering. All Jews who survive the Time of Trouble will be handpicked, and those in Gentile lands will be regathered to Israel after the Kingdom is inaugurated. In other words, the regathering takes place at this end of the age, in our day, but it will take place in two parts: both *before* and *after* Jacob’s Trouble.

Verse 11 is proof that this chapter is primarily future. “I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings.” In the future, Israel will be even more glorious than in Solomon’s day. Also, notice that “beginnings” is *plural*. The nation had a beginning and an end, a beginning and an end, and they will have another glorious beginning.

Verse 15 in the RSV reads: “I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, says the Lord God.” Not only will the people be regathered, but the cities will be rebuilt as well as the wastes. The reproach of the heathen will be removed. What wonderful promises!

Ezek. 36:16 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 36:17 Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it

by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.

“Their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.” The reference is to a menstruating woman, on whom the Law placed restrictions. She was separated from the religious service for that brief period of time—removed outside her habitation or camp—and then restored in a more or less mechanical fashion. Of course there are typical lessons. God likened the nation to an unclean woman. Because of *blood guilt*, the nation was removed into captivity. Just as the woman was without the camp, so the nation of Israel was without its own land—scattered into Gentile lands and without a Temple for communicating with God. In that condition, Israel has been suffering reproach, but the reproach is beneficial in that it is preparing a people for the Lord.

Ezek. 36:18 Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it:

The Israelites “shed blood upon the land” when they worshipped Molech, offering their firstborn sons and daughters. Also, murders were committed—another example of shedding blood.

Ezek. 36:19 And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

Ezek. 36:20 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land.

The Israelites went out of the Lord’s land into heathen lands where they had difficulty and profaned God’s name. In the Diaspora, Israel had no prophets. It was a long threshing experience with God’s back seemingly turned to them. Generally, two results have occurred: (1) The hearts of some have been hardened with a corresponding loss of faith, and (2) the faith of others has increased. The Diaspora has been a long purging experience, and it is not over yet. The *final* purging will be Jacob’s Trouble.

Ezek. 36:21 But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went.

Ezek. 36:22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

Ezek. 36:23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

God will do these things for His “name’s sake,” not for Israel’s sake. We are reminded of Moses’ reasoning: “If you destroy all the Israelites except me, the heathen will reason that you *were not able* to save them.” In other words, to vindicate His holy name, God will restore Israel in love and mercy. If He did not do so, the world might think He lacked the ability since the Israelites were called His people.

Although not stated here, another reason to restore Israel is because of the “fathers” such as

Abraham and Isaac—“even the sure mercies of David” (Rom. 11:28; Isa. 55:3). God will be sanctified in Israel when He fights for them in Jacob’s Trouble, bringing a successful conclusion. The *final* aspect will be the real eye-opener—when God deals with them *directly* through miracles and the Ancient Worthies. The *preparatory* work going on now and for some time is not recognized by the world.

Ezek. 36:24 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Ezek. 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

God said, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you.” Verse 25, which is describing a kind of baptism, refers back to the type when the Law was given and Moses sprinkled the people with blood and water. The activities in the type were symbolic of the establishment of the New Covenant and the purification of the Holy Remnant, who will have a new heart and mind and be in harmony with the Kingdom. Today the Jews are divided into four camps: worshippers of (1) money, (2) self, or (3) no God and (4) those who have faith.

Consider the term “clean water.” When we consecrate, we have the “truth” about God’s plan. The Ancient Worthies will be similarly blessed when they come forth from the tomb. When “clean water” is sprinkled on the Holy Remnant, it will have a *purifying* effect, and it will be received with *understanding*.

The Jews need to be cleansed, as shown here by the *sprinkling*. Ezekiel 20:37 shows that the Jews must “pass under the rod” at the time of Jacob’s Trouble, for those who survive will be handpicked and the “water” will touch each one of them. In other words, the Holy Remnant, having gone under the rod, will be repentant, and the Word of God will go only to those surviving Jews and cleanse them. The Holy Remnant will be so changed in heart that the world will recognize God’s dealing with them and will take hold of their “skirts” (Zech. 8:23). The Jews who are not sprinkled at that time will go into the grave and come forth in the general resurrection.

This chapter of Ezekiel is setting the stage for Gog and Magog in Chapter 38. Chapter 20 shows that although the Jews are currently *physically* in their land, they are still in a wilderness condition, figuratively speaking. Jeremiah Chapter 31 speaks of the whole process of the Millennial Age, which will be a continuing softening of hearts, whereas Ezekiel 36:25–27 refers to the beginning or the inauguration of the Kingdom.

When Jehovah fought for Israel in the day of battle (Zech. 14:3), it was actually the Logos who helped them. Similarly, Jesus and the Church will inaugurate the New Covenant—but according to *God’s* plan.

Ezek. 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezek. 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

As the chapter progresses, it becomes more and more obvious that the weight of instruction given pertains prophetically to the future, yet this instruction did help to produce two holy

remnants in the past (for example, at the First Advent). However, the next (future) purging will be *thoroughly effective*. Only those Jews in the proper heart condition will live into the Kingdom. Then the “new heart” and the “new spirit” will happen in an *abiding* sense.

Israel still has a heart of *stone* at present. Almost all Jews do not recognize the doctrine of repentance, which is the breaking of the stony heart. Verses 26 and 27 have a future fulfillment despite Auschwitz and other concentration camp experiences. *Repentance comes first*, not just decorum.

Ezek. 36:28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Verses 25–28 serve as an introduction to Chapter 37 on the Valley of Dry Bones, which shows various stages of growth from a skeletal framework. The word “spirit” in the phrases “a new spirit” and “my spirit” are the Hebrew *ruach*, as is “breath” in Ezekiel 37:5,6,8–10. Chapters 36–39 are a unit that follows through even into certain pictures regarding the Temple.

Ezek. 36:29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

Ezek. 36:30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.

Ezek. 36:31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Ezek. 36:32 Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

Ezek. 36:33 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.

Ezek. 36:34 And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

Ezek. 36:35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

Ezek. 36:36 Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.

Verses 29–36 were not fulfilled previously because the Jews have not loathed themselves in their own eyes (verse 31). A nucleus of Orthodox Jews may have had this spirit of weeping at times, but they are a *minority*. The mourning and loathing themselves tie in with Zechariah 12:10–14, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of

Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart." All of the Holy Remnant will be repentant. When Messiah is revealed to them, they will then see how they as a people have been blind.

Although the current regathering is according to God's providence, the real regathering is yet future, after Jacob's Trouble, for no true restitution blessings can begin until the sin offering is complete. In other words, both the Little Flock and the Great Company must first be removed from the earthly scene. Zechariah 13:8,9 says that "two parts [Little Flock and Great Company] shall be cut off," and then God "will bring the third part [Israel] through the fire."

Before favor returned to Israel in 1878, the Jews received persecutions while wandering aimlessly. Now the persecutions serve the constructive purpose of driving them back to Israel.

"The heathen that are left round about you" refers to the *Gentile* survivors of Jacob's Trouble. Only one sixth of the forces of Gog and Magog will survive to return to their homelands to give eyewitness testimonials (Ezek. 39:1,2). The initial impact will be that God has taken over.

As a second testimony, Daniel 12:1 states, "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people [Israel]: ... and at that time thy people [the Holy Remnant] shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." When Michael stands up with authority for Israel, the righteous Israelites will be delivered.

Jacob's Trouble will inaugurate the Kingdom at dawn. At present we are seeing through faith a few streaks of light, but it will get dark again before dawn.

Ezek. 36:37 Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Ezek. 36:38 As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The Holy Remnant will yet inquire of God before they are saved. There will be two inquiries: one by those not in the right heart condition, whose prayer will not be answered, and one inquiry by those who are in the right heart condition (the minority), whose prayer will be answered.

The "holy flock" of verse 38 is a comparison with the three feast days when all males were required to go to Jerusalem and many flocks were present for animal sacrifices. The multiplication of Israel in the future is likened to a "holy flock" (Joel 2:28; 3:17,21; Ezek. 37:23,26).

The Holy Remnant will still be tested in the Kingdom for everlasting life, and no doubt some will not get life. Just as the Christian can fall away after consecration, so can one of the Holy Remnant.

This chapter will encourage the right-hearted Jew in captivity in the future, just before the deliverance of the Holy Remnant. When all looks *hopeless*, the Scriptures will provide *hope*.

A theme that is emphasized over and over in Holy Writ is that God will save Israel for His *own* sake, not for Israel's righteousness. This principle was true even with regard to the Red Sea and the ten plagues.

Ezek. 37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,

Ezek. 37:2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

Chapter 37 is known as the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. In verses 1 and 2 God took an interesting approach with Ezekiel. The prophet was shown the valley, but that was not enough. He had to travel all the way around the valley and really observe and be impressed with the fact that it was *FULL* of bones and the bones were *VERY DRY*.

Probably Ezekiel was transported to this valley by means of a vision or a trance. His seizure by the Holy Spirit, a private experience not shared by the people, did not necessarily occur at night—it could have happened during the day. At any rate, Ezekiel *felt* this experience.

What do the “dry bones” suggest? Not only was there no life, but the bones had had no life for a *long time*. They were like the bones in Egypt dating from the Persian Empire under Cambyses II at the Amenehat Pyramid, that is, thousands of years old and very dry.

Ezekiel had to pass around the valley in order to have the scene impressed upon him. He saw “*very many [dry bones] in the open valley [a broad expanse of valley, not just a gorge].*” The implication is that the bones were *scattered throughout* the valley, and this disposition is significant for the antitype.

Ezek. 37:3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

When God asked Ezekiel, “Can these bones live?” the prophet replied, “Thou knowest.” Ezekiel's words show he had faith that if God wanted the bones to live, they would. He *knew* God had the answer. He also realized there was something behind this question, for it would take a miracle for *very dry* bones to *live*.

Ezek. 37:4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

Ezek. 37:5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

God not only told Ezekiel to speak (prophecy) to the dry bones but gave him the exact words to say. Ezekiel had to address the bones with the authority of God and *as if the bones could actually hear him*. The prophet manifested faith and courage by speaking directly and loudly—as a trumpet. He spoke *with authority*: “O ye dry bones, *hear the word of the LORD*. Behold, I [God] will cause breath [wind, spirit, Hebrew *ruach*] to enter into you, and *ye shall live*.” Various phases of development are given in the next few verses, but God's motive is seen here: to cause Israel to *live*. When Israel lives, the nation will be endued with **POWER**.

Ezek. 37:6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

The order of development in giving “breath” to these bones is as follows: sinews, flesh, skin (epidermis), and breath (spirit). The breath, though mentioned first in verse 5, would be given *last*. In other words, the objective was the breath. Then verse 6 shows the stages of development, the sequence. Sinews hold the bones together; they draw the separate bones into one cohesive whole with flexibility, coordination, and locomotion. The flesh, the meat part of the body, is a symbol of material prosperity. The skin, which includes nerves, is a protection for the flesh from the air and irritants. Skin is a symbol of Israel’s external recognition as a nation or power, which occurred in 1948.

Ezek. 37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

As the process began to happen, Ezekiel first heard a noise, then a “shaking,” an earthquake—an ominous sound that showed the prophecy would be fulfilled under *troublesome* conditions (persecutions, pogroms, and hatred directed against the Jews that caused them to turn to Palestine/Israel). The migration to Israel was something like the settlers who came to America, an unknown land, under difficult conditions, leaving behind possessions in order to gain liberty.

While the shaking occurred in the vision, the scattered bones came together into many human skeletons. In fulfillment the “bones” were collected out of the various lands and came together in Palestine.

Ezek. 37:8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

Next, sinews or ligaments covered the bones, followed by flesh or muscle, and then skin. Now Ezekiel saw many complete bodies, but *no life, no breath*.

This process is analogous to Adam’s creation. He was perfectly formed step by step from the dust of the ground (given flesh, skin, etc.). The last step was when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living soul. (Life begins when the *breath* enters the organism.) Hence, although Israel was formed earlier, the nation will not live until the “breath” is imparted, a stage still future.

The *viable* life of the fetus does not take place until it leaves the womb, and the Valley of Dry Bones vision is one proof. It is true that life does occur in the womb, but it is only *cellular* life. For instance, when one dies, the cells are still alive. Some cells decay quickly, within hours, but others (such as hair and fingernail cells) may take weeks, months, or even years to die depending on factors like climate, entombment, and the moisture content of the tomb. Moreover, all cells in a person’s body are replaced every seven years but in stages. Hence every cell in the body dies in seven years, but the individual himself—the viable life—does not die, just his cells. Abortionists and antiabortionists do not know where to draw the line, but the Bible has the answer.

The sinews were the various organizations for trade, kibbutzim, etc., that resulted in

wealth, but even today there is still no breath. The nation cannot get the peace they want. When Israel dwells without walls in the near future, the seeming peace will be a false security, for *God* is the One who will give them breath in *His due time*.

In summary, then, Ezekiel saw many human bodies that had no breath, no life. What an impressive motion picture to see as the bones came together and the bodies formed!

Ezek. 37:9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

Ezek. 37:10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

Although God told Ezekiel what to do, it was actually God who caused the breath to come into the bodies. He instructed Ezekiel to address the invisible wind and prophecy, “O wind, O breath, come from the four winds [the four breaths come from the north eventually], and breathe into these slain bodies, breathe into the lungs of these corpses, so that they will live.”

As Ezekiel complied, the human bodies not only came alive but stood up on their feet. From a prone position, they stood up and constituted an “*exceeding great army*” in this big, open valley. What a very strange vision! Ezekiel would have wondered what was happening. A resuscitation was being implied—literally from the grave as well as figuratively as a nation. The Holy Remnant will hear earlier, but the nation must hear after Jacob’s Trouble.

Ezek. 37:11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

Now God explained the vision to Ezekiel. The vision symbolically represented that in the Diaspora the people of Israel would be scattered throughout Europe and elsewhere. Those Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the 70 years’ captivity thought this prophecy pertained to them, and the prophecy did include them, but a much greater dispersion occurred in AD 69–70. In fact, in this latter dispersion, Jews were even separated from their families and sold as slaves. (Incidentally, the Anglo-Israelite theory has some credibility in that there are evidences of Jewish names foreign to the native population. The Jewish people were so capable that some left an impression—such as their names. However, other parts of the Anglo-Israelite theory are erroneous.)

A popular saying among the Jews was, “We are without hope, and our bones are dry.” They likened themselves to dry bones because of their experiences. What hope did a separated family have of being reunited? None. As time went on, the Jews felt their national polity was forever lost. God used such statements to show that He will miraculously restore the Jews to their former condition.

In these verses the Hebrew *ruach* could just as appropriately have been translated “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit.” In verse 9 the King James translators probably wanted to emphasize the oxygen or air, so they used “wind.” The corpses needed to be oxygenated so that they would be rejuvenated and live. Wind, breath, and spirit all pertain to *air* in one form or another.

Ezek. 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

The prophecy continued: “O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” A “grave” can be either in the ground or on top of the ground, for the “grave” is the *condition of death*, and not necessarily a place. One who dies in an explosion and is blown to bits is still considered to be “in the grave.”

Ezek. 37:13 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

Ezek. 37:14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

The word “spirit” is the Hebrew *ruach* again. The variations in translation help to give meaning to the vision. “Spirit” is a good word here, for “breath” makes the organism live, but “spirit” indicates a *consecrated* life.

Verses 12–14 are proof that the infusion of breath is still future, as well as the opening of the graves (although the return from Diaspora has been a *partial* fulfillment). Israel will then know that Jehovah is the Lord—and that *He* has both prophesied and performed their revival as a nation.

There are two thoughts with regard to the opening of the graves:

1. The Jews were in various nations throughout the Diaspora, being prisoners without hope and cut off from God. They were (and are) called from these nations to go back to Israel. But this explanation is only *part* of the picture. The nation cannot fully come out from the grave until after Jacob’s Trouble when the breath of life is given. Even though Jews are back in the land, they are considered sojourners until they pass under the rod and a Holy Remnant survives. The sinew, flesh, and skin developments came *after* they were back in Israel for a while, and the breath will come *after* Jacob’s Trouble. The point is that the nation does not come from the grave like Lazarus—in a moment. Israel’s coming out of the grave is a *long process*. The bones do not come out from the other nations as a whole organism but piecemeal.

2. Each bone represents one person. When collected, the bones represent people (plural), and eventually the people represent the nation.

Additional Explanation of Verses 7–9

Ezek. 37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.

The bones began to come together from 1878 on, contemporaneous with the Zionist movement and the preparation work preceding it, beginning with Petatikva (“Door of Hope”), established in 1878, the first Jewish colony in Palestine after almost 2,000 years. An organized, concentrated effort to return to Israel and settle there is indicated by the bones’

forming into human skeletons.

The “noise” and “shaking” (earthquake) refer to persecutions, pogroms, and trouble that led to the Jews’ migrating back to Israel. “Behold, I will send for many fishers [the Zionist movement], saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters [pogroms of Russia, persecutions under Hitler, etc.], and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks” (Jer. 16:16). The cruel “hunters” woke up the Jews to see that they had to do something in order to survive, for Hitler’s intent was to exterminate them.

More specifically, the “hunters” were the leading personalities in connection with the pogroms and the persecutions, such as Stalin and Hitler. Examples of “fishers” are Herzl, who preached Zionism, and Chaim Weizmann during World War 1, who saved Britain by making dynamite from garbage. In gratitude England viewed with favor the establishment of a homeland in Palestine for the Jews.

Ezek. 37:8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them.

1. *Sinews* go into the flesh like the roots of a tree. At first the sinews were just laid on the bones, but later they were attached to the flesh. The sinews picture organization, recolonization, and activities such as building houses and draining swamps for farmlands.
2. *Flesh* pictures temporal prosperity and increase.
3. *Skin* shows statehood, recognition as a nation from man’s standpoint (from 1948 on), UN membership.

When the “breath” or spirit enters, the earthly rulers of God’s government will be the Ancient Worthies, the “princes in all the earth,” who will have their headquarters in Jerusalem (Psa. 45:16).

Ezek. 37:9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

The *breath* stage of development is still future. When the Kingdom is established, God will infuse breath, or spirit, into Israel, and the nation will *LIVE* under the New Covenant with *POWER*.

Comment: It is remarkable to consider what happened to Israel in the 70 years from 1878 to 1948.

Reply: A 2,000-year separated condition is now being reversed.

It is helpful to compare Israel’s going back after the 70 years of desolation with the present return from Diaspora. After the 70 years, the people’s building efforts were directed to their houses, not to the Temple. As a result, the Prophet Haggai and others scolded the people. Cyrus had given permission to rebuild the Temple, but the Israelites were preoccupied with building their personal houses. Zechariah and Haggai got the people to bestir themselves, and then, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Joshua the high priest, Ezra, and Nehemiah,

the rebuilding of the Temple was accomplished. Organization was needed. First, the Temple platform was built and then the structure itself, but the city lacked walls for its protection and the protection of the Temple until Nehemiah's day. Therefore, it took nearly a century, from 536 until 454 BC, for the walls to be built and the Jews to be really established. The wall was built in 52 days (Neh. 6:15).

Some would say the breath has already entered Israel, pointing out Israel's recognition as a nation, winning wars, etc., but *Israel has not yet been recognized in the sense of this prophecy*. Not until *God's* spirit enters Israel will the nation *live*, and the entering of *God's* spirit will mean *consecration*. After Jacob's Trouble, the Holy Remnant will consecrate, turn to the Lord. *God* will pour out His spirit ("the spirit of grace and of supplications") upon the Holy Remnant (Zech. 12:10). The process will start with repentance and a mourning for Jesus as for an only son. At that time they will know that *God* is *God*, that *He* has opened their graves and saved them (Ezek. 37:13,14).

Q: How does the spirit (or breath) come from the "four winds"?

A: The term "four winds" is used in Daniel 7:2; 11:4 and Revelation 7:1 to pertain to the Time of Trouble on the world, whereas Ezekiel 37:9 is a picture of Israel, specifically Jacob's Trouble. It is like a zoom lens that has a wide focus on the world and then concentrates a close-up focus on Israel. The loosing of the four winds (the fallen angels) will occur in Jacob's Trouble. Stated another way, the loosing of the four winds will precipitate the *climax of the Time of Trouble*. The intent of the fallen angels will be to destroy *God's* handiwork. Since the true Church will be gone when the fallen angels are fully loosed, their target will be the Jews. If those days were permitted to be prolonged, no flesh would survive, for the fallen angels are vengeance-prone. First, Satan and the fallen angels will dispatch the Great Company, who must die before the Ancient Worthies are raised perfect. Christ's merit, which has been loaned out to Christians, must first be released and paid over to Justice for the world before it can be used for the Ancient Worthies. Therefore, the first evidence that this has occurred will be the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies.

Q: Are the four winds of Ezekiel 37:9 different from the four winds of Revelation 7:1?

A: Yes, in that the fallen angels will be only partially loosened at first. Proof texts that Ezekiel 37:9 pertains to the judgment of the fallen angels are Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4.

Satan will be on hand for the Great Company, but a very, very short time later the fallen angels will be loosed en masse, coming in "like a flood" (Isa. 59:19). When the fallen angels are fully loosed, *real trouble* will break out, for they will cause more trouble than Gog. Following this "wind," the graves will be opened in regard to the Ancient Worthies and their helpers.

It can be said, then, that Israel will be born in *great trouble*. *God* has promised, "Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, *yet will I not make a full end of thee*: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished" (Jer. 30:11). Saviors (plural) will come out of Zion to rescue Israel (Obadiah 21).

Why did *God* use Ezekiel to prophesy? *God* uses *human* instruments. Hence He will use an "Ezekiel" *class* to prophesy at the end of the age. John the Revelator also represents a *class*: the last feet members. In the Book of Revelation an angel (an *individual*) instructed him.

Another aspect of John's life, the fact that he was the last living apostle, also indicates he represents a *class*. Likewise, John the Baptist represents mainly a *class*. The Lord's people can *with authority* proclaim Jacob's Trouble—the last wave of anguish to come over the Jewish people—and how the forces of Gog will come down and Jehovah will intervene to save Israel. In an early chapter of the Book of Ezekiel, Bro. Russell is shown as the man (an *individual*) with the writer's inkhorn (9:2,3). Toward the end of the Book of Ezekiel, a man (an *individual*) is shown measuring the Temple with a line of flax and a reed (40:2,3).

Ezek. 37:15 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

Ezek. 37:16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

Ezekiel was instructed to dramatize another lesson before the captives in exile. He was to take two sticks. On one stick he wrote "For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions." On the second stick he wrote, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions."

Ezek. 37:17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

Ezek. 37:18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these?

Ezek. 37:19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

The stick of Joseph was in the hand of Ephraim, and the implication is that the other stick was in the hand of Judah. In other words, Ezekiel had one stick in each hand. To dramatize the lesson, he put the two sticks together, pulled them apart, put them together, etc. It was as if the sticks were in the hand of the Lord, for *God's* hand would be involved in the uniting of the two sticks, in the reunion.

Why does the account say, "Joseph ... in the hand of Ephraim"? Joseph had two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh. In Moses' deathbed prophecy, Ephraim, the second-born, got the better or chief blessing. Joseph was honored by a *double* representation (two sons represented two separate tribes). What were the two blessings? "the ten thousands of Ephraim" versus "the thousands of Manasseh"; that is, Ephraim's blessing was ten times greater than Manasseh's (Deut. 33:17). Both were fruitful, but Ephraim was far more fruitful.

The term "in the hand of" means "in the power of" or "under the king of." After King Solomon's death, in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the nation of Israel was divided. The ten-tribe kingdom was called Ephraim, and the two-tribe kingdom, consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, was known as Judah. The two divisions were like two separate countries with two capitals, two kings, and two centers for religious worship. The picture here in Ezekiel 37 is that the hand of *God* would bring the two together. The two sticks would become one stick, their union being a miracle.

Q: Back in verse 16, what do the expressions “Judah, and ... his companions” and “Ephraim, and ... his companions” mean?

A: The ten tribes went into captivity about 150 years before the two tribes. The ten- and two-tribe kingdoms were separate before captivity, and they were taken into captivity at different times. Ezekiel was among the ten tribes, who were in captivity much longer than the two tribes.

When, much earlier, some inhabitants of the ten tribes saw the golden calves of Dan and Bethel that Jeroboam had erected, they moved to Judah and settled there. Moreover, the 55,000 Jews (out of approximately 2 million people) who returned to Israel from Babylonian captivity under Ezra in 536 BC were almost all from Judah.

Ezek. 37:20 **And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.**

Verses 20–28 had a partial fulfillment in 536 BC, but the great preponderance of the prophecy is *still future*. Nevertheless, this prophecy was comforting to the Israelites in Babylon during the 70-year captivity.

The Israelites wept by the waters of Babylon during the 70 years. “How can we sing a song in Babylon?” was their question or sentiment. Jeremiah’s Lamentations are like a doleful song—a song of the blues. Many died in captivity. Then, when the 70 years had elapsed, Cyrus’s decree came suddenly one day. How startling! It took Daniel to inspire the people, but it was Jeremiah’s writings predicting the *70 years* that inspired Daniel. (The fact that Daniel predicted the *70 weeks* is interesting.)

Ezek. 37:21 **And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:**

Ezek. 37:22 **And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:**

“One king shall be king to them all.” This statement about Israel’s having one *king* is proof the prophecy is still future in its primary fulfillment, for following the return in 536 BC, Zerubbabel was their *governor*. Also, most of the returnees were from Judah, whereas this prophecy equally stresses the second stick, that is, Israel, the ten tribes. Most of the Jews who returned were from Judah and Benjamin because their former territory had been Jerusalem and its environs. The Levites went back because Hebron, a Levitical city, was in the permissible area. And those from Simeon returned because their territory consisted of scattered cities in Judah. Of those who returned, the people had mixed motives. Some had pure religious motives, some had partial religious motives, and some just wanted to get to the homeland. However, since only the *one* “stick” really went back after the expiration of the 70 years, the primary fulfillment of this prophecy is yet future.

Incidentally, the Pastor uses verses 20–28 to refute the Anglo-Israelite theory. The 12 tribes will be *one* nation. This prophecy was only *partially* fulfilled after the Babylonian captivity. The *real* regathering as one nation is taking place now and will continue in the future, after Jacob’s Trouble.

Ezek. 37:23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

Verse 23 probably had an impact on Ezra, who would have applied these Scriptures to the return of the Jews in 536 BC. They were not to defile themselves with idols or transgressions; they were to be cleansed. Ezra even commanded that they put away their foreign wives and go back and start afresh. In Babylon the Jews did learn to get rid of their idols.

Ezek. 37:24 And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

“David,” meaning “beloved,” refers to Jesus. This prophecy will be fulfilled when Jesus reigns in the Kingdom. Ezekiel 34:23 and 37:24 suggest that the literal David may be the first Ancient Worthy to preside over and be in charge at Jerusalem. Another hint is the term the “sure mercies of *David*” (Isa. 9:7; 55:3).

Ezek. 37:25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

Ezek. 37:26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

Another clue that this prophecy pertains to the future is that God “will make a covenant of peace with them; ... an *everlasting* covenant.” This is a reference to the New Covenant.

Ezek. 37:27 “My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ezek. 37:28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Verses 26–28 refer to Ezekiel’s Temple with the terms “sanctuary” and “tabernacle.” “And I ... will set my *sanctuary* in the midst of them for evermore.” “My *tabernacle* also shall be with them.” “My *sanctuary* shall be in the midst of them for evermore.” When the Israelites returned in 536 BC, a temple (the Second Temple, Zerubbabel’s, which was enlarged into Herod’s Temple) was built, but it was destroyed in AD 69–70. The “sanctuary” described here will be “for *evermore*.” Moreover, the true regathering is occurring in our day, as proven by the preceding vision of the Valley of Dry Bones in this very same chapter.

The Third Temple will be a temporary expedient for the Kingdom Age; that is, although the Temple structure will remain forever, the sacrifices will cease at the end of the Millennium. The sacrifices will be literal—they will be a memorial—but just as the sacrifices of the Tabernacle under the Mosaic Law ceased, so those of the Third Temple will also cease.

Verse 27 sounds like Revelation 21:3. A great voice out of heaven said, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” The “tabernacle” is God’s dwelling place; *He* will be in that structure.

The rebuilding of the Temple will be quickly performed after Jacob’s Trouble and after the New Covenant is made. Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39 tell of the *BLAST* that will take place in Israel, for Old Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock must be demolished to make room for the new Jerusalem. Ezekiel Chapters 40–47 provide details of the Third Temple, and Chapter 48 describes how Jerusalem will be rebuilt, the geographical relationship of the city to the Temple, the disposition of the land immediately around the city, and how the 12 tribes will be situated.

Sequential, verse-by-verse Bible studies are essential for understanding such details. For example, Chapters 38 and 39, pertaining to Jacob’s Trouble, expand upon the “four winds” of Ezekiel 37:9. From Chapter 36 to the end of the book, the prophecies in Ezekiel are *future* in their fulfillment. There are still *many* details in Scripture that man has not even really touched upon. God has provided messengers for dispensational truth, but for *details* of dispensational truth (and especially as time goes on), we must search the Word itself.

Ezek. 38:1 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Ezek. 38:2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him,

Ezek. 38:3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

God told Ezekiel to prophesy against Gog, the chief prince of the multitudinous host that would come down against Israel. Ezekiel was facing north, signifying that, generally speaking, the peoples comprising the forces of Gog would come from that quarter.

Gog is the leading character from the land of Magog, which is Russia. In the homeland of Russia are Meshech (an ancient name for Moscow) and Tubal (Tubalesque formerly, now Leningrad). Notice that the four names, all places in the Russian homeland, are grouped together: Gog, Magog, Meshech, and Tubal. In the USSR, an abbreviation for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (*plural*), are some discontented republics who want their autonomy. [Note: As of June 1999, there are still republics, even though the union no longer formally exists.]

Ezek. 38:4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:

God will turn Gog *back* and bring Gog forth—and all Gog’s army, armor, and weapons. In other words, Gog will be *turned around* and *hooks* put into his jaws, and then he will be *pulled down* to Israel. The wording suggests that a *strong* influence will be brought to bear to make this figurative or symbolic personality called Gog come down to the Holy Land. (Verses 10–12 reveal what some of the attractions will be.) Note: Gog is *not an individual*.

A world war followed by depression will occur first. Next Russia will invade Italy and

destroy the Vatican. Then, while the enemy forces are contemplating the destruction of Europe, God will *change* their plans and have them “turn back” and invade Israel. The fact that “hooks” have to be put in their jaws shows a little resistance at first.

Gog will be an armed, relatively organized host. The multitudes under the leadership of and associated with Gog, the chief ruler or prince, will be clothed with military garments and use military weapons and conveyances. This massive horde of people will be an organized invasion, a disciplined host, of guerrilla bands.

Ezek. 38:5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet:

Now comes another grouping: Persia, Ethiopia (Cush), and Libya (Phut). This auxiliary host will be associated with the Gog grouping. Persia comprises Iran and Iraq. Ethiopia is India, part of eastern Turkey (Cush lived in Eastern Anatolia), and part of India (Gen. 2:13; 10:6). The river Gihon, one of the four rivers that went out of Eden, was in Asia Minor. Therefore, this Ethiopia has nothing to do with Africa. Libya is northern Arabia, which includes the Persian Gulf states. Neither Ethiopia nor Libya refer to Africa but pertain to the areas Noah’s descendants lived in after leaving the Ark.

Ezek. 38:6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee.

Another grouping is Gomer and Togarmah. Gomer and all of his bands, Togarmah from the north and all of his bands, and *many* people associated with Gog will unite in the goal of going southward into Israel for evil purposes. It is hard to be definitive with Gomer and Togarmah, but Gomer could be China. The picture is widening *northeastward* and *northwestward* toward China and Europe, respectively. Particularly involved will be *Eastern* Europe (the former East Germany, Poland, etc.). Incidentally, the multitudinous Gog host comprises more than just the peoples named in verses 2, 3, 5, and 6.

Ezek. 38:7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.

Gog, as well as the great host accompanying him, is instructed to be prepared; in addition, Gog is told to be a guard unto the host. In other words, the Gog power will be looked to for leadership. A preparatory work has been going on, for Gog will be headed in a different direction but then be turned around when hooks are put in his jaws to pull him down to Israel. The others will not necessarily be with Gog at the time the hooks are put in his jaws, but when Gog goes down against Israel, others will join in and be in sympathy with Gog’s evil designs. Others will be attracted to Gog for this evil purpose. The Gog host is being prepared not only for an invasion of Israel but also for its own ultimate destruction.

Ezek. 38:8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.

Ezekiel was prophesying during the Babylonian exile (between 606 and 536 BC), so “after *many* days” helps us locate this prophecy on the stream of time way down in our day, in the near future. The Revised Standard Version reads, “After many days you will be mustered [organized for battle]; in the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land where people were gathered from many nations upon the mountains of

Israel, which had been a continual waste; its people were brought out from the nations and now dwell securely, all of them."

When the enemy host is fully prepared, Jews will have been gathered out of Diaspora and reassembled in their land, dwelling in relative peace, safety, and self-sufficiency. After 1,845 years of exile and being laid waste, Israel has been in a state of regathering since 1878, with national recognition coming in 1948.

"They [Israel] shall dwell safely all of them." In the *final analysis*, Israel will dwell safely, but Jacob's Trouble precedes this *permanent* peace and security. (Verse 11 tells of a *temporary* peace and security prior to Jacob's Trouble.) Only the handpicked Holy Remnant will survive the trouble and live on into the permanent peace and security of the Kingdom.

Ezek. 38:9 **Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.**

Gog and the multitudinous host will ascend and come like a storm, being so numerous that they are likened to a cloud that covers the land of Israel. A storm "ascends" when the dark clouds form on the horizon. The people dwelling safely in Israel will suddenly see an *enormous* potential hazard in the north that makes them feel small and helpless. The hordes will begin to come down. A *great many* people will be involved in this invasion.

Ezek. 38:10 **Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought:**

What is the thought of "at the same time"? Verse 10 reverts to when Gog, having already destroyed the Vatican, is turned back from invading and destroying Europe. During this period of time of invasion, an "evil thought" about Israel's defenseless position will come into Gog's mind, convincing the host to go down and attack Israel. In other words, since Christendom falls *before* Jacob's Trouble, Gog will already have invaded Europe, Italy, and the Vatican before starting down to Israel. The evil thought is part of the "hooks" mentioned in verse 4. Gog will be so strongly attracted to Israel that the plans will change.

Ezek. 38:11 **And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,**

Ezek. 38:12 **To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land.**

Gog's evil thought will be, "I will go up to Israel, to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to those who are at rest and dwelling safely without walls or gates. I will go to take a spoil and a prey from the people who have gotten cattle and goods and dwell in the midst of the earth." The "spoil" would be food, goods, and possessions, and the "prey" would mean the destruction of the people, that is, taking vengeance and destroying Israel as a nation. As a breadbasket, Israel will be appealing to the hungry hordes of Gog.

"To turn thine hand upon ... the people that are gathered out of the nations." This is a dispensational clue telling us that we are in the last days because Israel has returned to her land. *The* event of history is about to occur.

At this time, just prior to Jacob's Trouble, Israel will be in a state of relative security and prosperity. Hence between that time and now, there must be some kind of solution of the Palestinian issue and peace achieved with the immediate Arab neighbors and nations. And there must be economic prosperity too, for Israel has had a dreadful inflation rate. Already the number of flocks has been increasing, indicating that Israel will prosper more and more. The Galilee area is flourishing agriculturally. Israel feels the need to be self-sufficient because of the inflation rate and the nation's to-date reliance on foreign aid. Prosperity does not have to be measured in hard currency—it can just mean being self-sustained.

Israel dwells "in the midst [navel] of the land [earth]" (see King James margin). Strategically located, Israel is a good place from which to set up a headquarters and then establish world dominion. A superpower that controlled Israel would be at the throat of three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. Gog's intention will be to destroy the Jews, take the "cattle and goods," and seize the strategic location. However, the providential reason for Israel's location is its future position as capital of the world.

Armageddon involves *almost all* nations; Jacob's Trouble involves Israel. The gathering of all nations to Armageddon in Revelation 16:16 is just prior to Ezekiel 38 and concerns the fall of Babylon. The fall of the churches will bring on the world's trouble, of which Jacob's Trouble is the climax.

Ezek. 38:13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

Here is still another grouping: Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish. However, these three will not be part of Gog's host. As separate observers, they will inquire of Gog, "Have you come down to Israel to take a spoil and a prey?" Since these words are expressed in *question* form, we know these three powers will be *on the scene* but will feel relatively *powerless* to avert the intent of the enemy.

What is the identity of these three nations? All three are Western powers as follows:

1. "Sheba" represents the United States. As ruler of Egypt and Ethiopia, the queen of Sheba traveled from the coasts of the earth (from Upper Egypt, which was like another continent in that day) to see Solomon's Temple. The Prophet Isaiah referred to the United States as "the land shadowing with wings, which is *beyond the rivers of Ethiopia*" (Isa. 18:1); hence Sheba symbolizes the United States, a country that was far, far away, on the outer extremities of the world, as it were. Just as the queen of Sheba had wealth, so the United States is a wealthy country. Moreover, Queen Hatshepsut, who was the queen of Sheba, had a mixed race of black and white, just as the United States does.
2. Dedan is France.
3. "Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" is a symbol of England with all the colonies she had until recent years. England is the main or mother "lion," as it were. Moreover, a lion is the symbol of Britain. The "merchants," indicating a naval power, also help to identify Tarshish as England.

The point is that the United States, France, and England will have expeditionary,

representative, peace-keeping forces on the scene in Israel, such as United Nations forces. However, being limited in number, the forces will be powerless to stop the host of Gog.

God's purpose is to "gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2). The leading powers of earth will be attracted to Israel so that they will be on hand to see God's glory in rescuing Israel. With all communication being cut off, the Gentile survivors will return to their homelands and be able to give eyewitness accounts. The survivors of Gog and of Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish will probably be about the same ratio: 1 out of 6 (Ezek. 39:2).

Other Scriptures, such as Psalm 83, suggest that prior to Jacob's Trouble, a conflict will occur in which Israel will defeat her immediate Arab foes in a remarkable victory. As a result, it is likely that the United Nations will providentially establish a peace-keeping force there. The victory will lead to temporary prosperity and security for Israel. During the presence of the peace-keeping forces, the Gog host will come down.

And there is another point. Since their own homelands will be in anarchy at the time of Jacob's Trouble, the peace-keeping forces will not be inclined to return to their respective countries. They will feel they are better off staying right where they are. Ezekiel 39:6 is a proof text of the anarchy that will be occurring in Russia and elsewhere at that time: "*I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD.*" Isaiah 34:2 is another such text: "*For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.*" All nations worldwide will experience anarchy.

The Scriptures seem to indicate that there will be nuclear warfare, but even that would not be the real Time of Trouble. It will, however, prepare the way for anarchy, for nuclear warfare will disrupt everything: communications, employment, food supplies, etc. Being sick of war and the results, the people will curse their governments in each of their lands (Isa. 8:21).

As for the Gentile survivors, when the Gog host finally realize God is fighting for Israel, they will be deathly afraid to do any more damage. They will be only too glad to have survived and will go back to their homelands to give eyewitness accounts.

Ezek. 38:14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it?

When Israel is dwelling safely, it will be a time of paradox, for as the rest of the world gets closer to trouble, that nation will be prospering and financially secure. Israel will be self-sufficient and prosperous while all others are going down. In fact, the other nations will be angry. When the communist/socialist ideology falters and the kibbutzim prosper, Russia will be angry.

Ezek. 38:15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:

Ezek. 38:16 And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.

Much of these verses is repetitive except that verse 16 reveals God's purpose: He will be

sanctified in Gog before the eyes of Israel and surviving Gentiles. How? When God's fury comes up into His face and He defeats Gog with stupendous miracles and upheavals in nature and the Holy Remnant is rescued, it will be obvious that superhuman power is being used. In the destruction of this multitudinous host, God's glory and power will be magnified in the sight of the survivors, both Jew and Gentile. God will be magnified and revealed as the God *of Israel*, and the surviving Gentiles will return to their homelands to give eyewitness accounts.

Comment: The term "heathen" is used for the Gentiles because even though Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish are on the scene, the Christians (Little Flock and Great Company) will have been removed by this time.

Ezek. 38:17 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?

God spoke about Gog through the prophets (*plural*) of Israel, telling that He would bring Gog against Israel. "Gog" is not used in other prophecies, but the term "Assyrian" is used in Isaiah as the hammer and the ax. Jeremiah also talks about Jacob's Trouble. In some of his prophecies, the king of Babylon (or Sheshach) is a picture of Gog. The point is that verse 17 is a *comprehensive* statement. All of the Old Testament prophets spoke of the trouble and then the blessings to follow. Instead of symbolizing Papacy in certain pictures, Babylon represents an atheistic, communistic power. Hence this end-of-the-age confrontation between Israel and "Gog" is found in other prophecies under other symbols. Verse 17 is a reminder of Acts 3:21, which states that the times of restitution are a theme of *all* the holy prophets.

When the Scriptures say that God will come in *great power and glory*, we must realize it will be the official inauguration of the Kingdom and not a period of 120+ years of preparation. Ezekiel Chapters 38 and 39 have been given a spiritual application for the most part, and thus the power and force of the meaning have been hidden.

Ezek. 38:18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face.

Ezek. 38:19 For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

Ezek. 38:20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.

As God said through Isaiah, "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: *now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once,*" and so God's fury will come up in His face (Isa. 42:14). This expression is figurative because no man can see God's face and live. The expression indicates that (1) God has had enough. He will lay bare His holy arm in the sight of all and execute judgment (Isa. 52:10). (2) A person can be angry, but that anger can go undiscerned. However, for fury to come up in God's *face* means an *outward* manifestation of His indignation against this invading host. God will be "seen" in this trouble. One way will be "a *great shaking* [earthquake] in the land of Israel."

The earthquake will be of *such mammoth proportions and intensity* in that selective area that birds, insects, fish, animals, and people in all conditions will feel the effects. All will shake at God's presence. The Dome of the Rock and the city of Jerusalem, both new and old, will be leveled to prepare the topography for the Temple platform in the Kingdom. When the Mount of Olives splits, the Holy Remnant will find the valley that opens to be a place of refuge and safety. They will rush into that valley and be protected, while all around will be utter destruction. God's method will be similar to the Israelites' protection when the Red Sea opened and they crossed dry-shod in the Exodus. The "dry land" of the future will be the valley of safety between the two halves of the Mount of Olives.

Q: The end of verse 19 defines the earthquake as being in the land of Israel, but verses 20 and 21 sound as if the earthquake affects the whole earth. Doesn't the qualification of verse 19 apply to all three verses?

A: Yes. Zechariah 14:4,5,10 confirms the selectivity. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.... All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited." Zechariah 14:10,11 shows that Jerusalem will be rebuilt. Gog and Magog will come down to *Jerusalem*; they will not be interested in Tiberias or Haifa, for example, but the main capital. "The city shall be taken" (Zech. 14:2)—what city? *Jerusalem*. All the land in that environs will be lifted up and the land completely reallocated. A *literal* earthquake will occur in the future as it was a *literal* earthquake in the days of Uzziah (Zech. 14:5; Amos 1:1).

So specific shall the judgments be that near the end the inhabitants of earth will know it is the Day of the Lord. "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:15). "And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward [*to me* in that day, saith the LORD]" (Isa. 8:21).

Ezek. 38:21 **And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother.**

The particular intent is the destruction of Gog and those with him, as well as the unholy Jew, and not of Sheba, Dedan, and Tarshish especially. "Every man's sword shall be against his brother." This statement indicates that utter confusion and panic will cause Gog's own "sword," the very weapons of destruction and violence, to be turned against one another. We are reminded of the Gideon-Midianite account where God gave Israel a great victory by causing the enemy to become so confused that they slaughtered each other.

Many of the great literal occurrences of the Old Testament will have a brief, concentrated, literal, limited application in Israel in Jacob's Trouble to show it is the *God of nature* and the

God of Israel who is manifesting power. And it will be *very obvious* that a power is protecting each of the Holy Remnant. For example, if one of the Holy Remnant is in a building and the building collapses, killing all of the others, that one individual will survive. Each one may escape death dozens of times over the month or whatever period of time is involved. When this mutual class realize they are being protected and then get into the valley between the split Mount of Olives, they will know they have been saved, covered, by the Lord's hand. And the surviving eyewitness Gentiles will discern this miraculous protection.

Ezek. 38:22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

God will plead against Gog in various ways. Some will die by "pestilence" (disease) and others by "blood" (violence—accidents, that is). Overflowing rain suggests a flood; a torrential downpour will occur reminiscent of the Deluge in Noah's day, drowning some. Hailstones will be the size of basketballs, weighing a minimum of 50 pounds (compare Josh. 10:11). Fire and brimstone (sulfur) indicate the earthquake will spew out lava, which will fall destructively as in the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah. What happened to Lot's wife will happen again. These occurrences will disprove the idea that the Old Testament accounts are fables to instill good morals and that they are not literal. All of these calamities will happen to Gog and to "his bands," the many people confederate with Gog. The inauguration of Christ's Kingdom will be one of the *most dramatic* occurrences of history as there are sample reenactments of the miracles that occurred in Israel's past. In all of the confusion and destruction, those whose names are written in the book of life will survive. Each one will know he has been specially spared and will thus repent and mourn for Jesus as for an only son. The Holy Remnant will mourn as being responsible, as a people, for Messiah's death (Zech. 12:10–13).

Ezek. 38:23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Thus will God *magnify* and *sanctify* Himself and *be known* in the eyes of many nations. So much for those who think the Kingdom will gradually come in! Ezekiel 38 is STRONG and SPECIFIC language. To say the Kingdom will glide in means that such are not really reading Scripture and that they are babes in understanding. The nominal system has had the view that the Kingdom will come when everybody is converted. Go out and evangelize, they say, and eventually, when enough are evangelized, the world will know Christ. But the reality is far more DRAMATIC!

Ezek. 39:1 Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:

Chapter 39 begins with wording that is similar to Chapter 38. Ezekiel was told to prophesy against "Gog, the chief prince [or ringleader] of Meshech [Moscow] and Tubal [Leningrad]."

Other Scriptures describe the areas and cities of the invading host, Gog, and their movement. Gog will be involved with the Plain of Esdraelon and will go down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat. From the north, Gog will follow the path of least resistance down to Israel and inundate the land. Another Scripture describes the terminal end of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. It is one thing how the Gog forces come down and another thing how they

end up. There was a mass burial in the days of King Jehoshaphat. God fought that battle and the people sang, not using their weapons. They came upon mass dead bodies and despoliation (2 Chron. 20:20–30). The Valley of Ziz (verse 16), that is, the Valley of Berachah (verse 26), nicknamed the Valley of Jehoshaphat, refers to that incident. In a similar fashion, God will deal with Gog but through a variety of miracles.

Ezek. 39:2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel:

“I [God] will ... leave but the sixth part of thee [Gog].” This is a key thought to show the degree of devastation and havoc that will be brought against Israel’s enemies (Gog and associated bands), leaving only *one-sixth to survive* Jacob’s Trouble. Stated another way, *five-sixths will perish* when God rescues the Holy Remnant and defeats the enemy. The small percentage of Gentile survivors will go back to their homelands with eyewitness accounts.

The various translations have different thoughts for this part of verse 2, not even agreeing with each other. For example, the King James margin has alternate thoughts, but note that the number six is there (although it is lacking in some other translations). “Six plagues” cannot be the correct thought because, according to the different prophets, more than six calamities will come on the enemy host. The thought of only one sixth of the enemy surviving seems to be the most accurate based on parts of the Books of Isaiah and Zechariah. A tremendous horde will come against Israel, and this chapter later shows a *huge* number of bodies (carcasses) will require burial, so a five-sixths destruction ratio would seem to be correct. Of the *enemy host* (not of the onlookers, not of the peacekeeping force), only one-sixth will survive.

“I will turn thee back, ... and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, ... [to] Israel.” This verse confirms the thought in Ezekiel 38:4 that God will put hooks in Gog’s jaws and turn the host in a different direction. Ezekiel 39 picks up the same scene but from another perspective. The “north parts” of this verse corroborate the “north quarters” of Ezekiel 38:6.

“I ... will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.” This statement is to be considered in a literal sense. Note: Ezekiel Chapter 39 has both *literal and figurative wording*, but not symbolic.

Ezek. 39:3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

God will smite the bow (the instrument of destruction) out of Gog’s left hand and the arrows out of his right hand. In other words, Gog’s weapons will become useless and of no avail.

Ezek. 39:4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.

Ezek. 39:5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.

The enemy, Gog and all his “bands” (Ethiopia, Libya, Gomer, etc.—see Ezek. 38:5,6), will fall upon the mountains and on the open field to be devoured by birds of prey. Verses 4 and 5 are literal, describing GREAT CARNAGE. Bodies will be strewn about in the open field. Vultures and birds of prey will feed on them in great numbers. Birds of the air and beasts of

the ground will have a mighty feast on these carcasses.

“For I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.” These verses are *forceful* language. God will put hooks in the jaws of the enemy force and draw them down to Israel for the purpose of displaying His former glory (the glory that was exercised in the “day of battle”—Zech. 14:3). An important point should be kept in mind, however. God *does not interfere* with man’s free moral agency. Rather, certain forces will be at work where evil thoughts will come into Gog’s mind to distract from what the enemy had intended to do.

As in verse 2, the “mountains” are those near the area of the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized. More will be said on this point later in the chapter.

Ezek. 39:6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

God will send a “fire” on Magog (the homeland of Gog, Russia) and on those who dwell confidently in the “isles” (the more democratic countries such as the United States and England). This verse is saying that at the time of Jacob’s Trouble, there will be anarchy both in Russia and in the democratic nations; that is, East and West will share in this judgment.

Ezek. 39:7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

“So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people *Israel*,” saith the Lord God. Whatever judgments are abroad elsewhere in the earth to teach the inhabitants righteousness, they will be especially dramatic in Israel. With the climax of the Time of Trouble being Jacob’s Trouble in Israel, that tiny nation will be center stage for the revealment of God’s name and cause.

God will not let Israel pollute His holy name anymore. This will be accomplished through the purging process whereby the Jews who survive will be handpicked. The unfit class will be weeded out—to be dealt with in the general resurrection later, when the Gentiles also come forth from the tomb.

The heathen will know that God is “the Holy One *in Israel*” because eyewitnesses will go back to their respective homelands. Also, when God brings peace to Israel, the anarchy will suddenly cease around the world. As God fights for His people, Israel, the judgments will be seen as selective and providential against the enemy.

Ezek. 39:8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken.

“This is the day whereof I *have spoken*.” This verse is a reminder of Ezekiel 38:17, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I *have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel*, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?” God spoke of Gog by the mouth of all His holy prophets to a greater or lesser extent.

Ezek. 39:9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years:

After God delivers the Holy Remnant, those who dwell in Israel's cities will go forth and burn weapons with fire for seven years; that is, the weapons will be melted down and converted into farm implements ("plowshares" and "pruninghooks"—Isa. 2:4) or other useful purposes. Hence the land will be cleansed of unsightly burned-out weapons and equipment.

Ezek. 39:10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD.

In Ezekiel's day there were more forests than today (the Romans later denuded them). Wood, as fuel, was used to cook food and warm houses. During the future time period of Jacob's Trouble, there will be no need to cut down trees in the forests, for the Gog forces will bring their own gasoline, oil, diesel fuel, etc.—the modern-day equivalent of "wood"—with their weapons and artillery. When God delivers the Holy Remnant, all of Gog's equipment and supplies will be abandoned and Israel will seize them. Gog will come down to spoil Israel, but instead Israel will end up taking spoil and booty from the enemy. Since Israel will be quite reduced in population when the unrighteous Jews are weeded out and the surviving eyewitnesses return to their homelands, the booty will last a considerable time.

Even with the establishment of the Kingdom, it will take time for conditions to return to normal. The Ancient Worthies will be on hand, and the people will need leadership and instruction to get things operating smoothly.

In extreme conditions it is even possible to make ersatz (fake) bread out of sawdust, and people trapped in mines have eaten their leather belts and shoes. But Israel will not have to resort to such measures because with God's defeat of Gog, the spoil will be prepared for them. Other countries, however, will have to take dire measures such as eating the roots of trees for a short time. These experiences will tenderize mankind, who will realize that no flesh could have survived unless a superpower, God, intervened to save them from the destruction and anarchy. God will intervene through The Christ.

Ezek. 39:11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog.

It shall come to pass at that time that God will give to the multitude of Gog "a place there of graves [a cemetery] in Israel." The cemetery will be on the King's Highway in the Valley of the Passengers on the east of the Dead Sea but at its northern end. This land, which is sometimes called the land of Gilead, is now Jordan, but in the Kingdom it will belong to Israel. (The King's Highway went north on the east side of the Dead Sea, all the way up to the far side of the Sea of Galilee and beyond.) In other words, an area *with specific boundaries predetermined by the Lord* will be used as a graveyard. Very numerous will be the corpses interred there, but each one will have its own little plot. Rather than a mass grave, there will be individual spaces. The stench from the decaying corpses will be so terrible that it will "stop the noses of the passengers," and the people who have to travel that way will feel like vomiting (see King James margin).

Ezek. 39:12 And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.

It will take seven months to bury the bones and cleanse the land from disease. Meanwhile, the bodies will decay and vultures will attack and devour the dead flesh. Thus for seven months the vultures will feed as the remaining bones are buried. The graves will be without names even though they are separate plots.

Ezek. 39:13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD.

The number of dead bodies will be so great that for the seven months *all survivors*—men, women, and children—will be responsible for getting the corpses in the graves as fast as possible. Such a task will really impress on their minds what God has done for them.

Ezek. 39:14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search.

Ezek. 39:15 And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.

When the mass burying in separate plots is completed at the end of seven months, the universal conscription will stop and a burial crew will be hired to continue burying isolated bones that are found. As a bone is spotted, a marker will be placed next to it, and word will be sent to the burial crew regarding its whereabouts. The burial crew will then go to each site where a bone or bones were found and gather them to the national cemetery and bury them. (As God starts to deliver the Holy Remnant, some of the enemy will flee and then be struck down in their escape effort, thus dying some distance from the mass destruction—hence the need to search for isolated bones.)

The seven months are definitely literal, for when they expire, the burial crew will act. The account does not state how long the burial crew will operate. The point is that wherever the skeletons, bones, and corpses are found, they must be transported to the cemetery for burial.

Ezek. 39:16 And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land.

The cemetery will be so large that it is to be called a “city.” The name of this city of the dead—this enormous, vast cemetery-city—will be Hamonah. Combining the thoughts in verses 11 and 16, we see that the city of Hamonah will be in the Valley of Hamon-gog. “Hamonah” means multitude, and “Hamon-gog” means the multitude of Gog. In the Book of Esther, Haman plotted to get the king to put all Jews to death. However, by God’s providence Esther gained the king’s favor and Haman’s plan boomeranged. As a result, Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai, Esther’s uncle. In Jacob’s Trouble, Gog will be the enemy of the Jew as Haman was back there. Thus the Valley of Hamon-Gog is really the valley of Haman and Gog—a play on words, a flashback, and a real *memorial*. Those who view the cemetery in the Kingdom will be reminded not only of Jacob’s Trouble but of the historic Esther-Mordecai-Haman incident.

The cemetery will serve a symbolic purpose in the future, for it is intended to indicate what previously happened—that God destroyed this host in the Time of Trouble. Similarly, the Great Pyramid will be preserved for posterity as a memorial.

How can any think the Kingdom will glide in gradually?!? Seven months will be required for the bulk of the burials, but in addition, the deaths will occur *suddenly*. The Kingdom will be ushered in suddenly, with a *definite* chronological beginning—a *date* known to the Lord. However, it will take time for all things to run smoothly in the Kingdom. Therefore, time has been set aside for the reconstruction of human and angelic society.

The Holy Remnant will be responsible for the burying. They will utilize the one-sixth survivors of the Gog host, as well as the survivors of the peacekeeping force. “All the people of the land” (verse 13) includes the Gentile survivors as well as the Holy Remnant of Israel. Those who are on the scene will have to cooperate in the burial work. The one-sixth survivors will bury their own before going back to their homelands as eyewitnesses. And it will even take time, after the burial, to get the eyewitnesses home. Therefore, it will probably be a year after Jacob’s Trouble before all are in their homelands. Rumors and reports will go back quickly to the home countries via ham radio (or whatever means), for regular communications will have been cut off, but the survivors themselves will return in due process of time to verify the information.

Ezek. 39:17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

God told Ezekiel to invite every fowl and beast to come to this GREAT slaughter on the mountains of Israel, and there they would eat flesh and drink blood. From a natural standpoint, this would literally be true, with birds of prey and wild animals feeding on the dead bodies.

The Scriptures are low-key, so let us be sure we get the *power* of this prophecy. Ezekiel actually had to *dramatize* the message. He was by the river Chebar in Babylon among the captives of the ten-tribe kingdom when the people saw him literally point to imaginary birds and beasts and call them by name. Some of the people would have ridiculed him, and some would have paid serious attention. Such experiences crystallized the prophet’s character. A son of a priest, and thus a cultured man, he had to humble himself, and the more he acted like a madman, the more he pleased the Lord.

Ezek. 39:18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

Ezek. 39:19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

The feathered fowl and the wild beasts will partake of animals (rams, bullocks, etc.) as well as humans. They will be attracted by the blood at first and later by the carrion.

There are three perspectives:

1. A *primary natural* fulfillment with regard to Israel. With the hailstones, flood, earthquake, pestilence, etc., animals will die as well as humans. For example, *all* living beings will be affected when the earthquake occurs (Ezek. 38:19,20). One calamity after another will take place in the Holy Land to decimate the enemy host.

2. A *secondary natural* fulfillment with regard to the world.
3. A *figurative* fulfillment with regard to Christendom.

The flesh “of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings” refers to *food* that the enemy Gog will bring along. Everything will be consumed by the Israelites: implements of war, food, electronics, the literal enemy. Drinking “blood till ye be drunken” indicates satiation of spirit from the Jews’ seeing their enemy destroyed. In other words, by Gog’s defeat Israel will have satiation and satisfaction *physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally*. Figurative and literal language are commingled.

Ezek. 39:20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the LORD GOD.

Notice that God will spread the table: “Thus ye shall be filled at *my* table.” The fowl and the beasts will eat their fill of blood and fat of horses, riders (RSV), and mighty men.

Many try to figuratively and symbolically interpret Ezekiel 38 and 39, not from an Israeli standpoint but as a *worldwide* condition. They say the worldwide picture is the *primary* application, but these chapters say that Gog comes from the north *into Israel*. Other prophets confirm this, one example being, “For I will gather all nations against *Jerusalem* to battle” (Zech. 14:2). Failure to see the literal aspect of Jacob’s Trouble indicates a lack of Bible study.

In other pictures, but not here, the birds of prey are in a worldwide scene, and the feathered fowl represent the depraved of mankind—the terrorists and the anarchistic element who, in the Time of Trouble, will plunder and destroy. Many will end up killing each other. They will fight like dogs over a bone and destroy one another in the process. The populace are enjoined to seek meekness and righteousness in the hope that they may be hid. The more one stays aloof from the mad-dog fight, the better his chance of survival.

Ezek. 39:21 And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them.

God’s deliverance of Israel will be so spectacular, so unique, that it will be different from anything that has happened in the past—chiefly because of the multitude of ways the deliverance will be accomplished. Of course the primary focus of attention will be in Israel. God’s judgments there will be the centerpiece of His glory. However, the Scriptures show that there will be happenings in other nations too. “When thy judgments are *in the earth*, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9). The whirlwind comes from the coasts of the earth. “And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day *from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth*: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground” (Jer. 25:33). *Many* people will die in other lands in the anarchy. If, say, one half of earth’s population die in the trouble, that would be *billions*.

Ezek. 39:22 So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.

Israel will not be converted until Jacob’s Trouble: “from that day and forward.”

Ezek. 39:23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for

their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword.

The heathen, the Gentiles, the other nations, will know that Israel previously trespassed against God, and for that reason He hid His face from them during the Diaspora, as shown by the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Ezek. 39:24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them.

It has been a hard lesson for those in the *wrong* heart attitude. Consider *right*-hearted Daniel and Nehemiah, who prayed as if they were the guilty ones (Dan. 9:4–19; Neh. 1:4–11). Israel's uncleanness has to be exposed in order to create a new climate for rebirth and regeneration.

Ezek. 39:25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name;

Ezek. 39:26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.

Ezek. 39:27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;

Verse 26 indicates there will be a period of complacency and prosperity just before Jacob's Trouble, a time when Israel will begin to forget the Lord. Therefore, Israel will have to bear their shame in Jacob's Trouble, but then God will be jealous for His holy name and save them out of the trouble. He will "have mercy on the *whole* house of Israel" (on those surviving Jacob's Trouble as well as on all who come back from the grave). The Kingdom will have a distinct beginning. God's methods of starting with the Holy Remnant, where they mourn for Jesus as for an only child, will create the greatest cleansing, the most beneficial, the most lasting effect.

God will "bring again the captivity of Jacob." First, the living generation (all surviving Jews in Gentile lands) will return to Israel after Jacob's Trouble; then those in the tomb will come forth. The exception will be the Ancient Worthies, who will be revealed with the Holy Remnant. Those captive to death in life (the Holy Remnant) plus certain select, elect ones in the tomb (the Ancient Worthies) will come forth.

When the Jews who survive the trouble in Gentile lands are brought back to Israel, God will be "sanctified in them in the sight of many nations." When the world sees the Holy Remnant—when it is seen that these Jews are a changed, contrite people—the Gentiles will be impressed just as we are when we see a former reprobate who has accepted Christ and truth and thus has undergone a radical change.

Ezek. 39:28 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.

"Then shall they know" that Jehovah is their God. He will gather the Jews unto their own

land and leave “*none of them any more there* [in Gentile lands].” This gathering will occur *after* Jacob’s Trouble; that is, a gathering occurs before Jacob’s Trouble (currently going on) and a gathering occurs immediately after so that ultimately *no Jews will be left in Gentile lands* except the Ancient Worthies sent there by the Lord.

Ezek. 39:29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

God will no more hide His face from the Jews when He pours out His spirit upon Israel. When He puts His spirit in them, they *shall live* (Ezek. 37:14). Although the selective sparing of the Holy Remnant will be especially dramatic and noticeable in Israel, it will also occur in other nations. All Jews who survive the Trouble *worldwide* will comprise the Holy Remnant. However, this does not mean that every Jew should now settle in Israel, for some are of mixed marriages, and there are other complications. Such determinations will be made under the laws of the Kingdom. The Kingdom will be a dictatorship along the lines of righteousness. To some the laws will be very severe; others will rejoice in the laws because of former oppression.

God will pour out His spirit on Israel in connection with the *trouble*. Similarly, when a child is punished, he can learn a lesson and become more responsive, have a new spirit. Jacob’s Trouble, the judgment by the Lord, will change the Jew. Psalm 119:67 expresses the principle: “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”