

EZEKIAL

WRITER

There is no question that Ezekiel, the priest, was the writer of this book (1:3). The meaning of his name is, “God will strengthen.” His father’s name was Buzi (1:3). He was a priest who descended from Zadok, of the family of Eleazer, the son of Aaron (1:3; see 40:46). He was born in 622 B.C. during the time of King Josiah’s reform. When he was twenty-five years old he was taken with the first captives and King Jehoiachin to Babylon in 597 B.C. This was the first Babylonian captivity when Nebuchadnezzar took 10,000 of the most prominent of the people to Babylon (2 Kg 24:14-16). His home in Babylonia was Telabib that was located by the River Chebar, about one hundred kilometers south of Babylon.

Ezekiel was called to be a spokesman for God at the age of thirty, the age at which priests assumed their duties. The Lord came to him through a great vision with a personal destiny that he had to fulfill (1:3 – 3:11). It was his mission to encourage the Israelites in captivity by helping them to understand that God was in control of all things. Their captivity was in the plan of God, and thus they should resign themselves to the fact that God would eventually restore them to their land if they repented of their idolatry. They did repent in captivity, and thus were restored to the land as the prophets stated.

Ezekiel was a married man, though he lost his wife in the 9th year of his captivity and the 4th year of his ministry (24:15-18). She died at the same time when the Babylonians began their siege of the city of Jerusalem (24:1,15-18). Contemporary with Ezekiel was Daniel, who prophesied in the city of Babylon. While Daniel lived through the period of seventy years of captivity, Ezekiel probably died before 536 B.C., the date of the release of the captives.

DATE

King Josiah died in 609 B.C. by the hands of the Egyptians who were on their way to help the Assyrians defend themselves against the Babylonians at Carchemish. The Israelites selected Jehoahaz, Josiah’s son to reign in his place (2 Kg 23:30). However, he reigned only three months before the Egyptians replaced him with Jehoiakim (2 Kg 23:34). Jehoiakim subsequently became a vassal to the Egyptians. But he died and Jehoiachin his son became king. However, in 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, humbled Jerusalem. Jehoiachin reigned only a short time before he and 10,000 Israelites were taken into Babylonian captivity (2 Kg 24:8-16). Though he was taken into captivity, he was still honored as the king of Judah.

Zedekiah was then placed on the throne in Jerusalem, and subsequently became a vassal to the king of Babylon (2 Kg 24:17). Zedekiah eventually rebelled against the Babylonians, which rebellion led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Jeremiah was God's prophet in Jerusalem before and after the fall of the city. Ezekiel was in Babylon by the River Chebar. Daniel was in the city of Babylon. There were false prophets both in Jerusalem and in Babylon. The false prophets in Babylon were giving the people the false hope that they would in their lifetime return to Palestine (Jr 28:1-4). Before the fall of Jerusalem, they were preaching that the city would never fall (Ez 13:16,19). Before the fall of the city, therefore, both Ezekiel and Jeremiah were preaching to the people that God was carrying out His promise that they would go into captivity if they continued their idolatry. The captives were thus to settle into their captivity until a new generation of Israelites would grow up, knowing only the God of heaven (Jr 29:4-10). It was during these years of international turmoil that Ezekiel was called. His ministry extended from 592 to 570 B.C., during which time his oracles were transcribed in this book.

BOOK

When approaching a study of this book, in different contexts one must often reverse the normal procedure for biblical interpretation. The general rule for biblical interpretation is to understand a text literally, unless the context and style of writing suggests that we must interpret the text figuratively. But many contexts of this book must first be understood in a figurative sense. This is the most unique of all books of the Old Testament. Symbolism and metaphors run throughout the book in proverbs, parables, allegories and dramatically portrayed prophecies. Many contexts were written as apocalyptic literature with cryptic symbols (See intro. to Rv).

The reader must always remember that Ezekiel's message was directed to the Israelite captives. The oracles of the book were given in order to pronounce the end of Israel's independent state in Palestine, with hope for the future restoration, and eventually the Messianic age that would be introduced with the coming of the Messiah. Ezekiel carefully dates his material, and thus the book is systematic and the material orderly outlined according to the historical events through which the Israelites were going at the time.

The Call And Commission

(1:1 – 3:27)

Outline: (1) The call (1:1-28), (2) The commission (2:1 – 3:27)

Chapter 1 THE CALL

1:1-3 *Thirtieth year:* It is not known from which event this accounting of years was measured. It has been suggested that this was the thirtieth year of the life of Ezekiel when he was called to be a prophet. In this call, the ministry of Ezekiel as a priest was changed to that of a

prophet. The reason for God calling him was to minister to those who were in captivity. It also had specific reference to his ministry among the people who were being given a false hope of immediate restoration to Palestine by the false prophets who were also working among the captives. The false prophets were proclaiming to the people that there would be a return to Palestine in the immediate future (See comments Jr 23; 29). However, God's prophets were saying that there would be a captivity of seventy years. This meant that the generation to whom Ezekiel prophesied would never return to the land. Only their children and grandchildren would return. In the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, Jeremiah had sent a letter to the captives explaining this (Jr 51:59). One year after Jeremiah sent the letter, God called Ezekiel. **Visions:** A vision was a mental picture of an event or action that was so real to the prophet who experienced it that he could not differentiate it from reality. **Jehoiachin's captivity:** This captivity took place in 597 B.C. **River Chebar:** This tributary to the Euphrates was located south of the capital, Babylon. This was the location of the ministry of Ezekiel (3:11,15,23; 10:15,20,22; 11:24,25). **Hand of the Lord:** See 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1. The hand of God was for comfort and direction with reference to the faithful. But for the unfaithful, it meant destruction.

1:4-28 This vision pictured the work of God in bringing judgment upon the remainder of the Israelites through the proxy of the Babylonian army. Ezekiel

saw a stormy wind, a wind of judgment. As the army of Assyria that God used to discipline the northern kingdom of Israel came from the north of Palestine, so came God's judgment by proxy through the Babylonians. Since Nebuchadnezzar's army had to follow the Fertile Crescent in order to circumnavigate the Arabian Desert to come into Palestine, they would thus have approached Israel from the north. Six years from the time of this vision, God would send the Babylonians to Palestine. The presence of God was in the cloud that appeared. **Four living creatures:** The four arms, or possibly armies, of the Babylonian forces would be unleashed on Judah and Jerusalem. **Wings:** The forces of Nebuchadnezzar were sent by God, and thus could not be stopped by any earthly army. **Joined one to another:** This could represent the unity of the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, or a coalition of other armies that were fighting together with the Babylonians who were under the command of King Nebuchadnezzar. **Straight forward:** Nebuchadnezzar was resolute in his mission to destroy Jerusalem. **Each had the face of a man:** Though commissioned by God, the destroyers were armies of men. **Lion:** Power and terror. **Ox:** Unyielding strength. **Eagle:** Swift. **The spirit:** The army of Nebuchadnezzar was commissioned to be God's judgment by proxy upon the land of Palestine, and specifically, Jerusalem. **Wheel:** God was with the Babylonian army in order to accomplish His purpose in terminating Israel as an independent nation. The Lord was thus impelling the forces

of Babylon toward Jerusalem. They could not be stopped. **Eyes:** The eyes of God were on the rims. He could see in all directions. **Beryl:** A deep green or blue green color. **Firmament:** Over the heads of the creatures was the arch of the sky. The throne, or authority of God, was over the marching Babylonian army as it carried out God's judgment on Jerusalem. **Likeness ... of a man:** This was the revelation of hope in the vision, possibly taking our minds beyond the national calamity of the time, to the ascension and reign of the Son of Man. **Rainbow:** The rainbow was given to humanity as a symbol of God's continual protection (Gn 9:13-17). After the calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of Israel as an independent state, God would continue to protect His people, and thus continue their existence. **Fell upon my face:** When any man encounters the presence of God, even in such an awesome vision as this, the natural response would be the total submission of man.

Chapter 2

THE COMMISSIONS

2:1-5 Son of man: There are eighty-six references in this book to Ezekiel as the son of man (See Nm 23:10; Jb 25:6). Reference to him as the "Son of man" was meant to point out that Ezekiel was a man, with all the fallibility of a man without the Spirit of God who would direct him in his ministry as a prophet. The reference was also used by both David and Daniel in reference to the Christ (Ps 8:4; Dn 7:13). However, when used in reference by Jesus throughout His min-

istry, He designated Himself as **the Son of Man**. Ezekiel, David and Daniel were referred to as the son of God in order to emphasize the fact that their mission and ministry originated from God. **I am sending you:** Ezekiel was personally called by God and personally filled with the Spirit in order to deliver a designated message to the Jews in captivity. **Rebellious nation:** They were a hardheaded generation that would not humble themselves because of their calamity of captivity.

2:6-10 Do not be afraid: They had digressed so far away from God that anyone who came with a message from God was opposed, even to the point of threats of death. In some cases, God's prophets were killed by the ones to whom they were sent (Hb 11:32-40). **Briers ... thorns ... scorpions:** They were the offspring of their fathers who had rebelled against the will of God. They were a people who had digressed from prickly needles of briers, to hurtful thorns, and then to deadly scorpions. **Whether they hear or ... refuse:** The preaching of the word of God does not depend on whether people listen or refuse to listen. It was the work of the prophet to deliver God's word to the people, and in doing such, God would stand just for His condemnation of them. If the prophet failed to speak what God had given him to say, he would have been rebellious. **Roll of a scroll:** The message that was written on both sides of the scroll was not good for the captives. There were lamentations over their predicament, mourning as a result of their plight, and woe if they did not repent and submit to the Lord.

Chapter 3

3:1-3 Before Ezekiel could go to the people with the word of God, he had to consume it. Because it was sweetness in his mouth, he was motivated to tell others. When one is filled with the word of God, it becomes fire in his bones, and thus he is moved to preach the word. One's belief that the word is from God moves him out of necessity to preach it to others (See comments At 4:20).

3:4-11 *Speak with My words:* When one speaks for God, he must speak God's word, not his own feelings or emotions (1 Pt 4:11). If one speaks from his own feelings and emotions, he is leading the people by his emotional experiences, not the word of God. ***They would have hearkened:*** Ezekiel's commission was to all Israel, specifically to those of the captivity. The predicament in which they found themselves at this time in history was the result of their stubborn attitude against God's direction. Though the nations would have listened to what he had to say, the people of Israel would reject the word of his preaching. However, Ezekiel had to understand that the ministry of preaching was not dependent on people listening to the word of God. Prophets were sent to preach, regardless of the receptivity of the people. If the preaching of the word of God draws people, then the people who are drawn by the word have a sincere heart for God. When people stop being drawn by the preaching of the word of God, they digress to being drawn by the charismatic personalities of man (See comments 2 Tm 4:1-4). ***Your forehead strong:*** In order to

accomplish his ministry, Ezekiel had to be an astringent personality. He was to preach what the people did not want to hear, but needed to hear. He sought to lead them where they did not want to go, but needed to go. Nevertheless, he had to preach and lead. Astringent leadership is not determined by the wishes of the people who often do not want to listen to the word of God. Good leaders are determined by their motivation by the word of God, not by the desires of the people (Compare comments At 20:32; Hb 4:12). When people refuse to hear the word of God, the preacher must become more determined than the people in delivering the word of God. A preacher must never be discouraged by those who have no desire to hear the word of God.

3:12-15 In order to emotionally prepare for his mission, Ezekiel had to take the traditional seven days to think through his calling and ministry (See Jb 2:13). We must keep in mind that he was a married man, and thus he may have wanted to consider also the stress that his mission would have on his family. He had a tremendous mission before him, and thus with great prayer and fasting, it was his destiny as a called prophet of God to go forth with the message of God (Compare comments 2 Tm 4:1-5).

3:16-21 This text reveals the personal accountability of all men in reference to their free-moral response to the word of God. ***Watchman:*** Ezekiel had been made a sentry over the people in order to guard them from lies and deceptions (See Is 56:10; Jr 6:17; Hk 2:1). As a watchman, he was given the responsi-

bility to proclaim the word of God. **Hear the word from My mouth:** A watchman for God does not determine the state and direction of the people with his own word, but with the word of God (Jn 12:48; 1 Pt 4:11). Preachers who do not know the Bible seek to lead by their own charisma or ability to speak. God's leaders, on the other hand, know and obey His word, and thus communicate His word to the people. **Die in his iniquity:** If one knows the truth, but does not speak to others what he knows, then he will be held accountable for those to whom he did not preach the word of God. If the wicked are not warned, they will still die in their sins. They will die in their ignorance. The Bible nowhere teaches salvation by ignorance (See comments At 4:12; 2 Th 1:6-9). **His blood:** If the wicked person dies without warning, then the one who had the message that would have given him the opportunity not to die in his sin, would also be guilty. It was the responsibility of Ezekiel to warn the unrighteous. It was not his responsibility to save them. God's people are the medium through whom He seeks to warn all men. But God is the one who will render death to the disobedient. **A righteous man turns from his righteousness:** There is no such thing as once-saved-always-saved. The righteous man can turn from his life of righteousness, and then lose his soul (Rm 11:22; see comments Rv 2:10). **Stumbling block before him:** God will take responsibility for allowing free-moral individuals to live in a

world wherein temptation exists. He will allow one to sin, but judge him for his sinful way of life because he free-morally chose to sin (2 Th 2:10-12).

3:22-27 Hand of the Lord: Boldness to go forth with the word of God comes when one knows that God is present in his life (See Mt 28:20). **Arise, go:** After seven days of contemplation, it was time to go to work. **They will put bonds on you:** Anyone who would preach the truth of God, must expect retribution from those who do not want to hear (At 9:16). The retribution here would come from the people of God, not from the unbelievers. Religious people who are ignorant of the word of God are those who persecute those who preach the word (Compare comments Mt 5:1-12; Mk 7:1-9). **Cleave to the roof of your mouth:** God wanted to frustrate Ezekiel by not allowing him to preach to Israel for a period of time. Once the word of God burned in his inner soul while he was shut up in his house, then he would be ready to go forth with determination to warn the people.

Prophecies Before The Fall (4:1 – 24:27)

Outline: (1) 5th year prophecies: Symbolic acts (4:1 – 7:27), (2) 6th year prophecies: Discourses of Judah's destruction (8:1 – 19:14), (3) 7th year prophecies: Abominations of the people (20:1 – 23:49), (4) Prophecy before the fall (24:1-27)

Chapter 4

5TH YEAR PROPHECIES: SYMBOLIC ACTS

The prophecies of this text were acted out in a dramatic display before the people. Visual aids were used in order to portray the meaning of the prophecies.

4:1-3 This was a prophecy of the siege of Jerusalem. The siege of Jerusalem began about four years after this prophecy and lasted for thirty months. The city eventually fell in 586 B.C. The clay tablet could have been a clay brick on which Ezekiel inscribed the city of Jerusalem. The iron plate symbolized the walls of Jerusalem, which walls were torn down when the city fell to the Babylonians.

4:4-8 This prophecy was an acted out drama. Ezekiel laid on his left side for 390 days for the northern kingdom of Israel, and on his right side 40 days for Judah, for a total of 430 days. According to verse 6 each day was to represent a year. It is difficult in this prophecy to determine the meaning of the 430 years. It may be that God's actual siege against Israel and Judah began when the Israelites asked for a king on earth to reign over them. This succession of Israelite kings began with King Saul, about 430 years before the termination of Israel as an independent state. If this is what is signified here, it at least conforms to the 400 to 500 year period of history after which a sociological paradigm shift took place in the history of Israel, which period would have begun from the time of Jacob's initial entry into Egypt to begin the 430 years when Israel was in Egypt.

Israel was in the wilderness and land of promise from 1,445 until about 1,000 before they asked for a king. From the time of King Saul to the termination of Israel's earthly kings in 586 B.C., God laid siege against their desire for an earthly king. In 586 B.C. God terminated the Israelite kings on earth (Jr 22:30). From the time of their captivity to the time of Christ, 536 years, they were without a God-anointed king. And now, Jesus is the God-anointed King of kings (1 Tm 6:15). Regardless of our understanding of the period of time that is designated in this prophecy of Ezekiel, the meaning is that God punished His people for turning away from Him in order to serve earthly kings and worship idol gods.

4:9-17 Food ... water: Ezekiel was to ration to himself a small portion of food and water throughout the time he laid on his side. This depravation of food and water symbolized the rationing of food and water that took place during the siege of Jerusalem (Jr 37:21). **Bake it over dung:** In order to manifest the deplorable conditions that existed in Jerusalem during the siege, and the deplorable nature of Israel's sin, the food was to be cooked over man's dung. Ezekiel complained to God that he had not defiled himself by eating abominable things since his youth. He had been a young man with principles. God relinquished to his desire after testing his commitment to the law of God, and thus allowed him to cook his food over cow's dung. God was not insensitive to his personal convictions. However, in writing this prophecy, we understand the deplorable nature

of the sinful state into which His people had fallen because of the original instructions that were given to Ezekiel. The Jews had greatly defiled themselves with idol gods and unrighteous behavior.

Chapter 5

5:1-4 Ezekiel was commanded to shave his head and his beard, and then divide the shavings into three portions. With each of the portions he was to demonstrate what was to happen in the destruction of Jerusalem.

5:5-17 Jerusalem had become the physical symbol of Israel's existence. It was the last symbol left for the existence of Israel as an independent nation, having existed since the days of David. In order for God to mold His people, He had to destroy every symbol of nationhood. He took them from their land, and now He was taking their symbol of existence and His presence from them. **More than the nations:** Because they had the privilege of being given the oracles of God directly, they had greater responsibility (See Rm 3:2). Since they had the privilege of God being manifested so many times in their past, they fell away from Him more than the nations. Their opportunity of having God work directly in their history made them more responsible to be faithful to Him. **One-third portion:** The portions of hair represented what would be the fate of the Israelites who were still held up in Jerusalem. One third would die from disease and famine. One third would be killed. One third would go into captivity. Only a few of the poorest would be left in the land. But even

these would suffer greatly. Once this judgment had been rendered to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, then God would have then completed His punishment for all Israel that had gone deeply into idolatrous worship. **Fathers will eat their sons:** The conditions during the siege of Jerusalem would be so deplorable that the people would resort to cannibalism. God would allow the situation to digress to such a point in order to teach the nations that since Israel claimed to be His people, then it had to be manifested that when they forsook Him, He would punish them. We must keep in mind, that the extent to which the calamity went for their punishment, their restoration would manifest the greatness of the miracle of their rebirth. In their apostasy, the Jews were a reproach to the name of God among the nations. However, the nations would later wonder concerning their rebirth after 539 B.C. when the Medo-Perians allowed former captives to return to their homelands. Except for Egypt, the other nations that rejoiced over Israel's fall went out of existence.

Chapter 6

6:1-7 In this chapter the silence of Ezekiel is broken, and thus, through him God delivered a stern rebuke in reference to Israel's idolatrous ways. The condemnation of idolatry is addressed to all Israel, including those who had been taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722/721 B.C. **The mountains:** The high places to which they went to worship their idol gods was here brought under condemnation. The worship of false gods

split their loyalty between the false gods of their imagination and the true God of heaven. They manifested in their behavior this dichotomy in their religion. Whenever man makes an idol god, whether fictitious in his mind, or he worships of things of this world, he cannot give his total commitment to God. The idolater, therefore, has committed spiritual adultery (Hs 1:2). The extremity into which Israel went in idolatry determined the extremity of punishment to be handed down to the Israelites in order to cure them of their idolatrous spirit.

6:8-10 *A remnant:* Though God would bring the Jewish state to a conclusion, He would spare some of the people. From this remnant, He would begin again to build a nation from whom the Messiah would come. ***Remember Me among the nations:*** God would take away their idolatrous spirit by placing them in lands where they would refuse to worship the gods of their captors. In this way, they would return to remembering the God of heaven. ***I have been hurt:*** Idolatry is a taunt and rejection of the one God. God is a God of feelings, and thus men should never think that it does not hurt God to see His children turn from Him. ***Loathe themselves:*** The time would come when the Jews would totally abhor idol worship. They would look back on their idolatrous behavior and loathe themselves. The last generation that was taken into captivity would give birth to a new generation that would learn from the error of their fathers. They would realize that the great calamity that befell Israel was the result of hurting God through

idolatry. The Jews would never again become an idolatrous people as they were when they existed as an independent nation in the land of Palestine. ***Not said in vain:*** God had told them that they would be taken into captivity if they turned to idolatry. We must be assured, therefore, that God will bring eternal calamity on those who do not obey the gospel (2 Th 1:6-9).

6:11-14 *Then you will know:* Their national calamity was the fulfillment of prophecy. God had warned them what He would do if they went into apostasy. The fulfillment of the prophecy concerning their idolatry would prove that God had spoken through His prophets. ***Slain men will be among their idols:*** The picture here is graphic. During and immediately after the destruction, there would be dead bodies laying among their idols, on their idol altars, on the high places of their idol worship, on the tops of mountains, and under the trees where they committed acts of fornication in worship to their idol gods.

Chapter 7

7:1-9 *Four corners:* The end had come for all the land. ***According to your ways:*** See 2 Co 5:10. ***Repay:*** See comments Gl 6:7,8. ***You will know:*** They would know that God was at work in the calamity that He would bring upon them because of these very prophecies that were made concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. ***Joyful shouting:*** The joyous shouting at harvest time will pass away.

7:10-15 *Pride has budded:* Their

pride had resulted in the doom that was coming upon them. No one would feel sorry for them because of their past arrogance. **The seller:** Reference here was to the property laws in Israel. One could sell his inheritance to another. However, all property was to be restored to the original owner every fifty years in the year of Jubilee. In this case, those who were taken into captivity would not return. The first captives would die in captivity. Their captivity would last beyond the fifty years of Jubilee. **No one goes to battle:** The famine that existed within the city of Jerusalem before its fall was so severe that no one had enough energy to fight. Fighting the well-nourished Babylonians, therefore, was useless.

7:16-22 Though some will escape into the mountains, they will mourn because they realize that the calamity came upon them because of their iniquity. **Shame ... baldness:** They will shave their heads because of their shame. **The stumbling block of their iniquity:** Since their materialism had led them into being an unjust society, they would discover that they could not buy their way out of the impending doom. This statement enlightens us concerning the real problem that lead Israel into idolatry and their downfall. Solomon introduced a wealthy life-style. The people followed after his life-style until it led them into being an unjust society that oppressed the poor. **Used it to make the abominable idols:** Since there was no banking system, the people molded their gold and silver into idols. Thus the wealth that was represented by their idols became the focus of

their lives. The more idols one had, the richer he was (See comments C1 3:5). In the time of their calamity, however, their gold and silver would mean nothing, for they would fear for their lives. **My secret place:** The result of their iniquity will result in the Babylonians' entrance into the temple and taking all the utensils and furniture of bronze, silver and gold.

7:23-27 Prepare chains: It was time for captivity. Psalm 74 seems to have been written immediately after the fall of Jerusalem by one who had fled to the mountains of Judea. **Seek a vision:** They will seek God, but He will not be found. **What they deserve:** They had rendered unto others that which they will reap. Their iniquity was within their own Jewish society. Their wickedness, therefore, was carried out upon themselves. They were a society that was morally in a state of self-destruction. Before they completely brought themselves to an end, God brought the invasion of the Babylonians in order to save a remnant from themselves.

Chapter 8

6TH YEAR PROPHECIES: DISCOURSES OF JUDAH'S DESTRUCTION

8:1-6 This vision took place in the sixth year of the imprisonment of King Jehoiachin (591 B.C.). The Spirit took Ezekiel in vision by the hair of his head to the city of Jerusalem. The Spirit brought him to the idol that had been placed at the entrance of the temple (See 2 Ch 33:7,15). It was an idol that pro-

voked jealousy in God, for the people were spiritual idolaters. They were half-hearted religionists who compromised their total commitment to God.

8:7-12 *Hole in the wall:* What the people thought was concealed from the eyes of God, was actually known by Him. ***Wicked abominations:*** When Ezekiel went into the inner part of the temple he saw images of animals that were displayed around on all the walls of the temple. Those who were carrying out their idol worship led themselves to believe that God did not know their detestable works. They denied the omniscience of God.

8:13-18 *Tammuz:* This was a god of vegetation and fertility that the Babylonians had brought over from the Sumerians. ***The sun:*** There was symbolism in the fact that they turned their backs on the temple, the representation of the presence of God, in order to worship the sun. The sun was an object of the worship of the Canaanites, which worship was also adopted by the Assyrians. ***Putting the twig to their nose:*** This is a literal translation of a figure of speech that means the people were throwing their obscenities in the face of God. ***I will not hear them:*** They had digressed so far away from God, that they had no reverence for Him. Since God is real, and their idol gods and worship were false, then the conclusion would be that the people were no longer representatives for God (Compare comments Rv 2 & 3). The progression of their religion led them to the point of this great digression away from the God who brought them forth as a na-

tion out of Egyptian captivity. In their sin, therefore, God would not hear their pleas for His help. God could not help them simply because if He did, they would not represent Him on earth as His people.

Chapter 9

9:1,2 It was time for judgment. The six angelic beings stood ready to execute slaughter of the people who had given themselves over to false gods. The symbolism is of Nebuchadnezzar who would come with his army from the northern part of Palestine to Jerusalem. One angelic being with a writer's kit would first place a mark on those who were to survive. These would be those who were trapped among those apostates who were rebellious against surrendering themselves to the Babylonians.

9:3-7 There was mercy manifested before the slaughter. Before the slaughter was to begin in Jerusalem, those who mourned over the abominations that had been brought into the temple and practiced among the people were to be marked and spared (Compare Rv 7:3,4; 22:4). Those who had given themselves over to idol worship were to be slaughtered. Once the mournful righteous were identified, the slaughter was to begin. ***Defile the temple:*** When a person touched a dead body, he was unclean for a designated period of time. In this picture, the temple would be defiled by the presence of so many dead bodies.

9:8-11 In the vision, Ezekiel was in awe of the number of people who were slaughtered, wondering if there would be any who would be saved. He cried out

for mercy. **Israel and Judah:** The destruction of Jerusalem was the finality of the judgment of God on all Israel, both the northern and southern kingdoms. The north went into Assyrian captivity in 722/721 B.C. The destruction of Jerusalem signalled the end of the southern kingdom. The angelic being with the writer's kit reported that all was carried out according to the instructions of the Lord. This announcement indicated that those who would be saved out of the destruction had been identified, and thus the slaughter could begin. In reference to Ezekiel's concern of a total destruction, the answer was that there were those who were marked for salvation. There would be no total destruction of the people. Many would go into captivity. Their punishment, however, would be both captivity and death in captivity, for they would never return to Jerusalem.

Chapter 10

10:1-5 In this vision Ezekiel sees similar things to what he saw in chapter 1. **Cherubim:** See Is 6:1-6. **Clothed with linen:** This was the angelic being who had the writer's kit in the previous chapter. In chapter 9 he marked those who would be spared. Here he is commanded to set fire to the city. The presence of the cherubim was a sign that judgment was coming on Jerusalem. As a result of the judgment, there was cleansing of the temple, signifying a restoration of the presence of God to the hearts of the people.

10:6-22 This vision corresponds to the vision of chapter 1, though there are

some added details. It is difficult to understand the meaning of every detail of the vision. For this reason, the interpreter should be cautious about inventing spurious thoughts that are out of harmony with the immediate application of the visions. In this vision the splendor and awesomeness of those who bring judgment on Jerusalem must not be questioned. Since God is the one who is commanding the judgment to take place, then we must conclude that He is doing so for good reasons. Though there are some new details in this vision, the message is the same as the previous visions, that is that God's judgment on Jerusalem was just because of the iniquity of the people. The nation had digressed to the point that it was no longer useful for His purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world. Although all Israel had not gone after idols, the vast majority had. It was a time in the history of Israel, therefore, that the majority was about to overcome even those few who remained faithful. The purpose of the destruction and captivity, therefore, was to give birth to a new Israel that could be identified as the people of God. It would be through this restored and identifiable people that God would fulfill His promises to the fathers that the Redeemer would come into the world.

Chapter 11

11:1-13 This is a prophecy of judgment on Jerusalem. This prophecy is a picture of 25 leaders at the temple who were advising rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. In their rebellion, they looked to Egypt for support, for Egypt

too was fearful of the Babylonian domination of the region. Contrary to the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, these leaders refused to believe that the end of Jerusalem had come. They thus sought to rebuke the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. They saw the fortified city of Jerusalem as a caldron that would protect the people from all enemies, including Nebuchadnezzar. But Ezekiel prophesied that they would not be protected. God would subject the Israelites throughout their borders, for the entire land would fall to the Babylonians. Jaazaniah and Pelatiah were two leaders among the 25 leaders at the time. While Ezekiel was in the vision, Pelatiah fell dead. His death seemed to shock Ezekiel, for he questioned whether God would destroy the entire nation of Israel.

11:14-23 These verses are the answer to Ezekiel's question concerning the fate of all Israel. The majority of the people had moved far away from the Lord. However, there was a remnant of faithful among the people. For their sake, God would not destroy all the people. The faithful remnant did not side with the unfaithful leadership who were giving the people a false hope that the city would not fall. Many of the faithful remnant were already in captivity, and thus were not living in the doomed Jerusalem. These were those who gave heed to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and thus resigned themselves to their captivity. Jerusalem would indeed become a caldron, but the rebellious would be the meat cooked in it. Those who had already gone into captivity, however, were in the protection of

their captors, and thus they would survive. ***I will gather you:*** No matter where the Israelites were scattered among the nations, God would gather a remnant of them to the land. ***Take away all the detestable things:*** Upon their return to the land, they would never again give themselves over to idols. ***A new spirit:*** The spiritual character of the returnees would be different than the rebellious heart of their fathers. ***One heart:*** They would be totally dedicated to the one God. Their loyalty would never be divided between God and idols. It would never again be divided between a king on earth and a King in heaven. If we would infer that there are Messianic implications in these words, then we would be looking for the one body that would be of one mind (At 4:32; 1 Co 1:10). It would exist as one body because all would submit to the one head and King. ***A heart of flesh:*** The stony heart of rebellion and stubbornness would be replaced with a heart of compassion and obedience (See Dt 30:6). What Ezekiel sees in the vision here, and in 36:26,27, is similar to what was revealed to Jeremiah (Jr 31:31-33). A time was coming for a new covenant, which covenant would be for a people who came into a covenant relationship with God through their obedience to the gospel. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel used the illustration of the returning remnant of Israel after the Babylonian captivity to picture the beginning of a new heavens and earth that would begin in A.D. 30 (See comments At 2). ***The glory of the Lord went up:*** God figuratively removed Himself from the city in order that His pun-

ishment be enacted on the inhabitants. Both the city and the temple were to be destroyed. **East side:** The Mount of Olives was to the east of the city.

11:24,25 Ezekiel was brought back to Chaldea at the end of the vision. He then spoke to the exiles in order to confirm what Jeremiah was speaking to those in Jerusalem. The city would in a few years fall to the Babylonians.

Chapter 12

12:1-6 This is another action prophecy. Ezekiel dramatized what would happen in the near future concerning the fall of Jerusalem. **Do not see:** They disregarded his previous spoken prophecy in chapter 6. **Prepare your baggage:** Ezekiel acted out that which would take place concerning one going into exile. In the evening he was to dig a hole in the wall of his house. Then he was in the daylight to crawl through the hole with a cover over his eyes. He was to stumble through the hole and away from his house. The symbolism was that those who did dig a hole and escape to the Babylonians, would live. Those who did not, would die from the slaughter that would take place as the Babylonians entered the city.

12:7-16 **What are you doing:** Since they did not ask, God instructed Ezekiel to prophecy in word what he had acted out. **They will know:** The prophecy was being made at this time before the fall of the city. Once the city fell, then they would know that the prophecy came from God. It seems that the Jews were so certain that the city would not fall, that it astonished them when it did. **I will leave**

a few: A few would be spared from the destruction in order to tell others what had happened. The 30-month siege of Nebuchadnezzar against the city would turn the inhabitants into cannibals. Others needed to know the fulfillment of the prophecies of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in order to confirm that they were fulfilled in every detail. **Cover his face:** Zedekiah tried to escape when Jerusalem fell. However, he was captured. His sons were killed before his eyes, then his eyes were put out and he was marched to Babylon (2 Kg 25:4-7; Jr 52:7-11).

12:17-20 Ezekiel was to dramatize life in the city of Jerusalem before it fell. Both food and water would be scarce during the siege, so scarce that the people would turn to cannibalism. Many of the people died from the famine within the city, others from pestilence.

12:21-28 **Days are prolonged:** Because they did not believe the city would fall, it became a customary saying that God's judgment on the city would only come in the far future. The false prophets were preaching peace and safety, though doom was near. **Every vision fails:** The visions of the false prophets would fail when the city fell, for they were saying that it would not fall. When preachers preach feel-good lessons in times of crisis, they will go into captivity with those they did not warn concerning imminent doom. **Fulfillment of every vision:** The visions of the true prophets of God would be fulfilled when Jerusalem fell. The false prophets, with their false visions of peace and safety, would pass away. What God had said

would happen. It would not be prolonged. It would take place only a few years after this prophecy was made. Therefore, if one interprets these prophecies that have reference to the history of Israel as prophecy in reference to the end of time, he has misunderstood the prophecies. He has stolen from the people of God at the time when the prophecies were given, hope for their future restoration. The prophecies were directed to the people of God who were suffering through great national calamity. One thousand years as a nation were coming to a close. The prophecies, therefore, were given in order to give the people of God hope for a restored Israel that would wait for the Messiah.

Chapter 13

13:1-7 Everyone who would presume to be a spokesman for God should carefully study through this chapter (See Jr 23:9-40). There are many religionists in the world who presume to speak for God, but they know nothing of His word. This was the case of the false prophet. He spoke what the people wanted to hear (See comments 2 Tm 4:1-4). He even sought to add authenticity to his statements by saying, "The Lord says." But because he was speaking outside the word of God, he was speaking falsehoods to the people. He was a false prophet because he would not tell the people the truth about the impending doom that awaited the people. Therefore, whenever one would say, "The Lord says," he should be following the statement with a quotation from the word of God, not his

own dreams and supposed visions. ***Followed their own feelings:*** Those who do not preach the word of God confirm their own message for themselves through their feelings. They will preach feel-good lessons in order to retain the favor and support of those to whom they preach. They are as Balaam who preached for money (See 2 Pt 2:15; Jd 11).

13:8-16 ***They will not be in the assembly of My people:*** Those who would speak contrary to the word of God have voted themselves out of the company of God's people. They cannot be of God's people simply because they are not listening to God. Those who are not students of the Bible are not disciples, for they are not listening to God who speaks through His word (See comments At 20:32). ***Seduced My people:*** They have prophesied what the people wanted to hear in order to maintain the following of the people (2 Tm 4:1-4). There was financial security in their motives, for they were supported by the people. They did not want to endanger their support by preaching the word of God. ***Whitewash:*** They whitewashed it. It looked fine until the rains came and washed away the whitewash. The false prophets were as dishonest builders who presented a fine looking house to the new owner. However, the house was weak and vulnerable to the summer storms.

13:17-23 ***Prophecy out of their own heart:*** They were spiritual frauds, presumptuously assuming that their emotions were some revelation from God. These prophetesses preached for money,

a handful of barley or piece of bread. Being driven by their desire for sustenance, they would speak anything that was pleasing to the ears of the people in order to maintain their support from the people. When people in poverty assume to speak for God, they are tempted to speak only that which their supporters want to hear. They are often as Balaam who preached for hire (See Jd 11). **The souls:** In this case, they reversed the messages of both Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The people who were to die, were the ones they said would live, and the ones whom Jeremiah and Ezekiel said would live, they said would die. **Magic bands:** They gave out “magic charms” in order to give the people a false sense of hope. However, the righteous who believed Jeremiah and Ezekiel were made sad by the influence the deceptive women had over the people. And indeed it was a sad time when false prophets were speaking contrary to that which God had spoken through His prophets. The time was coming, however, when the false prophets would all die in the destruction of Jerusalem. God’s prophets would be confirmed to be His prophets because their prophecies would have been fulfilled. The people would then know that God was to be the Lord of their lives.

Chapter 14

14:1-11 Some elders among the captives came to sit before Ezekiel. They were idolaters in heart, and thus would on this occasion reap the rebuke of the Lord. **Should I be consulted by them:** The hypocrisy of the elders was in the

fact that in their hearts they still bowed down to their idols. On this occasion, they had the audacity to seek council from God through His prophet Ezekiel. **Repent:** This was God’s message for all those who still clung to their past idols. **Estranged:** When one idolizes something in his heart, he cannot give his full commitment to God (See comments Mt 6:24). **I ... have deceived that prophet:** See comments 2 Th 2:10-12. **Israel may no longer go astray from Me:** God had disciplined Israel by taking them through the destruction of the land and Jerusalem. Throughout the destruction, idolatrous priests and prophets died. Such was the first cleansing of the people from idolatry. Those who placed themselves in spiritual leadership for the sake of gain had to be taken from among the people before the people could be turned again to God. Now that the captives were in captivity, there still remained some of the false prophets and idol worshipers among the people. In this context, God said that He would destroy this remnant of idolaters from among the people. When the time for the restoration came, therefore, Israel would have been cleansed of all idol worshipers.

14:12-20 The primary theme of this context is one’s individual obedience to God. Righteous living, therefore, was the only guarantee of being delivered from the judgments of God. The righteousness of one person cannot save another, and thus one is accountable for his own life before the Lord (See comments 2 Co 5:10). Even if one were as righteous as Noah, Daniel and Job, his righteousness

could not save either son or daughter. **Daniel:** Daniel was also a prophet among the captives in Babylon. His righteousness was well-known among the captives, and thus God used him as an example of standing firm for the word of God (See comments in intro. to Dn).

14:21-23 *You will be comforted concerning the calamity:* The righteous are comforted by those who are like-minded. When God delivered the righteous from the destruction of Jerusalem, He brought them to Babylon. It was a great comfort to Ezekiel to meet these righteous people who had surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar according to the instructions of Jeremiah, who was preaching in Jerusalem during the destruction. Once the righteous were delivered, Ezekiel understood why God brought doom upon the city. He understood that God wanted to cleanse Israel of all those who were unrighteous.

Chapter 15

15:1-8 *The vine:* Israel was often referred to as a vine that should bring forth good fruit (Gn 49:11; Is 5:1-7; Jr 2:21). In this context, however, reference to Israel as a vine was a metaphor that referred to the nation as useless before God. Vines are not good for wood to make objects that are useful to man. One cannot make a peg from a vine in order to hang objects. Therefore, except for bearing fruit, a vine is useless. Israel had turned into a wild vine, and even her fruit was useless. The prophecy was of the destruction of Jerusalem. They would be consumed because they were not profitable for the purpose for which God had

created the nation. When they were consumed, then the people would know that the Lord was working through the destruction.

Chapter 16

16:1-5 This chapter is a sad allegory of the history of Israel. It is a story of an unfaithful wife who went into harlotry, regardless of all her tender origins and care. The allegory begins with the birth of Israel from Egyptian captivity, and follows the history of the people to the destruction of Jerusalem. The northern kingdom would first reap the judgment of God, then Judah the southern kingdom, and finally, Jerusalem. God brought forth Israel from Egyptian captivity. However, regardless of His care over her, she ran after other gods of her own making. At the time of her deliverance from Egypt, no nation of the world cared for her since she was viewed as a group of rebellious slaves who had rebelled, and thus gained their freedom from the Egyptians. The nations abhorred her throughout the years of her wilderness wanderings and conquest of the land of Palestine. ***Salted ... swaddled:*** Salting the newborn was for the purpose of cleansing and dedication to God. Swaddling was for the purpose of protecting the newborn from the elements.

16:6-14 Newborn Israel was as a newborn babe that just came from the womb. The babe struggled in its own blood without anyone to help. But God reached down in order that Israel might live, develop and become a beautiful nation to His glory. As was common in

pagan nations, as a newborn female, she would have been left to die. But God reached down with grace and compassion. He declared that she should live. **Entered into a covenant:** As in a marriage covenant, at Mount Sinai God entered into a covenant with His people, making promises of blessing to care for them. **I washed you:** In the ceremony at Sinai, God cleansed the people with the sprinkling of blood in order to ratify the covenant. **I adorned you also with ornaments:** God brought Israel into the land of milk and honey. He prospered them, even to the zenith of their glory during the reign of King Solomon. **Your fame:** God blessed Israel so much that the fame of the kingdom went into all nations of the world. From a small nation of captives who had come out of Egyptian captivity, to the grandeur of the kingdom during the days of Solomon, Israel was blessed exceedingly above all nations.

16:15-22 Played the harlot: When Israel became appealing to the nations as an influential nation, then she gave herself over to the idols of the nations for the sake of economic gain. Her blessings, therefore, became her curse. She used the beauty that was given to her by God as an opportunity to make trade alliances with the nations. And in doing so, beginning with Solomon, she gave herself over to the gods of the nations. The very silver and gold that was given to her by God was used to make the idols of the gods she had created after her own imagination. **Everyone who passed by:** Israel was given the major trade route

between the northern nations of the Near East and the nations of Africa. It was God's original intention that when traders passed through Palestine, the Israelites would have an opportunity to talk to the traders about the one true and living God. However, instead of being the international influence for God that was originally intended by God, she adopted the gods of the nations. She compromised the God who gave her birth for the sake of trade with nations of other gods. **Sacrificed them to idols:** They morally digressed to the point of offering their children in sacrifice to gods they had created after their own imagination.

16:23-34 Israel digressed to be morally worse than the nations around her. She could not be satisfied with her idolatry. After all that God had done for her in the past, which things He had not done for the idolatrous nations around her, she became skilled in the art of idol worship, even to the point of offering her children as sacrifices. In order to be constantly reminded of her fictitious gods, she made and placed idols in every public place. She adopted so many idol gods from the nations around her that even the pagan nations, who were loyal only to their national gods, were alarmed at her idolatry. The idol gods of the nations were a symbol of patriotism. But Israel adopted the symbols of patriotism of the other nations for the sake of maintaining trade relationships with the nations. Her strategic trade route in Palestine led her to adopt the patriotic gods of any nation that would bring her wealth. She thus sold the God of her origin for the gods of any

nation that would bring her prosperity.

16:35-43 *Filthiness:* This was the Holy Spirit's term to define false religion. This was the reason for the judgment that God would pour out on an apostate people. ***Lovers:*** These were the nations with whom Israel had formed alliances, both for trade and protection, which nations God would turn against her. Israel would be subjected to the same judgment as adulterous wives. She would be publicly shamed before the nations, and stoned. ***Make My fury toward you to rest:*** God would unleash just judgment upon them until the full measure of His punishment was completed. It would be completed only when they had completely given up idolatrous religion.

16:44-52 *Your sister Sodom:* Because Israel had received great attention and love from God, she had greater responsibility, and thus would be judged with greater judgment. ***Samaria:*** This would be the northern kingdom that had already suffered the Assyrian captivity. Judah was arrogant when the northern kingdom fell, and was self-righteous in reference to the destruction that came upon Sodom. But in her arrogance and pride, she had to bear her own shame for being a woman of harlotry.

16:53-59 There was a message of hope in a sad story of betrayal. The people were going into captivity. In captivity they would be cleansed of their idolatry. They would be returned to the land, not as an independent nation, but only as an identifiable people, the Israel of God.

16:60-63 Ezekiel concludes the al-

legory with a message of a new covenant. It would be a new covenant that would extend to all nations (See comments Jr 31:31-34). It would be a covenant of including all people, not exclusion.

Chapter 17

17:1-6 *Riddle ... parable:* A riddle was embedded in this parable. By doing this, God wanted the people to draw their own conclusions, which conclusions would be obviously correct. The parable would be so clear that they could not miss the application. The riddle would be explained after the occurrence of the events that were set forth as a parable. ***Great eagle:*** The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. ***Different colors:*** Nebuchadnezzar led an alliance of nations that were under his command. ***Highest branch:*** King Jehoiachin. ***The seed:*** Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as the king in Judah. ***Low stature:*** Zedekiah was a subject, or vassal, to Babylon.

17:7-10 *Another great eagle:* Egypt would rise up to help Judah against the attack by Babylon. ***Wither:*** During the siege of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar left the siege for a short period of time in order to squash the approaching Egyptians. And then again in 582/581 B.C., he invaded Egypt and sacked the country. ***East wind:*** The Babylonians who were east of Palestine.

17:11-21 *Rebellious house:* Ezekiel was in Babylonia prophesying to those who were already in captivity. The exiled Jews were rebellious in that they thought that they would soon return to the land of Palestine. They did not ac-

cept the fact that they would die in captivity. **Taken its king:** This occurred in 597 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin and the princess into captivity. **The king's seed:** Zedekiah. **Subjected:** Nebuchadnezzar subjected Judah to Babylonian dominance. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylonian control, and then went to seek help from Egypt. This subsequently infuriated the Babylonians, who in turn came and destroyed Jerusalem. **Given his hand:** Zedekiah agreed to be a vassal of Babylon, but he went back on his word and rebelled. He broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. **My oath ... My covenant:** When Zedekiah swore an oath to Nebuchadnezzar, the oath was before God, and thus, it was binding as an oath with God. So when he broke the oath, he was breaking an oath he had made before God (See Jr 21:1-10). **Trespassed against Me:** When one broke his oath to another man, it was a sin against God, for oaths were laws that one binds on himself in reference to his obedience to God.

17:22-24 This conclusion to the preceding parable was a prophecy of the Messiah to come (Is 53:2; Jr 23:5; Mc 4:1-3). Once all the national turmoil of the nations among whom the preceding events had taken place, God would send forth the King of kings who would draw people from all nations in order to find protection under His wings.

Chapter 18

18:1-18 *Fathers have eaten sour grapes:* This was a proverb that was commonly spoken among the captives

(See Jr 31:29,30; compare Lm 5:7). The proverb was false in reference to the guilt of sin. The children were not considered unrighteous because of the personal sins of their fathers. The guilt of sin was never handed down from father to son. However, in reference to the consequences of the fathers' sinful behavior in reference to idolatry, the sons did suffer from the results of the fathers' sins. In the historical context here, the fathers were an idolatrous generation who turned from God. God subsequently condemned them to captivity (See Ex 20:5). The sons, therefore, suffered from the consequences of the fathers' sinful idolatrous behavior. **The soul that sins, it will die:** It must be kept in mind that in the context of this chapter the phrase "surely die" is used first in reference to physical death. Those who had lived immorally after the idolatrous religiosity of the day would be punished with death. They would either die during the calamity that was brought upon Israel, or die in captivity. Their punishment for not repenting of their wicked ways would be physical death, which punishment would eventually end in their second death and separation from God. In life, they had sinned against God's law. Because of their sins, each individual would give account of his own sin (2 Co 5:10). We will individually be held accountable for our own sins, and thus die in our sins if we do not repent. The Bible nowhere teaches that the children inherit the guilt of the parents' sins. Ezekiel gave a list of actions that identified unrighteous behavior. **Eaten to shrines:** This was part of their worship to idol gods on

the high places (Is 65:7). **Neighbor's wife ... menstruous woman:** Reference here is to adultery and having sexual intercourse with a woman when she was in her period of uncleanness during the month. **Pledge:** Restored the property that was given as a pledge for a loan. **Plundered:** Has not stolen another man's property by force. **Given his bread:** Being benevolent toward the hungry. **Covered the naked:** Has been aware of guarding the modesty of oneself and others. **Interest:** See 22:25; Dt 23:19; Lv 25:36; Ps 15:5.

18:19-24 The son ... will surely live: This must be understood in the historical context of the first generation of captives among whom Ezekiel was prophesying. God swore that they would die in captivity. However, their children and grandchildren would be restored to the land after the seventy years of captivity had been completed. It was this generation of exiles who were cleansed of unrighteous behavior, and thus were allowed to return to the land. But those fathers who brought on Israel the wrath of God through their idolatrous behavior and wicked living would never see the land again. They would suffer from the guilt of their sins. **If the wicked will turn:** This exhortation would have been to the fathers, that they focus on their repentance for their own sins. If they repented, they would save their souls. They would then pass on to their children a life-style of righteousness that would allow the children to return to the land. **The soul who sins will die:** Israel ended up in captivity because they sinned against the law

of God. In this context, the nation as a whole was composed of sinful individuals. Disobedient individuals developed a collective culture of sin. However, each individual was responsible for his own disobedience. Neither father nor son passed the guilt of their personal sins to the other. Each person would be held accountable for his own sin, regardless of whether they lived in a sinful culture where everyone was living according to sinful ways. **When the righteous turns away:** There is no such thing as once saved, always saved. The apostate has turned away from righteousness. He was first righteous, and then he turned away from righteous behavior. And because he turned away, he became lost. **All his righteousness:** One's good deeds do not atone for one's sins. The obedient life-style is what constitutes righteousness before God.

18:25-32 The way of the Lord is not fair: This was a complaint. God was fair and just to mete out judgment upon those apostate fathers who had turned to idol gods. He was fair to bring on them the consequences of their sinful behavior. Though the sons had to suffer the consequences of the wicked behavior of the fathers, God was still acting fairly to bring judgment in time upon the unrighteous behavior of the fathers. The exhortation in this context is that the sons do not adopt the idolatrous and wicked behavior of their fathers that led to their captivity. **Make for yourself a new heart:** Each person will be held accountable for his own sin (2 Co 5:10). Since each person was created a free-moral in-

dividual, then each person must be held accountable for the guilt of his own sin. God is a fair God because it is man who chooses to sin. When one is condemned for his own sin, God is fair and just. He is fair and just because He gave man law by which to live, and declared to man the consequences of his violation of the law. It is the responsibility of each person, therefore, to voluntarily obey the will of God, and thus create a new heart with a spirit of obedience.

Chapter 19

19:1-9 This is a lamentation for the princes (kings) of Israel. Their mother, the nation of Israel, gave birth to their existence when they asked for a king to rule over them (1 Sm 8). **Lion:** The royal family (See Gn 49:9; Nm 23:24; Mc 5:8; Rv 5:5). **Two cubs:** In the historical context, reference here was probably to Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Jehoahaz reigned only three months before he was taken by Pharaoh-necho and put him in prison (2 Kg 23:33). Jehoiachin reigned after Jehoahaz, but he was taken into Babylonian captivity in 597 B.C. (2 Kg 24:8-16). Israel had gone from God-anointed kings that they wanted during the end of Samuel's life, to foreign powers appointing kings for them. A king on earth was never in the plan of God for Israel. When the people cried out for a king, God gave them this concession (1 Sm 8). However, the kings would eventually lead them into apostasy.

19:10-14 The poem turns to the nation of Israel. She was a nation that was planted in the land of milk and honey.

She prospered because of the work of God. She produced great kings to rule over her. And she was exalted among the nations. However, because of her apostasy from her creator, she was plucked up by the Babylonians from the east and planted in a desolate land. Her kings were broken and no more. They withered in the wilderness of Babylonia. Israel would never again have a king on earth.

Chapter 20

7TH YEAR PROPHECIES: ABOMINATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

20:1-4 Seven years after Ezekiel's captivity in 597 B.C., or 590 B.C., some of the elders came to inquire of the Lord through Ezekiel. This was about one year after the previous prophecies of 8:1. Based on Ezekiel's answer to these elders, we would assume that they came to inquire about setting up idols again in the temple of Jerusalem, to which they believed they would be returned in the near future. But Ezekiel's answer was far from what they expected. He paralleled Israel's existence in the wilderness that resulted from their rebellion after they came out of Egyptian captivity with their rebellion at the end of their existence prior to the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in 586 B.C. The destruction took place about four years from the time of this encounter.

20:5-9 *Lifted up My hand:* God took action to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity. His first proclamation to them was that He was the only God

among all the false gods of the Egyptians. He then gave them a land from which they were to eradicate all beliefs in false gods. **They rebelled:** Because of their rebellious spirit, they did not give up their idol culture of Egypt, which culture first made itself known when they molded the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. **I worked for My name's sake:** God's use of Israel among the nations was evangelistic. He meant for them to be a monotheistic nation, proving them to be His people by His mighty works. They existed, therefore, only because God miraculously worked to bring them out of Egypt.

20:10-17 I caused them to go out: They could not deliver themselves from Egyptian captivity. When God delivered them from Egyptian captivity, the nations then understood that Israel's God was powerful enough to deliver them. **He will live in them:** God gave Israel commandments and statutes in order to change them from a culture of idolatry to a monotheistic culture of belief only in Him. The purpose for the law, therefore, was to change and direct their culture toward Him. If they would have continued to live according to His law, therefore, they would have remained a monotheistic culture. **Sabbaths to be a sign:** Their keeping of the sabbaths was an indication that they were a people who were in a covenant relationship with God. Their keeping of the sabbaths was a conscious acknowledgment that they were the people of God. **Pour out My fury ... to consume them:** Because of their rebellion at the foot of Mount Sinai, God was go-

ing to destroy the entire nation and start another plan of nation building. But Moses interceded for the people, and God held back His hand of destruction. However, those who rebelled were not allowed to enter into the land of promise. The same would happen to those elders who came before Ezekiel. Because of their rebellious and idolatrous spirit, they would not be allowed to return to the land of Palestine. The elders were assured that they would die a natural death in the wilderness of Babylon, but they would not be allowed to return to Palestine because they had rebelled against the statutes of God and profaned His sabbaths.

20:18-26 Throughout their 38 years of wilderness wanderings after their idolatrous rebellion at Mount Sinai, the rebellious fathers died. The children were trained to be a monotheistic culture, serving only God through obedience to His statutes. **Sanctify My sabbaths:** When they kept the sabbaths, they were signalling to God that they were obedient to His statutes. They were also signalling to the surrounding nations that they had a covenant with God. But the people rebelled again. However, God did not destroy them completely, for He continued to be patient with them for the sake of His name and the salvation of mankind. If God did not fulfill the promises made to the fathers, then His name would be blemished. **I would scatter them:** This statement would refer back to the time when they were scattered throughout the Sinai Peninsula during the 38 years of wilderness wanderings. They came together as one nation of people

only when they gathered on the east side of the Jordan River in order to begin the conquest of the land. At the time Ezekiel wrote, they were scattered in the same way among the nations of the world, which scattering started with the Assyrian captivity in 722/721 B.C. **Statutes that were not good:** The law was good and holy (See Rm 7:7-12). The law was not good in reference to salvation and a good conscience before God. No man could keep the law perfectly (Rm 3:9,10,23; see comments Gl 2:16). One's honest recognition that he cannot keep law perfectly should move him to trust in the grace of God (See comments Gl 2:1-16). But in Israel's case, they created idol gods after their own imagination and laws of these gods that they could legally keep in order to justify themselves before these gods. **Pass through the fire:** They offered their children in sacrifice to their idol gods in order to feel good before their gods. Instead of trusting in the grace of the God who brought them forth out of Egypt as a nation, they sought to appease their own guilt by obedience to laws they made for themselves. This was the spirit of idolatry that the commandments of God could not remove from their culture.

20:27-29 Every high hill ... thick trees: Their idolatrous spirit moved them to build high places of worship to the Asherah on the tops of the hills and to make shrines in the groves. What was to be a blessing to them, became an opportunity to continue their idolatrous worship to false gods. **Bamah:** The meaning is "high place."

20:30-32 As representatives for the exiles, the elders were told that God would not listen to their pleas to return to the land. They were still a generation of idolaters, seeking to identify with the Babylonian culture through their idolatry. If their children were to be candidates to return to the land of Palestine, they must put away their idol gods.

20:33-38 They had to submit to God's rule over them. When this was accomplished, then He would bring them out of their captivity as He brought them out of Egyptian captivity. God would bring back to the land only those who were submissive. A spirit of submission, not rebellion, would characterize those who would enter the land of Israel. **Pass under the rod:** When the shepherd brought the sheep into a boma (protected area) at night, they would be counted as they passed under his staff. He thus knew that each sheep was brought into his protection. **Yoke of the covenant:** Their submissive spirit would bring them again under obedience to the conditions of the covenant.

20:39-44 Those who would continue in idolatry were let go by God. They would no longer be of Israel. But the obedient Israel would be called again to return to the promised land where they would no longer profane the name of God through idolatry. These would again go unto the holy mountain of God's kingship over them. **All the house of Israel:** There are many promises throughout the prophets that all twelve tribes of Israel would be represented in the return to Palestine to reestablish the identity of

Israel. There would be no lost tribes. If there were, then God's promises to the captives that all Israel would return to the land would have been false. **Then you will know:** The fulfillment of the prophecies that a remnant of all Israel was restored to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity was historical evidence that God was working in Israel. Psalm 83:4 is significant in reference to this historical miracle of God. The oppressing nations sought to destroy the identity of Israel, which they sought to accomplish through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Israel lost her identity as an independent nation with her own land. They became only captives of conquering world empires. The historical miracle of God was the restoration of their identity as a people, as well as their restoration to their homeland, though their homeland was occupied by the Medo-Persians when they returned. It was then occupied by the Greeks, and finally by the Romans. But they were restored as the people of God, ruled by their King from heaven and governed by the law of the covenant they had with their King.

20:45-49 Because the Babylonian army would approach Judah from the north, the prophecy here was to Judah to the south. It was a message of fire and destruction. In the allegory, Judah was the forest that would be consumed by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. **Parable:** This was a parable. However, the Hebrew word can also be translated "allegory."

Chapter 21

21:1-7 The destruction of the land

and Jerusalem will come through Nebuchadnezzar, who is used as the sword of the Lord. **Righteous and the wicked:** In this case, the righteous will suffer because of the sins of the wicked. When national calamity comes, the righteous are caught in the calamity that they did not produce. **Sword ... will not return:** The destruction will not stop until God has accomplished His purpose.

21:8-13 **Sharpened:** The sword would do its work effectively. **Polished:** It will come upon the people as a strike of lightning. Since such was to take place, it was not a time for mirth, that is, rejoicing. **Despises the rod:** Because they did not repent as a result of former discipline through famine and calamity within the land, they had to be destroyed from the land. **Strike ... thigh:** This was a Near East gesture of showing despair (Jr 31:19).

21:14-17 **Strike your hands:** A gesture that signalled activity to begin. The decision in the court of Nebuchadnezzar had been made to take action against the rebellious in Palestine. Even as Ezekiel spoke these words, it was probable that the Babylonian army was in preparation to march on Judah and Jerusalem.

21:18-23 Nebuchadnezzar was to march against the Ammonites and Judah. In the calamity that befell Judah, the Ammonites also suffered defeat (25:1-7; Jr 49:1-6). **Rabbath:** The capital of Ammon. In order to make his decision concerning who to strike first, Nebuchadnezzar consulted the diviners. When the decision was made to strike Ammon first, the Jewish exiles assumed that Judah and

Jerusalem would be spared. But the suggestion of the diviners that Ammon should be taken first was considered false divination by the Babylonians, and thus they marched on Jerusalem instead. **Look at the liver:** This was an action of the diviners in their attempt to foretell the future. In modern-day terms, it would be the practice of soothsayers looking into a crystal ball, throwing bones, or using cards in order to determine one's fate.

21:24-27 Zedekiah's rebellion was remembered by Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was thus determined to punish Jerusalem for the rebellion that was led by Zedekiah. **Remove the turban and take off the crown:** Ezekiel prophesied that Zedekiah take off the symbol of kingship. Since he had been appointed king by Babylon, and not anointed by God, he had no right to be the king of Israel. The prophecy here tells him to get off the throne, for he had no right to reign. **Until He comes whose right it is:** The only one who would have a right to reign as king of God's people would be the Messiah who was to come (See comments Lk 1:31-33).

21:28-32 The extent of the destruction of Ammon was that the Ammonite nation was terminated. After the destruction by the Babylonians, it went out of existence, never to be restored again as a nation under the sanction and purpose of God.

Chapter 22

22:1-16 In this first of three pronouncements of judgment upon the city of Jerusalem, the sins of the city are

named. It was a city of blood because within it innocent people died without just cause. The righteous were even subjected to the intimidation of the wicked leaders at the time the city was under siege. They would not allow anyone to leave the city, and thus innocent people died from famine and pestilence. Ezekiel pronounced judgment on the kings who remained leaders through murder and oppression. They had no respect for their fathers and mothers. They oppressed the fatherless and widows. They did not spiritually lead the people. The leaders had no moral character, and thus led the people to moral degradation. In all their dealings, the leaders were corrupt and immoral. They served for their own existence, subjecting the people in order to satisfy their own greed and thirst for power. **Consume your filthiness out of you:** God would send the people into captivity until those of their culture of wickedness had died. Once they came to their moral senses in captivity, then they would understand that all the calamity through which they were taken was the work of God to cleanse them of their apostate behavior.

22:17-22 In this second pronouncement of judgment, Ezekiel portrayed the nation as metal melted down to dross. The wickedness of the people had stirred up the anger of God, which anger was poured out in wrath upon the city in order to consume it.

22:23-31 This third pronouncement of judgment upon the city focused on the prophets, priests and princes who had led the people in a conspiracy against God.

The end of the tragedy was that God sought for someone who could intercede for the city, but no one could be found. And since He could find no one to intercede for the city, He had to continue with His plan to destroy the city. If one person could have been found to intercede for the people, then God would have turned His wrath from the city (Compare Gn 18). **Her priests:** The priests were so ignorant of the law of God that they did not know the difference between right and wrong according to the law. They did not know what was clean or unclean. **Her princes:** The kings and leaders tore at the people, seeking gain through any means. **Her prophets:** The false prophets claimed to speak for God. They claimed to have either a vision or dream. But their visions or dreams were the product of their own imagination. **The people:** The population turned on itself, neighbor against neighbor. **Stand in the gap:** Only one person could have stood in the gap between God and man, and subsequently through prayer turn the wrath of God away from the city. But not one righteous person was found.

Chapter 23

23:1-10 This oracle came around 590 B.C. (20:1), after the northern kingdom of Israel, represented by Samaria (Aholah), her capital, had already gone into Assyrian captivity. The southern kingdom, represented by Jerusalem (Aholibah), would go into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., about four years from the date of this prophecy. The northern kingdom had committed spiritual

harlotry by signing alliances with foreign nations throughout her history. She was eventually taken into captivity by one with whom she had signed an alliance. She went into Assyrian captivity in 722/721 B.C. **From the time in Egypt:** While the Israelites were in Egyptian captivity, they were greatly affected by the idolatry of the Egyptians. Though their desire for idols subsided in the years of their early history, Solomon reintroduced idolatry through his trade deals and foreign wives. His influence over the people throughout history was perpetuated to the point that it led to their captivity to the Assyrians.

23:11-21 In reference to their digression into idolatry, Judah became worse than her northern sister. She made an alliance with the Babylonians, into whose hands she would eventually be given in captivity (See 2 Kg 20:12-21; 24:1). Because the Israelites were located in the major trade route of the ancient world (Palestine), she continually had dealings with nations to the north who traded with Egypt and the northern nations of Africa. The temptation was too great to remain culturally separate from these nations, for traders passed through Palestine on a continual basis. Instead of influencing the traders for good, and teaching them of the one true and living God, she was influenced to accept their national gods in order to establish trade relationships. Solomon began this economic culture of idols and trade, and the kings after him simply continued making alliances with foreign nations, which nations (Assyria and Babylonia) eventually took control

of the trade route. The captivities of the Israelites, therefore, was more than the mere conquest of one people over another. The captivities were national conquests of the major trade route of the ancient world. After the Babylonians, came the Medo-Persians, then the Greeks, and then the Romans. All these empires wanted to maintain control of the Palestinian trade route in order to control the trade of the Near East.

23:22-31 *Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa ... all the Assyrians:* The Babylonians were able to muster the allegiance of mercenary peoples in order to conquer the land of Palestine. Though the Babylonians had overthrown Nineveh in 612 B.C., and finalized the Assyrian Empire at the battle of Carchemish in 609 B.C, the Assyrians were assimilated into the Babylonian war machine. *Make your lewdness and your harlotry ... to cease:* Their culture of involving themselves in idolatrous worship, and all that it entailed, would eventually be forsaken by the Israelites. Their captivity would see the end of the generation of idolaters who generated the wrath of God against them. A new generation would be born in captivity and would not follow after the idolatry as their fathers. *Cup:* The cup was symbolic of suffering. As the northern kingdom suffered captivity, so would the southern kingdom.

23:32-35 Judah became arrogant when her northern sister was taken into captivity. Her arrogance led her to go further into apostasy. She would drink all the cup that was handed to her northern sister, and thus suffer the horrors that

came with Nebuchadnezzar's 30-month siege against Jerusalem which finally fell in 586 B.C.

23:36-49 *To pass them through the fire:* Their religious behavior was void of righteousness. That which would have been morally common sense, was absent from their religious behavior, even to the point of offering their children as sacrifices to the gods they had created after their own imagination. It was to this moral level of degradation that God allowed them to go before He destroyed them with famine, pestilence, the sword, or death during the captivity. *They have sent for men:* Both Samaria and Jerusalem sent for foreigners with whom they could commit spiritual adultery through the making of alliances. Their alliances with their lovers eventually led to their ruin. God allowed their lovers to conquer their territories, and thus bring to an end Israel's control of the land of Palestine for the remainder of her history as a nation. Israel ended when she was dissolved into the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Gl 3:26-29). Even when the Israelites were allowed to return to the land after the Babylonian captivity, it was controlled by the Medo-Persian Empire. Thus the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. resulted in an irrevocable loss of Israel's autonomy in the promised land. In every way, therefore, they had to bear the sins of their past in giving up their possession of the land.

Chapter 24

PROPHECY BEFORE THE FALL

24:1-14 This pronouncement came

in January, 588 B.C., about two and a half years after the previous oracle. This was the date that Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city of Jerusalem (See 2 Kg 25:1; Jr 52:4). What Ezekiel was commanded to do here was interpreted in verses 6-14. The pot symbolized the city of Jerusalem, and the rebellious house of Israel was in the pot for cooking. Because the people within the city did not surrender to the Babylonians, they would suffer the 30-month siege of the city. The righteous and unrighteous would suffer together. Because the city was surrounded, no one would be able to escape the siege. Some did escape to the Babylonians, but they had to secretly leave the city in order to give themselves over to the Babylonians. ***Her blood is in the midst of her:*** Murderers were in Jerusalem, as well as all those who had defiled every symbol that represented the presence of God. The city was sealed up by the Babylonian army, and made ready for the devastation of famine and pestilence that would ravage the population before it finally fell. ***Let the bones be burned:*** Once the flesh was cooked well, Ezekiel was to pour out the broth and burn even the bones. He was also to empty the pot and set it directly on the fire in order that the bronze might burn red hot. It was to be melted with its rust. The city was to be thoroughly cleansed of all sin, which meant that all its inhabitants were to be killed or taken away into captivity. Jerusalem was to cease as a city.

24:15-27 God took Ezekiel's wife as His people were taken from Him by their idol gods. When Ezekiel's wife

died, God commanded Ezekiel not to mourn her death, for her death was a prophecy of the death of their sons and daughters in the city of Jerusalem. When his wife died, Ezekiel was to carry on with his work. Doing so stirred the people to inquire concerning the meaning of his actions. When the people eventually received news that Jerusalem had fallen, Ezekiel instructed them that they were not to mourn for the city, for its fall was the plan of God. Other than prophesying concerning the judgment of God of the nations, Ezekiel was to keep silent until he heard word that the city had fallen. This came about two years later (33:21). When the city had fallen, the event would be a sign that all prophecies concerning its fall would have come to pass. All the prophets of God would have been confirmed true, and all false prophets judged to be false.

Prophecies Against The Nations (25:1 – 32:32)

Outline: (1) Prophecy against Ammon (25:1-7), (2) Prophecy against Moab (25:8-11), (3) Prophecy against Edom (25:12-14), (4) Prophecy against Philistia (25:15-17), (5) Prophecy against Tyre and Sidon (26:1 – 28:26), (6) Prophecy against Egypt (29:1 – 32:32)

Chapter 25 PROPHECY AGAINST AMMON

The time for these prophecies against the nations that surrounded Israel came before the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem. All these nations were related

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

25:1-7 When Nebuchadnezzar finally brought an end to Judah through the destruction of Jerusalem, Ammon rejoiced. Ammon rejoiced when the temple was defiled and the land laid waste. She possibly saw Judah's demise as revenge for what had formerly transpired when Israel conquered her many years before when they were entering the promised land (See Jg 10:9 – 11:40). When the northern kingdom of Israel fell in 722/721 B.C., the Ammonites reclaimed the territory that was formerly taken from them (Jr 49:1). She then attacked the southern kingdom of Judah in 600 B.C. Because of her resentment and evil actions toward Judah, the judgment that would be brought on her would result in her termination from history as a nation. The Ammonites would be assimilated into the world powers that would control the Near East, and thus go out of existence as a nation of people.

PROPHECY AGAINST MOAB

25:8-11 Israel was arrogant in the fact that she was the chosen of God. When she went into apostasy by adopting the idol gods of her neighbors, then her neighbors said that she was no dif-

ferent than them. When Jerusalem fell, and the temple was destroyed, the nations mocked Israel, reaffirming their claim that she too was only another nation of the world like them. Since Israel could no longer claim to have the special protection of her God, then she could no longer claim to be the special people of God.

PROPHECY AGAINST EDOM

25:12-14 From the day that Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, the Edomites were antagonistic against Israel. These descendants of Esau seemed never to forgive Abraham for allowing their forefather to be cast out of his camp (Gn 35:22 – 36:43). Their hatred of Israel led them to work against God's plan through Israel. Because of their work against the plan of God, they brought judgment on themselves, which judgment meant their extinction from history (See comments Ob; see also Ez 35:1 – 36:15). Their hatred went so far as to murder the Israelites who escaped from Jerusalem when it was under siege by the Babylonians.

PROPHECY AGAINST PHILISTIA

25:15-17 From the time Joshua led the Israelites into the land of promise, the Philistines were the continual antagonist against Israel's possession of the land (Jg 3:31; 14:1-16; 1 Sm 4:1-6; 2 Ch 26:6,7). Because the Israelites had throughout their history defeated the Philistines on many occasions, they harbored an ongoing hatred of Israel. When Israel fell, they rejoiced over her demise. Because of their actions against Israel, God's proph-

ets pronounced their certain demise and extinction from history (See Is 14:29:-32; Jr 25:20; Am 1:6-8). **Cherethims:** This was another name for the Philistines. This name was possibly given to the Philistines before the Israelites arrived in Palestine, for they had migrated from Crete, or Caphtor (See Dt 2:23; Jr 47:4; Am 9:7).

Chapter 26

PROPHECY AGAINST TYRE AND SIDON

26:1-14 Tyre and Sidon were prominent gateway seaport cities. Palestine, and the nations immediately east of Palestine, were able to trade with the Mediterranean cities through the ports of these two cities. ***I will be filled now:*** The Israelites evidently functioned as “customs control” when nations as Syria, Ammon and Moab to her north, and cities to the east and south, traded with the coastal cities of the Mediterranean Sea (See 27:5-25). But when Judah fell, the traders had free access to these nations. However, such was not to be for God wanted to destroy both Tyre and Sidon in order to desolate the land of Palestine and punish those neighboring nations of Israel who sought her demise. Because of their strategic location and trade with many nations, the people followed after the pride of their King Ithobaal II (28:12). They lifted themselves up, but they would be brought down. According to Josephus, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for thirteen years. Once he conquered the city, the port came under Babylonian control, but never functioned as it did prior

to the Babylonian destruction. Years later Alexander the Great also besieged the city. During the siege by the Greeks, a remnant of people of Tyre fled from Alexander to a small island off the coast of the mainland city. In order to completely devastate the city, however, the army of Alexander built a causeway with the remains of the coastland city by throwing stones into the sea. A causeway was thus made in order to access the small island. The city was never rebuilt in ancient times to its former glory that it enjoyed prior to its destruction by the Babylonians.

26:15-21 ***Troubled by your departure:*** The kings of all the Mediterranean coastal nations would lament the fall of Tyre simply because they would lose a very strategic trade port to the Near East nations. They would be economically devastated by the demise of a great amount of trade. ***Descend into the Pit:*** Not only would the city fall, but the unrighteous would be brought down to Sheol. What is symbolized in verse 20 is not a location of the dead, but a metaphorical understanding in reference to the beliefs of the people. Shrines and temples were built on high places because of the peoples’ belief that God could be better accessed on hills and mountains. The opposite to such locations would be the depths of the earth. This was the location, therefore, where it was believed that demons existed.

Chapter 27

27:1-36 Judgment upon Tyre was indirect judgment upon all those nations

who traded through her ports. Her trading partners extended even to the ports of Spain and all northern Africa. The Near East trade that went through the port city of Tyre is often ignored when dealing with the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel. When Israel came out of Egyptian captivity, God gave to the Israelites all the territory that extended into the land of the Hittites to the north (modern-day Turkey), to the border with Egypt to the south. He even gave them the territory to the east of the Jordan River when they defeated the Ammonites. The territory that He gave them was the heart of all the Near East trade. If they would have remained faithful to Him, they would have developed into one of the most glorious empires of the world with the opportunity to influence the world for God. One wonders what the world would have been like today if they had remained faithful to God. They had the opportunity, but they foolishly turned their back on God. The emphasis on the greatness of Tyre in this chapter manifests just a portion of the international trade and opportunity that Israel could have had if she would have conquered all the land that God gave her, and then remained faithful to Him. Just having this one city within her border would have given her the opportunity to preach the name of God throughout all nations of the world. As Bible historians, therefore, we see in the words of this prophecy concerning the fall of Tyre the fall of a great opportunity for Israel that they could have had if they would have controlled their rebellious attitude and stiff-

necked behavior. There is thus more to the words of this prophecy against Tyre than a condemnation of the city. We must not forget that the city and port could have belonged to the people of God, who in turn could have had a great impact on the world through their monotheistic beliefs.

Chapter 28

28:1-10 “I am a god”: Any man on earth who would set himself up as one to be worshiped, has declared his own doom (See comments At 14). Only God is to be worshiped, for it was He who created all things. The city of Tyre, therefore, was to pay the price for the arrogance of their king. We would assume, however, that they would not have been punished because of their innocence in this matter. They evidently accepted him as a god, and thus gave him worship. **Wiser than Daniel:** Daniel was but a man, but wiser than the king of Tyre. This statement was a mockery of the king for his arrogant presumption that he would be as wise as God. If the king claimed to be a god, then he would have to be omniscient, and thus no secret could be hidden from him. **Acquired riches:** The king’s self-deception was that his great acquisition of treasures led him to believe that he was as wise as Solomon. But he went one step further. He thought he was as wise as a god. His worldly wisdom to acquire riches was not a qualification for claiming to be a god. So because he claimed to be God, God would send a ruthless army against him in order to bring him down. And once he was

brought down, he was asked if he would still claim to be a god.

28:11-19 God had set the king of Tyre in his position as the king (Compare comments Rm 13:1-4). But because of his sin, God would bring him down. He was a leader that God raised up in order to accomplish His purpose among His people. But when the sin of materialism took control of his life, he was taken out by God. ***The people will be astonished:*** The people would actually learn a lesson from the fall of the king of Tyre. He exalted himself among the people as a god. However, he was brought down. Though they may not have recognized that it was God who brought him down, they certainly learned that one as the great king of Tyre could be no god, for he was brought down by another king who was more powerful than he.

28:20-26 Since Tyre and Sidon were sister cities, they were considered in prophecy together. What affected one, affected the other (See Is 23:1,2; Mk 7:24-26; At 12:20). Ezekiel and the other prophets spoke against both Tyre and Sidon. They proclaimed that they would fall. Once they fell, God's prophets were proved to be sent from God who only can know the future. ***Prickling brier:*** The nations that surrounded Israel continually plagued them throughout their history. But this would come to an end, for these nations would be terminated by God. This was done when the Medo-Persian Empire assumed control of all the former possessions of the Assyrians and Babylonians. When God brought His people back to the land of Palestine, the people

who were already in the land, and the territory of all neighboring nations, were under the authority of the Medo-Persian Empire. They could not rise up against the returned remnant of Israel, lest they be seen as rising up against the Medo-Persian authority that was in control of all Palestine and surrounding regions. For this reason, the Jews dwelt safely in the land when they returned, for they were under the protection of the Medo-Persians (See comments Er & Ne). ***Sanctified in them:*** God would be set apart in their minds as the only true and living God.

Chapter 29

PROPHECY AGAINST EGYPT

29:1-7 This oracle of Ezekiel was delivered during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem. It is specifically directed toward the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because the Pharaohs of Egypt thought that they were the descendants of the gods, they were arrogant and pompous. ***My river:*** The Nile River was the source of food for Egypt, and thus the foundation of their existence. The crops of Egypt were planted along the silted banks of the Nile, which made it possible for Egypt to have food even in the worst of famines. ***Great monster:*** Pharaoh wallowed in the wealth of the Nile. But God would bring him up from the Nile as a fish caught on a hook. As scales are attached to the fish, the people would cling to the big fish Pharaoh, which would result in all of them being cast into the wilderness. ***Not be gathered and buried:*** It was abhorrent to the Egyptian not to be buried, es-

pecially for the Pharaoh who would enjoy a great entombment at the time of his burial. Because they would not be buried, animals and birds would eat their discarded bodies. **Staff made of reed:** Israel had leaned on Egypt in the past for help, but Egypt crumbled as a staff that was made of flimsy reeds.

29:8-12 Egypt would be laid waste by the Babylonians from the small town of Migdol in the north (See Ex 14:2; Nm 33:7), to Syene (modern-day Aswan) in the south. This was the totality of the heart of Egypt. **Forty years:** This time may be symbolic, taken from Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness (Nm 14:33; Ps 95:10). It would refer to the time when the Medo-Persian Empire extended into Egypt from 525 to 487 B.C. **I will scatter the Egyptians:** As Israel was scattered among the nations, so would the Egyptians be scattered during their period in the wilderness.

29:13-16 I will gather the Egyptians: Only the Egyptians were promised to be restored to their land. All the other nations against whom prophecies were made, were destined to termination. God seems to make this promise to the Egyptians because they were the nation that housed His people during their years of development as a nation. **A lowly kingdom:** Though the Egyptians would emerge as a nation, they would not be the dominant and glorious nation that they were in their former years. **No longer be the confidence of ... Israel:** In her apostasy, Israel turned to Egypt for help. But Egypt would never again be a strong nation to which Israel would be

tempted to again turn for help.

29:17-21 Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Tyre for thirteen years. However, he took little spoil from the city. It was at this time in history that God was using the Babylonian Empire to bring judgment on Assyria for arrogantly striking against the people of God in the northern kingdom, and then against Judah. In order that the Babylonian army continue to be God's proxy judgment against the apostate people of God, they needed to survive. For this reason, therefore, God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to conquer Egypt. **The horn of the house of Israel:** Reference here could be to the time when God would open Ezekiel's mouth once again to speak concerning Israel and her future. At this time his mouth was closed, for he could speak only concerning the destiny of the nations around Israel. But when God once again allowed him to speak, he would speak of the restoration of Israel, as well as the coming of the Messiah.

Chapter 30

30:1-9 The day of the Lord: In prophecy, this phrase meant that judgment and destruction were coming. The day of the Lord meant deliverance of the righteous by the destruction of the wicked (See comments 2 Pt 3). In this historical context, Egypt and all nations who were in alliance with her were to suffer the destruction that would be coming from the Babylonian Empire. When Egypt and its alliance countries fell to the Babylonians, the neighboring Ethiopians to the south of Egypt would also suffer.

30:10-12 *I will make the rivers dry:*

The Nile River would not completely dry up, but it would be so low that the irrigation canals would not feed through to the crops. However, most of the small rivers that dispersed from the mouth of the Nile in the land of Goshen would dry up.

30:13-19 The cities herein mentioned are the principal cities throughout Egypt. Memphis was the capital of Lower Egypt (the northern region) and Pathros was the capital of Upper Egypt (the southern region). *No:* Thebes. *Aven:* Heliopolis. *Pi-beseth:* Bubastis. *Tehapthenes:* Or, Tahpanhes.

30:20-26 The date of this oracle against Pharaoh was 586 B.C., the year that Jerusalem fell. While Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem, the Egyptians came up to help Judah. But Nebuchadnezzar temporarily left his siege of Jerusalem, and engaged the Egyptians, whom he defeated and sent back to Egypt. Then again in 582/581 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar took his army into Egypt and ravaged the land. The prophecy here made by Ezekiel possibly refers to the 582/581 attack of Nebuchadnezzar against Egypt.

Chapter 31

31:1-9 This oracle is dated about two months after the previous oracle (30:20). The prophecy here was directed to Pharaoh. However, Assyria is used to illustrate that no matter how great a kingdom might be, it can be brought down by God. *Cedar:* In order to exemplify the greatness of the Assyrian Empire, it was compared to a great cedar of Lebanon. The

Assyrian Empire became extensive throughout the Near East. Other nations founded their security on its existence, trusting that it would never fall. Through its far reaching governance of the Near East, nations could trade in peace. The kings of the Empire were arrogant because of the greatness of the kingdom. God had raised up this empire for the purpose of using it to discipline His people of the northern kingdom of Israel.

31:10-14 Though the Assyrian Empire was so great, the Babylonian Empire overcame it. Assyria was brought down. And when it was brought down, all those who depended on her existence came down with her. *The most ruthless of the nations:* The Babylonian army was composed of a coalition of forces that were of a warrior culture. They existed off the plunder of other nations. Their survival, therefore, depended on their plunder of those cities they conquered. The Assyrians could not stand against such an army. They were thus brought down to the pit of death.

31:15-18 Assyria was brought down. And when it fell, it fell as a great tree to the ground, causing a tremor throughout the nations that depended on her existence. Such would be the fate of Egypt. Egypt was never the extensive empire that Assyria was. And since Assyria was brought down by the Babylonians, Ezekiel wanted the Egyptians to know that they did not have a chance. They too would come crumbling down in order to find their place among the uncircumcised.

Chapter 32

32:1-10 This oracle against Pharaoh was delivered in March 585 B.C. It was delivered a year and nine months after the oracle of 31:1. This prophecy is specifically against Pharaoh. He made himself fierce like a lion, and like a great monster—possibly a reference to a whale—among the nations. ***Spread out My net:*** No matter how fierce and large Pharaoh presumed himself to be, he would be caught and entangled in the net of God (See 29:3-5). Pharaoh would be brought out of his protective waters, and laid out on the ground. The wild birds and beasts would then come and devour him. He would not be allowed the honorable burial that was traditionally given to Pharaohs. ***I will cover the heavens:*** When Pharaoh fell, all his governors, princes and leaders of the land fell with him. Their influence was darkened. They were as stars and the moon that no longer gave their light. When Pharaoh (the sun) was covered, the Egyptian leaders (the moon), could no longer reflect the influence of the Pharaoh throughout the land. ***Trouble the hearts of many people:*** When Pharaoh was brought down, all those nations that depended on Egypt were troubled. They would see that if Egypt could not stand against the invasion of the Babylonians, then surely they could not stand.

33:11-16 Death and destruction would not stop with Pharaoh. The Babylonians would strike the population of Egypt. Since God meant for the Babylonian army to be replenished with the spoil they would take from Egypt, the treasures

of the country would be taken. The animals and crops would be taken for food. The country would be plundered of its goods, and thus the people would be left with nothing to eat. Those who fled into the desert would starve.

32:17-32 Though the Egyptians considered themselves a distinct people from the rest of the Gentile nations, they would go down to death and join all the uncircumcised in Sheol. Pharaoh, and all his people, would be laid in the grave among all the other Gentiles. ***Sheol:*** All the spirits of the dead would go to the realm of departed spirits. This is not the eternal punishment, but the abode of the dead. ***Asshur:*** Or, Assyria. All the nations that were mentioned in this context were formidable military states. They all fell to succeeding nations, and thus Egypt would be no different. Meshech and Tubal were remnants of the Hittites who dwelt north of Palestine. Though all these nations were a terror to the populations of the Near East, they were all gone, buried with their populations. The grave silenced their terror, and the world continued on a better place without them. Pharaoh would suffer the same disgrace and the world would carry on.

Restoration And Reconstruction

(33:1 – 48:35)

Outline: (1) Return of the glory of the Lord (33:1 – 39:29), (2) Restoration of worship and civic life (40:1 – 48:35)

Chapter 33

RETURN OF

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Beginning with this chapter, and ex-

tending throughout the remainder of the book, the primary focus of the prophet is on hope for the future. Except for a brief interjection of prophecy in reference to the nations (36:7; 38; 39), the pronouncements of these final chapters are to the people of God.

33:1-9 Watchman: The prophets of the Old Testament were the watchmen of God (3:16-21; Is 21:6; Jr 6:17; Hk 2:1). They were called in order to call Israel back to God. Their work was to warn the wicked, that they turn from their wicked ways. The Major and Minor Prophets existed for the purpose of warning God's people during the era of apostasy that they should repent, and return to God. **Wicked man:** In this context, Ezekiel turned from the sins of the nation to the sins of the individual. Though the nation had to suffer the calamity of destruction and captivity, the individual would be saved through individual repentance and obedience of God's law.

33:10,11 How should he then live: The people knew that they had to pay for their sinful ways. Their question was how could they survive the present calamity. The answer was simple. They had to repent. They had to turn from their idolatrous beliefs and behavior and return to the law of God.

33:12-16 Righteousness ... will not deliver: This context of teaching argues against the concept that one is once saved, and then he is always saved before God. The word "if" places a condition on one's salvation. If one does not continue in his obedience to the word of God, he will fall from his state of salva-

tion (See 1 Co 15:2). It is true that our works (righteousness) do not guarantee our salvation. We are saved by grace, regardless of the works that we do in response to God's grace (See comments 2 Co 4:15). However, if one claims to be righteous because of his works, and then works wickedness, God's grace will not cover his wicked behavior. If the wicked men turn from his wicked ways, he has thus changed his eternal destiny. He will be saved. His eternal destiny, therefore, is determined by his obedience to the will of God.

33:17-20 Their way is not fair: In order that the justice of God stand unchallenged, each free-moral individual must be held accountable for his own sins. His eternal destiny cannot be unconditionally determined by God before he is born. God's justice stands because each person will be held accountable for his own sins (See comments 2 Co 5:10). Because of the many exhortations throughout the Bible in reference to the teaching of this context—that one must continue faithful—individual responsibility for one's behavior is necessary in order that God stand just in judgment (See Mt 10:22; Cl 1:23; Hb 3:6; 2 Pt 1:10).

33:21,22 One who had escaped: The normal journey from Jerusalem to Chebar would have taken over three months (See Er 7:9). Because of the detention of the captives after the fall of the city in 586 B.C., we would assume that the journey of this refugee took over six months. Ezekiel's mouth had been closed by God in giving any further oracles concerning the city after the state-

ments of 24:26,27. During the interim period he spoke only of the nations (25 – 32). But now God opened his mouth and he could speak concerning the future of Israel.

33:23-29 Many residents of Jerusalem had scattered throughout the land during Nebuchadnezzar's 30-month siege of the city. They were reasoning that if God had given the land to one man, Abraham, then certainly they should be granted the land as a group. In their reasoning, however, they had forgotten their idolatrous beliefs and behavior that had led to their loss of the land. In this oracle, God reminds them of their sinful ways that led to their loss of the land. **Eat with blood:** They ate blood in reference to idol worship (See At 15:20). **Shed blood:** They had offered their children as human sacrifices to their idol gods. **Stand upon your sword:** They trusted in their own military strength, and not in God. They lived by plunder and murder. **Defiles his neighbor's wife:** They were an immoral culture. **Fall by the sword:** Those who remained in the land after the destruction of Jerusalem would be hunted down and killed by the Babylonian army.

33:30-33 *They will not do them:* They came to hear the word of God from the preacher, but they would not take action. They were hearers of the word, but not doers (See comments Js 2:14-26). **A prophet... among them:** When Ezekiel's prophecies were fulfilled, then he was confirmed without doubt to be a prophet of God.

Chapter 34

34:1-6 This is a picture of a self-centered leadership that was concerned only with their own well-being. **Shepherds:** The shepherds in this context were the kings, princes, priests and elders of Israel. When Jerusalem fell, the people of God were scattered as captives, not only throughout the land of Palestine, but also throughout the Babylonian Empire. They were scattered because their leaders had led them into the apostasy of idolatry. In the preceding chapter the leaders simply wanted to come before Ezekiel and hear a word from the prophet. They should have been inquiring of the Lord as to how they could gather the scattered flock of God. **You have dominated them:** Leaders who are concerned for their own well-being, and do not lead by service and example, control by domination. The less they care for the flock, the greater the severity of their domination in order to maintain their base of support and control over the people. They thus use the sheep as an opportunity to satisfy their own thirst for power and control. These shepherds failed to serve the flock of God. God's shepherds should lead by service, not command (Compare comments Mk 10:35-45; 1 Pt 5:1-4).

34:7-10 *No shepherd ... search for My flock:* A shepherd is no shepherd at all if he has his own interest at heart. Since in the context the shepherds were the civil and religious leaders of the people, then in this statement, God said

He would take them away. He would take away any further earthly kings in Israel. The emphasis of what God states in this context is that He will restore His original plan for His people, that He only be their king, reigning over them from heaven. His kingship would continue with the coming King, the Messiah, who would reign over the people from heaven (Lk 1:31-33; At 2:21-36).

34:11-16 God would seek out His sheep from among the nations to which they had been taken in captivity. Once they were gathered, He would bring them again into their land that He had given them. This would happen when the Medo-Persian Empire, under the kingship of Cyrus, would allow the captives to return to their land in 536 B.C. (See comments Er & Ne). ***Destroy the fat and the strong:*** The wicked kings and leaders of former Israel would be taken away. God would never again allow His people to have royal authorities on earth to dominate His people. All authority would remain in heaven where it has always existed (See comments Mt 28:18).

34:17-19 ***Male goats:*** God would take away those who sought to dominate among the flock. These had formerly consumed the wealth of the land for their own selfish ends. They had no consideration for the people, and thus seized and maintained control of the people for the purpose of maintaining their own lifestyles. When religious leaders take advantage of the people in order to guarantee their own life-style, they have stolen the flock of God.

34:20-22 ***Fat sheep:*** One was de-

termined to be a self-seeking shepherd by his fatness that had resulted from his exploitation of the flock. ***Scattered them:*** Their behavior resulted in the scattering of the flock, for they led the people into idolatry. ***Save My flock:*** The ungodly and self-centered leaders of Israel had scattered the flock. God was now taking control of His flock and bringing them back to Him. No longer would He relinquish the flock to man in order that a king reign over them. Their rejection of Him had led to their destruction as a nation. His direction would lead them back to Him, and the Servant that was to come. They would regain their identity as a people, but not regain their independence as a nation in Palestine.

34:23-31 Nothing short of a Messianic fulfillment can lead one to understand the meaning of these verses. ***I will set up one shepherd over them:*** About 500 years before the time of this statement, Israel had cried out for a king on earth to rule over them. This system of governance led to their destruction, for the kings led in their idolatry. In this context, God was laying the foundation for restoring His sole kingship over His people. Through the captivity, their shepherds were taken away, and God was enthroned in their hearts. They were thus being prepared for a social paradigm shift that would last for another 500 years, which would bring them to King Jesus. God would set up His anointed King who would come from the lineage of David (See comments Ep 1:20-23). He would be the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11,14). ***Covenant of peace:*** See comments Jr

31:31-34. **My hill:** See comments Is 2:1-4. **Showers of blessing:** See At 3:19. **Delivered them:** God would deliver the captives from the bondage from which they could not deliver themselves. Their physical deliverance from Babylonian captivity would be typical of their deliverance from sin under the reign of the coming Servant. Once delivered, God's sheep would be in His protective hand. They would no longer fear those who could kill the body, but could not kill the soul (Compare Mt 10:28; Rv 21:4).

Chapter 35

35:1-9 Mount Seir: Edom. **Stretch out My hand:** God will influence the events of history in order to bring Edom to a close. **Perpetual hatred:** Being the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, the Edomites were continually the antagonists of Israel. From the time the Israelites came out of Egyptian captivity, to the time of their demise in the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites shed the blood of the Israelites (Nm 20:18). When Israel was coming to a close with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Edomites murdered many Israelites who escaped from the destruction of Jerusalem and fled toward Edom (See comments Ob). The Edomites rejoiced over the doom of Israel (See comments Ob 12). Because they showed no mercy for God's people, God would show no mercy toward them (Js 2:13). Edom as a nation would be terminated from history. They lived by the sword, and by the sword they would die. They were a cruel race of people. Herod the Great was an Edomite.

Centuries after this prophecy of Ezekiel, Herod the Great, and those who descended from Herod, were designated by the Romans to reign over the Jews in Palestine immediately before the birth of Jesus. It was an effort by the Romans to humiliate the Jews who were living in Palestine at the time of the birth of Jesus.

35:10-15 Before the birth of Jacob and Esau, God told Rebekah that there were two nations in her womb (Gn 25:23). These two nations were the Edomites and Israelites. Israel followed after God, but the Edomites followed after false gods (Ob 2). They followed after the character of their father who was a profane person (Hb 12:16). **I will do according to your anger:** God would render to them that which they had done to others (Rm 12:19). **Idumea:** The Edomite nation. The Edomite nation would be made desolate, but the Jews would be restored to their land.

Chapter 36

36:1-7 Ezekiel had previously revealed condemnation of Mount Seir (35:3). Now he revealed blessing for the mountains of Israel. **Mountains:** The mountains stood for all the land. The land, including its mountains, valleys and rivers, was the sustenance of the nation of Israel. **Have become our possession:** The rest of the nations were land grabbers. Once the Israelites were taken from the land, countries as Edom grabbed the land. Because of the apostasy, God had taken His people from the land. However, when He took His people from their inheritance, He did not permanently give

it over to other nations. The message of hope in this context was that the mountains and valleys would again be productive for the people of God.

36:8-15 *Yield your fruit for My people:* Though others took possession of the land, the promise was that the land would again bring forth its fruit for the people of God. ***All the house of Israel:*** All twelve tribes would again enjoy their occupation of the land after King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire released the exiles in 536 B.C. The promise was that the cities of the land would be rebuilt, not just the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was important to the returnees, but it was not the only city that was rebuilt. In fact, according to the history that is given by Ezra and Nehemiah, the completion of the reconstruction of Jerusalem came after the rebuilding of many other cities in the land (See comments Er & Ne). There is no emphasis here on the rebuilding of the temple. ***I will multiply:*** Their prosperity in the land would be the sign that God was again with them. ***Bereave your nation of children:*** The other nations were saying that Israel bereaved herself of children. But this reproach of the nation would cease. Neither the people, nor the land, would bear the disgrace that was brought on the land through their apostasy. Through repentance and restoration, the Israelites would not become the victims of themselves. They would no longer be a reproach and a derision among the nations.

36:16-25 *Woman in her impurity:* When a woman was in her time of uncleanness, she was ceremonially impure

(Lv 15:19-24). She was not to be touched by a man. When Israel was unclean with idol worship, God could not be close to her. He stood at a distance, and thus Satan had his opportunity to bring the ruthless nations of the world into her land for the purpose of destruction. ***According to their deeds:*** They sowed idolatry, and thus reaped the consequences of their sin. ***Profaned My holy name:*** Through their disobedience of His law, and their apostasy to idols, they brought mockery on the name of God. They caused the Gentile nations to accuse that the God of Israel was no different from their nationalistic gods that they had created after their own imaginations. ***I do this ... for My name's sake:*** Israel was only the opportunity through whom God planned to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. She was a flawed instrument. Nevertheless, in order to fulfill the promises that were made to the fathers, God restored Israel in order that she be identified as the heritage through whom the Savior came in fulfillment of the promises. ***I will sanctify My great name:*** God's name would be set apart, and thus manifested as a name of the God who exists above the minds of men who imagine their own gods. Through the restoration of His people to the land, therefore, God vindicated Himself to be the one true and living God (1 Sm 2:2). ***Sanctified in you before their eyes:*** When God was hallowed—set apart as the only God—then the nations would perceive that God was working in the restoration of Israel to their land. ***I will cleanse you:*** The people would be cleansed of their former sin

because of their repentance of their idolatrous past. They would once again be His holy people (Lv 11:44; see 1 Pt 1:15,16).

36:26-32 A new heart: It would be a humbled heart. The purpose for the captivity of Israel was not simply punishment. If we do not understand that God was working to preserve a remnant of Israel in order to reestablish their identity for the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers, then we have missed the point. In order to reestablish the identity of Israel, they had to be humbled through captivity. This was God putting a new heart and spirit within them. They had to voluntarily submit to His will, realizing that the only way out of captivity was through humble submission to Him. Once this was accomplished after the first generation of captives died, then through scribes as Ezra, with the leadership of spiritual men as Nehemiah, the humble and dedicated could be brought back into the land in order to prepare for the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. **I will put My Spirit within you:** This statement would possibly take these promises beyond the restoration of the captives to the land after the Babylonian captivity. The prophecy possibly looks to the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32 (See comments). God poured out the Holy Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2, afterward filling His people with the Spirit upon their obedience to the gospel (At 2:38). However, the meaning would also be applicable from the time of the restoration to the coming of the Messiah, the time when God did not work through prophets as

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets. The Old Testament prophets were sent in order to call Israel back to God from their idolatry. But after the return, they would need no message as was given to them by the Old Testament prophets. They had the writings of the prophets to lead them to the Messiah. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit would not cease to work among God's people until the coming of the Messiah. He would work, but not as through prophets as the Major and Minor Old Testament prophets. He would work through chosen individuals as Simeon and Anna who would constantly remind the people that the Messiah was coming (See comments Lk 2:25,36). **Cause you to walk in My statutes:** God caused them to go through the cleansing of the captivity by humiliating the proud and arrogant idolaters. Since we would also interpret this to refer to a restoration of the people to return to God, then we would assume that the teaching of Jeremiah 31:31-34 would apply to this prophecy (See comments). The new heart would be the people's desire for God alone. **My people ... your God:** They would no longer give themselves over to false gods that they had created after their own imaginations. They would be restored to the one true God, and thus made to be His people. **No more reproach of famine:** Because they would give their hearts to God, God would not bring famine and pestilence on them in an effort to turn them from their sin. Thus the nations would never again mock them because their God had brought punishment on them for their sin. **You will**

loathe yourselves: When restored to the land, the generation of Israelites that would return would look back to the idolatry of their fathers and loathe the behavior of their fathers. They would realize that their fathers brought independent Israel down because they ran after false gods.

36:33-38 *Dwell in the cities ... ruins rebuilt:* These promises caution us not to be too zealous to see Messianic prophecies within this context. Ezekiel focused the prophecy on the restoration of the people to the land of Palestine, rebuilding of the cities that had been destroyed by the invading forces, and then, cultivating the land. God would do all this as an evidence that He had worked a historical miracle. When a nation was conquered in ancient times and taken into captivity, that was the end of the nation. However, in the case of Israel, God would resurrect His people out of captivity and reestablish them as a people within their land that had been given to them one thousand years before. When this would happen, then all the nations would perceive that the God of Israel was the true God of heaven.

Chapter 37

37:1-14 This was surely one of the most unsettling visual prophecies that Ezekiel experienced. The message of the illustration is clear. The power of God that was manifested in the resurrection of the bones proved to the people that if God could raise up these bones, and put life in them, then surely He could raise up His people out of their captivity and

bring them again into their land. The northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity in 722/721 B.C. by the Assyrians. They had thus been in captivity over 140 years before this prophecy was made. They were many generations into their captivity, and thus settled in the lands of their captors. The captivity of the southern kingdom was finalized in 586 B.C. But in the prophecy, both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel would be brought together as one nation of twelve tribes. They would be brought back into the land of Palestine. This historical miracle was accomplished when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, and subsequently allowed all captives to return to their homelands that were under Medo-Persian control. The fact that this would eventually happen caused wonder at the time Ezekiel made the prophecy, but belief when it actually happened.

37:15-23 What God commanded Ezekiel to do was to be done before all the people. It was to be done in a manner that would cause them to ask concerning the meaning of his actions. One stick represented the southern kingdom of Judah. The other used Joseph to stand for the northern kingdom of Israel. The sticks represented the two kingdoms coming together to be known as Israel, thus reestablishing the identity of Israel. The two kingdoms had been divided since the time immediately after the death of Solomon in 931 B.C. In 536 B.C., when the Medo-Persians allowed the Jews to return to their land, they would be united as one nation. After a period

of almost 400 years of division, they would be brought together as one nation. Truly, it was a historical miracle of God to do such a thing.

37:24-28 There is certainly Messianic prophecy in this context. **David My servant:** This statement should be understood in view of its fulfillment in Jesus (See comments Lk 1:31-34; At 2:25-36). When a remnant of all twelve tribes was restored to the land after 539 B.C., they also restored themselves to serve God as their only king. When Jesus came, the Father gave kingdom reign to the Son, who is now on the throne of David, reigning with all authority on earth from heaven (See comments Mt 28:18; Ep 1:21-23). **My tabernacle:** The tabernacle was located in the middle of the twelve tribes, and thus symbolized the presence of God among His people. The restoration of the tabernacle meant that God's presence would again be restored among His people. **The Lord sanctifies Israel:** The word "sanctify" here means to set apart. The thought is that the nations would, after the return of the captives, know that God had set apart His people. They were set apart for a specific purpose, that is, to bring the Savior of the world into the world for all nations.

Chapter 38

38:1-17 In chapters 38 & 39, apocalyptic prophecy is directed against Gog, of the land of Magog, who would fight against the people of God. Magog was a land to the north of Palestine. It included the regions of Meshech and Tubal. Some have assumed that Gog was Gyges (690-

657 B.C.), king of Lydia in Asia Minor. Others have assumed that Gog was Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonian Empire. Some have suggested that reference is to Alexander the Great who took control of Palestine in the latter part of the 4th century. Still others have suggested that Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, is pictured, for he was the one who defiled Israel's sacrificial ceremonies in the early part of the 2nd century. However, if this context is apocalyptic, then the identity of Gog as a specific person is meaningless. He simply represents any force that would set himself or itself against the people of God. In view of the statements in 39:25-29, reference in the prophecy of these two chapters is to a time after the return of the captives from Babylonian captivity. The historical events look forward from the return to the coming of Jesus for His earthly ministry. This is an apocalyptic picture of any attack against God's people, and thus an encouragement to the returnees that they should never again fear a force that would destroy them. Others would come, but they would not defeat and scatter them as in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. **Persia, Ethiopia and Libya:** The prophecy was not only against Gog to the north of Palestine, but also against Persia to the east and Ethiopia and Libya to the south. All the nations surrounding Israel after the return are here warned not to trouble God's people, for He will bring judgment on them for harming His people. In the prophecy, Gog is representative of all enemies who would set themselves against Israel. Since Israel was restored to Pal-

estine, the major trading route of the time, then the trading nations to the north and south of Israel are judged for their trouble that they would bring on God's people. It is difficult in the prophecy to determine exactly what nation would be represented by Gog. Though we may not understand the specific identity of Gog, and the country of Magog, the central meaning of the prophecy is clear. Gog would represent any king who would set himself against God's people. Magog would be representative of any kingdom that would seek to again assimilate God's people to the loss of their identity. All such kings and kingdoms would fail in their attempt to annihilate God's people. ***Sanctified through you:*** From the time of the return of the remnant to Palestine, which began in 539 B.C., to the time of the coming of Jesus, the land of Palestine was occupied by the Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans. All these empires subdued the people of God. However, the attack of Gog, who represented all enemies of the people of God, would come to no avail. God's people would continue to maintain their identity as Jews until the coming of the Messiah. The fact that they maintained their identity as a culture of people, proved that God had set them apart (sanctified) as His people through whom the Savior would be brought into the world. Every effort to terminate Israel from history, therefore, would fail.

38:18-23 The meaning of the prophecy was that God works for His people. In the case of any attack upon God's people, it is not stated that it would be His people who would take up arms and

defend themselves against the attacker. It is stated that God would raise up all that would be necessary in order to thwart the plans of the attacker of His people. Thus God would work nation against nation in order that no nation ever again conquer His people. God would do all this in order to exalt His name among the nations.

Chapter 39

39:1-8 In this context the invading hostile force against God's people is described in detail. Regardless of the strength of forces against God, He, with a simple strike, dismantles their power. They are laid bare to be devoured by birds and beasts. Because the evil forces are so easily defeated, God's people conclude that only He could have been the source of their defeat (See comments Et).

39:9,10 Once God had brought the forces of evil down, then His people enjoyed the plunder of His deliverance. The extent of the victory was measured by the greatness of the spoil. The burning of the instruments of war for fuel took seven years, indicating complete destruction. It also symbolized that the enemies of God were great. However, they were overcome, regardless of their greatness and the number of weapons they used against the people of God.

39:11-16 Gog would be buried beyond the Jordan River (Sea). In order that the land be cleansed of all the dead bodies (36:18; Nm 31:19,20), a burial party would be employed for the purpose. If anyone identified a body, he was to mark the location for the burial party.

39:17-24 Though God used invading forces to punish Israel for their iniquity, He sacrificed (set apart) the invading forces in order to restore and spare His people. Assyria and Babylon were used as His proxy judgment against Israel. Assyria and Babylon, however, were conquered in order to restore the people to the land. Both Assyria and Babylon were evil forces against God's people. However, they arrogantly marched against the people of God. Because of their arrogance, they were sacrificed for the benefit of the restoration of the people of God. Israel's deliverance from the evil forces that were against her is the occasion for belief among the nations. The nations thought it was the end of Israel when she was taken into captivity. But when the powers that took her into captivity were terminated, she was restored to her land. The historical miracle of her restoration became the opportunity for the honest historian to conclude that God was still working through His people.

39:25-29 This clear historical conclusion to the apocalyptic revelation of chapters 38 & 39 place the setting of the events at the time of Israel's captivity and restoration. Evil forces symbolized by Gog and Magog were brought against God's people. They were defeated by God once He had used them for His purpose. That purpose was concluded with the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire. Cyrus, king of the Medo-Persian Empire released the captives, and thus the faithful in Israel concluded that there was only

one God. All their false gods and their false prophets had been proven wrong. God's prophets had been proven true. And thus, Israel knew that God caused both their captivity and return. They knew that God did what He said He would do if they forsook His covenant with them.

Chapter 40

RESTORATION

OF WORSHIP AND CIVIC LIFE

40:1-4 Ezekiel dates these prophecies in 572 B.C., fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In vision God wanted Ezekiel to see the restored Jerusalem. Thus the angel took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in order that he might see in vision what he would never see in life, for he would be dead by the time this vision was fulfilled. But to give hope to the captives, he was to tell what he saw to the people throughout the Babylonian Empire.

40:5-49 *Temple:* The literal Hebrew word is "house," and thus can be translated "house" throughout the remainder of these chapters. Since the word "house" would metaphorically refer to the abiding place of God among His people, the physical symbol of the temple is used in prophecy to look forward to the house of God, the church (See 1 Tm 3:15). *Cubit:* About eighteen inches, or forty-five centimeters. *Rod:* About ten and a half feet, or a little over three meters. In this chapter the angel measured for the returnees the places for the restored sacrifices. When the return of the exiles happened, they would reinstitute sacrifices at the temple. Ezekiel is

given this revelation in order to bring hope to the captives, reassuring them that though the temple had been destroyed, and the temple sacrifices terminated, they would in the years to come be reinstated. The purpose for the revelation, therefore, was to bring encouragement for the discouraged captives in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. It is difficult not to understand that these prophecies look beyond the physical restoration of Israel to the land of Palestine. In our hindsight view of the establishment of the church, we can see the symbolism of the physical return of God's people to the land of Palestine as a metaphor that would refer to the establishment of the church in Acts 2.

Chapter 41

41:1-26 When reading this vision of a rebuilt temple, the Bible historian should keep in mind that a permanent temple for Israel was not in the original plan of God. When Israel was still at the foot of Mount Sinai, God, through Moses, gave instructions to Israel to build a tabernacle, or tent. The instructions were given in detail in order that Israel rebuild the tabernacle throughout their years in the land of promise. The tabernacle represented the presence of God among the people, and before it they were to assemble yearly. The tabernacle was to be moved among the people in order that no tribe be marginalized for the annual sacrifice during the day of atonement. However, when David became king, God gave a concession to him that he build a permanent structure to house

the ark of the covenant. David was not allowed to build the temple, but Solomon, his son, did (1 Kg 6-7). Solomon's temple, therefore, marginalized the tribes to the north in Palestine, and thus after Solomon's death Jeroboam built two altars, one in Bethel and the other in Dan (1 Kg 12:29). In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon's temple. In the return of the remnant, God knew that the remnant would remain small in the land, and thus the rebuilding of the temple that is described in these chapters would suffice in providing a location to which the returned exiles could go for the annual sacrifices (See comments Er & Ne; Dt 12:21). The dimensions of the temple were different than those of Solomon's temple. This temple would exist until Herod the Great, who would later built what was referred to as Herod's Temple. This temple would be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 and would never be rebuilt again. Because of Ezekiel's use of the word "forever," it may be that these instructions concerning the restoration of the sacrifices and rebuilding of the temple were symbolic of the spiritual temple of God, the church, that would come a little over 400 years after the last return of the captives to Palestine (See comments Er & Ne). At least we know that when Jesus came, no emphasis was placed on a continuation of the temple, for true worship would take place anywhere in the world, regardless of any physical structures (See comments Jn 4:23,24). In fact, Jesus prophesied the destruction of the temple structure that stood at the time of His ministry (See comments Mt 24). One of

the great lessons that the Jews learned while in exile was that they could worship God without the presence of a temple structure. When they returned to rebuild the temple, therefore, they rebuilt it in order to unite the people around the sacrifices that were to be continued until the coming of the final sacrifice of the Son of God. While in captivity, it is believed that the Jews developed the idea of the synagogue. It is difficult to determine the origins of the synagogue, for the structure and function of the synagogue is found nowhere in the Old Testament. The Jews in captivity possibly built the synagogues for the purpose of solidifying their religious identity and culture throughout the world where they had been scattered. The concept of the synagogue thus came with the returnees in view of the fact that the rebuilt temple still marginalized those in Palestine who were too far from the temple (See comments Dt 12:21). Instead of a restoration of the mobile tabernacle, the Jews built synagogues throughout Palestine. Since they had built synagogues throughout the land of their captivity, the synagogue became a customary cultural and religious center of Israel. Every region, therefore, had a synagogue where sacrifices and teaching could take place. The synagogue thus became an opportunity for world evangelism in the early days of the church (At 17:2).

Chapter 42

42:1-20 Bible students should not be frustrated in interpreting the description of the temple that is given here.

Because the Hebrew text varies in different places it is difficult in some places for the translator to bring over into another language the details of the Hebrew text. We do understand that these instructions were given through Ezekiel in order that the returnees after the Babylonian captivity would have some guidelines concerning the reconstruction of the temple. God knew that the temple had been so completely destroyed that the returnees would not have an idea as to how they should rebuild it. No guidelines or blueprint for building the temple were given for the construction of Solomon's temple. It is believed that Solomon built his temple after the model of Canaanite temples that were contemporary with Solomon. The returnees, however, were so repentant concerning their sin of idolatry, that they did not want in any way to rebuild the temple in a manner that would resemble or reflect the pattern of any pagan temples. In order to ease their minds, therefore, God revealed these basic instructions concerning the reconstruction in order that they be confident that the rebuilding was according to the will of God. Both Ezra and Nehemiah, who led returns and reconstruction after the Babylonian captivity, could follow the basic instructions given in these contexts in order to reaffirm to the people that the rebuilding was according to the plan and direction of God.

Chapter 43

43:1-12 The glory of the Lord fills all the earth (Is 6:3). God reveals His

glory in order to manifest His approval and presence. The vision that Ezekiel saw on this occasion was similar to other times when he experienced the awesome presence of God (1:26-28; 8:1,2; 9:1-3). What was experienced on this occasion was the divine glory of God that was manifested in Ezekiel's vision of the temple. His glory came into the reconstructed temple from the east, signifying that God was still present with His people in captivity in Babylonian territory east of Palestine. He would be with them when they returned from captivity to rebuild the temple. When the people forsook idolatry, God came again into their presence while they were in captivity. God's presence, therefore, was not confined to a physical temple. His presence with His people exists wherever they are in the world. **Threshold by My threshold:** The awesomeness of God cannot be compared to or associated with man in his most pure state of being. In the past, the Israelites had built their houses joined to the temple. In the restored temple, they were not to defile the presence of God by doing such. Man cannot exalt himself to be compared with God as he had done with his idol gods that he had created after his own imagination. The awesomeness of the presence of God should be so revered that we would fear His presence and stand in awe of His glory. If men seek to personalize God to the point that they lose their fear of His awesomeness, they may be creating a god after their own imagination. When God was incarnate in the flesh of man, He had to empty Himself of His divine form in

order for man to be able to stand in His presence (See Ph 2:5-8). God is personal to us through Jesus, but we should never forget that if we stood within the energy of His total glory we would be disintegrated into nothingness as in a nuclear blast. The One who created the millions of suns of the universe is millions of times greater in energy than all the universe combined together, for He is greater than that which He created.

43:13-27 In the vision Ezekiel sees the restoration of the temple ceremonies that were conducted by the priests, the descendants of Zadok (43:19; 44:15; 1 Kg 1:7,8). In connection with the offerings that were made, the priests were to sprinkle salt, signifying that the people would keep the covenant. The blood was sprinkled in order to sanctify (set apart) all that was reconstructed for the offering of the sacrifices. Before the people could continue with the altar and temple they had to cleanse and dedicate it to the Lord. After the cleansing, the people could be accepted, and thus the sacrifices that they would make would be accepted.

Chapter 44

44:1-3 The reason the gate is shut is because the Lord entered the temple through the gate. And since it was shut, the Lord would never again leave His holy place among His people. **Not be opened:** In their former state of idolatry, their sun worship was reflected in their opening of the door in order to allow the ray of the rising sun to enter the temple. But in their restoration, this door is never to be opened. **The prince:** As a repre-

sentative of the nation, the prince would eat alone in the sanctified gateway.

44:4-9 Since the temple had previously been defiled by idolatrous worship and idols, the Lord gives instructions as to who is permitted to enter the temple. From this time, no uncircumcised person was to administer at the temple. Though non-Israelites previously administered at the temple (See Ja 9:24,27), this would be changed, for God did not want anyone who was uncircumcised in heart to appear before Him on behalf of the people. In this way, He sought to guard Israel from the influence of idolatrous people. Foreigners had introduced idolatrous worship into Israel, beginning with Solomon and his many foreign wives. And thus, in their future God would not allow this to happen again.

44:10-14 *The Levities ... will bear their iniquity:* In this case, the consequences of the sins of the fathers was passed on to the children. Because the Levites' fathers did not assume their spiritual leadership in order to direct the people according to the law of God, they were banned from doing again that which was assigned to them under the law. Thus the menial work that was previously assigned to foreigners before the temple, was given to the Levites. Because the Levitical priests succumbed to idolatry, they are here assigned to be the gate keepers, butchers and servants at the table. Since they had failed in their duties to keep the people from idolatry, they were stripped of their duties that were given to them under the law and given responsibility that did not entail spiritual lead-

ership. When the return of the exiles eventually came after the Babylonian captivity, among the 40,000 exiles who returned, there were more than 4,000 priests. However, among this number there were only 74 Levites who wanted to leave their comfortable homes in Babylon in order to perform menial tasks at the temple worship (Er 2; compare Ps 84:10). Because there were so few Levites after the return, it was necessary that the Nethinim be called to perform the new duties of the Levites (Er 8:15-20).

44:15-27 *Zadok:* See 2 Sm 15:24-35; 1 Ch 15:11; 16:39. *Clothed with linen garments:* The symbolism of the garments was to manifest the ceremonial cleanliness of the people. Linen was considered more clean than wool, and thus the sanctification of the people throughout the land was to be symbolized by the best clothing that could be made by man. *Neither ... shave their heads:* This prohibition of shaving their heads, or not allowing their hair to grow long, was probably a restriction that again was in view of former idol worship. We must understand that the changes that are given in this context were given in response to the people's former behavior in reference to former idolatrous practices. In order to change the thinking of the people, God wanted to prohibit every behavioral characteristic that was associated with idolatrous worship (See comments 1 Co 8). *They will teach:* The priest was to be a teacher among the people (Dt 33:10). He was a judge in disputed matters (Dt 17:9; 19:17). *Keep my laws:* The priest was

to keep the ceremonial laws in order to manifest the people's obedience to the moral laws of God. **Sanctify My sabbaths:** When the people kept the sabbaths, they were indicating their obedience to all the law of God. There was no cleansing power in the ceremonial laws, nor in keeping the sabbaths. But their obedience to the laws manifested their willingness to submit themselves to God.

44:28-31 Inheritance: See Dt 10:9. The priests were to be full-time in their service to the people. In order for them to do this, they were to be given the offerings of grain and animals, and everything that was dedicated to the Lord. They were to be given the firstfruits of the land, and all contributions that were necessary in order that they and their families be able to give themselves totally to the administration of the temple service and teaching of the people. **Death:** See Ex 22:31.

Chapter 45

45:1-5 When the Jews are restored to the land, there was to be an allotment of land for the sanctuary, to the priests, the prince and for the city. The land was to be divided by allotment, thus assuring that there would be a fair division of the land. We would assume that the original records of the borders and inheritances of the land were destroyed when Jerusalem was burned by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The instructions in this context, therefore, were a new beginning for the allotment of the land. **Allotment to the Lord:** The allotment for the Lord was first (See Mt 6:33). **Open space:** In or-

der to maintain reverence for the allotment dedicated to the Lord, a space was given in order that no one build or go into this space. The Levites would be given a specific area for their dwelling that would facilitate their ministry at the temple.

45:6-12 Possession: Land ownership was a right throughout the history of Israel. Land ownership prevented dominant individuals from taking control of the land, and subsequently developing a totalitarian state and oppressing the poor. There were very few poor people in Israel for its first five hundred years of history in the land. Only when dominant individuals started ignoring the agricultural land laws of the individual did poverty become a problem. In order to guarantee a fair treatment of the poor, and to guarantee land ownership, the people were to use fair scales and specific measurements in order to protect the individual citizen from the oppression of the greedy. The leaders were to deal fairly with the people, and not use their positions as an opportunity to oppress the people (See 34:1-31). Civil leaders who use their positions in order to oppress the people will suffer the judgment of God. **Measure:** The exact amounts of these measures are generally not known today.

45:13-20 The instructions concerning the restoration of the sacrificial ceremonies in reference to the leadership of the prince is the focus of this context. In the reestablishment of the ceremonies of the law, we must keep in mind that God was seeking to consolidate the faith of Israel in the land in preparation for the

coming Messiah. Since the tabernacle was not reinstated as the point of assembly for the annual sacrifices, the temple was rebuilt in order to be the point of reference for the sacrifices that pertained to all the people. The sanctuary was to be ceremonially cleansed twice a year, on the first and seventh month of the year. The giving of life, thus the offering of blood, was to be used to symbolize purification (See comments Hb 10:1-4).

45:21-25 There are differences between what God reveals in this context concerning the Passover and what was revealed in the law as stated in Deuteronomy 16. The feast of Weeks is not mentioned here, but this does not mean that it was not kept. The purpose of Deuteronomy was to restate principles and statutes of the law. However, this was not the purpose for the revelation here. The focus of Ezekiel was on the sin of the people and their forgiveness. Because the Jews were in a process of restoration from a total apostasy to idolatry, what Ezekiel reveals is meant to continue and maintain this process of restoration until the coming of the Messiah. At that time Israel would be assimilated into the worldwide family of God, the church (Gl 3:26-29). They had the complete directions concerning what God wanted as it was revealed in the law.

Chapter 46

46:1-11 The restored Israel never again had a God-anointed king to reign over them on earth. In the restored order of ceremonial practices, the “prince” (leader) in this context seems to be a ref-

erence to the high priest. At least in the context he is given the responsibilities that were associated with the high priest under the law. The prince was to provide the sacrifice from that which was given to him by the people. He was also to provide from his own sources. In making these provisions, he was considered the representative for the people in fulfilling the requirements of the sacrifices. In reference to the people passing through the temple courtyard, they were to enter one gate and pass through without returning to the gate of entrance. This was a practical rule for the regulation of the traffic of the crowd of people. Every day a lamb of no more than one year old was to be offered. It was to be without blemish, thus symbolizing that purity only can be offered for sin. We must keep in mind that all the blood sacrifices were given in view of the sinless Lamb of God who would give Himself for the sins of man. In reference to the offerings, we must keep in mind that the sacrifices were eaten by the priests and people. Only a small portion was totally consumed as a burnt offering to the Lord. **As much as he is able:** There was room made for one to give according to his ability (vs 11). He could give voluntarily according to his ability (vss 5,7,11).

46:12-15 Will provide daily a lamb: It was not possible that any blood offering of an animal would take away sins (Hb 10:1-4). However, the continual offerings continually brought to their minds their sin. When Jesus came, He offered His blood once and for all. And thus, the drudgery of making daily animal sacri-

fices was done away. Jesus' sacrifice was complete and sufficient for all time (Hb 7:26-28). Christians today have the great blessing of being completely forgiven of sins, as well as not being under the law of ceremonial sacrifices that are outlined in this text (See comments Rm 7:1-4).

46:16-18 The prince had full ownership of his estate. He had the right to give it to anyone he chose. However, any part of the estate that was given to his servants was to revert back to the original estate during the year of liberty (Lv 25:10). The priestly family was provided for by the people, and thus there was no reason why he should evict people from their land. This unjust practice occurred during the apostasy of God's people, and it was never to happen again in their history (See 1 Kg 21:1-16; Mc 2:9).

46:19-24 *Priest will boil:* The priests were to prepare food for themselves from the offerings of the people. They would eat it alone. In another place separate from where the priests prepared and ate their food, the Levites prepared the sacrificial meals for the people. This area was built with hearths where the Levites could cook the food, and then distribute it to the people. The sacrificial meals brought the people together with the Levites, whose work it was to teach the people. The sacrifices, therefore, accomplished the purpose of continually bringing the people to the teachers of the law of God.

Chapter 47

47:1-5 The apocalyptic symbolism of this prophecy encourages Bible inter-

preters to look beyond the short term restoration of the temple by the returning exiles. If we understand the apocalyptic symbols of Ezekiel's writing as a metaphor concerning the beginning and continuation of the Messianic age, then there is great depth to what he says in this context. However, we would also guard ourselves from interpretive dogmatism since the inscription is in apocalyptic symbolism. The assigning of the land to the returnees was started in 45:1-8 and continued in 47:13 – 48:35. There is an interlude here in reference to the flowing water that proceeded from under the temple, possibly signifying the salvational redemption that would come from the presence of God and go to all nations (See Zc 14:8; compare Rv 22:1). The phenomenon about the water is that the flow becomes larger as it proceeds from the temple, to the point that it cannot be crossed by a man. It becomes larger without the help of smaller rivers flowing into it, possibly symbolizing the growth of God's people as they would go into all the world (Compare comments Is 2:1-4).

47:6-12 The blessing that came from the waters was that everything it touched would have life. When Ezekiel came to the banks of the river it had caused the growth of many trees. The apocalyptic symbols portray a garden of Eden environment that is captivating by those wandering in the desert. They are drawn to the river because all necessities for life are provided by the river. The east country would be a reference to the desert valley of the Jordan River east of the temple. The waters from the Sea of Ga-

lilee empty into the Jordan River, which river eventually empties into the Salt Sea, the Dead Sea. **The great sea:** The Mediterranean Sea. **Everything will live where the river goes:** Ezekiel takes the minds of the people, who were at the time in captivity, beyond the hope of their restoration to the land, the rebuilding of the temple, and resettlement in the land. He wrote prophecy of the Messianic age that they would not fully understand until its fulfillment (1 Pt 1:10-12). However, the returnees knew enough about the symbolism of the prophecy to understand that its fulfillment could not be in the restoration of the people to the land and the rebuilding of the temple. The prophecy was clear enough to generate anticipation as to things that would come, but cryptic enough to stimulate hope for another restoration yet in the future.

47:13-20 Twelve tribes: There should never be any discussion concerning the restoration of a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel to the land after the captivity. Even in apocalyptic language the metaphor of the restoration of the twelve tribes would mean nothing if a remnant of the twelve tribes did not literally return to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity. **Joseph:** Joseph would have two portions, for from Joseph came the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The limits of the borders would begin with Damascus in the north. On the east the border would extend through Gilead along the Jordan River to the east side of the Dead Sea. To the south the border would go west through Kadesh and then to the Mediterranean Sea. The Medi-

terranean coast would be the border on the west.

47:21-23 In preparation for the Messianic age, these instructions were given to the Jews in order that they allow proselytes to be assimilated into the nation. Proselytes were to be given a possession of land, and thus have inheritance rights among the people.

Chapter 48

48:1-7 In this chapter, verses 1-7 and 23-27 refer to tribal allotments of the land that were comparable to the allotments that were given when Israel first came into the land. Dan is situated in the far north of Palestine, with Issachar, Zebulun and Gad located in the south. These allotments clearly identify the restoration of the remnant of all twelve tribes to the land after the Babylonian captivity.

48:8-29 See the description 45:1-8 of these allotments which was possibly an abbreviated version of what was given here. An interesting point in this text was that the portion given to the Levites was not to be sold or traded, for the allotment was given to the Levites for a perpetual service to the Lord. The location of the temple was about four kilometers south of the original location. The priests were given the area where the original temple was situated. The city was to be located in the middle of a triangle of land and surrounded by gardens. The city itself was to be built as a square. Since the measurements of the city would make it about two kilometers long on each side, the size was beyond the actual construction of the city that was accomplished

when they returned. It is possible that Ezekiel uses these measurements to picture the spiritual city of God that was yet to come in the Messianic age. The city, and its gates, was a symbol of all of God's people.

48:30-35 *The name of the city:* The name of the city, "the Lord is there," is

symbolic of a repentant nation. When Israel went into the apostasy of idolatry, the Lord was removed from their hearts. When they repented of their idolatry, the Lord was restored to their hearts. He once again lived in their hearts (See comments Lk 17:20,21).