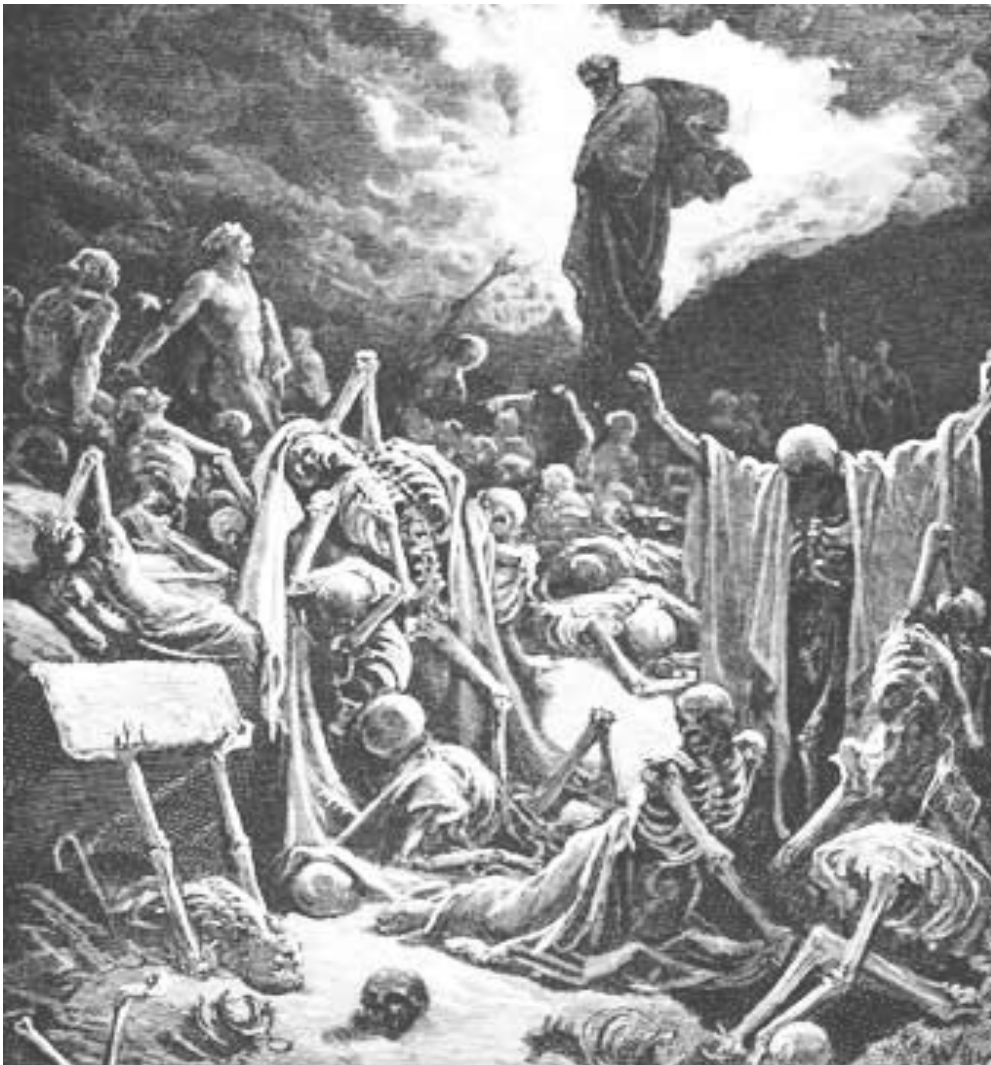


Ezekiel



The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.

Ezekiel 37:1

Yahweh Jireh Ministries

INTRODUCTION.	1
VISIONS OF GOD AND THE SINS OF JERUSALEM.	4
The Call and Preparation of Ezekiel.	9
The Vision of Heavenly Glory.	10
Ezekiel's Commission.	15
The first of four commissions.	17
The second of four commissions.	18
The third of four commissions.	18
The fourth of four commissions.	18
A Portrayal of Judah's Apostate Condition.	19
Sign of the tile.	19
God's time frame for the siege.	20
God deals with man through his stomach.	20
The destruction of Judah.	23
The judgement, punishment, and destruction of Judah.	24
A destruction of both Israel and her idols.	27
A remnant will be saved.	27
Israel's desolation.	28
A remnant to be saved.	29
Visions and the Prophecy of Restoration.	30
The image of jealousy, set up at the gate of the altar.	31
The elders worshipping images in a secret chamber.	33
The righteous marked for deliverance.	34
Babylon is assisted by angels to conquer Judah.	36
Coals of fire scattered over the city.	38
The cherubim and the Glory of the Lord depart, from the city.	38
Presumption by the Jewish leadership.	39
A message of comfort to the remnant.	40
JERUSALEM MUST BE DESTROYED BECAUSE OF ITS SINS.	42
The Babylon Captivity, and the Remnant Preserved.	42
Ezekiel's move.	42
Zedekiah's capture.	44
The immediate fulfilment of the prophecy.	44
The lying prophets.	45
The lying prophetesses.	46
The Elders Approach Ezekiel for A Word From God.	48
The Vine Tree.	50
The vineyard.	50
The judgment.	50
The Sign of the Child.	51
The birth.	52
The development of the child.	53
Marriage.	53

The wealth and fame of the child.	54
The sins of the child.	55
The promises of a restoration.	56
The Two Eagles.	57
The first eagle – Nebuchadnezzar.	57
The second eagle – Pharaoh.	58
Sermons.	59
All Men Are Equal.	60
Lamentation for the princes of Israel.	63
A prophecy to the elders.	67
PROPHECIES OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY.	73
Signs.	73
Signs of the drawn sword.	74
The sharp sword, complete destruction.	75
The sword at the crossroads.	77
Judgment on Ammon.	79
The prophecy against Israel.	82
The parable of Aholah (Samaria) and Aholibah (Jerusalem).	86
The joint wickedness – and the joint ruin of them both together	92
Prophecy against Judah.	93
PROPHECIES CONCERNING FOREIGN NATIONS.	95
Ammon.	95
Moab and Seir (the Edomites).	96
The Philistines.	97
Tyre.	97
The destruction of Tyre.	97
The nations lament Tyre’s desolation.	98
Lamentations for Tyre.	99
The pride and location of Tyre.	99
The Tyrian navy.	100
The Tyrian army.	100
The merchants of Tyre.	100
The two kings of Tyre.	102
Zidon.	104
Egypt.	105
Lamentations for Egypt.	112
THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM – GOG AND MAGOG.	114
Prophecies of the restoration.	114
Sermon of the watchman.	114
God now speaks to the remnant.	115
Prophecy against the pastors.	116
The restoration of the flock.	118

The false pastors will be removed.	118
The kingdom of David to be restored.	118
The prophecy against Edom.	121
A prophecy against the mountains of Israel.	122
A prophecy of Israel's restoration.	126
The valley of dry bones.	127
Armageddon and the Great White Throne Judgement.	130
The prediction of Gog and Magog's utter destruction.	133
The three consequences of that destruction.	135
A declaration of God's graciousness and providences concerning Israel.	137

THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE.	138
A new temple built signifying God's presence among his people.	138
Ezekiel is transported to see the restoration.	138
The details of the Temple.	140
The outside wall.	142
The gates.	143

A NEW SERVICE OF WORSHIP ESTABLISHED WITH GOD IN THEIR MIDST.	159
The Levites downgraded to servants.	160
The faithful priests raised up.	160
The division of the holy land.	161
A re-iteration of the Mosaic Laws.	163
Ordinances for the Prince and the People in Their Worship.	164
A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices and the baking of the meat-offerings.	166

THE SHARING OF THE LAND.	167
The Water of Life.	167
The borders of Israel.	170
The divisions of the land.	170

INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel's name means 'The strength of God', or one '...strengthened of God'.

God is possibly validating the meaning of Ezekiel's name by declaring, "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads", Ezekiel 3:8.

There is no definite record of Ezekiel's death, but it is generally presumed that he died while in captivity. Traditionally the Jews claim that Ezekiel was put to death by the captives in Babylon, by dragging him upon the stones till they dashed his brains out.

However, an Arabic historian states that they put him to death and was buried in the sepulchre of Shem the son of Noah.

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

Ezekiel also finishes WITH GOD, "It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there", Ezekiel 48:35.

Jonah was sent to Nineveh to prophesy, the only period he spent in captivity was in the belly of the fish, and once he had finished God's call to Nineveh, he was free to return home.

Both Ezekiel and Daniel were used by God to prophesy OUTSIDE Israel, and are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament who worked among the captives in Babylon.

Ezekiel prophesied at the beginning of the captivity; Daniel at the end. Ezekiel's prophecies, as uttered in this book, were given between July 593 BC, Ezekiel 1:1-2; and April 571 BC, Ezekiel 29:17, a period of just over twenty-two years.

When Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem in 597 BC, he took many leading citizens hostage to Babylon, and resettled them at Tel Abib on the river Chebar, a tributary of the Euphrates southeast of Babylon. It was there that Ezekiel received his call as a prophet of the Lord in 593 BC.

While Jeremiah continued to prophesy Judah's doom in Palestine, Ezekiel was preaching the same message to those who were with him in Exile.

While the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC confirmed Ezekiel's calling as a watchman, Ezekiel's prime calling by God was for him to be a watchman, warning the people of what was to come, Ezekiel 3:16-21 and

33:1–9, yet at the same time the theme of messages concentrated on hope and salvation.

The above paragraph is an ‘Old Testament mirror image’ of what the Church was to be.

Consider the following. To the Samaritan woman’s statement, “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship”, John 4:20.

Jesus’ answered “Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”, John 4:21–24.

The Scriptures now make three points manifest,

1 Ezekiel, who was of a priestly family, reminds the captives who felt cut off from God that the glory of the Lord had not remained tied to the Temple in Jerusalem, but had travelled with them into exile, chapters 1 and 10.

In chapter 33:10, Ezekiel reminds the captives who were prepared to receive his message that God did not want their death, but repentance that He might forgive them and restore them.

2 Jesus, our Great High Priest, was also sent to the Chosen Nation, and not only did His greatest works OUTSIDE the Temple, but also among those who were in bondage.

3 The Church, the present day sent one, does her greatest works outside the church building, among those in bondage to SIN, not inside the building she boasts of, and displaying her wealth.

Yet all three above are doing the same work,

1 A restoration of those who would listen,

2 God would be their shepherd, Ezekiel 34; John 10:14; and Peter’s instruction, John 21:15–17.

3 God’s sanctuary would be found in their midst, Ezekiel 40:1–43:5.

The visions are sometimes a little complicated, but always detailed. However, the sermons are generally plain and to the point.

1 Visions of God and The Sins of Jerusalem, Chapters 1–11,

2 Jerusalem must be Destroyed Because of Its Sins, Chapters 12–24,

3 Prophecies Concerning Foreign Nations, Chapters 25–32,

4 The Everlasting Kingdom – Gog and Magog, Chapters 33–39,

5 The Millennial Temple, Chapters 40–48.

Perhaps the most notable points in the book are,

- 1 A new heart, Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:25–28,
- 2 Our personal responsibility, Ezekiel 18:20–32,
- 3 Revival, Ezekiel 37.

VISIONS OF GOD AND THE SINS OF JERUSALEM

The book has a prime theme running through it dating from the time of Jacob until even this very minute. It deals with OUR promises to God.

Consider the following hypothetical exchange between a person saying the 'Lord's Prayer' ritualistically, believing that that is all that God wants, and God responding at the appropriate points.

Person: Our Father, who art in heaven...

God: Yes?

Person: Don't interrupt me, I'm praying.

God: But you called me.

Person: Called you? I didn't call you. I'm praying! Our Father, who art in heaven...

God: There, you did it again.

Person: Did what?

God: Called me. You said, "Our Father, who art in heaven," and here I am. What's on your mind?

Person: But, I didn't mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say The Lord's Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like getting a duty done.

God: All right, go on.

Person: Hallowed be Thy Name...

God: Hold it! What do you mean by that?

Person: By what?

God: Hallowed be Thy name.

Person: It means... it means... Good grief, I don't know what it means! How should I know? It's just part of the prayer... By the way, what does it mean?

God: It means honoured, holy, wonderful.

Person: Hey, that makes sense. I never thought of what hallowed meant before. But I guess I should go on; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

God: Do you really mean that?

Person: Sure, why not?

God: What are you doing about it?

Person: Doing? Nothing, I guess. I just think that it would be kind of neat if you got control of everything down here like you have up there.

God: Have I got control of you?

Person: Well, I do go to church...

God: That is not what I asked you. What about the bad habits you have? And what about your bad temper? You've really got a problem there you know. And then there is the way you spend your money...all on yourself.

Person: Stop picking on me! I'm just as good as some of the rest of those phonies down at church.

God: Excuse me. I thought you were saying for my will to be done. If that were to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you.

Person: Oh, all right. I guess I do have some hang-ups. Now that you mention them, I could probably mention some others.

God: So could I.

Person: Oh, stop that! Okay, I have not really thought about it very much until now, but I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to... you know... be free.

God: Good! Now we are getting some where. We will work together, you and I. Some victories can truly be won.

Person: Look, Lord. I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does. Give us this day our daily bread...

God: You really need to cut more bread out of your diet. You are getting a little chunky around that middle of yours.

Person: Hey, what is this; criticize-me day? Here I was doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden you break in and remind me of all my hang-ups.

God: Praying is a dangerous thing. You could wind up changed, you know. That's what I'm trying to get across to you. You called me, remember? And here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep on praying. I'm interested in the next part of your prayer. Go on.

Person: I'm scared to.

God: Scared of what?

Person: I know what you will say.

God: Try me and see.

Person: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

God: What about Bill?

Person: See? I knew it! I knew you would bring him up! Why, Lord? He told lies about me. He cheated me out of some money. He never paid back the money he owes me. I've got to get even with him.

God: But your prayer. What about your prayer?

Person: I didn't mean it.

God: Well, at least you're honest. But it is not worth carrying that load of bitterness around inside, is it?

Person: No, but I'll feel better as soon as I get even. Boy, have I got some plans for old Bill. He'll wish he never messed with me.

God: You will not feel any better. You will feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. Think of how unhappy you are already. But I can change that.

Person: You can? How?

God: I can forgive Bill. Then I will forgive you. Then the hate and sin will be Bill's problem and not yours. You may lose the money, but you'll have a settled and peaceful heart.

Person: But Lord, I can't forgive Bill!

God: Then I cannot forgive you.

Person: Hmmm (pause). Oh, I guess you're right. You always are. And more than I want revenge, I want you. Okay, I forgive him. Help him to find the right road in life, Lord. He's bound to be awfully miserable now that I think about it. Anybody who goes around doing the things he does to others has to be out of it. Show him the right road, Lord.

God: There now, how do you feel?

Person: Well, let's see, hmmm, hey, that's not too bad, not bad at all. In fact, I feel pretty great. You know, I don't think I'll have to go to bed all uptight for the first time in a long time. Maybe I won't be so tired from now on because I'm not getting enough rest.

God: You are not yet through with your prayer. Go on.

Person: Oh, all right. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

God: Good! Good! I will do that, just do not put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.

Person: What do you mean by that?

God: Quit hanging around the magazine stand where those pornographic magazines are sold. Just because your T.V. has digital cable doesn't mean you should be watching those adult programs. And what gives with some of those video games you spend so much time playing?

You need to change some of your friendships. Some of your so-called friends are beginning to get to you and they will have you completely involved in the wrong things. Don't be fooled! They advertise they are having fun, but for you it would be wrong. Don't use me for an escape hatch.

Person: What do you mean by that? I don't understand.

God: Sure you do. You've done it a lot of times. You get caught in a bad situation, you get into trouble, and then you come running to me. "Lord, help me out of this mess and I promise I'll never do it again". Do you remember saying that? Do you remember some of the bargains you tried to make with me?

Person: Yes, and I am ashamed Lord, I really am.

God: Which bargain are you remembering?

Person: Well, when the woman next door saw me backing away from the neighbourhood bar. I had told my mother I was going to the store. I remember telling you, "Okay, God, don't let her tell mom, and I'll be in church every Sunday."

God: She did not tell your mother, but you did not keep your promise.

Person: I'm sorry Lord, I really am. Up until now I thought that if I just prayed the Lords's Prayer everyday, then I could do what I liked. I didn't expect anything like this to happen.

God: Go ahead and finish your prayer.

Person: For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever, Amen.

God: Do you know what would bring me glory, what would make me happy?

Person: No, but I'd like to know. I want to please you. I can see what a mess I've made of my life and I can see how cool it would be to be one of your followers.

God: You just answered the question.

Person: I did?

God: Yes, the thing that would bring me glory is to have people like you love me. I see that happening between you and me. Now that some of the old sins are exposed and out of the way, well there is no telling what we can do together.

Person: Lord, let's see what we can make out of me, okay?

God: Yes. Let's see.

Jacob, Genesis 28:16–22, fleeing from his brother, at Bethel – entrance to God's House – built an altar to honour God after a peaceful night, vowed to return. Yet it was thirty years, and after they had defiled his daughter Dinah, before he returned to his altar.

Perhaps we should place a big sign on the refrigerator door, when, in crisis, we have called out to God, AND HE ANSWERED US. Maybe even close to Matthew Henry's statement, "Remember, O my soul! And never forget what communications of divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place; tell others what God did for thee.

The Call and Preparation of Ezekiel. Ezekiel 1:1–3.

In these first three verses, three distinct aspects are manifested,

- 1 The time the prophecy was given, verse 1,
- 2 The place where the prophecy was given, verse 2,
- 3 The Person who gave Ezekiel the prophecy, verse 3.

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

There is a train of thought that this infers Ezekiel's age, i.e. the time when he was legally able to commence the full execution of the priestly office. This is unlikely, for the captives had neither a temple nor an altar. Another alternative is that the thirtieth year refers to the commencement of the reign of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. The Chaldeans had begun a new computation of time, just as they had with Nabonassar 123 years earlier. Nabopolassar reigned nineteen years, and this was the eleventh year of his son, Nebuchadnezzar, reign, giving a total of thirty years.

Consider the circumstances that Ezekiel now found himself in, God was

there, not in the Temple, nor in Jerusalem.

For what? To honour Ezekiel, and, indirectly, to favour and strengthen His People.

Where? "...in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity".

Why? They were "...captives in the land of the Chaldeans".

Many Jews remained in Judah, these were some of the best, but they were called to be the first-fruits.

That they were to be a part of the captivity was already written into God's Word. "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law"; Psalm 94:12.

"Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good", Jeremiah 24:5.

The Vision of Heavenly Glory. Ezekiel 1:4-28.

The opening visions delivered God's judgements upon a disobedient people commenced with an assurance that cannot be matched by any human intervention. Ezekiel is the most precise of the prophets when describing 'non-human beings' in his writings and the following verses are no exception.

Ezekiel's call was direct from God, but the message he is to deliver, is brought to him by heavenly messengers. The Glory of the Lord precedes the arrival of the cherubim, yet more significantly, these cherubim are there to protect the Word, thereby encouraging us to trust The Word, and bring fear to The Word's enemies.

The visions of God which Ezekiel here saw were very glorious, and had more particulars than those which other prophets saw.

Note the following,

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

There are several important pointers in this verse when we understand that the Jews had not emigrated to Babylon, or even gone there for a holiday, THEY WERE THERE, and would STAY THERE until their time in captivity was fulfilled.

- 1 "...a whirlwind came out of the north...". This would appear to relate to an impending attack by the Chaldeans, who would approach Judea rapidly.
- 2 "...a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it...".

Three interesting points are found here,

- 1 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD", Exodus 19:9.
- 2 "...fire infolding itself...". The glowing within has two connotations,
 - a. "And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him", Exodus 34:35. Thus, the Glory of the Lord was so profound within the cloud, Moses' face still shone with the light of the Lord when he went back to the people.
 - b. "So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation", Exodus 9:24, thus, whatever the fire touched, it drew itself unto the fire.
- 3 It would now be obvious to those who were prepared to accept the fact, that from the Scriptures they knew, God was with them, and was not residing in Jerusalem.

It is necessary that we might obtain a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures, to look closely at Ezekiel's description of the cherubim. The Hebrew word used in verse 5 for the English translation 'likeness', is 'demut', and is the key to Ezekiel's description of the cherubim.

'Demut' means 'similitude' or 'like as'. Therefore Ezekiel is describing what something might be, rather than what it was. However, what he saw is, in so many instances, a graphic illustration of how God wants others to see us.

The scriptures give us a good illustration. Isaiah wrote "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?", Isaiah 40:18, yet God, in His Word, had already given us an insight as to His Appearance, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: So God created man in his own image...". Genesis 1:26-27.

There is no reason to think that God would not have formed His Angelic creation after his own likeness, and we have no reason to think that Ezekiel did not describe that which he believed he saw.

What then did Ezekiel see?

- 1 They had the likeness of a man, verse 5,
- 2 And every one had four faces, verse 6,
- 3 And every one had four wings, verse 7,
- 4 And their feet were straight feet; verse 7,
- 5 They sparkled like the colour of burnished brass, verse 7,
- 6 And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; verse 8,
- 7 Their wings were joined one to another; verse 9,
- 8 They turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward, verse 9,
- 9 They four had the face of a man, verse 10,
- 10 The face of a lion, on the right side, verse 10,
- 11 They four had the face of an ox on the left side, verse 10,
- 12 Had the face of an eagle, verse 10,
- 13 Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, verse 13,
- 14 The fire was bright, verse 13,
- 15 Their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel, verse 16,

In verse 5, we read “Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures...”.

Some have tried to give them names, i.e. Michael, Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, an exercise without substance. The following ideas would appear to have more substance.

- 1 Zechariah saw them as four chariots going forth east, west, north, and south, “And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grizzled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth”, Zechariah 6:1–5.
- 2 Jesus refers to the four winds of heaven, “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”, Matthew 24:31.

In verse 6, we read “And every one had four faces...”.

John, in his vision for the Book of Revelation describes them as beasts‘. “And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle”, Revelation 4:7, each having the same face.

Let us consider the faces.

- 1 The face of a man, after the image of God.
- 2 The face of a lion, the wild beasts. A lion is impressively large and powerful, excelling man in strength and boldness; therefore the angels, as a lion, enable the man in strength and boldness.
- 3 The face of an ox, the tamed and domesticated. An ox excels man in diligence, and patience, working tirelessly at the work he has to do; therefore the angels, as an ox, constantly uplift the man employed by God in his service to the church.
- 4 The face of an eagle, the fowls of the air. The eagle excels man in quickness and sight, therefore the angels, as an eagle, have a greater insight into the works of God.

The lion and the eagle are both strong and fearless, and will rip their prey apart; the ox for its strength and tirelessness in working for man.

How then, do they relate to one another?

Man, made in the image of God, has the strength and fierceness of both the lion and the eagle to tear his enemies apart; but as depicted by the ox, man is to be tireless to labour and serve.

In verse 7, we read “And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass”.

There are three sections to look at here,

- 1 Straight feet. They were straight feet, verse 7; they stood straight, and firm, and steady; no burden of service could make their legs to bend under them.
The Shulamite makes this point in describing her beloved, “His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars” , Song of Solomon 5:15, and such are the legs of the cherubim.
- 2 Sole of the feet. The sole of their feet was like that of a calf’s foot, which divides the hoof and is therefore clean: the Chaldee (Aramaic Version) was as the sole of a round foot; making them ready to move in any direction. Their feet were winged, according to the Septuagint (the Ancient Greek Version), enabling them to move quickly, just as if they were flying.
- 3 The colour. Their feet sparkled like the colour of burnished brass, and every step taken was glorious.
In the vision John had of Christ, it is said, “His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace...”. Revelation 1:15.

In verse 11, we read “Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and

two covered their bodies”.

Their wings were joined; denoting perfect unity and universal agreement, there is no contest among the angels.

Their wings were stretched upward and ready for use. Angels have nothing to seek, while men’s souls are more like an ostrich that can run, but totally unable to lift itself away from the earth.

In verse 13, we read “As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire...”. They got their power from God.

Therefore, they are in themselves, as with us, what God is pleased to make them; their glory, as should be ours, is a ray of God.

Coal will only burn where there is a fire. Consider the following,

- 1 Angels are living creatures, living beings, the work of God’s Hands; they do not have life in themselves, and cannot bring forth life, but receive life from Him who is the fountain of life.
- 2 Men on earth are dying creatures. Paul, however, wrote “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”, Hebrews 9:27.

Why did Paul pen these words? “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”, Genesis 2:16–17. The commandment was broken, and death was the penalty.

The living creatures Ezekiel saw coming out of the midst of the fire were seraphim — burners, of whom David said, “Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire”. Psalm 104:4, and Paul, writing of God’s angelic host, said “And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire”, Hebrews 1:7.

However, it is not until much later in the book that we read “This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubim”, Ezekiel 10:20.

Of whom Daniel wrote, “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: a thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened”, Daniel 7:9–10.

In Verses 15–25, we have a detailed account about what the prophet

saw. Wheels. Wheels with high rims; wheels with eyes surrounding them.

At this point in time, we, the Christian population, are in what might be termed a 'Dispensation of Providence'.

A 'Biblical Dispensation' is an era of time during which God tests man in respect of his obedience regarding a definitive revelation of God's Will, and should never be deemed as equal to a Covenant.

Seven such eras have been identified,

- 1 Innocents,
- 2 Conscience,
- 3 Human Government,
- 4 Promise,
- 5 Law,
- 6 Grace,
- 7 Christ's Rule.

However, at this point we are looking at what many term as the Dispensation of Providence, and by Ezekiel's language are compared to wheels.

Wheels do not move by themselves, but they do move by having a pressure exerted upon them, and in this instance called cherubim.

For the first illustration could liken them to the wheels of a chariot. A vehicle that a conqueror would use as he entered to take command of a vanquished city.

Secondly, these wheels could be viewed as the cogs within a watch, which, working together would cause a regular and regulated movement. For our third illustration, the wheels have eyes around their rims. This would enable them to see what was happening all around them.

In verses 26–28 Ezekiel now gives us a description of God. Ezekiel, hearing a voice from the firmament, looked up. The glory Ezekiel saw was above the heads of the living creatures, making the cherubim under the feet of Jesus. Having looked up when he heard the voice, the first thing he saw was a throne; therefore, the Divine Revelation that he was about to receive was backed and guaranteed by a royal authority.

Ezekiel's Commission. Ezekiel 2:1–3:27.

He was commissioned by God, as God's emissary and voice, to give messages to the Jewish captives in Babylon, Ezekiel 2:1–5.

God commanded him not to fear the Jews, Ezekiel 2:6.

The words of the messages that he was to give would be put in his mouth

by God, Ezekiel 2:7–10.

Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood had been brought low through, and by dishonour; therefore Ezekiel, called by God to be a personal servant, needed to be humble, and remember that he was a son of man, a son of Adam, who, having been brought forth from the earth WAS A SON OF THE EARTH.

Therefore Ezekiel, and we ourselves, need to remember that when God calls us, if it is to a post of honour, it must be remembered that ALL are a son of man (Adam); and that any good works done, are done by a son of man through the strength of Divine Grace.

Jesus, in the Old Testament is called the Son of man, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”, Daniel 7:13–14.

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of man, signifying that He had shed His Divinity, and, being born of a woman, He could legitimately refer to Himself as a man, and as a man – not part of the Godhead – He could die on behalf of man, and open the way for man to stand before the Father.

An interesting point now arises,
The term ‘Son of Man’ appears 192 times in the KJV Bible,
93 times in Ezekiel,
84 times in the Gospels,
leaving just 15 entries in the remaining 61 books.

We saw earlier in the notes 1:26–28, that the cherubim were under the feet of Jesus. Therefore, the command Son of man, stand upon thy feet’ brings two aspects of importance to our attention,

- 1 By prostrating himself, he was showing a great reverence to the One speaking to him, but when standing he would be able to respond more quickly.
- 2 We may also expect God to speak to us when we are ready, and prepared to be obedient to His commands.

In the first two commissions, God has told Ezekiel that his job at this time is to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

Ezekiel, by the visions give in chapter 1, is not only physically standing before the Lord, but like his counterpart to come, he has also become resolute to do a work for God.

God also lets Ezekiel know the downside of the expedition, for God states quite plainly that the people Ezekiel is being sent to, are,

“...a rebellious nation”, verse 3.

“...a rebellious house”, verse 5.

Yet God still graciously calls them the “...children of Israel”; a God given name to their pious ancestors. And what have they done to that name? Through a moral decline, they have made it bereft of any desirable quality.

The first of four commissions. Ezekiel 2:3–3:3.

Note the character reference God gives to the children of Israel,

- 1 They have transgressed against God,
- 2 A sinful house,
- 3 Impudent,
- 4 Stiff-hearted,
- 5 Not likely to listen.

Note the words of encouragement from God,

- 1 Be not afraid of them,
- 2 Be not afraid of their words (threats),
- 3 You will think that you are amongst briars and thorns,
- 4 You will think that you are living with scorpions,
- 5 You will speak My Words to them, as I give them unto you..

God knows all men’s hearts, and the captive Jews were not exempt. God refers to the children of Israel briars and thorns (4 above); The best of them are as a briar, and the worst are sharper than a thorny hedge, “The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity”, Micah 7:4.

The fruit of sin will only open he doors for warning judgements. Briars and thorns are a curse in men’s lives, and as briars and thorns are removed by fire, the end of people whom God likens unto briars and thorns are also to be burned.

There is even worse, for God refers to some as scorpions. Scorpions are venomous and malignant; their sting is hundreds of times more painful than a scratch from a briar.

Persecutors (scorpions) are of the serpent’s seed, dwelling in his own

household.

The second of four commissions. Ezekiel 3:4–3:9.

God again gives Ezekiel a character reference, this time to the house of Israel,

- 1 They used the same speech as Ezekiel,
- 2 The language for Ezekiel would then be easy,
- 3 Ezekiel was only to go to the House of Israel,
- 4 The people would not listen.
- 5 They were impudent and hard-hearted.

Note the words of encouragement from God,

- 1 Ezekiel's face would be hard against theirs,
- 2 Ezekiel's forehead would be hard against theirs,
- 3 Ezekiel's forehead would be as a flint,
- 4 He was not to fear them,
- 5 Again he was told not to worry about their looks.

The Lord's requirement of Ezekiel, and those of us who are sent by the Lord, is that we remain faithful, "Thou shalt speak my words unto them...". verse 7.

We are also required to be faithful to the souls of those to whom we are sent, for with the words "Whether they will hear of whether they will forbear", the message must be delivered as it was received, NOT ADAPTED SO THAT IT MIGHT SOUND GOOD TO THEM.

The third of four commissions. Ezekiel 3:10–3:16.

Ezekiel was to

- 1 Hear with his ears,
- 2 Store the words in his heart,
- 3 Speak the words to those in captivity.

Ezekiel's journey was to be a sad one; there was no joy in the message, it was lamentations, mourning, and woe.

Arriving at Tel Abib, Ezekiel joined the people there for seven days, listening to what they said, and watching what they did.

The longer he sat, the more overwhelmed he became with grief, yet feeling a superior strength by the vision he had seen.

God allowed him to reflect upon his grief.

The fourth of four commissions. Ezekiel 3:16–27.

Unlike the three previous commissions, this is totally different in four aspects,

- 1 At that time there was no temple or synagogue to worship in,
- 2 Ezekiel was with the people beside the river, compare this with Acts 16:13,
- 3 There was no vision heralding the Glory of God, just the Word of the Lord directly to Ezekiel,
- 4 Ezekiel is inducted by God into the office of a watchman.

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel”, verse 17.

The duties of a watchman are,

- 1 To listen for God’s commandments, and then warn the people, verses 17–21,
- 2 To watch over, and protect the people, Isaiah 56:10, “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber”.

The death penalty for sin was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden AFTER man sinned.

If the sinner is not warned and he dies in his sin, then the watchman’ will also die, for he will have condoned the sin by not speaking against it. If, at the time of Ezekiel, the prophet was the watchman, who is the watchman today?

- 1 Paul wrote “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers”, Ephesians 4:11,
- 2 Mark wrote “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following”, Mark 16:20.

Preached – from the Greek ‘baw sar’ – meaning to announce (salvation) as good news. Thus EVERY Christian is a watchman.

The prime duty of the watchman is to take notice of, and give notice to, WHEN GOD DIRECTS, AND WHEN GOD SPEAKS THROUGH OUR MOUTHS.

A Portrayal of Judah’s Apostate Condition. Ezekiel 4:1–7:27.

Sign of the tile. Ezekiel 4:1–8.

Many of the captives in Babylon would have been aware that in the past God had punished their forefathers for their lack of obedience. Some would even have believed in their hearts that they deserved what they had got. Others, through the sin of presumption would have believed that what they had done was not as serious compared to what their predecessors had done.

God, however, had a very different idea. Note the following,

- 1 “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me”, Isaiah 49:16
- 2 The names of the tribes were engraved in precious stones on the breast-plate of the high priest.
- 3 Now Jerusalem was no better than a harlot, and God instructed Ezekiel to use a brittle tile to portray the city.

Ezekiel was then commanded to build small forts, to resemble the camps of the invading armies. The iron pan, although depicting a wall, has a double meaning,

- 1 It represented the Chaldeans – no matter what the cost – to take and conquer the city,
- 2 It also demonstrated the Jewish determination not to surrender.

God’s time frame for the siege. Ezekiel 4:4–6.

That God had everything under control at this point is undeniable.

God told Ezekiel to lie on his left side for 390 days, representing the time the kingdom was divided – the split between Jeroboam and Rehoboam – until the eleventh year of Zedekiah when Jerusalem fell.

Three hundred and ninety days is about thirteen months. However, the following scriptures also play an important part, “And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land”, Jeremiah 52:4–6, a period of 18 months, but if we take away the five months when Nebuchadnezzar withdrew his army as Pharaoh’s army approached, Jeremiah 37:5–8, the actual number of the days of the siege was three hundred and ninety.

Ezekiel was then to turn to his right side, and remain there for a further forty days – which ran parallel to the last forty years of the three hundred and ninety years above – representing the sin filled years of Judah.

The forty years was made up as follows,

Josiah’s reign, 2 Kings 22:1,	18 years
Jehoiakim’s reign, 2 Kings 23:36,	11 years
Zedekiah’s reign, 2 Kings 24:18,	11 years
Total 40 years	

God deals with man through his stomach. Ezekiel 4:7–17.

Note the events at this time,

Nebuchadnezzar, who appointed Zedekiah king of Judah, became angry with Zedekiah after he rebelled against him, 2 Chronicles 36:13.

The Jews

1 Josiah, although he did right in the eyes of the Lord, 2 Kings 22, was warned by God through a prophet, that major problems were to befall Jerusalem AFTER HIS DEATH.

2 Jehoiakim's reign was an evil reign before God, 2 Kings 23:37

3 Zedekiah's reign was also an evil reign before God, 2 Kings 24:18. Therefore, at the time of Ezekiel, the Jewish thinking was "We have not been that bad, and God would not let any harm come upon his city, so we will be OK".

The Chaldeans,

1 They would block Jerusalem from receiving food,

2 They would block the Jews from leaving Jerusalem for food.

These were the standard practices in a war. The army, however, had a different thought, "The city is rich, and will have a lot to offer us, therefore, we will at least have something to take home with us".

Ezekiel,

1 He was to set his face to the siege, verse 7,

2 He was to uncover his arm, Verse 7.

3 Ezekiel was to prophecy what was to come, not with words, but with actions.

4 This would have made more impact upon those who witnessed the scenes.

The events themselves, and their outcomes, Jeremiah describes the events of Jerusalem AFTER Ezekiel had prophesied them, "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them", Lamentation 4:3-4.

So what did Ezekiel prophecy?

His 'solid food'. But note carefully the ingredients,

Wheat,

Barley,

Beans,

Lentils, pea like in appearance, and still a common for today in Egypt and generally stewed with garlic and oil for taste,

Millet, looking like wheat; it is generally used as an animal feed,
Fitches, a type of rye.

Although not a 'high quality meal' it would be just sufficient to sustain a person, and with the possibility of the rapture not far away, it would be more than the people left behind would deserve.

Compare this to the parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:15. This was the type of feed that he was giving to the swine in the fields, yet he was given nothing for himself.

His rations each day were,
For solids, twenty shekels, or about 283 grams per day,
For liquid about eight hundred ml per day.

Amos, some two hundred years earlier, had written, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!...That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph", Amos 6:1 and 4-6.

But worse was to come.

Having mixed all the ingredients, Ezekiel had what the prodigal Son was giving to 'unclean' animals, but Ezekiel was told by God to "...bake it with a man's dung", verse 12.

Imagine Ezekiel as he prepared his meals, and those who stood by and watched what he did, the thought messages that were being sent from the brain to the stomach.

Then, in front of those still watching, Ezekiel was to eat in the same way that he would normally have had his meal.

For those in Jerusalem it was about to become another story. Consider these two scriptures,

1 "And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied", Leviticus 26:26.

Although there would be bread to eat, God would remove its power to nourish, "...they should eat and not be satisfied".

2 "For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from

Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water”, Isaiah 3:1.

They would get to a point, which up till now had been a shared burden, where realisation would strike at their situation.

The Jews in Jerusalem, who as carnal man, would feel the following emotions,

- 1 Astonishment that God had not supplied to His favourite people‘,
- 2 Find that complaining about the situation would only aggravate and increase their misery,
- 3 Their misery would be universal, creating a greater unease as to when it might end.

Jeremiah, who spent so much of his ministry time in prisons and dungeons, said of these people, “They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field”, Lamentation 4:9.

Some two hundred and fifty years earlier, David had written, “He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat”, Psalm 147:14.

God’s graciousness had been regarded as a right to live in luxury and excess, this was a blatant sin and abuse of God’s graciousness, and was punished with a famine.

Continuing into chapter five, the situation does not improve, in fact it worsens.

The destruction of Judah. Ezekiel 5:1–4.

In these first four verses, we have the judge and the executioner not only delivering the sentence, but also as to how it is to be executed.

“And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber’s razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard...”, verse 1.

Shaving not only the head, but also the beard, was regarded as a complete abomination – and was also regarded as a sign of total rejection. In this instance it demonstrated God’s total rejection of the leadership and many of the people.

In these verses it becomes even more serious, for Jerusalem was regarded as the head of the Jewish Nation. Consider carefully the following points,

- 1 But now, with many of the Jewish religious leaders still there, it had become an abomination.

- 2 Thus the hair shaved off represented the people who had refused to accept the reprimands and urgings of the prophets sent by God, and God's rejection of these people.
- 3 It is an accepted fact that if a body is decapitated, cessation of life in that body becomes a fact.
- "...then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair", verse 1.

Ezekiel is to divide the hair into three equal portions. Not only were scales used by Ezekiel, but also by God, "And this the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians", Daniel 5:25–28.

The writing on the wall meant,
 MENE, MENE, 'the kingdom of Babylon had been numbered, and was finished.' It is stated twice to give emphasis to the severity of the judgement,
 TEKEL, 'in the balances of life – good and evil –Belshazzar had been weighed, judged, and found to be wanting in good,
 UPHARSIN, this is the plural of PERES, and literally means 'division.' This happened that night when the Medes and the Persians literally overran the kingdom.

Therefore God's judgments are exact and equal, with ALL men on the scales of truth and righteousness.

A third part must be burnt in the midst of the city, pointing to 'when the days of the siege were fulfilled', leaving much of Jerusalem in ashes,
 A third part was to be 'cut in pieces with a knife', indicating the many who, would be killed by the sword,
 The final third were to be scattered in the wind, representing those taken prisoner, and taken to other lands. Ezekiel was to gather some of these scattered hairs, and then bind them to himself, as remnant to be gathered by God again.

The judgement, punishment, and destruction of Judah. Ezekiel 5:5–17.
 This section deals with both the inhabitants AND THE CITY of Jerusalem.

The city was an honoured city. "Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her", Ezekiel 5:5.

Jerusalem was not situated in a remote obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, that she could be seen by them, and lead by example.

Of Jerusalem,

1. Isaiah wrote, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it", Isaiah 2:2.
2. David wrote, "Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever", Psalm 68:16.

It was God's intention that Jerusalem would be a good influence on those around her, and was, therefore, 'set in their midst', Jerusalem was as a candle, to illuminate the dark nations around her, Jerusalem was as a heart, to give life to the 'dead nations' surrounding her, Jerusalem became known as a wise nation, a nation to be consulted, "And there came of all people to hear the Wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom", 1 Kings 4:34.

Yet for all the above, God had two major complaints,

- 1 Jerusalem had "...refused his (God's) judgments and his statutes...", verse 6
- 2 Jerusalem had "...not walked in his (God's) statutes, nor kept his judgments...", verse 7.

The very things their heathen neighbours ADMIRE, the Chosen Nation DESPISED.

Note David's cry some five hundred years earlier, "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing (lying)? Selah", Psalm 4:2, and Paul's comment some 25 years AFTER the Crucifixion of Jesus, "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen", Romans 1:25.

What does God have to say about this? "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations", verse 8.

Two important points emerge here,

- 1 There are some today who appear to be Christians, and others who

call themselves Christians who will in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens.

- 2 Those who will not observe the judgments of God's mouth shall not escape the judgments of his hand.

Three statements often heard today are,

- 1 When you're dead, you're dead.
- 2 I won't go to hell; the Bible says that Jesus died for all men.
- 3 If there was a God, why does He let all these terrible things happen? This proves there is no God.

There are three answers,

- 1 If you are not redeemed, then you are dead to an Eternal life, and forever alive to an eternal death.
- 2 Jesus did die for all men. These people have not read the operative clauses that will open the door of life.
- 3 There is a God, and He placed man in charge on this earth. Man will bring about the terrible events, and God will use these situations to bring redeemed man back to the Garden of Eden.

The basics of the three statements above all took place in Jerusalem in Ezekiel's time, and all three answers were applied then, and are applicable throughout the current Church Age.

In verse 8, God statement is "I, even I, am against thee...". The Israelites, looking at the army they could see, saw the Chaldean army, now, through Ezekiel, they are told that they have a second opponent – God.

What had brought this about? Three hundred and ninety years of treating God as a second rate citizen in their midst,

- 1 There will be a fire in the midst of Jerusalem, verse 4. God's voice and word will burn-up all sin.
- 2 I will stand in the middle, and judge you before the nations, verse 8. God's judgement will not be secretive, but out in the open for all to see. It will not be in the villages for a few to see; it will take place in the cities for ALL to see.
- 3 Fathers will eat sons, and sons will eat fathers, verse 10,
- 4 I will execute judgments in thee, verse 10,
- 5 They had profaned the holy things, which she had been both entrusted and honoured with, verse 11
- 6 I will reduce your numbers, verse 11,
- 7 My anger, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, verse 13. My anger; which, for a long time I have kept silent, is about to be released. The struggle between mercy

and judgment has come to an end; God's mercy, which for so long had been abused by the people, could not give God one word to soothe or replace His anger.

8 I will execute my judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes, verse 15. Compared to God's statement, the following scriptures show the depth of God's hatred of sin.

Isaiah wrote of God, "Fury is not in me: who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together", Isaiah 27:4.

Hezekiah, at the time he proclaimed a Passover, said, "For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him", 2 Chronicles 30:9.

Sooner, rather than later, God's word will prove itself.

A destruction of both Israel and her idols. Ezekiel 6:1–7.

In this passage it is interesting to note the parallel between the Testaments. Ezekiel, the prophet, is told to prophesy against the mountains of Judah, "Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them", Ezekiel 6:2.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans – another city surrounded by mountains, and a religion using idols, writes, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now", Romans 8:22.

The mountains of Israel are high, and, to all intents and purposes, they were strong, but Ezekiel is to set his face towards them, and pronounce a judgement that would, if it was possible, shake their very foundations, for they had been Holy Mountains, but Judah had polluted them with their idols and high places.

After all that, Ezekiel is given a sweetener to take away some of the bitterness, THERE WILL BE A REMNANT.

A remnant will be saved. Ezekiel 6:8–14.

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

1 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee:

2 and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee;

3 and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them,

and it is to this final third that Ezekiel now turns his attention.

It is a remnant that God is preserving for His use at a later point in time. Even some of this remnant would be slain by the sword, but a greater fact in this statement is that God's Mercy came to the fore in the midst of these events, with a promise that some should not be killed, and would later be known as 'the Jews of the Dispersion'.

In verse 9 the prophecy brings forth the undeniable fact of who God is with the words "Those who escape of you shall remember me...". The following now become a fact,

1 God's patience leaves room for repentance,

2 God's function of grace is repentance,

3 God's grace is the space He gives us to seek repentance,

unfortunately, many find they have been given the space, and want the grace, but are not prepared to forsake the sin.

Israel's desolation. Ezekiel 7:1–15.

Ezekiel is now given a warning to give to Israel that her end is in sight.

If there is a major disaster in a town, families, friends, and local towns-people gather to see if they can be of any help, and at the same time, they try and strengthen one another.

Ezekiel proclaims God's Word, "...An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land", Ezekiel 7:2.

Ezekiel expected the people to respond as the townspeople above did, but the response he got was spiritual deafness, and showing no sign of concern.

Man, throughout the ages, has taken the view that any sign of impending trouble, it would soon pass. Those left alive would see an end, but they would have to live out the remainder of the judgement!

The fullness of time had come for sin to pay the penalty. Note the following verses,

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

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

In verse 2, the words 'An end, the end...' are spoken twice.

In verses 7 and 12, the words ‘...time is come...’ are stated twice.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus says the words ‘Verily, verily’ 25 times, each time to emphasise a point.

Thus God, speaking through Ezekiel, is emphasising the fact that the ‘...time has come...’ that the sinful ways of the Israelites must ‘...end...’

We learn here that God has three particular steps for each and every event in our lives,

- 1 There is a time,
- 2 A proper time,
- 3 And an END.

For judgments we can say,

- 1 They may be deferred,
- 2 They will not be shelved,
- 3 They will be executed.

Therefore, for the two points made above, two further points are manifested,

- 1 God’s patience may defer judgements,
- 2 It is only a man’s sincere repentance that will annul them.

A remnant to be saved. Ezekiel 7:16–27.

We have just looked at the fate of those who were to be cut off. Now we look at the fate of those who will escape.

Fugitives and vagabonds, afraid of being slain by anyone who might cross their path, each and everyone branded with the name ‘Cain’ by his own conscience.

They thought their wealth would be their strong city, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ransom of their lives, that they could never want bread as long as they had money, and that money would answer all things. What they believed, and what God knew were two points that were far, far apart. Consider these two scriptures – THEN and SHORTLY TO COME.

1 THEN

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

2 SHORTLY TO COME

“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every ship master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off., Revelation 17:18.

Where, oh where will some of the modern day evangelists and churches be on that day?

Their gold and silver will not protect them from God's judgements; and they will not have sufficient to pay God, that His wrath will be turned away from them. God told Haggai "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts", Haggai 2:8.

But perhaps Solomon, some 370 years earlier summed it up best of all, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death", Proverbs 11:4.

They looked at the Temple, a man-made building housing many idols and icons, many dedicated to a god, but not to the God of creation; they looked at the sturdy walls of Jerusalem to keep the attacking army out, but it would not stop God, but in the Day of God's Vengeance, THEIR CONFIDENCE OF BEING SAVED BY GOD WOULD FLEE FROM THEM.

Visions and the Prophecy of Restoration. Ezekiel 8:1–11:25.

In the previous chapters, God gave Ezekiel a verbal foresight of the miseries that the people would have to suffer for their previous sins.

This section starts with God giving Ezekiel a visual insight of what the people were actually doing to bring about both the captivity, and the retribution.

In chapter 8:1–4, the verses are remarkable, for not only do they date the vision, but they are also enlightening regarding Ezekiel's composure after the previous seven chapters.

1 The date of the vision.

To understand just how accurate and precise Ezekiel is with his writings, we must compare the following two verses. "Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. In the fifth day of the month, which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity", Ezekiel 1:1–2;

"And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month...". Ezekiel 8:1.

From the time of Jehoiachin's captivity – the fifth day of the fourth month of the fifth year – to Ezekiel 8:1, the fifth day of the fifth month of the sixth year, is a total time of fourteen months.

The Jews have a thirty day month, giving us a total of four hundred

and twenty days, possibly made up of thirty days for the prophecy, and the three hundred and ninety days Ezekiel was to be laid on his side, for now he was "...sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me".

2 Ezekiel's composure.

Therefore, the more we separate ourselves from the world, the closer and deeper becomes our relationship and communion with God.

He saw a likeness, and since it was a man in chapter 1:27, we can safely assume that it was a man again. The likeness was all brightness above the girdle and all fire below, and almost certainly the Second Person of the Godhead who was to become Jesus the Christ, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth", John 1:14.

It is even possible that the elders who were with him even saw the glow, but, as with Paul, testifying before the high priest of his calling on the road to Damascus said, "And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me", Acts 22:9.

Ezekiel, then IN the spirit was taken BY the Spirit to view the events that had been taking place in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel, miraculously lifted up between heaven and earth, and then setting him down again as if in a trance, that he might receive the visions God had for him. It then becomes, as Paul states, "...whether in the body or out of the body...he could not tell...".

God, by a vision – which does not close until the end of chapter 11 – takes Ezekiel to see for himself.

The image of jealousy, set up at the gate of the altar. 8:5–6.

The image of jealousy, at the gate of the altar, "...in the house of the Lord...", was enough to provoke Him (who had every right to be there) to jealousy; for we are told, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me", Exodus 20:5.

Who, then, is the image of jealousy? It is Satan, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine

heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High”, Isaiah 14:12–14.

Thus Satan commanded, and his workers obeyed.

They placed an image at “...the gate of the altar...”. verse 5. Satan knew that this would be an affront to God; he also knew that he had nothing to lose for hell was to be his home.

What did Satan gain? Souls. Having shown contempt for God’s Law, they would never enter heaven.

Today, Satan’s idol has become loud ‘music’ and words that praise man. Forget what the church says about loud music being in the Bible, IT IS NOT.

In certain passages of the Scriptures it mentions what might, in today’s language, be termed ‘loud’; it does not intimate the playing of an instrument through an amplifier.

Therefore, what information do the Jewish traditions and/or ancient sources tell us?

Using the passage from Psalm 150:4, the most vigorously used statement to ‘validate’ the use of loud music, by using James Strong’s concordance, and the Zondervan Bible dictionary, the ‘loud’ cymbal becomes the ‘large’ cymbal, and the high sounding cymbal is the small cymbal producing the higher pitched notes.

Secondly, yet perhaps even more importantly, the louder instruments were used to summon people to worship or warn them of an impending danger, whilst the high sounding cymbal would be used to get the assembled people’s attention.

The following scriptures would relate to the use of the ‘loud’ cymbal,

- 1 The return of the Ark from Kirjath-jearim, 1 Chronicles 15: 16, 19 and 28.
- 2 The dedication of Solomon's Temple, 2 Chronicles 5:13.
- 3 The restoration of worship by Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 29:25
- 4 The laying of the foundation of the Second Temple Ezra 3:10.
- 5 The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah 12:27.

If this is not correct, then why did God, when speaking to Moses, sound like the voice of many thunders? Zechariah says: "And the Lord God shall blow the trumpet...The Lord of hosts shall defend them”, Zechariah. 9:14–15.

It is said of Lucifer (Satan), “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee., Ezekiel 28:13–15. Why would God have installed loud music when Lucifer was “...the covering cherub...? for Isaiah says “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear., Isaiah 59:1.

The elders worshipping images in a secret chamber. 8:7–18.

God causes Ezekiel to go to the ‘outer court’, where the priests’ lodgings were. The priests were well aware that what they were doing was wrong – they had built a wall in front of their lodgings that those outside could not see in.

One problem with that line of thought, they had forgotten that God could see ALL things.

They might like to try and hide from men, but with God they were on the losing end, “Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?”, Isaiah 29:15.

They were a Jekyll and Hyde combination. What they did in God’s house was not what they did in their own houses.

When hypocrites attempt to hide themselves behind the veil of an external profession, it is hard for them not to leave a hole in the veil, and something will be seen through that hole which will betray them.

Therefore, those that would seek iniquity in others must make sure that they are well with God, for Satan will use the smallest chink in our lives to bring about our downfall.

But what did Ezekiel see? He saw seventy men of the elders of Israel worshipping and offering incense to the following,

1 The women weeping for Tammuz, verses 13–14.

It is inferred by some of the inscriptions of the times that the idols concerned were designed to weep, with those worshipping it joining in with the weeping!

The history of ‘Tammuz’ is quite remarkable. Tammuz was originally a Babylonian sun-god called Dumuzu, a handsome shepherd slain

by a wild boar. The death of the original 'Tammuz' symbolised the winter months; his 're-birth' symbolised the summer months. However, at the time of Ezekiel, Tammuz was a Phoenician deity, based upon the Greek god Adonis, which in turn had ushered in many lewd practices.

Two further points now arise,

- a. The death and re-birth factors here would appear to follow the fables of Nimrod, Genesis 10:8–9,
- b. That the Greeks were still worshipping many pagan gods when Paul went to Mars Hill, Acts 17:22.

And where did the women go to mourn and worship Tammuz? "...sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house...."

- 2 The men worshipping the sun, verses 15–16.

The abomination of this practice was increased in that it was practised "...in the inner court of the Lord's house at the door of the temple of the lord, between the porch and the altar.... This was the area where some of the most sacred ordinances of God were performed.

How well the words of king Ahasuerus spoken to Esther 7:8 fit in here, "...Will he force the queen also before me in the house?".

Some twenty-five men, living in the court of the priests, with a wall erected so that they could not be seen, giving that honour to the sun, a part of God's Creation as much as they were.

Thus those, who had been entrusted by God to do and speak His Word, were betraying both the gift and responsibility given, and also the GIVER.

- 3 Worshipping the branch, verses 17–18.

"...and, lo, they put the branch to their nose...". They repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again, and again, and again....

Note the following statements of God in the scriptures,

- 1 "My eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity;" Ezekiel 4:7 & 9, repentance shall be hidden from his eyes;
- 2 "Though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them;" Ezekiel 8:18, for still their sins cry more loudly for vengeance than their prayers cry for mercy.
- 3 "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:" Proverbs 1:28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that God will regard.

The righteous marked for deliverance. 9:1–6.

In the previous chapter, God had not only declared the abominations of Jerusalem, but had also shown Ezekiel first-hand of what God was angry at seeing all the time.

- 1 Preparation made of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city, 9:1–2.

In chapter 8:18, God says, "...I will also deal in fury...". At this point, a better rendition would be, "The visitation of the city is at hand". They had ignored 'the day of their visitation of mercy', but they would not be able to ignore 'the day of their visitation of wrath'. To emphasise God's anger at this time, we are told that God cried also in Ezekiel's ears with a loud voice..., verse 1, for men, when provoked, and they threaten in anger, speak with a loud voice.

The call of God at this time is "Cause those that have charge over the city to draw near...". verse 1. Those, whose job it will be to destroy Jerusalem are commanded to come forth and be ready.

This is NOT the Chaldean army – although they have been appointed to assist – they are only the servants and tools to be used by the angels.

Note the numbers of angels in the following scriptures,

- a. One angel was sent to destroy the first-born of Egypt, Exodus 11:4–6,
- b. One angel was sent to destroy the camp of the Assyrians, 2 Kings 19:35,
- c. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, Genesis 19:1,
- d. Seven angels were to pour out the vials of God's wrath, Revelation 16:1.
- e. Six men (angels) came, Ezekiel 9:2, one for each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape.

Note also the following at this time,

- a. They came "...from the way of the higher gate, which lies towards the north...". verse 2, the very gate where the image of jealousy was set up, Ezekiel 8:3 & 5.
- b. They placed themselves "...next to the brazen altar..."., thereby protecting the glory of God through the altar of sacrifice; and avenge the altar of profanity, for, as with Eli's house, the iniquity of Jerusalem could not be purged by sacrifice.

We are also told, verse 2, that another angel is also present, and is totally different from the rest. He was clothed with linen, and had a writer's inkhorn hanging at his side. He is there representing Christ as Mediator and High Priest.

God's angels, who, up to this point have been watching over the

city, are now charged to destroy the city.

- 2 The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple, 9:3.

The Shechinah of the Temple, which Ezekiel refers to as "...the glory of the God of Israel...". Ezekiel 8:4, moves from the Ark of the Covenant between the cherubim, "...to the threshold of the house..."., to summon His servants (the angels), give them their instructions, and dispatch them to their appointed tasks

- 3 Orders given for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction, 9:3-4.

They are easily distinguished. This remnant sigh – and cry – as men in pain and distress.

Many will cry unto God because of pain and distress, but, unlike the remnant who will cry to God in prayer, because of the abominations committed in Jerusalem, these will cry in despair.

Thus the one great teaching that we have here is that we do not delight and fellowship with them in their sins, but that we must mourn for them, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law", Psalm 119:136.

As much as we are expecting a time of Tribulation on the earth, "Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads", Revelation 7:3, for those about to receive their punishment, God ensured that His servants were safe and protected.

Babylon is assisted by angels to conquer Judah. 9:7-11.

Those who teach and proclaim that "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life", John 3:16 should consider the following very carefully,

- 1 Belief (believeth) comes from the Greek word 'pistis', and means be committed to/have a faith in/be reliant on. Therefore, to paraphrase this verse, it would read "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever trusts in Him, or commits himself to Him should not perish, but have everlasting life".
- 2 A command given to the angels to execute their commission. They were to destroy all that were either guilty of, or an accessory to, the abominations of Jerusalem. Compare Matthew 3:12.
- 3 They are ordered to destroy,
 - a. Without exception, and making no distinction of male or female, young or old, children or babies, all were to be cut off, neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocence of the babes, shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, and by the sword of the

Chaldeans.

The judgement of God is gracious to those who have accepted the gift of His Son, and severe to those who have rejected that gift.

- b. Without compassion: "Let not your eye spare, neither have you pity verse 5.
- 4 They are warned not to do the least hurt to those that were marked for salvation.
 Note how well God's Word fits in here, "The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction", Jeremiah 15:11.
 The king of Babylon ordered that Jeremiah should be protected. Baruch and Ebed-melech were also both secured. Therefore, there is no reason to think or believe that the mourning and praying remnant were not saved by God from the sword or the famine.
 When the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, the Christians were secured and saved in a city called Pella, whilst the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem perished.
- 5 The angels are commanded to begin where the abominations began – in the sanctuary.
 This applies not only to the sanctuary of the Temple, but also of the body, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities", Amos 3:2.
 - 6 Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and, began at the elders – the ancient men that were before the house – and slew them first, followed by the common people. God started the judgement, and He finished it.
 - 7 Ezekiel's intercession. In the midst of all that was going on, Ezekiel, verse 8, still managed to cry out unto God, "And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?"
 The angels were slaying people. Thousands were falling to his right and left, yet Ezekiel stayed standing as a pillar of righteousness. Although mostly referred to as an anonymous Psalm, Psalm 91 is sometimes attributed to Moses, and at other times it is referred to as a Messianic Psalm. Its content, however, fits either category.
 "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation., Psalm 91:7–9.
 - 8 God's denial of Ezekiel's request. God is always prepared to show

mercy where mercy would be justified. Firstly, let us look at what God says, verse 9, “The iniquity of the house of Judah and Israel is exceedingly great...the land is filled with the innocent blood”.

At this point there was no possible justification for God to show mercy, for the Jewish Nation was in bondage to a foreign power, a power that God had brought about because of their sins, yet those still in the Temple were not showing remorse or any sign of repentance.

John, in his Gospel, writes “...those that thou hast given me I have lost none, but the son of perdition”, John 17:12.

Coals of fire scattered over the city. 10:1–7.

It is at this point that we see the depth of this prophecy. Something of the normally invisible world is made visible.

Ezekiel, verse 1, becomes aware of what appears to be a sapphire, which then takes on the appearance of a throne. This can only signify one thing – a severe judgement over sighted by God Himself.

That what he is seeing is above both cherubim and man declares that it is God, and all beings, man or cherubim are subordinate to Him. Sinful man does not have a chance.

When God came into his temple the cherubim stood on the right side of the house, verse 3, as a guard of honour. Observe also that they went to the right side of the house, for the image of jealousy was still present on the north side, and they would, because of their holiness, place themselves as far as possible from the image of jealousy and any other instances of idolatry.

The man clothed in linen who had given His Mark to those who were to be saved, is now called upon by the Person on the throne “...to go in between the wheels, and fill his hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city”.

This, then, can only be termed the fire of divine wrath, for it is fire fetched from between the cherubim.

The cherubim and the Glory of the Lord depart, from the city. 10:8–22.

In this part of the vision, Ezekiel is shown the departure of both the Glory of God and the cherubim – as he had seen it by the river of Chebar – from the sanctuary.

For many of the churches of today, whose main gods are mammon and numbers, they may just as well hang a large sign on the door saying ‘Ichabod’, for God is not a God of ‘mammon and numbers’, and if God’s Presence is there, it is there for one reason only – JUDGEMENT.

Who, then, is Ichabod? The Book of Samuel states he is the son of Phinehas 1 Samuel 4:19–22, and the brother of Ahitub 1 Samuel 14:3. He was born on the day that the Philistines captured the Ark, and that his father and grandfather – Eli – had both died. The only information we have of his mother was that she went into labour on that day, and died shortly after naming her son Ichabod.

The name Ichabod has been synonymous with the ‘Glory of the Lord’ departing from Israel through his grandfather’s death, and as a reference to the loss of the Ark.

With many of the demonic and seducing doctrines that are prevalent in the so-called church of today, it surely has to be a sign that the Lord is returning soon. Ezekiel sees the glory of God illuminating the sanctuary that those who had deviated from God by their wickedness might see, and be aware of what they had lost. Then, as in the days to come, it will be too late to cry out ‘Where is the glory?’

Presumption by the Jewish leadership. 11:1–14.

In verse 1 we are told “The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east gate of the Lord’s house, and behold twenty-five men were there...”.

There are several points here that we need to notice,

- 1 God has taken Ezekiel to the GATE of the Temple, where he sees twenty-five men. They are the princes (senior men) of Jerusalem, who are there to sit in counsel, and protect the city.
- 2 They were sitting “...in the gate of the Lord’s house...” to try causes, Jeremiah 26:10. Note the charge that God brings against them – maladministration of governing the City.
- 3 They are not the same twenty-five men who were AT the door of the temple, “...worshipping towards the east...”. Ezekiel 8:16; they would have been priests or Levites – the sons of Zadok, for they were between the porch and the altar.

Various Jewish writings also seem to infer that Jerusalem was split into twenty-four divisions, and that these men were called either governors or aldermen, and over sighted by a mayor or president.

Of these people, God says, verse 2, “These are the men that devise mischief... they give wicked counsel in this city...”. by lies, denying God’s judgements uttered by the prophets. Believing that judgement will come, they prefer to rely upon God’s patience, a commodity they and their forefathers have long abused, with man’s eternal hope of ‘Not in our time.’

They continue, “...let us build houses...for this city is the caldron and we are the flesh”. Their thoughts then, seem to be “The city is a boiling

pot, and we are in that pot, which will be a secure shelter for us.. They were relying upon man-made walls to keep them safe, and not on the one who could save them.

Once again, verse 4, God uses a man to get His message to them.

To close this section, I quote an aged evangelist/teacher, “The pastor’s job is to comfort the people; the evangelist/teacher’s job is to discomfort the people”.

A message of comfort to the remnant. 11:14–25.

Prophecy has many aspects. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain...”, Isaiah 40:4.

On the premise of the above, and expanding the above verse, we find that prophecy,

- 1 Made the way easier for the seeker,
- 2 But harder for the disdainful,
- 3 It brought comfort to the despised,
- 4 But conviction to the presumptuous.

Two verses – 15 and 16 give us a contrast insight between the thoughts of God and man.

“Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come”.

The sneering words used by the Jews still in Jerusalem were words of arrogance, in that they still believed that the walls of the city would protect them, and that the land – given by promise to those who would be obedient, would immediately become the possession of those who were not only sinning, but were disobedient.

They might have the Temple in their midst, but God was not in it. His True Temple was in the hearts of the exiles – NOT BRICK AND MORTAR. God would be the exile’s protection and provision supplier until they were restored.

The exiles may have been cast off by the Jews, but God had not cast them off.

“Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of

stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem”, Isaiah 8:13–14.

And God’s message to the exiles at this time is “...Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel”, Ezekiel 11:17.

God would bring about an end to their afflictions. He would restore the land to them, it will be on a new agreement, and the disobedient will not have rights there at all.

However, their captivity was to be a time of learning.

- 1 They would return with a love of God.
- 2 They would return with a hatred of idols.
- 3 They would have a new spirit, guiding and leading them in the ordinances of God.

In verse 23, we read that God removed His Presence and the cherubim from the city and temple to the mountain which is on the east side of the city – the MOUNT OF OLIVES.

From the Mount of Olives one can look and see the fullness of Jerusalem, but look at the following Scriptures,

- 1 “And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith”, Deuteronomy 32:20,
- 2 “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it”, Luke 19:41.
- 3 “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south”, Zechariah 14:4.

JERUSALEM MUST BE DESTROYED BECAUSE OF ITS SINS.

This chapter, Ezekiel 12, opens with that the fact that the spirit of Ichabod – although not visible except through the actions of man – had clearly taken over the Temple, God’s Glory was no longer a visible fact, but to Ezekiel the Word of the Lord was still there to be heard.

The Babylon Captivity, and the Remnant Preserved. 12:1–16.

Whilst Ezekiel may well have been hoping that the glory of God would appear once again – it had appeared twice before – there is no further mention by Ezekiel of that happening, but the Word of the Lord never ceased. Compare this to the writer of Hebrews, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets”, Hebrews 1:1, but now it is through the Son – Jesus Christ, “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”, Hebrews 1:2.

Thus, in Israel’s past, God had either appeared or spoken directly to the prophets, who delivered their messages according to their understanding of the vision as it appeared to them, or directly according to the Word given to them. Today, we have God’s Word direct from His Son, who was the living representation of God communicating with man.

Even if the Glory of God had left the Temple, God still used Ezekiel to express his Word by actions.

Ezekiel’s move. 12:1–7.

The question now arises, ‘Why was it so necessary for Ezekiel to mime – in minute detail – what was about to happen in Jerusalem?’ David, in the Psalms gives us the answer, “They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them”, Psalm 115:5–8.

I ask you, in all seriousness, to think carefully on the following,

- 1 Psalm 115 was written some two hundred and seventy–five years BEFORE Ezekiel was called upon by God to mime the following.
- 2 Ezekiel mimed his instructions some five hundred and ninety years before our Lord’s First Advent.
- 3 In the late 1970's, about two thousand years AFTER Psalm 115 was penned, the following conversation took place between a mother and daughter,

“Mommy, the preacher's sermon this morning confused me”.
 The mother said, "Oh! Why is that?"
 The girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?"
 “Yes, that's true," the mother replied.
 "He also said that God lives within us. Is that true, too?"
 Again the mother replied, "Yes".
 "Well," said the girl, "if God is bigger than us and he lives in us, wouldn't he show through?"

I like that little girl's way of putting it. If God lives in us, then there's no way of keeping Him from "showing through". That's the essence of Christian living – living in such a way that people around will see God in our lives.

Many people in the world today are exactly the same, they have become inanimate objects, unthinking people that will neither hear nor heed the message of salvation given.

Yet, they have the faculty of passing a man–designed exam, receiving a piece of parchment – a degree, yet have to be re–taught when they enter the market place.

Many becoming ministers in a church, following in the steps of ‘The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber’, Ezekiel 8:7–18, page 34 forward. Wilfully ignorant, shutting their eyes against the divine light and stopping their ears from hearing the divine law.

What was Ezekiel demonstrating? The fleeing of the Jews from Jerusalem. The purpose then of enacting was to awaken the captives that they were safe, but that those who had not listened to God’s Word earlier were about to face major problems.

Ezekiel’s mime made the following points,

- 1 Everything was to be removed from the home and packed in a day, verse 3,
- 2 The city would be secured at night against the enemy, and they would have to escape through a breach in the wall, verse 4,
- 3 Every man would have to carry his own burden, for the servants would be looking after themselves, verse 5,
- 4 They would be ashamed and broken, verse 6.

Ezekiel’s response “I did so as I was commanded...”, verse 7, is a four–fold directive and teaching to all ministers and Christians alike, for all Christians should be ministers,

- 1 To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, no matter how difficult we perceive it to be,

- 2 To do all we can for the good of the souls of others, irrespective of how we see it as an inconvenience,
- 3 To be affected with the feelings of others. When they are sad, we should also feel for their sorrow.
- 4 To retain a loose relationship with the world, ready to leave the minute we are called.

Zedekiah's capture. 12:8–16.

It is here that we see just how careful we must be when we look at the scriptures.

- 1 Ezekiel always refers to King Zedekiah as prince, never as the king, – the idea of a king appointed by a foreign ruler was not accepted by the people who continued to regard Jehoiachin as their legitimate king, Jeremiah 37:1 – for Jehoiachin was the king by lineage, Ezekiel 17:13, “And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land”, for when Nebuchadnezzar first attacked Jerusalem he took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon, and installed Mattaniah as king, and renamed him Zedekiah, 2 Kings 24:17.
- 2 The idea of a king appointed by a foreign ruler was not accepted by the people who continued to regard Jehoiachin as their legitimate king Jeremiah 37:1.
- 3 All the house of Israel, however, shared the calamity to fall on Zedekiah.
- 4 Josephus [Antiquities, 10.7] reports that Ezekiel sent a copy of his prophecy to Zedekiah to confirm the warning given by Jeremiah. Zedekiah, however, believing he had found a contradiction between Ezekiel 12:13 and Jeremiah 24:8–9, declaring he should be carried to Babylon, believed neither.
The ‘net’ would appear to refer to the Babylonian army, whilst the ‘snare’ would seem to point to the false teachings of the priests, and the acceptance of idol proclamations, verse 13.
Zedekiah was captured by the Babylonian army, and taken to Babylon, but he never saw it because his eyes had been put out at Riblah.

How literally these prophecies were fulfilled can be seen from the account in 2 Kings 25:1–7.

The immediate fulfilment of the prophecy. 12:17–28.

It is at this time that two unsettling ‘feelings’ will start to become obvious in the lives of those at Jerusalem, both brought about with the latest word of prophecy.

- 1 Anxiety – a serious desire to avoid that which involves a risk to life,

or a life threatening event.

- 2 Fear – an unsettling inner emotion causing an unwelcome event, bringing about pain or harm.

There are three points that will bring about the above feelings.

- 1 The Babylonian army will have been encamped outside the city walls for a considerable time.
- 2 The food supplies will be dwindling.
- 3 Water will be becoming scarcer.

All brought about slowly, but surely, by the Hand of the Voice they would not listen to, but that would destroy the nation – save the selected remnant, the city itself, and the countryside round about.

The decay of virtue in any nation will bring about a decay of government, financial instability, and of home and family life.

But the effects of this judgement will bring about one thing “You shall know that I am the Lord”, Ezekiel 11:12.

They flattered themselves with the hope that the judgment should continue to be delayed. Note what God says through Ezekiel, “Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease...but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision”, Ezekiel 12:22–23.

To sum up then, the message from God at this time is very much to the point, ‘The word you have received from Me will be accomplished very shortly, exactly as I have said it, and will not be postponed as the priests have claimed’.

In chapter 13 both false prophets and prophetesses are spoken against by God, for they were the most spiteful enemies of those who would listen to God; and the most contemptible to stand before God.

When called foxes by God, verse 4, God was proclaiming their deviousness and cunning in their speech as they played upon the fears of those around them.

Job in censuring the wisdom of his ‘friends’ declares that God is the source of Divine Wisdom, “With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools”, Job 12:16–17.

The lying prophets. 13:1–16.

The false prophets, referred to here were both at Jerusalem “I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah”, Jeremiah 23:14, and among the captives in Babylon, “For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed”, Jeremiah 29:8.

Any hope God might have had of them showing repentance was extremely thin, therefore Ezekiel was to prophesy against them, in hope that the people might be warned not to listen, yet, by the same token, that Ezekiel prophesied against them left their works totally inexcusable. Therefore, WHAT WERE THEIR WORKS?

- 1 Their prophecy was based upon the desires of their own hearts, verse 1.
- 2 They followed their own spirit, verse 3.
- 3 Not one word uttered would help Israel in the day of battle, verse 5
- 4 Their words were the results of vanity and lying divinations, verses 6–7.
- 5 They had been persuaded to believe that peace was coming, when no peace had been offered by God, verse 10.
- 6 Built up the people’s hopes with untempered mortar, verse 10.

Thus much of what they said was what they thought would please the people, and therefore very fitting for what Jesus taught, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”, Matthew 7:22–23.

The lying prophetesses. 13:17–23.

God, some 225 years earlier, and through the prophet Joel working in Judah, said, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions”, Joel 2:28.

Satan has never been far behind with his works of imitation.

Note the words of God in verse 17, “Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them.

Therefore, as with the people that Moses was leading from captivity to the Promised Land, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves”, Exodus 32:7.

We need to look at three points here,

- 1 “They are thy people...”. God spoke these words to both Moses and Ezekiel. At the time, both Moses and Ezekiel were leading the people from captivity to a new beginning. God had, therefore, entrusted His People into the care of His Agents in the world at that time.
- 2 Twenty times Ezekiel, 1:1, 1:2, 3:11, 3:15, 6:9, 11:24, 11:25, 12:4, 12:7, 12:11, 16:53, 25:3, 29:14, 30:17, 30:18, 33:21, 39:23, 39:25, 39:28, 40:1, Ezekiel alludes to the Jews in Babylon as being captives. A far better terminology would be that they were being obedient to the Word of God, and were, therefore, captives of God being led to a new beginning.
- 3 The true captives in the Book are the Jews still in Jerusalem, for they were,
 - a. Captive to the word of Satan,
 - b. Captives of the Babylonian army for they could neither enter nor leave the city.

These prophetesses pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab’s prophets were, “And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king’s hand”, 1 Kings 22:12.

And what is the prophetic song of today’s church leadership? ‘Prosper, prosper...’

When the ‘leadership’ becomes shameless, it is time for the prophets to become bold.

But what was the sin of the prophetesses? It was basically the same, but the wording was more open,

- 1 Their prophecy was based upon the desires of their own hearts, verse 17.
- 2 They hunted the souls of God’s people, verse 18.
- 3 They killed the souls that should not die, and saved those that should not live, verse 19.
- 4 They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, verse 19.
- 5 They hunted the people to make them flee, verse 20.

What will happen to those who do not – or cease to – follow their words? GOD WILL DELIVER THEM, verse 23.

The Elders Approach Ezekiel for A Word From God, 14:1–23.

Listening for God’s Word and praying are two of the mainstays of our belief, yet chapter 14 is a mixture of surprises. Consider the following,

- 1 Some elders approached Ezekiel, and sat before him, verse 1. This itself is interesting, for to sit before a person was to acknowledge their closeness to a source of information, and/or wisdom.
- 2 Noah, Daniel, and Job were all called upon to pray for people, verses 14 and 20, whilst a decree had already been stated; their call to prayer was, in fact, a call to obedience.
- 3 James, after the Resurrection and Pentecost has this to say, –Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts., James 4:3.

Whilst it was most likely they were not fellow–captives, such as the elders of chapter 8:1, it would appear that they had heard of the word Ezekiel was speaking.

Therefore, the two most likely scenarios are,

- 1 They had been asked by fellow Jews to get the latest ‘update’, in the hope that it might just given them an idea as to what to do.
- 2 They could be some of the high ranking Jews in Jerusalem who had come to Babylon on business, or ambassadors from the king (Zedekiah), and were seeking information as to how they might negotiate.

In verse 4 it would suggest that by God’s severe answer their intent was to try and snare Ezekiel into contradicting Jeremiah’s prophecy.

What we need to note are the words “Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me...”, Ezekiel 14:1, and the words of Paul in Acts, “...I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest....”.

The ‘elders’ came dressed as elders, and Ezekiel accepted them as such; in Paul’s instance, the high priest was not wearing his robes, and his behaviour did not promote him as a high priest.

Therefore, these men were strangers to Ezekiel, and he received them as elders of Israel by the garments they wore, and as such he received them with respect.

God, knowing their hearts, gave Ezekiel a private insight into these men. Their real character was that of an idolater, and God did not impart His

Treasures to idolaters. But look how God continues, they not only had idols, but they loved them, they were wedded to them, giving them the best room in their lives in their affections.

They pretended that they had no idols, but intended to return to them. It was a case of 'See you later' NOT 'GOOD BYE'.

The answer they receive at this time is not the answer they wanted to hear, "...Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations", Ezekiel 14:6. As elders they should have been aware of the scriptures, and known what God had said when the Israelites were oppressed by the Philistines, "Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation", Judges 10:13-14.

God now tells Ezekiel of four impending judgements, famine; beasts; sword; pestilence, with each there is to be NO MERCY. The scope of these verses is to show that when moral standards decline, and usher in a state of ruin and spiritual bankruptcy, then that country can expect a national judgement.

Famine, verse 13. Sixty years later, Haggai, after Cyrus had permitted Ezra to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, Ezra 1:2; God called Darius to warn the people not to neglect the Temple saying, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes", Haggai 1:6.

Note, it is not just the common provisions that God is speaking about, but also the wherewithal to purchase food.

Beasts, noisome and noxious, verse 15. Not possible, note what God says in the Palestinian Covenant, "I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate", Leviticus 26:22, this is ALL living creatures will suffer, because of man's disobedience, the domesticated cattle along with the men, women, and children.

Sword, go through the land, verse 17. Whatever the execution by the sword, it is by God's Command to the sword; for it is His sword, and it acts as He directs.

Pestilence, verse 19. A fatal disease, generally in epidemic proportions such as the bubonic plague. The bubonic plague, also known as The Black Plague, was one of the most deadly pandemics in human history, and was thought to have been caused by bacteria named *Yersinia pestis*. It is thought to have begun in Central Asia, and spread to Europe by the late 1340s.

The total number of deaths worldwide is estimated at 85 million people; with an estimated 20 to 30 million deaths in Europe, or between one and two-thirds of Europe's population.

When God's professing people rebel against him, they can expect a permutation of either any one from four, or, ALL FOUR of the above.

The Vine Tree. 15:1–8.

God has used Ezekiel many times up to this point to foretell the total ruin of Jerusalem; even though Ezekiel – at times – seems to find it hard to believe that God is actually serious with regard to the Holy City.

The first five verses are very graceful, whilst the last three verses of this short chapter is a judgement of annihilation.

The vineyard. 15:1–5.

The twelfth of the Messianic Psalms, the song was written for the son of Korah. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King”, Psalm 48:2.

Whilst Jeremiah lamented over the city, “All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?” Lamentations 2:15.

Ezekiel would certainly have known the words of Psalm 48:2, whether he knew of Jeremiah's writings is not clear.

What is clear is that Jerusalem was his home city, and the centre of his relationship with God. Jerusalem would also have been in his mind when he left the city to be taken to Babylon, and now God was talking of destroying the city.

Note how beautifully God puts His reasons for the demise of Jerusalem. It is an answer that will clearly state to the elders their end, and yet to Ezekiel, it is a comforting answer that only the bad portions are to be removed, the good will stay.

The judgment. 15:6–8.

That holy city had become unprofitable and good for nothing. It had

been THE VINE–TREE among the trees of the vineyard, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. Note the following,

- 1 “And HE FENCED IT, and gathered out the stones thereof, and PLANTED IT WITH THE CHOICEST VINE, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: AND HE LOOKED THAT IT SHOULD BRING FORTH GRAPES, and it brought forth wild grapes”, Isaiah 5:2
- 2 “I the LORD do keep it; I WILL WATER IT EVERY MOMENT: lest any hurt it, I WILL KEEP IT NIGHT AND DAY”, Isaiah 27:3.
- 3 “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, BROUGHT IT FORTH WILD GRAPES?”, Isaiah 5:4
- 4 “For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: THEIR GRAPES ARE GRAPES OF GALL, THEIR CLUSTERS ARE BITTER”, Deuteronomy 32:32

The unfruitful vine is disposed of in the same way with the briars and thorns, whose end is to be burnt, and not even the ashes of it are worth saving.

In Ezekiel, God was referring to the elders of the temple. Today God is looking at many professors of religion – the elite leadership in their own eyes.

But both are the same, contradicting and denigrating God’s Word and Ordinances.

Certain nations around the world are noted for their politics, others for trade, and have retained their credibility.

The Jewish nation, along with many ‘Christian nations’; were known and famous for their holiness, but, losing their holiness, they became wicked, thereby losing their credibility and usefulness.

The writer of Hebrews wrote, “For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned”, Hebrews 6:7–8.

The Sign of the Child. 16:1–63.

In the previous chapter God had likened Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine; in this chapter God views Jerusalem as an adulteress that should, and must, be exposed.

Therefore God, by showing the people that He knows of their abominations, that although they might try and plead with Him, they will have no reason to complain about the judgments they were about to

receive.

The birth. 16:1–6.

It is here that we have one of those beautiful examples of ministries working together, not only for those immediately around them, but also for those in distant parts.

Ezekiel – chapter 16	Jeremiah – chapter 29
was among the captives in Babylon to uplift them	was with those at Jerusalem to condemn the false prophets
wrote to the people at Jerusalem to convict them	wrote to the captives to encourage them

Ezekiel's commission at this point is to expose Jerusalem's sins, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem; Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite", Ezekiel 16:2–3.

Since Jerusalem's 'parentage' is named, this chapter has to be about the city; therefore, the words "...thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite". are the founders of the city.

Who, then, were the Amorites and the Hittites?

1 Amorites. The term Amorites is used in the Bible to refer to certain highland mountaineers who inhabited the land of Canaan, and described in Genesis 10:16 as descendants of Canaan, son of Ham. Described as a powerful people occupying the land east and west of the Jordan; their king, Og, is described as the last "of the remnant of the giants" Deuteronomy 3:11.

The Biblical Amorites seem to have originally occupied the region stretching from the heights west of the Dead Sea, containing "all Gilead and all Bashan", the land of the "two kings of the Amorites," Sihon and Og, Deuteronomy 31:4. Both Sihon and Og were independent kings.

2 The Hittites were an ancient nation that occupied the general area of Asia Minor and Syria. Although not as popularly well-known as other ancient empires, they, at the peak of their power challenged the Egyptians and Assyrians for control of what is now the land of Israel.

Thus Jerusalem here is for the Jewish church and nation, and is

referred to as an outcast child, and abandoned. Yet this was not the worst; for Terah, the father of Abraham – their spiritual father – had served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees, Joshua 24:2. Even in Jacob’s family – through his wife’s family, there had been strange gods, Genesis 35:2. Thus Satan, from a very early start, had a foothold in the city.

The development of the child. 16:7.

Even so, there were other great things which God did for the Jewish Nation during Jacob’s time.

Raising the Nation by degrees from the seventy-five people who initially went into Egypt, God never took His Eye from them, saving them from the ruin and despair, verse 6, "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy own blood...I said unto thee, Live". Thus, in the two hundred fifty years they were in Egypt, they increased from seventy-five persons to over one million people.

Marriage. 16:8.

God may well have said here ‘Thou wast of marriageable age, but none was willing to marry thee, but I looked at My Chosen People, and My Grace knew that the time of your deliverance had come.

How well Solomon’s words fit in here, “My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away”, Song of Solomon 2:10–13. Even more so, God knew it was time for Him to fulfil His Promise to Abraham’s seed, “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance”, Genesis 15:13–14.

Note a very important fact here, she DOES NOT make an advance towards God – God makes the advance towards her.

By the use of the words “...spread my skirt over thee...”. God is referring to His Covenant with Israel at Sinai, “I entered into...covenant with thee...”, at which time Israel became THE WIFE OF GOD’S COVENANT.

God has been pleased to call Israel His Wife,

1 “For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and

thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called”, Isaiah 54:5.

2 “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion”, Jeremiah 3:14.

“...thou became mine...”. Not only did Jesus make this a statement of fact, “And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”, Matthew 19:5–6, but God also stated it in the Mosaic Covenant, “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine”, Exodus 19:5.

The wealth and fame of the child. 16:9–14.

“...washed I thee with water.... This is God talking, not people talking to one another.

God ordained a washing with water in the Mosaic Covenant “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes”, Exodus 19:10.

Man also thought that it was a good idea, “Now when every maid’s turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women”, Esther 2:12.

Jesus confirmed it, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”, Matthew 28:19.

And Paul rejoiced in it, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

“I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk”. In another of the Messianic Psalms, talking of the bride, it is said, “The king’s daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee”, Psalm 45:13–14.

But it is the Lord who supplies the bride with her wedding garments – AFTER SHE HAS PURIFIED HERSELF – “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they

which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God”, Revelation 19:8–9.

The sins of the child. 16:15–43.

Beginning at the latter end of Solomon’s reign, it is the embodiment of whoredom and adultery, for, instead of giving God the glory for her gifts and privileges, Israel chose to go her own way.

- 1 Both were a violation of the marriage–covenant with God, giving affection to others that are due to a husband alone.
- 2 Both corrupt, defile, and enslave man, influencing him to the dominion of lust.
- 3 Both are a sin that will harden the conscience.

The following verses cite the reason,

Verse 22. "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth",

Verse 30, "How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things".

Micah, about 140 years earlier, had warned the temple leadership with a word from God, "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us", Micah 3:10–11.

What were the sins?

- 1 They worshipped all the idols that came in their way, verse 15.
- 2 Covering the high places – where they worshipped their idols – with multi–colours, verse 16.
- 3 Making images with and from the precious things that God had given, verse 17.
- 4 Covering their idols with embroidered garments, verse 18.
- 5 Setting food before their idols, verse 20.
- 6 Murdering God’s children, verse 21.
- 7 Forgot – ignored – that God had rescued and revived her, verse 22.
- 8 Built a brothel as an idol temple, verse 24.
- 9 Built high places in every road, verse 25.
- 10 Committed fornication with Egypt and other nations, verse 26.
- 11 Turned to Assyria to fill unfulfilled lusts, verse 28.
- 12 Even multiplying her fornications from Canaan to Chaldea, verse 29.
- 13 Was untrue to her husband, verse 32.
- 14 Hired lovers to be with her, verses 31–34. Unlike other harlots, Israel hired her lovers; she was not hired by them.

Adultery was by the Law of Moses a capital punishment crime. This

notorious adulteress, being found guilty with the evidence in the previous verses, has a sentence passed upon her.

What then, were her judgements to be?

- 1 Note the address 'O harlot...' verse 35.
- 2 I will judge you as a harlot, verse 38.
- 3 I will give you to them, verse 39.
- 4 They will bring up an army against you, verse 40.
- 5 They will burn your houses, verse 41.
- 6 I will repay you with your own ways upon your head, verse 43.

"Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite", Ezekiel 16:45. For notes on Hittite and Amorite, see page 42.

From great beginnings, when Noah, after the Flood and as his family grew, handed down a true knowledge of God in Canaan, we have Melchizedek, king of Salem, in Canaan, "...a priest of the most high God", Genesis 14:18, in a situation that was to rapidly renounce a religious faith, and/or a moral allegiance to God.

Thus Paul was to write some 630 years later, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them", Romans 1:28-32.

Therefore, she who loatheth her husband was a 'hater of God'.

God called them 'sister of thy sisters' – related by blood in guilt to Samaria and Sodom, bringing about the eternal triangle as follows, Moab and Ammon, the incestuous children of Lot, had their origins from Sodom; that Sodom might be called Judah's sister. Samaria, answering to the ten tribes of Israel, is also a sister to Judah.

The promises of a restoration, 16:53-63.

No matter how severe the punishment God inflicted upon Judah, Judah would fail to reform, for it would be God alone, and through His Grace

that would be their restoration. Thereby,

- 1 God will hereby be glorified, verse 62.
- 2 They will become more humble, verse 63.

The Two Eagles. 17:1–24.

Augustine was once accosted by a heathen who showed him his idol and said, “Here is my god; where is thine?”.

Augustine replied, “I cannot show you my God; not because there is no God to show but because you have no eyes to see Him.

With the warnings they had received from both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zedekiah and the temple leadership can now be viewed as the heathen person accosting Augustine not only did they lack the eyes to see Him, they also lacked the ears to hear Him.

The temple hierarchy had resorted to idols, but Zedekiah had started communicating with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, thereby violating the homage and promised loyalty he had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar.

The first eagle – Nebuchadnezzar. 17:1–6.

Ezekiel was commanded to speak – in a parable form, verse 2 – to the house of Israel. Note the following reasons,

- 1 It was not, as Samson’s riddle to the Philistines, to puzzle them.
- 2 It was not to hide God’s intent towards them, neither was it to place them in a situation of uncertainty.
- 3 Ezekiel, upon completing the parable, is to explain its meaning.

Thus it is here that we see God using any method possible to get a clearly understood message to the people.

What, then, is in the message? Jehoiachin, the reigning king of Israel, had reigned in Jerusalem for three months, when he and his princes were taken captive, and brought to Babylon, 2 Kings 24:12.

At this point it is easy to understand that the eagle is Nebuchadnezzar’s army, and the tender branch of the cedar is Jehoiachin, and the carrying of the tender branch is the king’s removal to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel’s vision, is a lion (the king of beasts) with eagle’s wings, Daniel 7:4. Whilst in this parable he is an eagle (the king of birds), emphasising both his strength and his speed.

Let us now consider Zedekiah rather more closely.

There are at least two people named Zedekiah in the Bible. One was king of Judah and the other was a false prophet.

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made Mattaniah, his father's brother, king of Israel, thereby continuing to show his policy of maintaining a show of monarchy. Mattaniah was the third and youngest son of Josiah, 1Chronicles 3:15, and a full brother of Jehoahaz, making Mattaniah an uncle of Jehoiachin.

It is now time to look at the customs of the day.

Conquerors changed the names of those they took captive in a battle, thus Mattaniah became Zedekiah, which had the meaning –The righteous of God., and he reigned for eleven years.

This was a pure Hebrew name, which would seem to suggest that Nebuchadnezzar permitted the new puppet king to choose his own name. Regrettably he did not live according to the meaning of his name, for his heart followed the same path as that of Jehoiakim – impenitent and heedless of God's word, 2 Kings 24:17–19.

When the prophesied famine hit the city, he tried to escape, but was captured in the plains of Jericho, where he was taken to Riblah, where he was tried and sentenced before the King of Babylon. He was forced to watch as his sons were killed before his eyes, then his eyes were put out and he was taken to Babylon 2 Kings 25:6–7.

General Nebuzaradan of Babylon then burned down the Temple and the palace, and tore down the walls of Jerusalem.

It is also here that we see the depth of Paul's command to Timothy regarding the qualifications of a church leader, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil", 1 Timothy 3:6, for neither Jehoiachin nor Mattaniah (Zedekiah) could ever be conceived as being a novice, but their pride and joy were the devil's tools – IDOLS.

King Zedekiah refused the counsel of Jeremiah the prophet, who delivered the messages of the Lord, but continued rebelling against King Nebuchadnezzar, even though he had taken an oath – by his own God – of loyalty, 2 Chronicles 36:12–13.

The second eagle – Pharaoh. 17:7–21.

Today, this situation is commonly called the 'rebound' lurching from one straw to an ocean going ship.

The second eagle's plan was to entice the vine – Israel (Zedekiah) to look other than where God wanted the vine to face.

The new 'eagle' was Egypt. Its plan – to encourage Zedekiah to rebel

against Babylon, thereby attempting to annul Zedekiah's oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar.

A general consensus is that Ezekiel wrote this prophecy between 592 BC, Ezekiel 8:1, and 591 BC, Ezekiel 20:1.

Zedekiah's final revolt against Babylon actually began in 588 BC, thus Ezekiel predicted Zedekiah's revolt three years before it happened.

Thus Zedekiah's dilemma now is,

- 1 His oath of allegiance has lost its power of reliability,
- 2 He is turning to another power in the hope that it will have the strength to aid and abet him through the problem.

But, he has even worse problems,

- 1 He never heeded God in the past, and God will not want to know him now,
- 2 Both his dilemmas are represented as eagles – BIRDS OF PREY,
- 3 They will not necessarily attack one another, but both want to bring about the downfall of both Israel and Zedekiah, and either will fulfil the desire of God in Israel's downfall.

When God enlarged the Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 22:17, He said, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies".

Note the two promises in this verse,

- 1 "...I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore...".
- 2 "...and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies...".

SIN had brought about the situation where the king had to approach Egypt for PEOPLE.

God closes this parable with a promise to the remnant that He will again raise the royal family of Judah through the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom, verses 22–24.

Sermons. 18:1–20:44.

So far, many of us will have read the previous chapters, sitting comfortably, with an even more comfortable thought of –If the Jews would only but learned, they would not have had the problems they have today.

Get out of the comfortable chair. Get the comfortable thoughts out of your minds. Now, receive this uncomfortable thought, "THE ONLY REASON THE JEWS ARE MENTIONED, IS BECAUSE THEY WERE THE

CALLED PEOPLE OF GOD; GOD'S PROMISES HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THEM; GOD'S MERCIES AND GRACE HAD BEEN POURED UPON THEM, WITH THE ODD GENTILE ALSO RECEIVING A BLESSING HERE AND THERE".

Now, since the Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, anyone calling themselves a 'Christian' must have accepted the Birth, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus as the covenant of their new lifestyle.

In this chapter there is not a particular reference to either Judah or Jerusalem, it does set out the rules and laws that God will apply when dealing with the 'children of men'.

Let us consider the following scripture, "And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him", Genesis 4:6-7.

Where, then, does this get us?

In the Garden of Eden Satan had to talk Eve INTO her sin. Out of the Garden and born into a sinful family, God tried to talk Cain OUT of his sin. God's plea to Cain was 'DO THAT WHICH IS RIGHT' and all would be well in his life. For not to do that which was right, was to put Satan's seal upon his life.

This all took place when men were men – NOT JEW AND GENTILE.

All Men Are Equal. 18:1-30.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; and in like manner sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. At this point we see yet another – yet evil – proverb, a proverb that is defiant against both God's Word and His Justice.

Compare the two, "...The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?". Ezekiel 12:22 and "...The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?", Ezekiel 18:2.

In Ezekiel 12:8 ff, God had prophesied through the prophet that Jerusalem would fall: in Ezekiel 12:22 ff, we read that God certainly reproved the people for their sins, but, had not, as yet, brought about the judgement. Here, in Ezekiel 18:2, the Jews were using yet another proverb defiantly claiming an injustice with the words, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge...', for to eat sour grapes would only affect the eater AND NOT ANOTHER MEMBER OF

THE FAMILY, therefore, their statement that God was punishing them for the sins of their predecessors was, to say the least, ridiculous. Hardly the most appropriate way to try and make peace with God!

In verses 10–20, God declares that He will judge according to the life lived, a fact Paul repeats in his Epistle to the Romans, “But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath”, Romans 2:5–8. These verses are remarkable for yet another reason. Stephen, in his address to the Sanhedrin, Acts 7, never once directly names Jesus, but implies the Person Jesus at every point possible.

God, through Ezekiel, never names a type of person, yet implies at every point a situation that applies to the kings of Judah as much as to the beggars of Judah. Either could have a godly father and an ungodly child; or an ungodly father and a godly child.

Thus, God, the Father of the Chosen Nation, with all the instruction, education, and rebukes; the restraints (captivities) and the prayers His intercessors had placed before him, had all the pain and shame that an earthly father would suffer from a son that was notoriously wicked and vile, bringing about a curse and plague on his generation, as had happened in the generations before, and would happen in the generations to come.

Note the list that follows,

- 1 A robber and a shedder of blood, verse 10.
- 2 An idolater, verse 11.
- 3 An oppressor, verse 12.
- 4 A money worshipper, verse 13.

Many families have a son such as this, they are not on their own, and God knows their anguish.

In verses 21–29 we have seen how God dealt fairly and impartially depending upon the changes made in the lineage of the family, but at this point a subtle change becomes noticeable – God will judge or reward a person according to the changes made in that persons in their life.

We now, therefore, have the equation where,

- 1 Life is a probationary period, with the length of probation matching the length of life lived,
- 2 It now becomes a matter of life and death, with life and death eternal being determined at the last breath of life.

We now see just how important it is to behave well during our probationary time,

- 1 “But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed. and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die”, Ezekiel 18:21.
- 2 “Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive”, Ezekiel 18:27.
- 3 “Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die”, Ezekiel 18:28.

But it goes much deeper; a trait that many churches today DO NOT stress, for the first step towards any conversion is consideration.

Sinners continue in their evil ways simply because they have not considered the final result of sin in their lives. However, for the one that turns from the sins that he hath committed, and turns away from his wickedness that he has committed, and is prepared to consider the end results, turning away from his transgressions will bring the following promises,

- 1 They shall surely live, verse 19.
- 2 They shall not die, verse 21.
- 3 His sins shall not be mentioned unto him, verse 22.
- 4 They save their souls alive, verse 27.

In the final verse of this section, we read of the reality of their situation, “Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?”, Ezekiel 18:29.

Consider the ways of the House of Israel and the people of Jerusalem at this point, they were saying “The way of the Lord is not equal., yet God is holding them responsible for breaking His Laws at Sinai, which they renamed –The Law of Moses., by worshipping idols, and fulfilling their lusts with sexual acts; yet they continued to expect God to bless and protect them under the Abrahamic Covenant!

Since they were not showing respect or reverence to God’s Covenant and Law, they could hardly state that God’s Ways were unequal when their ways were on opposite ends of the pendulum.

But rather than condemn them, God preferred to counsel with them that they might be saved.

Note the overflowing content in the final two verses of this chapter. Four things are required of us,

- 1 We must repent,

- 2 We must change our mind,
- 3 We must change our ways,
- 4 We must be sorry for what we have done.

Lamentation for the princes of Israel. 19:1–14.

In this chapter Ezekiel is lamenting the ruin of the house and line of David, the head of the royal family in Judah, along with the damage and distress caused by the exit of the seed of Josiah—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off.

- 1 The mother and her sons, 19:1–9.

Before we continue, let us consider the actions of Saint Augustine. He was sent by Pope Saint Gregory the Great with 30 – 40 monks to evangelize the English.

Prior to crossing the English Channel, Saint Augustine sent a message to Gregory concerning reports he had heard about the English. Gregory's reply gave Austin both moral and spiritual encouragement, —It is better never to undertake any high enterprise than to abandon it once it has started", adding, "The greater the labour, the greater will be the glory of your eternal reward".

Crossing the Channel from France, they were greeted near Ramsgate by the then King of Kent – King Ethelbert of Kent; later becoming the first archbishop of Canterbury and was called the "Apostle of the English".

The translation of one of his better known statements reads —God does not urge us to do impossibilities, but by his commands admonishes us to do what is in our power and to pray for what is not.

Note right here in verse 1, God refers to the kings of Judah as princes; their glory had diminished, their purity was lost, and they had become as corrupt and idolatrous as the kings of Israel.

Advice, freely given in the past, is now too late. They had never been required by God to do the impossible, but, by his prophets they had been admonished, but they had never tried praying. It is now time to lament them.

Ezekiel's instructions are simple; he is to Judah as a lioness, utterly degenerate to when it had sat as a queen among the nations, verse 2.

“What is thy mother?”. The disgrace and shame that came with that question. “Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?”. Genesis 49:9.

Had they followed and been obedient to the divine law and promise, God would have preserved to them the might, majesty, and

dominion of a lion, but instead had send His Son as “...the Lion of the tribe of Judah”.

The royal family, then, should have been as a mother to the kingdom. She is the lioness, fierce and protective, thus,

- a. When they abandoned their divinity they lost their humanity,
- b. When they did not revere God, they did not regard man.

We are looking at the lament Ezekiel is to have for Judah, yet, THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE ARE NO WORSE – THE FACT REMAINS, IN MANY CASES THEY WERE BETTER – than the majority of kings, presidents, and many of the preachers who are pushing themselves through the medium of modern day TV.

- a. The sin and fall of Jehoahaz.

He became a young lion, verse 3.

He was made king, and thought he could do what he pleased, gratifying his ambition, covetousness, verse 3.

He became a master of tyranny, verse 3.

Where did this get him? He did not prosper in this lifestyle for long – his neighbouring countries heard what he was doing, and looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour.

He was taken as a beast of prey – IN THEIR PIT, verse 4.

He was carried captive to Egypt, and never heard of any more, verse 4.

- b. When Judah realised that they would never see their king again, they took another of the lion’s whelps (Jehoiakim), and made him a young lion, verse 5.

Instead of taking note of his brother’s fate, he consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious like him, verse 6.

All this did was to bring about his downfall, “And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets”, 2 Kings 24:2.

These bound him with chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon, verse 9, where Jeremiah stated that he should be buried “He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem”, Jeremiah 24:19.

Consider the following from the Roman poet Juvenal,

- a. How few of all the boastful men that reign
 - b. Descend in peace to Pluto’s dark domain!
2. Mother and rods (princes) taken into captivity, 19:10–14.
- Israel is represented by three trees throughout the scriptures,

- a. Vine demonstrated Israel's SPIRITUAL privileges,
- b. Olive demonstrated Israel's RELIGIOUS privileges,
- c. Fig demonstrated Israel's NATIONAL privileges.

Therefore, as Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is as the fruit.

Consider the following –

The vine clings to the oak during the fiercest of storms. Although the violence of nature may uproot the oak, twining tendrils still cling to it. If the vine is on the side of the tree opposite the wind, the great oak is its protection: if it is on the exposed side, the tempest only presses it closer to the trunk.

In some of the storms of life, God intervenes and shelters us; while in others He allows us to be exposed, so that we will be pressed more closely to Him.

B. M. Launderville.

On page 67, we read,

- a. When they abandoned their divinity they lost their humanity,
- b. When they did not revere God, they did not regard man.

When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and walking with God, the courts of justice were filled with men of sense, honesty, and decency, Jerusalem's stature was exalted, and the nation was respected.

Here, in this chapter, and using a similitude, Ezekiel presents Jerusalem, the mother-city (a vine); therefore, the princes are her branches. Places of great wickedness may prosper for a while; and a vine set in blood is likely to have many branches. Jerusalem was full of branches, able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience – many of whom would have been minor princes or directly associated with the king's court.

Ezekiel 12:22 states, "...The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?". claiming that God was lax with His threats instead of accepting God's extended time repentance.

Ezekiel 18:2 states "...The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?", whereby the Jews were defiantly claiming that God was unjust, eating sour grapes would only affect the eater AND NOT ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

Neither was the most appropriate way to try and make peace with God!

The fullness of God's time for the people remaining in Jerusalem had arrived.

First, consider these two New Testament teachings,

- 1 Ephesians 1:10, “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him”.

Paul reveals that God’s Will is that He WILL gather all things together as one, either to enter His Kingdom, or to be judged.

Therefore, there is now no ‘mystery’, and had nothing to do with anything being ‘eerie’, but a ‘sacred secret’ once mainly hidden from the Gentiles – but revealed to the Jewish Nation through the prophets.

Now ALL things are revealed by God through His Son’s Gospel and teaching.

- 2 Galatians 4:4, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”.

The old religions were dying; the old philosophies were empty and powerless to change men’s lives. Religious bankruptcy and spiritual hunger were everywhere.

Christ’s birth at Bethlehem was not an accident; it was an appointment with not only Judah, but also Israel; but more so, it was a confirmation to those who had been obedient to God’s Word through both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, that OBEDIENCE would bring RESTORATION.

The ‘fullness of time’ was when Roman civilization brought about peace and a road system throughout the then known world.

When the Greeks brought about an advanced stage of human development through a common language known as the lingua franca, a basic Italian language mixed with French, Greek, Arabic, and Spanish, yet understood by the inhabitants of those countries. When the Jews were proclaiming monotheism and a Messianic hope in the synagogues of the Mediterranean world.

The “Son” was not only Deity; He also became ‘_humanity’ by being born of a woman.

Thus Christ was born under the Law as a Jew; He lived and kept the Law as a Jew; He died as a man, but arose as deity with Divine blood in His Body, enabling Jew and Gentile to become one in Him. Jesus, in ‘the fullness of time’, DID NOT come to make us slaves – BUT SONS.

Under the Law, the Jews were mere children; but UNDER GRACE, the believer is a son of God with an adult standing in God’s family. Consider the following,

The Child	The Son
by regeneration entering the family under guardians cannot inherit.	by adoption a blood relative of the family the liberty of an adult an heir to the Father.

Nebuchadnezzar, provoked by Zedekiah's treachery, is now ready to destroy the vine, ruining both the city and kingdom, and cutting off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way.

Cut off close to the ground, the roots were left there. The immediate 'life-blood' – the young people – were either slain by the sword, or taken captive to Babylon.

Yet it was the king himself, who, by rebelling against the king of Babylon, had brought this destruction about.

In chapter 19:1, Ezekiel is told by God to take a lamentation for the princes of Israel; in chapter 19:14, Ezekiel writes, "...This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation".

God's Word is SURE, and CANNOT be changed.

A prophecy to the elders. 20:1–21:32.

Ezekiel is again approached by some of the elders of Israel. This prophecy is given in the seventh year of the captivity, about two years after Ezekiel's first prophetic statement, and about 12 months AFTER the visit of the elders in chapter 14, page 38).

The sermon in chapter 18 is to the people, and addressed their presumptuous reflections of God's Love and that His leniency would prevail.

Here, chapters 20–21, God lists His Blessings and desires for them in the past, and then draws their attention to their hypocritical enquiries after him, followed by their consistent rebelliousness.???????

1 God's blessings in Egypt, Israel's rebellion, 20:1–8

Again, Ezekiel does not make it clear as to whether the elders were those amongst the captives, or possible emissaries to try and broker a deal with Nebuchadnezzar.

It would not be difficult to think that they had come from Israel, not only from the king, but a lot of the people in the city as well, for a seven year siege would be making its presence felt.

With God listing their rebellions against His Blessings towards them, it is almost as though God is saying, 'I have eternity, and you only have a limited life-span, so when are you going to learn?'

Several interesting points are now made,

- a. God does not say that He is angry with them; but that He is, is made manifest in verse 3, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you".
- b. God now places the onus on Ezekiel, verse 4, "Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them?". At this point, we, the modern day people of God also have to apply this to our

lives,

- c. As an intercessor, would we plead for them?
- d. Why would we not be prepared to condemn their previous actions?
- e. We are the sons of God, why should we be ashamed to tell them of the judgements that will come from God?
- f. We are to warn (state) that they will suffer, as their fathers did, for their own abominations.

Theirs, and our abominations are sufficient for God to bring a judgement against us, but they are to be reminded of their father's abominations, that the righteousness of God may be manifested.

Let us, for a moment; look at the rebellious history between man and God's Commandments,

Man's creation	eating the forbidden fruit	eviction from the Garden, Genesis 3.
Man's sacrifice	offering the fruit of a cursed earth	murder, Genesis 4
Man's laws	following the flesh, not the conscience	drowning, Genesis 7
God's Promised blessings	looking to another country for food	captivity, Genesis 42
Released from captivity	complaining about the food	forty years in the desert, Exodus 16
Seven apostasies	idol worship	servitude and civil war, Judges 3-21
Demands for a king	monarchy and bondage to another power	1 Samuel 8 Malachi

Yet, throughout all this time, God chose the Israelites as a special people, being the seed of Jacob, and making Himself known to them personally, "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them", Exodus 6:2-3.

2 God's blessings in the Wilderness, Israel's rebellion, 20:9-13

Notice the promises expressed at this time by God,

- a. He chose them and us.
- b. He made Himself known to them and us in our Egypt.
- c. He made himself their God and our God in covenant.

d. He promised to remove them and us from our Egypt.

This is one of those ‘treasury’ sections of the Bible. God chose ‘them’ (Israelites) and ‘us’ (the modern day elected). What God did, He did for His Name’s sake.

Consider what Ezekiel wrote some 130 years earlier, “When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without”, Hosea 7:1. After the death of Solomon, the Nation of Israel had split into two – Israel and Judah.

God’s graciousness was to do well for Israel. God saw Israel as sick and wounded by a disease that was dangerous and malignant, and likely to be fatal, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment”, Isaiah 1:5–6.

What would God have done?

- a. He would have reformed them.
- b. He would have separated them from their sins.
- c. He would have purged out the corruptions that were among them.
- d. He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and restored to them their peace and prosperity.

The following equation now becomes a fact. If God would do that for Israel, then there is no reason why He would not have done the same for Judah, and there can be no reason why God would not do it for the people now.

If God cannot find a reason in people for His favours, God Himself will find one.

Therefore, the struggle, between a sinning Israel, who, by disobedience to God’s Laws were doing their best to annihilate themselves, and the never ending mercies of God, through which he endeavoured to save them through the messages of the prophets as a never ending lesson to the church today.

3. God’s blessings after the Wilderness, Israel’s rebellion, 20:14–26. Moses, in his first intercession, Exodus 32:11–14, interceded on

behalf of an estimated 2,323,200, that God's wrath be turned from the people, and that His- God's Name – would "...not be polluted and profaned among the heathen", verse 14.

Note also, that in verse 6 God "...lifted up his hand...", yet in verses 15 & 16 God "...lifted up his hand against them;". Why? For exactly the same reasons that He was doing so now, "Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it", Numbers 14:22-23.

By their contempt, the elders representing those in Jerusalem were exactly the same as those in the desert, who also despised God and His Mercy.

Now consider the following points,

- a. Where do we stand when we consider that mankind, through every age, has given God a substantial reason to make an end of mankind?
 - b. When we look at the corruptions of the visible church, we rightfully have every reason to fear its total extinction, yet, our strength remains in the fact whilst the world remains as is, and God will always have a church – remnant – in it.
 - c. If we, like those in the wilderness, or the temple in Jerusalem, will not acknowledge God as our Lord and ruler, we, like them, will be forced to acknowledge him as the Lord – our judge – when it is too late.
4. Their father's rebellion in Canaan; their rebellion in Jerusalem, 20:27-32.

God had made good his promise, "For when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them...". Ezekiel 20:28, even though in verse 27, God had reminded them that "...your fathers have blasphemed me...they also have trespassed a trespass against me".

Therefore, their fathers were no worse than they were, and had no more provoked God than what they were doing at that time.

The word 'provocation' here comes from the Hebrew word 'kas' (kah'-as), and means vexation – anger, angry, grief, indignation, provoking, brought about by a feeling of spite or wrath.

In our English language, the word provocation – in its fullness – means to stimulate or cause a strong or unwelcome reaction or

emotion) in someone by deliberately annoying, or inciting a person by arousing their anger.

Is it, then, time to look at ourselves?

It is here that we have possibly one of the greatest damning statements in the scriptures,

“Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah (literally a hill top) unto this day”

God told them that He knew exactly,

- a. Where they were worshipping.
- b. What they were worshipping.
- c. How they were worshipping.

And in the three thousand years since Ezekiel to the present, nothing has changed, God knows,

- a. Where we are worshipping.
- b. What we are worshipping.
- c. How we are worshipping.

So far in this chapter, we have read of five separate rebellions by Israel,

- a. In Egypt, verses 2–13.
- b. In the wilderness, verses 14–26.
- c. In both Canaan and in Jerusalem, verses 27–32.

Again, we must ask ourselves a question, “What do we find so inviting that we will leave God’s altars, where he requires our attendance, frequenting places as he has forbidden?”

5. A re-gathering and a future judgment 20:33–44.

This section starts with an oath that cannot be reversed, “As I live, saith the Lord God...”, verse 33.

Literally, no person, city, or nation would be able protect or save them.

“...surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you”.

God was Israel’s King. Had they continued to accept Him and His Rule, He would have ruled them with an enveloping love and tenderness, but they had not, and now He was going to rule with a stretched-out arm.

Thus the power that should have been their PROTECTION was now

the power of their CORRECTION.

In verse 39, "As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols", or to simplify the verse, I quote Elijah, "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word", 1 Kings 18:21.

PROPHECIES OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY.

Signs. 20:45–49.

As part of the sermons Ezekiel is to preach to the elders who have come before him, by using a parable of two forests.

Whilst it is not directly related to the earlier parts of chapter 20, it acts as a transition from chapter 20 to 21, and is a prophecy of extreme anger against Judah and Jerusalem.

The forest is to the south of where Ezekiel is, thus, when he is instructed to turn his face towards the south, verse 46; he would be looking directly towards both Judah and Jerusalem.

The use of the word 'forest' by God is also very interesting,

- 1 Judah and Jerusalem are called forests, whereas they should have been called orchards, but, they had become fruitless. Compare what Isaiah had to say, "Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest", Isaiah 32:15.
- 2 Those that should have been as the garden of the Lord, had become as a forest, overgrown with briars and thorns.

Thus, the fire prophesied in verse 47, is a fire kindled by God.

Note again what Isaiah had to say, "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it", Isaiah 30:33.

Although spoken against the Assyrian army one hundred years earlier, the fire was by God's BREATH, burning with great intensity. Compare the following scriptures,

- 1 "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven", Genesis 19:24.
- 2 "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup", Psalm 11:6.
- 3 "And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone", Ezekiel 38:22.
- 4 "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is

in their mouth”, Revelation 9:17–19.

Whilst all point to the following scriptures of what is to come, NONE compete with, or match the severity of what is to come in eternity,

- 1 “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone”, Revelation 19:20.
- 2 “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”, Revelation 20:10.
- 3 “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death”, Revelation 21:8.

Signs of the drawn sword. 21:1–7.

Ezekiel, at this time, is very plainly directed by God where to shoot this prophecy, it is towards,

- 1 Canaan the holy land,
- 2 Jerusalem the holy city,
- 3 The temple the holy house.

All three were ordained of God, for His word to raise up His people that His Glory should, and would, be manifested.

All three were to be impressive or worthy of respect above other places, but, when they – the Israelites – polluted them, the Word that God used to nourish them was turned against them.

What was fulfilled in these seven verses?

- 1 My sword shall cut off from Canaan, Jerusalem, the temple, the righteous and the wicked, 21:2–3.
“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”, Hebrews 4:12.
- 2 My unsheathed sword shall be against all for the north to the south, 21:4.
- 3 My sword will accomplish its work before it returns to Me, 21:5.
- 4 Because of My sword shall make every heart melt, 21:7, making,
 - a. All hands became feeble,
 - b. Men’s spirits become faint,
 - c. Men’s knees became weak,
- 5 It will happen, and it came to pass.

God had honoured Israel by supplying them with prophets, through whom He could speak to a Chosen People, but they had despised,

- 1 The Sender.
- 2 The Word,
- 3 The man used.

But now God has a man, Ezekiel, and God's hand is both on him, and protecting him, for,

- 1 That man, Ezekiel, is to be instructed by God.
- 2 That he should be able to instruct the people.

Now note the words in verse 3, –Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel!.

Let us, for just a few minutes consider those words,

“Behold, I am against thee, O land of.....(the continent we live on).

“Behold, I am against thee, O land of.....(the country we live in).

“Behold, I am against thee, O land of.....(the town we live in).

“Behold, I am against thee, O land of.....(the street we live in).

If then, God is with us, we do not have to fear those who might be against us, and if God is not with us, we have much to fear.

Continuing in verse 3, we read, “The sword in like manner shall cut off the righteous and the wicked”.

The righteous and the wicked are equally involved in the common calamities of any nation; the righteous because God moved them to another country, (where possibly some did die) but God could bring a remnant back to establish righteousness in the country, but the unrighteous were to be cut off completely from the land Israel.

Whilst the sword was able cut off both the righteous and the wicked, “Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him”, 2 Samuel 11:25.

The sharp sword, complete destruction. 21:8–17.

In the previous verses, Ezekiel stated how the sword had been withdrawn from its sheath, God, through Ezekiel, is bringing His Word into the open, and, as the sword would be on view from its sheath; God's Word is open – not hidden. The sword has been,

- 1 Sharpened by the wrath of God, that it may be used time and time again,
- 2 Polished by the Word of God, causing it to appear as a flaming sword, “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the

garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life”, Genesis 3:24 .

That the sword will kill and glitter illustrates that the delay of His Judgements have been but behind a veil, and the judgements will be severe.

In verse 10, it is defined even more clearly where the sword will strike, “...the rod of my son...”.

Moses was commanded by God to tell Pharaoh “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn”, Exodus 4:22.

Earlier in the study we read how God referred to the government of that people a rod, a strong rod, “And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches”, Ezekiel 19:11.

Thus God, in verse 10, is stating that because of sin, the ‘rod of his son’, is no greater than any other tree, and His Sword will despise them. Thus David, Psalm 2:9, “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel”, clearly defines the rod of The Son to be the sword that will break His son Israel.

The seriousness of these events is evident in verse 12, where the words “It shall be upon my people”, are uttered twice by the Lord.

The final three verses in this section demonstrate the gulf between holiness and sinfulness.

Verse 15 states that the sword is against their gates. All the gates they might intend to use against the sword of God are man-made, whether of wood or brass. The sword will smash and splinter the wood gate; the Voice of God will melt the brass.

Once the point is through the gate, it will point at them as sinners.

Their hearts will faint, and they will be unable to offer any resistance.

Without resistance they are ruined.

But why worry about that? In verse 16 it is clear that the sword has a commission with what we would call ‘an open ended warrant’. Consider then the verse looked at earlier on the previous page, “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life”, Genesis 3:24 . That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel, and it is as much alight today as the day God planted it east of the Garden of Eden.

In verse 9, the Lord said “A sword! A sword!”. In the norm of life, if a house is on fire, people yell and scream ‘Fire! fire!’, yet God uses the

word nine times in six of these verses, so why does man have to try and re-arrange the word of God? God was serious with His judgement and sentence upon Israel.

The sword at the crossroads. 21:18–27.

In this third message on the sword, Ezekiel sees the symbolic actions as God supernaturally guiding Nebuchadnezzar to Jerusalem to over-throw the city.

Whilst the scriptures tell us that Ezekiel was to mark out two roads (cross-roads) for the sword of the king of Babylon to take.

It is secular history that will give us the understanding.

When Jerusalem rebelled against Babylon in 588 BC, it was one of three cities or countries seeking independence. The other two were Tyre and Ammon.

Nebuchadnezzar led his forces north and west from Babylon along the Euphrates River. When he reached Riblah (north of Damascus in Syria) he had to decide which nation he would attack first. He could head due west toward the coast and attack Tyre, or he could go south along one of two 'highways', leading to Judah and Ammon.

Since Tyre would be the most difficult of the three cities to attack, Nebuchadnezzar decided to take the coastal highway and attack Judah and Jerusalem or to head down the Transjordanian highway and attack Ammon and Rabbah. Rabbah was the capital of Ammon and is identified with today's modern city of Amman in Jordan.

Meeting at Riblah, at the fork in the road, to decide which course of action to take, Nebuchadnezzar and his generals consulted their gods for advice.

Three methods were used to determine which course of action to take.

- 1 Casting lots with arrows. Casting lots with arrows was probably similar to today's practice of drawing straws, with the arrows – marked with the name of a city – placed in a quiver, the arrow drawn first was the one the gods indicated should be attacked.
- 2 Consulting his idols. The consulting of 'idols' involved the use of teraphim or household idols, possibly in an attempt get advice from the departed dead.
- 3 Examining the liver. The shape and markings of the liver of a sacrificed animal were studied by soothsayers to see if a proposed plan was favourable or not.

Whilst God was not in any of the above, God caused everything to indicate Jerusalem.

Jerusalem became the centre point of interest. The campaign opens with

the siege of Jerusalem. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege. Orders are given to provide everything necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; battering rams made ready, and forts built. O what pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another! But has anything changed since then?

Consider the following figures, all obtained from statements made during 2005 regarding the Iraqi war,

- 1 One day in Iraq is equivalent to half of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country of East Timor
- 2 One day in Iraq could feed all of the starving children in the world today almost four and a half times over.
- 3 One day in Iraq could vaccinate three-quarters of the children in Africa for measles and give millions a lifetime protection from the disease.
- 4 One day in Iraq could build 5,571 AIDS clinics in Africa.
- 5 One day in Iraq could provide 650,000 women in Africa living with HIV/AIDS anti-retro viral treatment for one year to extend their lives and improve the lives of their children.
- 6 One day in Iraq could provide one third of the aid needed for earthquake relief for the four million people affected in South Asia.

Let us consider once again what was said on page 75.

In verse 9, the Lord said "A sword! A sword!" In the norm of life, if a house is on fire, people yell and scream 'Fire! fire!', yet God uses the word nine times in six of these verses, so why does man have to try and re-arrange the word of God?

And today they produce new versions of the Bible, claiming it makes God's Word easier to understand!

Are people any better? We have the same traits happening today as in verses 23-24.

- 1 They have given very little attention to any warning of the coming judgment, preferring to regard any warning as a false prophecy instead of letting the Word of God move them to repentance.
- 2 Hearing that Nebuchadnezzar, by his divination is directed to Jerusalem, they again call it a false prophecy.
- 3 They have joined in a solemn league, and sworn oaths with the Egyptians to assist them should there be a battle.
- 4 They preferred to rely upon the weak assurances of the false prophets.
- 5 Are they safe because they are secure? There is no security when one,

- a. Treats God's Law with contempt.
- b. Treats the word of the Prophet as false.

Judgment on Ammon. 21:28–32.

Although this section is only five verses in length, it is possibly one of the most intriguing passages in Ezekiel.

- 1 Collectively, the name Ammonite was given to the descendants of the descendants of Ammon, the son of Lot and his youngest daughter's incestuous relationship with her father, Genesis 19:38. (His eldest daughter, also through an incestuous relationship with her father, Genesis 19:37, bore a son named Moab). Thus the tribal families are related by the incestuous relationships of their mothers.
- 2 From the very beginning of their history, Deuteronomy 2:16–20, (about 1423 BC), they were closely associated with the Moabites, Zephaniah 2:8, (624BC).
- 3 Both of these tribes hired Balaam to curse Israel Deuteronomy 23:4.
- 4 They inhabited the country east of the Jordan and north of Moab and the Dead Sea, from which they had expelled the Zamzummims or Zuzims Deuteronomy 2:20.
- 5 They are known as the Beni-ammi Genesis 19:38, Ammi or Ammon being worshipped as their chief god.
- 6 They were of Semitic origin, and closely related to the Hebrews in blood and language.
- 7 The origins of 'Semitic' are not entirely clear. It was first used when referring to a language family, mainly of largely Middle Eastern origins, and now called the Semitic languages.
- 8 This family includes the ancient and modern forms of Amharic (spoken in North Central Ethiopia, and the second largest Semitic language behind Arabic), Arabic, Aramaic, Akkadian, Ge'ez (Eritrea and northern Ethiopia), Hebrew, Phoenician, Maltese, Tigre and Tigrinya among others.
- 9 They showed no kindness to the Israelites when passing through their territory, and therefore they were prohibited from "...entering the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation", Deuteronomy 23:3.
- 10 Because of the apostasy in Israel, God ordained that Israel would become a servant of Eglon, king of Moab, Judges 3:13, (1372 BC).
- 11 In 1114 BC, Jephthah waged war against them, and took "...twenty cities... with a very great slaughter", Judges 11:33.
- 12 Saul defeated them in 1065 BC, 1 Samuel 11:11.
- 13 David also defeated them, taking their chief city, Rabbah, with a lot of spoil, and their allies the Syrians in 1006 BC, 2 Samuel 10:6–14.
- 14 One of Solomon's wives (Naamah) was an Ammonite. She was also the mother of Rehoboam, 1 Kings 14:31.

- 15 The national idol worshipped by these people was Molech or Milcom, at whose altar they offered human sacrifices, 1 Kings 11:5, 7. The high places built for this idol by Solomon, at the instigation of his Ammonite wives, were not destroyed till the time of Josiah, 2 Kings 23:13.
- 16 The prophets predicted fearful judgments against the Ammonites because of their hostility to Israel,
- a. Amos, (764 BC), One year before Isaiah was born), “Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead. that they might enlarge their border: But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah. and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind: And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD”, Amos 1:13–15
 - b. Zephaniah, (624 BC), “I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom. and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah. even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them”, Zephaniah 2:8–9..
 - c. Jeremiah 49:1–6 (599 BC, this was only about 8 years before Ezekiel pronounced God’s judgement upon the Ammonites in Jerusalem. “Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD. Howl, O Heshbon. for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me? Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth”, Jeremiah 49:1–6.

- d. Ezekiel, (591 BC). “The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity; Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations., Ezekiel 25:1–5, 10.

Note the following places within the scriptures,

- 1 Gilead – a plateau some 2000 feet high, which, at the time of Moses was lush pasture land. When Jacob fled from Laban, the two (Jacob and Laban) meet, and made an agreement not to meet again. In the division of Canaan, Gilead was given to the Reubenites.
- 2 Rabbah – the only city of the Ammonites to be named in the scriptures.
- 3 Sodom and Gomorrah – God delivered Lot from there, but it was in a cave near there that an incestuous relationship began between Lot and his daughters.
- 4 Heshbon – the area of land Reuben asked Moses for as it was fertile and suitable for breeding cattle.
- 5 Ai – Abraham pitched his tent between Ai and Bethel.

Having read the above, and the fact that Ammon and Jerusalem, even though they had been enemies for many hundreds of years, had made an alliance to fight Babylon together, really does demonstrate just how far Israel had walked from God.

Ezekiel’s fourth prophecy about the sword was directed against the Ammonites, who thought they had escaped Nebuchadnezzar’s attack. They had been rejoicing that Jerusalem would suffer in their place, even though they had organized the coup that caused the death of Gedaliah, Nebuchadnezzar’s appointed governor of the land, Jeremiah 40:13–41:10.

We also see from Jeremiah’s record of the events at this time, that human incestuousness quickly translates into spiritual incestuousness.

In Jeremiah 40:11–12, Judah's prospects had apparently started to brighten; with what appeared to be peace and stability returning to the land.

However, peace and stability were being built upon a bed of instability, for it literally a 'marriage of convenience', and it would only take a little time before instability broke through the veneer thin surface.

Both Judah and Ammon were vassals to Babylon, and BOTH had taken part in secret meetings in 593 BC to assess their prospects of a united rebellion against Babylon.

Thus the bed of 'incest' was the birthing place of iniquity.

The prophecy against Israel. Ezekiel 22:1–31.

Chapter 22 contains three separate – yet stand alone – prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem, showing the sins and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins.

1. The sins God had been watching, and was about to bring in His judgment, 22:1–16.

In these verses the prophet by a commission from Heaven sits as a judge upon the bench.

When we look at the following scriptures, we certainly find what appears to have been a precedent set that Ezekiel was to be used as – and seen as – a judge. Prophets were to be the immediate organs of God for the communication of his mind and will to men, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him", Deuteronomy 18:18–19.

He is the mouth by which God speaks to men, "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people", Isaiah 51:16,

and,

"Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth", Jeremiah 1:9, therefore, what the prophet says is not of man but of God.

Thus, the mental image that we now get is Jerusalem standing at the bar as a prisoner, but, as the saying goes, 'There is more', for when we read the next verse in Jeremiah, "See, I have this day set

thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant”, Jeremiah 1:9, where the prophets were set over other nations, than how much worse will it be for Jerusalem?

Ezekiel is to list ALL of Jerusalem’s sins. What are they?

- a. Murder: The city sheds blood, not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but in the midst of it, where, one would have hoped, that the law-keepers would be vigilant.
 - i. Thus thou hast become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, verse 4.
 - ii. The princes of Israel, who should have been the protectors of injured innocence, every one were to their power to shed blood, verse 6.
 - iii. There were those who carried tales to shed blood, verse 9.
 - iv. There were those who took gifts to shed blood, verse 12.
- b. Idolatry: She makes idols against herself to destroy herself, verse 3.
 - i. Thou hast defiled thyself in thy idols which thou hast made, verse 4.
 - ii. Those who did not make idols themselves were yet found guilty of eating upon the mountains, or high places, verse 9.
- c. Disobedience to parents, verse 7.
- d. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves they wronged the poor, verse 7.
Thou hast taken usury and increase...”, verse 12.
- e. Profaning the Sabbath and other holy things.
“Thou hast despised my holy things”,. verse 8.
- f. Uncleanliness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives men up, to punish them for their idolatry and profanation of holy things.
- g. Jerusalem had been famous for its purity, but now “...in the midst of thee they commit lewdness”, verse 9.
- h. Lewdness goes bare-faced – the “...discovery of the father’s nakedness”, verse 10.
They made nothing of committing lewdness with a “...neighbour’s wife”, with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, verse 11.
- i. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness, “Thou hast forgotten me”, verse 12.

And the false prophets said –Don’t worry about God, He’s coming and judging the next generation!

Ezekiel is now to pass judgement upon Jerusalem for these crimes.

- a. Jerusalem's iniquity has reached full capacity, Jerusalem was as an heir that had come of age, and was, in her own eyes, ready for her inheritance, yet note the Words of God as He listed their sins,
 - i. She has made her time to come, verse 3.
 - ii. She has caused her days to draw near, verse 4.
 - iii. She has come to her years of maturity, verse 4.
 - b. Jerusalem had exposed herself, and God was now ready to expose her,
 - i. I have made thee a reproach to the heathen, verse 4.
 - ii. To those who are near, and those afar off, verse 5. This would include actual eye-witnesses, and those further afield who would look and take notice of their downfall, and mock them.
 - c. Let Jerusalem know that God is displeased with her wickedness, and will witness against it.
I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain, verse 13.
 - d. Let Jerusalem know that her pride is no match for God's judgments.
I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it, verse 14.
 - e. Let Jerusalem know that if she must walk in the way of the heathen, she shall live in the midst.
I will scatter thee, verse 15.
 - f. Let her know that God has disowned her.
Thou shalt take thy inheritance in thyself, verse 16.
2. God sees their sins as resembling dross that is condemned to a fire, 22:17–22.

At the beginning of Ezekiel's first message, we saw him portrayed as a judge. In this message, the second, Jerusalem is portrayed as a furnace of affliction – a furnace of judgment that would melt those who remained.

Israel, as she had allowed herself to become, was worthless to God because of her sin, therefore she was to God as dross – the scum left from the purified contents in the furnace.

The compiler of Psalm 119 has inserted a very interesting verse, "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies", Psalm 119:119.

Whilst the majority of the Psalms are attributed to either David or Solomon, the only clue to the writer of this Psalm comes to us through a traditional belief is that Ezra collected writings from both David and Solomon, and used them to form Psalm 119. This is

supported by the fact that it confirms the writings of Ezekiel in the current chapters.

Let us look at the destruction of this degenerate house of Israel from the people's point of view.

They had come from the towns and villages of Israel, and gathered together in Jerusalem. Why? Because Jerusalem was looked upon as a city of refuge, not only because it was a strong city, but because it was the holy city.

Whilst Jerusalem was certainly known as 'The City of God', it had also become the stronghold of Satanism. It was a 'My will city', not a 'Thy Will city'.

Let us look at the destruction of this degenerate house of Israel from God's point of view.

When the House of Israel had been formed, it was a house with a 'head of gold'.

When the kingdom divided, the head of gold became 'arms of silver'.

At this point it had degenerated into metals of either little or no worth at all. Let us look at the metals God uses to describe them. The brass here denoted the impudence of their wickedness. In the original temple, brass had been used to cover or hide the material underneath. It is a soft, but pliable metal, easily moulded, generally shiny and pleasing to the eye. Tin, denoted a hypocritical profession of piety, which was no more than a thin veneer covering for their iniquity.

Iron denoted the cruel disposition of their false prophets.

Lead denoted dullness and stupidity, whilst remaining pliable towards evil thoughts, because of its weight, it was not easily moveable to good.

3. The sins of Israel, they would share the same punishment as Jerusalem, 22:23–31.

God commences His dialogue with some very damning words in verse 24, "...say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation".

It was no longer a 'refined land', God's previous callings had fallen on deaf ears, and now, during the time of refining Israel would "...not rained upon in the day of indignation., for the blessings would be in the refining.

Whilst Ezekiel was giving his message in Babylon, Jeremiah had already prophesied the same message in Israel, "Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen

were ashamed, they covered their heads”, Jeremiah 14:4, for their preaching, prophesying, and general living standards were full of cracks and holes – there were no Spiritual Rains to bring about a crop of revival.

Those, who should have been the spiritual leaders had become corrupted, and became the leaders in iniquity and all patterns of vice.

The prophets, who pretended to be God’s elected leaders, were not only deceivers, but DEVOURERS OF MEN’S SOULS, verse 25.

The priests, who were teachers by office, by not calling the false prophets to account, were as bad as the false prophets, verse 26.

The princes, who should have used their authority to remedy the situation, were as daring transgressors of the law as any, verse 27.

The people that had any power, instead of using it, were quite prepared to learn from the princes on how to extend their abuse, verse 29.

Note God’s final words at this time, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none”, Ezekiel 22:30.

Sin makes a gap in the hedge of our spiritual protection, permitting evil to enter our lives, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none”, Ezekiel 22:30. Our prime example here is Abraham, standing before God, and interceding for Sodom.

But God could not find one person who was prepared to intercede for them.

The parable of Aholah (Samaria) and Aholibah (Jerusalem). Ezekiel 23:1–49.

Chapter 23 is a summary of the Jewish Nations abandonment of a belief in God who had stated that He would be their God, and they would be His People, along with a total abandonment of His known principles, i.e. the Law, the Covenants, and the Messages from His prophets concerning their behaviour, and/or lack of respect.

One might well ask ‘Why does God keep re-iterating these things?’ The answer is simple, to warn people against a false and loose commitment towards God, and that others may fear, and not sin after the manner of Israel and Judah.

- 1 The apostasy of Israel and Samaria – and their ruin for it from God, 23:1–10.

The culprit of the sin named here are two women, representing two kingdoms – sister-kingdoms (Israel and Judah), and the daughters of one mother, having, at one time, been members of a large family.

Solomon's kingdom was large, and as with so many large families, a fight broke out between family members, each making a grab for what they could get. What they got was not exactly what they were looking for.

In the section 'Judgment on Ammon', page 77, paragraph 1, we read "Collectively, the name Ammonite was given to the descendants of the descendants of Ammon, the son of Lot and his youngest daughters incestuous relationship with her father, Genesis 19:38. (His eldest daughter, also through an incestuous relationship with her father, Genesis 19:37, bore a son named Moab).

Thus the tribal families are related by the incestuous relationships of their mothers.

"And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity", verse 3.

Their combined character then was that they were one in carnal desire. Thus the 'lover' – whoever had the price that was wanted – was embraced tightly, and held closely to the chest – heart, yet never fulfilling the desires of the heart.

To sum up, it was a fleshly lust of a fruit that tasted good at the time, yet it was a fruit of sinners that never went beyond infatuation, but was deep enough to bewitch them and alienate their minds from God.

It is worth noting the meanings of Aholah and Aholibah,

Aholah	the elder sister, ISRAEL, because she separated from the family, the greater sister, for the ten tribes went with her, her own tabernacle, because she chose her style of worship, and places of worship,
Aholibah	Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah, my tabernacle is in her.

Yet God says of them both, "They were mine", for they were the seed of Abraham "His friend," and of Jacob "His chosen", and both

were in covenant with God.

Therefore their apostasy was the alienation God's property, the basest form of ingratitude, and the most treacherous violation of a most sacred relationship.

"Aholah played the harlot when she was mine", verse 5. Although the ten tribes had deserted from the house of David, and Jeroboam, through setting up and establishing the golden calves, had sinned, and made Israel to sin, as long as they worshipped the God of Israel only, God did not totally cast them off.

She was as a vile adulteress, doting on her lovers, because they were young and handsome, captains and rulers, clothed with blue, admiring their military strength as if her own God could not be depended upon.

Not only was she extremely fond of the chosen men of Assyria, but also on their idols, and quite happy to defile herself with their idols.

Now God's convicting eye goes back even further.

1 "Neither left she her whoredoms which she brought from Egypt", verse 8.

There are two very damning statements – as in cutting off the flow of God's Love and Protection – found in the scriptures.

a. The calves set up in Dan and Beth-el by Jeroboam, answering to the Egyptian bull-formed idol Apis,

i. "And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made", 1 Kings 12:32.

ii. "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Bethel, and that were in Dan", 2 Kings 10:29.

iii. "And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods", 2 Chronicles 13:8.

b. Her alliances with Egypt politically are also meant,

i. "That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be

- your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion”, Isaiah 30:2–3.
- ii. “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!”, Isaiah 31:1.
 - iii. It is, therefore probably correct that the ten tribes recommenced using the Egyptian rites, that they might enlist the Egyptians against Judah, “And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD, With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem”, 2 Chronicles 12:2–4.

The remarkable analogy here, is that whilst God remembered their attachment to idol worship whilst in Egyptian bondage, they retained a love and respect towards Egypt’s idols – which put them in direct conflict with the commandant God had given to them through Moses, “After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the LORD your God”, Leviticus 18:3–4 – even though they remained in a constant fear of Egypt’s tyrants and task-masters!

Note the sequence of events at this time,

- 1 God gave her up to her lusts – she doted on the Assyrians.
- 2 God delivered her into the hands of her lovers – the neighbouring nations, whose idols she had conformed to.
- 3 This did not pass by the Assyrians, who quickly realized that she would turn to any who would listen to her.

They soon worked out the easiest way to attack her, leaving her ...naked and bare...carrying her sons and daughters into captivity, she was left showing her total immorality, her Godly boasting now displayed her as a sham, and she was son less.

- 2 The apostasy of Judah with Assyria, and the sentence passed on them, 23:11–35.

Hosea, some 120 years before these events, had prophesied

of these events.

- a. Of Israel and Judah, “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt”, Hosea 11:1.
- b. Of Judah, “Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth”, Hosea 4:15. Regrettably, as we shall shortly see this lasted not long.
- c. Of Israel, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints”, Hosea 11:12.

Through some unfortunate arrangements made between the houses of David and Ahab, the worship of Baal had infiltrated the kingdom of Judah. However, some of the latter Judean kings had set about some mini reformations.

In the reign of Manasseh, shortly after the destruction of Israel, Judah had become more corrupt than Israel in their love of idols.

Matters were made worse by the fact that instead of heeding the warning, they blamed God for the breach that was now appearing in Israel, and instead of regarding God with awe and respect, they removed themselves from God’s presence, and became an even greater stranger to Him.

Thus Jerusalem, that had been a faithful city, became a harlot, fulfilling the prophecy that had been given by Isaiah some 133 years earlier, “How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers”, Isaiah 1:21.

Jerusalem, God said,

- 1 Doted upon the Assyrians.
- 2 Adored their captains and rulers.

Their actions said,

- 1 Everything, including the gods, are better in the other country, thereby despising their own mother country, AND THE GOD OF THEIR FATHERS.
- 2 The religion was even better, and even more festive in the heathen temples.

Thus Jerusalem, as Aholibah, stands indicted by the serious crime of treason in that she is a false traitor to her sovereign Lord by,

- 1 Removing her allegiance from Him.
- 2 Refusing to accept His Government.
- 3 Entering into a confederacy with his enemies.

Note just how God metes out her punishment, He will use,

- 1 Those with whom she had signed a confederacy agreement with were now to become her executioners; and those who she had accepted as her leaders in sin will become the instruments of her punishment.

Verse 22, “Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side”.

“I will raise up thy lovers against thee., the very people – the Chaldeans – who she had admired so much that she yearned to possess an relationship with them.

Note, in verse 22 they are referred to as “...thy lovers...”, but in verse 28 they are referred to as “...those whom thou hatest...”.

It is quite common for sinful love to turn to hatred. Compare Amnon’s sinful love and desires towards his sister Tamar, 2 Samuel 13:1–32.

- 2 “Her enemies shall come against her on every side”, verse 22.

Here enemies at this time comprised of, “The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them”, verse 23.

Earlier, much earlier, they had looked so magnificent in their uniforms and riding on horses, now they all looked so formidable as they advanced to erase Jerusalem’s treachery and its absolute ruin. Whilst their base aim was to destroy Jerusalem, they would come with,

- a. A great deal of military force, verse. 24, chariots for speed, and wagons filled with provisions, arms and ammunition. Thus they were well armed.
- b. They will have justice on their side: “I will set judgment before them”, verse 24.

These armies would have both the right and the might for this attack, for the king of Judah – Zedekiah – had broken his agreement with the Babylonians, giving them the right to attack, whilst God, because Judah had rejected Him, would give the Babylonian army the might.

- 3 The particulars of the sentence that God had pronounced, were,
- a. That all Jerusalem claimed to own would be seized.
 - b. All that she had got by her labours would be taken.
 - c. Both city and country shall be impoverished and all the wealth of both taken away.
 - d. Her children shall go into captivity.
 - e. This shall be the end of Jerusalem, for she has never again attained her original glory.

In all this God will be justified, and they will be reformed. Forgetfulness of God is contempt of God. Men wander after idols, because they forget

God, and their obligations to him.

The joint wickedness – and the joint ruin of them both together, 23:36–49.

The first question that God asks at this time is “Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah together?” this is followed immediately by the command that Ezekiel is to declare their abominations.

With regard to the question “Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah together?” we have to consider two aspects,

- 1 Aholah, the ten tribes of ISRAEL, became splintered when they went into captivity, and a remnant gathered at Jerusalem, and wanted to retain own her style of worship, and places of worship,
- 2 Aholibah, Judah, a remnant who survived, wanted to retain what they had earlier – false prophets and idol worship,

leaving us with the situation that the two sisters had become one, thus the situation, rather than being better, is made worse since the union, for

- 1 Both are both guilty of adultery.
- 2 Both have broken their marriage–covenant with God.
- 3 Both had committed barbarous murders – sacrificing their children to Moloch.
- 4 Both had profaned the sacred things of God.
- 5 Both had defiled the sanctuary.
- 6 Both had profaned the Sabbath.
- 7 Both had sent to foreign embassies.
- 8 Both are referred to as ‘lewd women’.

Look at how the ‘sisters’ behaved.

- 1 Privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her, verse 40.
- 2 A great preparation was made for these foreign ministers, verse 40.
- 3 The rooms of state were beautified and made it look fresh, verse 41.
- 4 Yet God, by his prophets warned them against making these dangerous leagues with foreigners, verse 43.

Ezekiel was to warn them of coming judgements. Prophets were sent, and ignored. Israel has been in bondage to Gentile domination for years. Jesus came with His First Advent, and they rejected Him. Jesus will come again for His Second Advent, and they will not be able to reject Him again. Between the two Advents their enemies shall easily prevail, for God will give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled.

The judgments of God upon some are designed to teach others, and happy are those who receive instruction from them not to tread in the steps of sinners. Those who are teachable must know God is the Lord, and a God that judges in the earth.

Prophecy against Judah. Ezekiel 24:1–27

There are two separate sermons in this chapter; each speaking of the Jerusalem's approaching fate.

1. Parable of the boiling pot, 24:1–14.

Notice how God gives the captives in Babylon – through Ezekiel – a prophecy regarding Jerusalem.

“Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day”, verse 2.

Possibly the last report the captives had received was that Nebuchadnezzar was at Rabbah, deciding if he should attack the Ammonites, or head towards Jerusalem.

This is Ezekiel's final prophecy on the doom of Jerusalem. Because of the events importance, Ezekiel was to write down the EXACT day that God spoke to him.

“Again in the ninth year. in the tenth month. in the tenth day of the month. the word of the LORD came unto me, saying....”, verse 1. For those who might like to be a little more precise, it would have been 15th January, 588BC – a day of national and catastrophic calamity for Jerusalem.

It was a day that Ezekiel had been warning the people about for the previous four years.

It was a date that was so significant that it is mentioned by the author of 1 & 2 Kings, 2 Kings 25:1, AND by the Prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah 39:1 and 52:4.

The parable is about a cooking pot being filled with water and choice cuts of meat being boiled.

The false leaders and counsellors in chapter 11 used the cooking pot to plant an image of false security. The people accepted that analogy, and believed that the city – the cooking pot – would keep them safe.

Here, chapter 24, it is prophesied that the pot would be their place of destruction.

These verses conclude what we have been looking at from the beginning of the book.

From this point Ezekiel prophecies of other nations, until he hears of Jerusalem's destruction three years later, chapter 33:21.

2. No mourning, 24:15–19.

It is here that we read one of the saddest parts of Ezekiel's prophecy – the death of his wife.

God warned him of His intention to take his wife from him. There was no sinful reason, and since the writer of Hebrews proclaims –Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge., Hebrews 13:4, and therefore not sinful in ministers.

This, then surely means that we do not mourn for unrepentant sinners, but that we rejoice when the repentant (redeemed) sinner goes to be with the Lord.

PROPHECIES CONCERNING FOREIGN NATIONS.

So much of the previous twenty-four chapters has cross-related to the actions, teaching, and behavioural standards of the church today, that it should not come as any surprise that the next eight chapters point so directly to the Tribulation about to come.

In the following chapters, we shall read, and see, just how God dealt with those around the borders of Israel.

Neither should it be any surprise to find that God used Peter prophetically to write in his Epistle, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?", 1 Peter 4:17.

Ezekiel is not the first to be used by God to prophecy against these nations, Isaiah and Jeremiah had already prophesied of God's controversy with them, for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity.

Ezekiel, was a captive in Babylon, and knew very little of his own country, other than what God has told him.

He knew even less of the countries surrounding Israel.

Each is charged with either – or both – barbarous and insolent conduct towards Israel, God's chosen nation, by using the same methods they used against Israel against them. This also signalled to Israel, whilst their punishment had been severe, that God had not cast them away, but would retain them as His Own, and plead their cause.

Ammon. 25:1–7.

For their insolent and barbarous triumphs over Israel at the time of Israel's distress, verse 3.

When they rejoiced when the Temple was reduced to ashes by the Chaldeans, verse 3.

For rejoicing that the land of Israel was made desolate, the cities burnt, the country wasted, verse 3 Had rejoiced when the Chaldeans had – because they were not strong enough to do so – oppressed Judah. Why? Because they hated their religion and the divine oracles that God favoured them with.

The scenario is repeated again in verse 6, "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel". They regarded the actions of the Chaldeans as the actions of wild dogs

attacking a weaker animal.

The Ammonites should have been the last to rejoice in Jerusalem's ruin, for it was by just a narrow margin that they were not selected, 'The sword at the crossroads', page 80.

Yet, because of the hardness of their hearts, they refused to consider that they could be next, but it was to the Babylonian army that God used for His revenge. God had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, Ezekiel 21:28, and had they followed the actions of the Ninevites and repented, Jonah 3:5–10, their destruction would have been revoked; but now it is ratified.

It was the Arabians; about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem – who were the children of the east – came and took possession of the land AFTER the Chaldeans had made the country desolate. Shepherds' tents were their palaces, verse 4, eating and drinking the fruit and milk. They even made the royal city a stable for their cattle and camels, verse 5.

Moab and Seir (the Edomites). 25:8–15.

Seir was the name of the mountain range south of the Dead Sea marking the border of Edom.

What was the sin of both the Moabites and Seir? They triumphed at Israel's abandonment of her beliefs, and turning towards idol worship. This, then, amounted to a contemptuous attitude towards God and His People.

Because of this, God treated Moab with contempt by exposing Moab's glory, exposing its northern flank to attack, and destroying three towns, Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kiriathaim.

Beth Jeshimoth guarded the ascent to the Medeba Plateau from the Plains of Moab by the Jordan River, whilst Baal Meon and Kiriathaim were important fortresses on the Medeba Plateau.

Thus its frontier towns, the strength and guard of any country, would be demolished by the Chaldean forces.

Once again God uses the Arabians, who are shepherds, to have possession of a land, whose people were soldiers – men of war.

The Edomites, descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, and through whom there had been a line of enmity, had also rejoiced over the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem – as with the Moabites and Ammonites.

Note the wrath of God's judgement here. Their country shall be desolate from Teman, which lay in the south part of it; and they shall fall by the

sword unto Dedan. The country was to pay the price from the north to the south.

The Philistines. 25:15–17.

Their sin and their punishment are about the same of the Edomites. They claimed it was revenge, but was done with a vengeance that came from a heart that was still full of hatred, verse 15.

Whilst each country was punished by the same means, not one appears to have been alarmed at the success of the Chaldean army at that time.

Tyre. 26:1–28:19.

With the four previous nations, Ammon, Moab and Seir, the Edomites, and the Philistines, speedily dealt with, God now set Ezekiel's face towards Tyre.

What then, was the difference between Ammon, Moab and Seir, the Edomites, the Philistines and Tyre,

- 1 Ammon, Moab and Seir, the Edomites, the Philistines were small countries, and their fall made hardly any difference to world history.
- 2 Tyre was a place of vast trade, and known throughout the then known world.
- 3 Some 145 years earlier, God had caused Isaiah to write an entire chapter on the 'Burden of Tyre', Isaiah 23.
- 4 At this point, Ezekiel is commanded by God to write down much more, Ezekiel 26–28:19.

The destruction of Tyre, 26:1–14.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and in the first day of the month, verse 1, but it is not stated which month.

Because it is a prophetic statement, and not a recorded historical event, many think that it is the fourth month, the month Jerusalem was taken.

A further pointer to the fact that it is a prophetic statement and not a historical event is found in verse 2, where Ezekiel, a captive in Babylon,

- 1 Is far away from Jerusalem.
- 2 Is far away from Tyre.
- 3 Is told by God what Tyrus said against Jerusalem, "Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste", verse 2.

Whilst the Tyrians were not as spiteful and mischievous to the Jews as the Ammonites and Edomites, they were businessmen, and viewed the fall of Jerusalem as a way of enlarging their business potentials and

trading abilities.

Their dislike of Jerusalem was certainly not as an enemy, but a rival.

Thus the words God quotes Tyrus as saying, “Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste”, verse 2, was not a rejoicing of Jerusalem’s spiritual or moral degeneration, but a rejoicing that such a city was a great resort and a general rendezvous of many nations, their wealth and power would be quickly multiplied.

The words of Jesus now take on a greater significance when He was in the Temple, “...My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves”, Matthew 21:13. These words are also recorded in Mark 11:17 and Luke 19:46.

The ‘crime’ then, was not only using God’s City – Jerusalem – as a financial base, but to continue using the Temple as a market place.

God, in the past, had blessed the city of Tyre. It was both a pleasant and wealthy city, and there is certainly no reason to believe that it could not have remained so had she shewn some feeling of sympathy.

Therefore, God’s displeasure with their plans is manifested by the words “...Behold, I am against thee...”, verse 3.

Note what God tells Ezekiel at this time,

- 1 The invading army will be led by “...Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings...”, verse 7. Nebuchadnezzar had many tributary kings who not only served him, but were also dependant on him. He is that “...the head of gold...”, Daniel 2:32, led a vast army into this battle. It was an army of land forces only, making the attack and destruction more difficult.
- 2 Tyre would be reduced to stones and dust, a dust that would cover the city, verse 10. As the Israelite army destroyed the walls of Jericho, so also, with God’s assistance, the walls of Tyre would be broken down, verse 4.
- 3 The very thing they were looking to enlarge – their wealth – was to become the spoil of the conqueror, verse 12.
- 4 Tyre was to become desolate, and their enemy would carry away the stones and the timber, and dump them in the sea.

The nations lament Tyre’s desolation, 26:15–21.

In this section of the prophecy against Tyre, note how those around her wail and squeal.

Those dependent on Tyre for their trade and commerce, as they saw their champion crash, yet they would feel the after shock waves for a time to

come.

The governors and leaders of each area would have to forgo their luxuries, sitting around in a state of extreme apprehension, dismayed at the unbelievable fate of their chief benefactor.

Tyre had been a formidable power on the seas, but her demise would take her to the underworld never to rise again, verse 20. So emphatic on this point is God, that He re-iterates it again in chapter 27:26–35.

Closer to home, as it were, note the distress of Tyre's inhabitants, "...when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee...", verse 15.

They cried in vain, the conquerors would not have heeded their cries, for they would have died anyway, there was no second chance to rid them of their pain.

Lamentations for Tyre, 27:1–36.

Three times in this chapter, Tyre's boast is of its 'perfect beauty', verses 3, 4, and 11.

Satan, in chapter 28 is also referred to as a beautiful being, 12 and 15. Thus the people of Tyre and Satan shared one common aspect – beauty – IT WAS THEIR EGO LIFTER.

The pride and location of Tyre, verses 1–4.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, the year Jerusalem was taken, and in the first day of the month, but unfortunately it does not say which month.

Some think that it refers to the month in which Jerusalem was taken, which was the fourth month, and therefore the 'first month' of new beginnings, especially since the Tyrians were taking a lot of pleasure looking at a ruined Jerusalem.

At this particular point in the prophecy, Tyre still retains its prosperity, for that is the snare that God will judge her for, and the trap that she will be entangled in.

Consider these facts,

- 1 Tyre was a Gentile land.
- 2 Tyre was a trading country, and would, therefore, be well acquainted with Jerusalem and its Godly heritage.

Therefore, God, in verse 3, is able to say "...Thus saith the Lord GOD; O Tyrus..." a phrase that they would often have heard when trading in Jerusalem,

- 1 They had heard the Godly warnings, and prophetic words.
- 2 They had heard of the events happening in Jerusalem, for they were

rejoicing of the fulfilment of the prophetic words.

3 Yet they never appear to have applied it to their own living conditions.

Now the prophetic word is given to them, "...O Tyrus! thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty...", verse 3.

Tyre, relying on the fact that it is a well built city, rich in trade and money, on hearing the words "Thus saith the Lord GOD; O Tyrus", ignored them instead of trembling at what could, and did, come.

The Tyrian navy, 27:5–9.

It is believed that the Tyrians were the first to invent the art of navigation, or at least improved it to the point where a magnetic compass was all that could surpass their abilities.

For their fast ships of the fleet, they used,

1 Fir trees fetched from Senir for their boards and planks, verse 5.

2 Cedars from Lebanon for their masts, verse 5.

3 Oaks from Bashan for their oars, verse 6.

4 Ivory from Chittim for their seats, verse 6.

5 Fine and embroidered lined from Egypt for their sails, verse 7.

6 Their seamen came from Zidon and Arvad, verse 8.

Therefore, wherever a Tyrian ship went, it displayed the opulence of Tyre.

The Tyrian army, 27:10–11.

As with their navy, they had to fetch men from other countries to make up their army to protect them.

The Tyrian expertise was trade, but they still needed to know that they would be protected from any foreign attack.

Thus, for their foot army, they were prepared to place people from Persia, Lud, and Phut on their payroll.

For the city walls they used men from Arvad, but to guard their towers, they used men from Gammadim, known for the strength in their arms.

The Gammadim are generally believed to be a particular type of man from Arvad who were known for their daring, and also their swordsmanship.

A further point of interest here is that the armouries are stated to be furnished with shields and helmets – defensive arms – not with swords and spears – offensive arms.

Thus the enlisted armies were there for the sole purpose of protection. not for attack.

The merchants of Tyre, 27:12–36.

The following is a list of places and nations (22) who Tyre traded with,

Tarshish, verse 12	silver, iron, tin and lead,
Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, verse 13	the persons of men (slaves), brass instruments
Togarmah, verse 14	horses and horsemen and mules
Dedan (Rhodes), verse 15	ivory tusks and ebony
Syria, verse 16	purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and agate
Judah, verse 17	wheat, honey, and oil, and balm
Damascus, verse 18	wine and wool
Dan and Javan , verse 19	wrought iron, cassia (for perfumes), and calamus (herbs)
Dedan, verse 20	precious clothes for chariots
Arabia, and Kedar, verse 21	lambs, rams, and goats
Sheba and Raamah, verse 22	spices, precious stones, and gold
Haran, Canneh, and Eden, Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad	blue clothes, embroidered work, chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar

However, in this chapter there are a further 14 places mentions,

Lebanon Senir	verse 5	Gebal	verse 9
Bashan Chittim	verse 6	Gammadins Lud Persia Phut	verse 10
Egypt Elisha	verse 7	Helbon	verse 18
Arvad Zidon	verse 8		

Nowhere else in the Bible do we find such a gathering of place names, but it does appear to broaden the nations after the flood, Genesis 10.

A serious point now arises, when we look at the 'trading' table above,

Jesus, in His Revelation to John also cites the same commodities, “The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men”, Revelation 18:12–13.

The Temple at Jerusalem was destroyed for its lack of teaching, thus, we must ask “WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE THE CHURCH TODAY?”, for the same style of priesthood and teaching has not changed.

Furthermore, it is stated that Judah and the land of Israel were also merchants in Tyre. They,

- 1 Traded in wheat – a necessary commodity.
- 2 They traded in honey.
- 3 They traded in oil.

None of which could be called pandering to luxury.

- 1 They did not trade in the Bread of Life – God’s provisions.
- 2 They did not trade in honey – the sweetness of God’s Word.
- 3 They did not trade in oil – the balm of the Spirit.

Tyre had built itself up with its own greatness, and it would be a mighty fall. But note how poetically God paints the picture of this fall.

Tyre is described as a great ship richly laden, that is has run aground and split. Those driving the ship forward have been obedient to those who were calling the commands. Thus, it is the captains of the city, who, by their mismanagement, and a belief in their own importance have taken the city into a situation, where to sink in ruin is the only answer.

The two kings of Tyre, 28:1–19.

- 1 The earthly king of Tyre, 28:1–10.

In the previous chapter we read how God dealt with the city. At this point we see how God deals with the earthly ruler of the city.

“His heart was lifted up”,.. verse 2. He was conceited and opinionated at what he saw as his own sufficiency.

“I am a god...”, verse 2. He not only thought it in his heart, but stated it publicly.

‘I am wiser than Daniel., verse 3. Daniel was celebrated for his prayer life, Daniel 2:14–18, whilst the prince of Tyre is celebrated for his impudence.

Once again it is strangers – human, not angelic – who will bring about his downfall and destruction.

Why did God refer to them as strangers? The prince of Tyre would have been well aware of Nebuchadnezzar and his generals meeting Riblah, ‘The sword at the crossroads’, page 75, yet the Chaldeans are not mentioned in the chart of traders, page 100.

Because of their conceit and self-opinionated attitude, both the people and the prince were very much strangers to both God and the Chaldean army.

2 The angelic king of Tyre (Satan), 28:11–19.

God’s final word about Tyre through Ezekiel at this time is very interesting, for to use the word ‘king’ instead of ‘ruler’ points to the fact that God is speaking against a person to whom the prince has been obedient.

Yet another interesting point is that Ezekiel only refers to one king by name, King Jehoiachin, chapter 1:2.

Another, but also indicative of a major change in these two prophecies, is that in the first prophecy the ruler for claiming to be a god, whilst in the second prophecy to the king phrases are used that could never be applied to a mortal man.

The king,

Had been in the Garden of Eden, verse 13.

Had been an anointed cherub, verse 14.

Had been upon God’s holy mountain, verse 14.

Was sinless from the time he was CREATED. verse 15.

Verse 19, talking of the king, takes this a further step forward for us. “Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities...”.

One of the major elements of Satan’s lifestyle was his sin of dishonest trading.

The word used here for trade comes from the verb ‘rāal’ which means ‘the going from one to another’. Ezekiel uses the noun in speaking of Tyre’s commercial activities, Ezekiel 28:5).

Thus the PRINCE of Tyre became the KINGS vassal OPERATOR in Satan’s business at that time.

Many thousands died because of the prince’s decision, whilst the king looked elsewhere for another vassal operator.

Satan’s ultimate destiny will be the lake of fire, Revelation 21:10. The defeat and death of the prince of Tyre is also described as being consumed by fire, Ezekiel 28:18.

Zidon. 28:20–26.

Zidon was a city close to Tyre. Historically it was older than Tyre, but for its dependence, it relied on Tyre, and therefore rose, stood, and fell with Tyre.

The big question now arises –Why should it be judged here?.

The answer to that question is in the following points,

- 1 The Ionians were addicted to idolatry, and noted for their worship of Ashtoreth.
- 2 Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Zidon, bringing the worship of Baal into Israel, 1 Kings 16:31.

Although the section regarding Zidon is only seven verses, there is a lot packed into them. Verses 20–23 have been fulfilled. whilst verse 24–26 remain unfulfilled.

Zidon shared a border with Israel, a place where God was known and they would have known of God; instead they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols.

Because they had not sanctified God in the past, God would execute two wasting and depopulating judgments upon them.

1. The fulfilled word
 - a. "...against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee...", verse 22
 - b. "...and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her", verse 22
 - c. "For I will send into her pestilence...", verse 23
 - d. "...and blood into her streets...", verse 23
 - e. "...and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD", verse 23
 - f. "...and they shall know that I am the LORD", verse 23.
2. The unfulfilled word
 - a. "And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel..." verse 24
 - b. "...nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them...", verse 24
 - c. "...When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered...", verse 25
 - d. "...(I) shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen...", verse 25
 - e. "And they shall dwell safely therein..." verse 26.
 - f. "...they shall build houses...", verse 26.
 - g. "...they shall plant vineyards...", verse 26.
 - h. "...they shall dwell with confidence...", verse 26.

- i. "...and they shall know that I am the LORD", verse 26.

Egypt. 29:1–32:16.

Whereas three chapters recorded the events of Tyre, with Egypt it is four. Biblical and secular history clearly show that Egypt had formerly been a house of bondage to God's people, even to the extent that they —...they retained a love and respect towards Egypt's idols, even though they were in constant fear of Egypt's tyrants and task-masters., see page 88. More recently, with their impending doom becoming more obvious, it was time to stop the 'friendly correspondence', and remove Egypt from the friendship list!

Overall, the prophecies against Egypt are given on five separate dates,

- 1 The first in the tenth month of the 10th year of captivity, 29:1
- 2 The second in the 27th year of captivity, 29:17.
- 3 The third in the first month of the 11th year of captivity, 30:20.
- 4 The fourth in the third month of the 11th year of captivity, 31:1
- 5 The fifth in the 12th year of captivity, 32:1, and a final word in the 12th year of captivity, 32:17.

1. The immediate judgement, 29:1–16.

To understand the reason for the apparent anomaly with the dates above, and also as we go through this section, it is necessary to understand that the prophetic word is not always immediate, but often for a time in the future.

This first prophecy concerning Egypt in the book of Ezekiel bears out the above statement.

The prophecy was given "In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month...", 29:1; yet the prophecy given against Tyre was given "...in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month...", 'The pride and location of Tyre', page 81.

There are four possible reasons for this, and there is no reason to suspect that the Holy Spirit did not use a particular one,

- 1 The Holy Spirit has grouped the prophecies concerning the various nations,
- 2 The destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt,
- 3 Egypt was to be Nebuchadnezzar's reward for his service against Tyre.
- 4 The final possibility is that it was at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem, "Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from

Jerusalem”, Jeremiah 37:5.

At the immediate start of this prophecy, God directs His Words directly against “...Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt...”, verse 2.

It is interesting to note just how God describes Pharaoh,

- 1 A great dragon (crocodile) verse 3.
- 2 One that lies in the midst the rivers of Egypt, verse 3.
- 3 Who has stated that the rivers are mine, to do whatever I like, verse 3.

The river Nile (Nilus, verse 3) is famous for crocodiles. Thus God is equating the king of Egypt, with the Nile crocodile, the largest of the four species found in Africa.

Feared as a man-killer, its large stocky body only enhances its reputation.

At this point God commences to expose Pharaoh’s pride, “...he lies in the midst of his rivers”, verse 3, boasting of his wealth and pleasure; but he goes even further, claiming “...my river is my own....”.

In his arrogance, he further boasts that the river and everything in the country is his, forgetting that God blessed his forefathers through Joseph – Genesis 47:23 – and that it was also through God’s blessings to Egypt, through the springs that God had installed to feed the Nile, that the Nile would feed the land.

God’s decreed course for Pharaoh was to humble him. Pharaoh is the great dragon, verses 4–5, but God has a hook and a cord with which he can manage him, though none on earth can.

Having ‘dealt’ with Pharaoh, God now states His controversy with the Egyptian people. They have cheated his people by encouraging them to expect relief, and then deserting them in their time of need, “Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel”, verse 6.

Yet God had warned Israel, “Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him”, Isaiah 36:6.

Whilst God, in His Righteousness, allowed the Israelites to suffer because of their own folly, God would punish the Egyptians for their falsehood and treachery.

The prophecy of Egypt’s punishment at this time is in two parts,

- 1 Forty years of ruin and desolation, verses 8–12.

The ruin of Egypt will be their pride, for they claimed to have made what was a part of God's Creation, "The river is mine and I have made it...", verse 9, placing them in direct opposition to God.

The country shall be depopulated. "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste", verse 9.

The country would not be cultivated, nor the cities inhabited. "The land shall be utterly waste and desolate", verse 10; "...neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited for forty years", verse 11; "...make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are so...", verse 12. This refers to the war which the king of Babylon made upon them.

- 2 Restoration, but never as a world power, verses 13–16.

At the end of God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them "...return to the land of their habitation...", verse 14.

2. Nebuchadnezzar is to inherit Egypt as his wages, 29:17–21.

This is Ezekiel's second prophecy, and is a striking illustration of God is seen 'fine tuning' His Plans to bring about all things at their respective times.

It is given in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, dating it seventeen years AFTER the prophecy above, and some fifteen years AFTER the final prophecy against Egypt in Ezekiel 32:17. Therefore, let us look at some of the events that took place in the intervening years,

- 1 After the destruction of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquest of the Ammonites and Moabites and making himself master of their countries.

- 2 The siege of Tyre took thirteen years.

- 3 The Egyptians were at war with the Cyrenians and others, weakening and impoverishing their army and resources.

This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold by Jeremiah some sixteen years earlier, "And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array

himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. He shall break also the images of Bethshemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire”, Jeremiah 43:10–13.

This is God’s last prophecy through Ezekiel, and should, chronologically, have been placed last in the book. Nebuchadnezzar, prompted by an economic necessity turned to Egypt.

Nebuchadnezzar presumed that if he plundered Egypt, he would have sufficient wealth to pay his army, but God had already proclaimed that He would give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar. ‘I have given him Egypt as a reward for his efforts’.

3. The desolation of Egypt, 30:1–19.

This chapter is an extension of chapter 29, and includes that which God would do for Babylon to succeed.

The prophecy in this chapter is both very full, and frightening for the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as, in the general, very frightful. What can protect a provoking people when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

The churches today are money orientated, and man promotional. Look what happened when Solomon finished his prayer of dedication, “....the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD’S house”, 2 Chronicles 7:1–2.

Ezekiel saw the Glory of the Lord depart from the Temple, page 29. Yet today it is very hard to find a place of worship, where, when you walk in, you find and feel that you are immersed in the Glory of the Lord, for so many places of worship are places where it is ‘Look what we have done’.

The question is ‘What will become of the Pastors and Priests of today’s Church?’. Or ‘When will man learn?’

For Egypt it was a day when people cried as they realised what they had done with their lives. It was a day people shrieked as they perceived what was coming. It was a day that many had dreaded, and so few had admitted they deserved.

It would not only be Egypt but her neighbours and inmates would also fall with her.

It was to be from Africa on one side through to Asia on the other. It was to embroil Ethiopia and Libya, originally Cush and Phut, two of Ham’s sons “And the sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, and Phut,

and Canaan”, Genesis 10:6, the Lydians, known for their archery were also known to be confederates of Egypt, “Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow”, Jeremiah 46:9.

We have a saying, ‘Birds of a feather flock together’. Note the following in verse 6, Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; now those who were saying that they supported Egypt were no better, for their words were just as meaningless.

Consider these two points,

- 1 History, written by man is, according to many, infallible.
- 2 Biblical history, written by man and over sighted by the Holy Spirit is, according to many, unreliable.

Yet God does not forget, neither does He have to change what He has said; but man, according man’s wisdom, has to re-write both history and God’s Word.

With the above statements, let us look at the following words of prophecy AND REMEMBER THE EVENTS OF SOME 890 YEARS EARLIER,

- 1 “I will make the rivers dry...’, verse 12. God caused the SEA to go back – not just a river, Exodus 14:21
- 2 “I will cause their images to cease...”, verse 13. God caused plagues to be inflicted upon Egypt, but the Egyptians, through their gods, could not manifest the same plagues.

Egypt will be embarrassed – God will be glorified.

4. God aids Babylon in the war with Egypt, 30:20–26.

This is Ezekiel’s third prophecy against Egypt, and was given on the seventh day of the first month, and in the eleventh year. Thus, whilst the prophecy above was seventeen years after the first prophecy, this prophecy was given a little over three months after the first prophecy.

The first prophecy was for the time when Egypt went out to strengthen and save Israel from Babylonian army, “Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison. Then Pharaoh’s army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem”, Jeremiah 37:4–5.

The words ‘I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt’, verse 21, now become significant, for the fact that Egypt had failed in its attempt to aid Jerusalem certainly – in both a moral and political way – weakened of the power of Egypt.

But it was to get worse. The broken arm would not be treated to bring about a healing, for God would break the surviving arm, AND THEN BREAK THE BROKEN ARM AGAIN, verse 22.

With the Egyptians now retreating, the king of Babylon renewed his siege and strengthened carried his point.

Thus the pain Egypt was to suffer at this time would have been immense, her strength would have left her, and any ability she had to protect herself would have been completely removed.

YET EGYPT'S FULL JUDGEMENT WAS STILL TO COME.

5. The similarity of Egypt and Assyria, 31:1–18.

Let us, for a minute, build a resume for both Egypt and Assyria. In this resume, the over-riding factor appears to be 'Who's worried about God, we've got our own problems?' a factor that is prevalent in the world even today.

For several centuries the Assyrian Empire had dominated the ancient Near East, but was currently approaching the brink of collapse rapidly.

The capital city, Nineveh, best known for its revival after Jonah's visit in 767 BC. The Assyrian collapse at this time was brought about by the emerging power of Babylon.

Thus Babylon's rise and Assyria's collapse created a realignment of power throughout the area.

Although Egypt had feared a powerful Assyria, she now had a greater fear of the emerging power of Babylon.

Egypt, however, sensing an opportunity to enlarge its kingdom at the expense of Assyria's collapse tried to use a weakened Assyria as a buffer against Babylon's westward advances.

In 609 BC Pharaoh marched a large Egyptian army toward Haran to support the remaining Assyrian forces, and make a final attempt to retake their lost territory. In Judah, Josiah comprehending what the consequences would be for Judah if Egypt were successful, marched his army to stop the Egyptian advance. At the battle on the plain of Megiddo, Judah lost and Josiah was killed in battle, 2 Chronicles 35:20–24, and the Egyptian army continued towards Haran.

Whether Josiah's attack had an effect on the outcome, but Assyria failed in its bid to recapture the land, and it ceased to be a major force in history.

Two major events took place in 605 BC,

1 Jehoiakim switched allegiance to Babylon after the Battle of Carchemish and agreed to serve as a vassal king for Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kings 24:1.

2 Nabopolassar, the king of Babylon, died. Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon to claim the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar by appointing kings and taking hostages from his territories, assured a continued loyalty. It was also in this period that Daniel was taken captive, Daniel 1:1–6.

This is the fourth prophecy given by Ezekiel against Egypt in an allegorical form.

6. The allegory of Assyria as a cedar tree, 31:1–9.

This prophecy is dated just less than two months from the previous prophecy, addressing his message to Pharaoh king of Egypt and his multitudes, and to emphasise this point, Ezekiel ends the prophecy with the same words, verse 18.

To further make his point, Ezekiel suggests that perhaps Egypt should compare herself with Assyria. To the question ‘Why?’ consider the two following points,

1 Assyria had been the only Mesopotamian nation to invade Egypt. (In 633 BC Assyria had entered Egypt and destroyed the capital of Thebes, Nahum 3:8–10, and was the only nation that could be compared to Egypt.

2 Assyria had been destroyed by Babylon; the same nation Ezekiel said would enter Egypt and destroy it.

3 Assyria’s former exalted position and influence had far exceeded Egypt’s, and was, therefore, the perfect example to show Egypt the effects of God’s judgment.

7. The downfall of Assyria, 31:10–14.

God brought about Assyria’s downfall because of her pride. As with Judah, Ezekiel 16:56; Tyre Ezekiel 27:3: and Egypt, Ezekiel 30:6, – it would also happen to Babylon – God judged and punished nations because of their pride.

In this section we read that God judged Assyria by handing it over to Nebuchadnezzar who, following in his father’s footsteps, continued to expand the borders of Babylon at Assyria’s expense.

The Babylonians thought they were so powerful, so good and strong but it was God who had ordained Assyria’s fall, “And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts,

perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off”, Nahum 1:14–15.

Thus, the Assyrian army was crushed by Nebuchadnezzar’s army – one of the most ruthless of foreign nations – as though felled by an expert axe man.

8. The descent of Assyria into the grave, 31:15–18.

Having proclaimed Assyria’s death, verse 14, Ezekiel now expands the ramifications of the nations who had pinned so much hope and trust upon Assyria, verses 15–18, and faced with the fact that one so strong could be cut down so quickly and easily, they were left with the question ‘What hope have we?’, for ALL are equal in death. Thus, to Ezekiel’s question, “Which of the trees of Eden can be compared with you in splendour and majesty?”, verse 18, the answer now becomes obvious, the trees in the Garden of Eden were of the earth, Egypt, who was similar to Assyria, could only suffer the same fate – she too would be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth below.

Egypt’s end would be one of shame, her fall would be fatal, and to emphasise his point, Ezekiel re-quotes verse 2 of this chapter, “This is Pharaoh and all his multitudes...”.

Lamentations for Egypt, 32:1–32.

The final two prophecies on Egypt relate to Egypt’s judgement, and descent into Hell.

However, one greater point comes to the fore at this time. With so many prophecies given through Ezekiel to the nations of Ammon, Moab and Seir (the Edomites), the Philistines, Tyre, Zidon, Egypt, and Assyria, of their behaviour, and judgements, bringing about what can only be called a mini ‘Tribulation’, are we considering our behaviour, and the judgement it will bring in the near and forthcoming ‘TRIBULATION’?

1 The judgement of Egypt, 32:1–16.

Ezekiel is commanded to show the cause of his lamentation, Pharaoh has been a troubler of the nations, verse 2. He that has troubled others must expect to be troubled; for the Lord is righteous, “And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones”, Joshua 7:25.

- a. The multitude of Egypt shall be destroyed, whilst some will be selected to be made an example of, ALL CUT OFF.
- b. The pride of Egypt will be spoiled.
- c. The cattle of Egypt will be destroyed.

- d. The waters of Egypt, that used to flow briskly, shall now grow deep, and slow, and heavy.
 - e. The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth.
- 2 Egypt's descent into hell, 32:17–32
- This, then sixth prophecy, completes the burden of Egypt, leaving it, and its associates in the pit of destruction.
- The writing here is that of a funeral service of a criminal. The corpse of the kingdom is has been brought to the grave in readiness to be "...cast down into the pit...", verse 18. It could well be called an honourable funeral, placing her quality "...with the daughters of the famous nations...", in their burying-places and with the same ceremony.
- Note who is there with her,
 The Assyrian empire, verses 22–23,
 The kingdom of Persia, along with the king of Elam and his numerous armies, verses 24–25,
 Meshech and Tubal, the barbarous northern nations, verses 26–28.
 The Edomites, verse 29,
 The Zidonians, verse 30,
 All waiting to greet Pharaoh and the Egyptians, verses 31–32.

Having looked at the behaviour, judgement, and demise of the above, we must ask "What is the reason for it?"

Going to the beginning of our Bibles, we do not have to enter in very far before we find the reason, "And he (God) said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance", Genesis 15:13–14.

Thus God, at the very beginnings, KNEW that His People would be afflicted by Egypt, and DETERMINED that He would judge Egypt for OPPRESSING His People.

Some of this was fulfilled in the plagues, more was fulfilled in the prophecies of Ezekiel, more will be fulfilled in the Tribulation, but the finality of Egypt comes at the Great White Throne Judgement.

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM – GOG AND MAGOG

Prophecies of the restoration, Ezekiel 33–37.

Sermon of the watchman. 33:1–20.

Jerusalem had been captured by the Babylonian army, and Ezekiel is once again to direct what he is told towards Jerusalem.

This is the second call from God for Ezekiel to become a watchman. For the first, see ‘The fourth of four commissions’, Ezekiel 3:16–27, page 15. This time it is a different call, for the message deals with their individual accountability towards God’s restoration of Israel.

As a watchman to the house of Israel Ezekiel had given warnings to the house of Israel, and the nations surrounding her, but his duty from now on was to warn the sinners of the misery and danger that would come upon them because of their sin.

It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this: that they may flee from it, “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”, Matthew 3:7.

It is the minister’s work – for He is the watchman in the Church today – to warn.

If the watchman today neglects to preach the Word of God, and souls are lost, he – the watchman – is guilty of neglect.

God, through Ezekiel, now turns His attention to the people.

“Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?”, Ezekiel 33:10.

God, at this point, is not contending with the people, but endeavouring to show them that there is a way – they had to circumcise their hearts rather than industriously trying to justify themselves.

God, through Jeremiah, said, “And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death”, Jeremiah 21:18, thus God’s rules are quite clear – obedience or rejection, life or death.

Therefore, the question “...how should we then live?”, is not applicable at this time, yet God, because of the peoples uncircumcised hearts, answers in verses 12, 13, and 18, that the profession of religion, to hide the fact that the way of the world might become their way of life,

immediately annuls any profession of religion.

However, if those – where the way of the world was their way of life – become circumcised in their hearts, their sins shall be pardoned, and they will be justified and saved.

God now speaks to the remnant. 33:21–33.

Whilst this message was directed to the remnant who were still in Jerusalem, it was not to be given until AFTER Ezekiel had received an eye-witness account of what did happen.

As we look at this, it is very easy to see that man has not changed much over the years. What they had been through would have been humbling, and it is likely that the situation in Jerusalem remained threatening, yet almost immediately, God's message to Ezekiel is "They say, The land is given us for inheritance., verse 24.

Consider these next two points,

- 1 Their outright audacity on how to become an enemy of God continues in this one-off easy lesson. They compared themselves to Abraham, saying "We have Abraham to our father, he inherited the land, and lived many years, so the land is now ours by inheritance".
- 2 What they had not taken into account were the works of Abraham which proved his faith; whereas their works denied their faith.

In the section covering Chapters 12–24 of this study, we saw how God had endeavoured to humble them by letting them suffer one judgement after another, yet they never felt the terror, nor were they humbled.

Now God tells them quite plainly that because they will continue to persist in their wicked ways, they were not entitled to any share in the land.

Note the things that are still obvious to God,

- 1 You do not follow my commandments, "You eat with the blood" this was directly opposite to one of the commandments given to Noah and his sons immediately after the Flood, Genesis 9:4, verse 25.
- 2 You still convene with idols, a covenant-breaking sin, verse 25.
- 3 You commit murder, verse 25.
- 4 You confide in your own strength, and do not rely on God, verse 26.
- 5 Your works are abominable, verse 26.
- 6 You defile your neighbour's wife, verse 26.

Thus, is it surprising that at the end of verses 25 and 26, the same question appears, "...and shall you possess the land?".

God, in an attempt to bring a reverential fear into their lives, then proceeded to let them know of the future judgements He has in store for

them. God's opening words here are awesome,

- 1 Those that are in the cities shall fall by the sword, verse 27.
- 2 Those that are in the open field shall be devoured by wild beasts, verse 27.
- 3 Those that are in the forts and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence, verse 27.
- 4 The whole land shall be most desolate, verse 28.
- 5 The pomp of her strength shall be made to cease, verse 28.
- 6 The mountains of Israel shall be desolate, verse 28

But good news follows, –Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have made the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed., verse 29.

In the final verses of this chapter God turns His attention from the Jews in Israel to the captive Jews in Babylon.

These Jews, were a memorable example – and a continuous reminder – of God's sparing mercy, yet they had not returned to the Lord, preferring instead to,

- 1 Talk about the messenger, verse 30.
- 2 Show a form of religion and devotion by going to Ezekiel to see what God might be saying, verse 30.
- 3 Listen to what was said, and then not be obedient to what God commanded, verses 31–32.

Thus hypocrisy was the order of the day!

Prophecy against the pastors. 34:1–10.

In this chapter the shepherds of Israel, the rulers of both the church and state, are charged with aiding and abetting the sin, and therefore an accessory to the ruin of Israel, through neglecting to do their duty according to their calling.

Who, then, were the shepherds of Israel? They were the,

- 1 The kings, both of whom were in Babylonian captivity,
- 2 Princes,
- 3 Magistrates,
- 4 The priests and Levites,
- 5 The Sanhedrin or council of state,
- 6 Whoever had authority governing the direction of public affairs.

God had every right to say something to the shepherds, for they had been placed in their office by Him, and were, therefore, accountable to him.

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth”, Psalm 80:1.

There is only one shepherd who has dwelt between the cherubims, “The

LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want”, Psalm 23:1.

Regrettably, a lot of what follows is still the norm even today,

- 1 They fed their own desires, verse 2.
- 2 Had not fed the flock with God’s Word, verse 3.
- 3 Have not protected the weak, verse 4.
- 4 Have not healed the sick, verse 4.
- 5 Have not sought the lost, verse 4.
- 6 They had scattered the flock, verse 5.

As much as there was a six-fold condemnation, there would also be a five-fold judgement,

- 1 They fed their own desires; – everything was done to their own advancement, verse 8.
- 2 Had not fed the flock – they ceased to feed them – verse 10.
- 3 Have not protected the weak – the weak became a prey for the predators, verse 8.
- 4 Have not sought the lost – they did not go and look for the lost, verse 8.
- 5 They had scattered the flock -- there was no shepherd, verse 8.

One could well wonder, when comparing this section – verses 7–10 – with our Lord’s words in Matthew 23:15–33, what the difference might have been between Ezekiel’s day, and the present time?

They had a commission from God to feed and protect the flock. They made use of God’s Name in all that they did. **AND THEY EXPECTED GOD TO STAND BY THEM, AND PROTECT THEM.**

God’s answer was far from what they wanted to hear, it was a resounding ‘NO’, for God was against them.

For God’s people today, the command is “...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”, Matthew 28:18–20.

However, we also need to understand that as much as it is our job to gain souls for the kingdom, **IT IS ALSO OUR JOB TO FEED THEM.**

Note especially in these verses, Ezekiel 34:7–10, just how concerned God is for the flock. If God has got to minister to those we have not ministered to, and then when we come face to face with Him, we are going to have some very awkward questions to answer, and will, if we are

not extra careful, be treated as the priests were in Ezekiel's day.

The restoration of the flock. 34:11–16.

God will gather His flock together, it is a stated fact by His Son, and recorded in His Word, “And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats”, Matthew 25:32.

In the letter to the Church at Pergamos, John records the Words of Jesus “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth”, Revelation 2:13.

Thus the words, “...I will both search my sheep and seek them out”, verse 11; and “As a shepherd seeketh...”, verse 12, God's Promise is that He will find them and “...bring them to their own lands...”, verse 13.

Therefore, God, by His Grace, will call them, and by His protective care, He will not only remove the problems that would afflict them, but also open the door for them to enter in.

The false pastors will be removed. 34:17–22.

Ezekiel is now commanded to speak to the flock. No shepherd shouts at the sheep – they will scatter. Thus Ezekiel is to speak in a sympathetic manner, to dispel any doubts of God showing them mercy.

Mary, in receiving the message of her coming pregnancy, and of her coming child, Gabriel states, “He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away”, Luke 1:53.

Matthew quotes Jesus, “And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”, Matthew 25:32–34.

Therefore, what Ezekiel is saying is not a new thing, for the concept had been in place since the beginning.

The kingdom of David to be restored. 34:23–31.

At this point, Ezekiel is directed by God to name King David as the future shepherd of Israel, this is only some 250 years AFTER the death of David. Thus the history of David, and his accomplishments, would have

been well known to those who had remained in Jerusalem.

So much can be written about this one man, his life spanning a spectrum from his warrior aspect, through to his religious, moral and social codes were always foremost, yet all governed and driven by his inner drive of a personal relationship with God.

We know, both historically and Biblically, that the story of Israel is of a small country literally sandwiched between the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia, which at certain times was ruled by the Assyrians, Babylonians or Persians.

From their time of entry into the Promised Land, and even for a short period after his death, Jerusalem has always been an unconquered non-Jewish city in the heart of a Jewish country.

Therefore David is very closely related to the city of Jerusalem.

As our Lord established David, verse 23; so also The Father established the Son.

As the Lord will raise David up, verse 29; so also The Father will raise up the Son.

Note also what is said in the Psalms (a religious song or hymn) regarding Jerusalem,

1061 BC.	After the Philistines returned the Ark.	“Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee”	Psalms 68:29
1004 BC.	After David’s dalliance with Bathsheba, but immediately prior to the death of the child.	“Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem”	Psalms 51:18
992 BC.	David reproached by Joab for mourning Absalom, when it was a victory for the Lord.	“Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee”	Psalms 122:2, 3, & 6
976 BC.	The completion of Solomon’s temple.	“The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life”	Psalms 128:5

976 BC.	976 BC. The Ark taken to the Temple.	“Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD”	Psalm 135:21
586 BC.	At the sixth deportation.	“O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps”, Psalm 79:1. “Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them”, Psalm 79:3.	Psalm 79:1. & Psalm 79:3
550 BC.	A Psalm of the captivity.	“If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof”	Psalm 137:5–7
539 BC.	The people challenged by Ezra to build the Temple.	”To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem”	Psalm 102:21
535 BC.	The Samaritans interfere with the rebuilding of the Temple.	“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever”	Psalm 125:2
516 BC.	Dedication of the Temple, and Passover celebration.	“In the courts of the LORD’S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD”	Psalm 116:19

444 BC.	The dedication of the wall.	“The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel” “Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion”	Psalm 147:2. & Psalm 147:12
---------	-----------------------------	--	-----------------------------------

Thus David, a shepherd and one after God’s own heart, is to be set as a prince to his King upon the holy hill of Zion, verse 24.

“I will make with them a covenant of peace...”, verse 25 is the central core of the covenant of grace and peace, verse 25.

It would be very hard for us to even try and imagine just how much comfort these words would have give t the remnant in Jerusalem.

We are the sheep of this good Shepherd.

We are fed in his pastures.

We are being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

The prophecy against Edom. 35:1–15.

In the previous chapter, we read how Ezekiel was prophesying an advanced time – the Coming of the Messiah – that He (God) would set up His Kingdom in the world.

1. The cause of the judgement, 1–10.

If the words ‘Moab and Seir’ seem familiar, do not worry, for when we looked them before, they came together in one of the threatenings, ‘Moab and Seir (the Edomites)’, 25:8–15, page 95.

This time, however, Mount Seir is mentioned by itself, and is convicted and condemned by itself.

What then, is the cause of the present controversy? “Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end”, verse 5.

To clarify this point even more, we need to go back much further in Biblical History.

The controversy had been spawned between two brothers, where the basic fundamentals were a birthright and a meal, Genesis 25:29–34; followed by a stolen blessing, Genesis 27.

Some twenty–two years later the brothers became reconciled, yet between then and their deaths, there are no further recorded quarrels.

It is also a well known fact that children are more likely to imitate the

vices of their parents, rather than the virtues of their parents. Thus, whilst the brothers were able to accept the reconciliation, the future generations of the two were happy to accept – and follow – a life of perpetual hatred.

Furthermore, following man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, God placed enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, Genesis 3:15, an enmity that will continue until Satan is locked up for eternity. The cause of this judgement then is wrapped up in one word – UNFORGIVENESS.

2. The judgement, 11–15.

Note the three major passions the Edomites display against Jerusalem,

Anger.

Envy.

Hatred.

Siding with the Babylonians, and encouraging them to reduce Jerusalem to dust. They wanted to triumph in Jerusalem's ruin, for they themselves – the Edomites – were no match against the Chaldean army, but they did have a great desire to enter Israel and possess the country.

There was one major flaw in their plans – they did not seek God to find out what His Plans might be. In verse 13 they boasted against God. In verse 14 God did not boast, He stated a fact.

It was a national sin, and the punishment was to match – a national desolation.

A prophecy against the mountains of Israel. 36:1–15.

Israel, like England, does have a mountain range running from the north to the south, and as with the Pennine Chain in England, is known as the back-bone or spine.

In Israel, the mountain range extends from Jezreel in the north to the south of Hebron. Many of the ancient cities such as Bethlehem, Hebron, and Shechem sit on top of this range with Jerusalem being some 800 metres above sea level.

So important are these mountains, that God does not give them a serious mention until this point,

Why here, one might ask. The answer comes in three parts,

- 1 The first part of the prophecy relates to Israel being taunted by her enemies – the Great Tribulation.
- 2 The second part of the prophecy relates to Israel's restoration, the Millennial Period.

3 The Book of Ezekiel closes with God's Words on the 'The Millennial Temple' section, Chapters 40–48.

Consider for a minute the twenty-one verses concerning 'The Mountains of Israel',

"Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places", Ezekiel 6:2–3.

"In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell", Ezekiel 17:23.

"And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman", Ezekiel 18:6.

"That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife", Ezekiel 18:15.

"And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel", Ezekiel 19:9.

"For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things", Ezekiel 20:40.

"For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through", Ezekiel 33:28.

"And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country, I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel", Ezekiel 34:13–14.

“And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume”, Ezekiel 35:12.

“Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD”, Ezekiel 36:1.

“Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about”, Ezekiel 36:4.

“Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen”, Ezekiel 36:6.

“But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come”, Ezekiel 36:8.

“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all”, Ezekiel 37:22.

“After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them”, Ezekiel 38:8.

“And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel”, Ezekiel 39:2.

“Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured”, Ezekiel 39:4.

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every

feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood”, Ezekiel 39:17.

“In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south”, Ezekiel 40:2.

All in twenty-one verses.

The mountains in each of the Scriptures above represent,

- 1 A problem area in the Israelites way of life ,
- 2 A threatening of an aggressor,

thus each ‘mountain’ is not a geographical feature, but a life style event.

Much has happened over the centuries regarding these mountains – and much would appear to be forthcoming on the relatively near future.

One factor – GOD – however, was never taken into consideration in the past, and is unlikely to be considered in the future, not one mountain has been moved, leaving an undeniable testimony that the land was given by God to the Israelites, who remain, even today, its rightful inhabitants.

Following the four reasons looked at above; there is yet one further point that must be understood.

These hills – mountains – become more personalised when taken in context with Jacob’s prophecy given to Joseph, “The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren”, Genesis 49:26.

Therefore, it can now be seen that there is a vast difference between Israel and her heathen neighbours – Israel has a covenant relationship with God, ensuring a restoration after chastisement; thus any hope the heathen may have had of possessing any of Israel’s inheritance must fail, for they have no covenant relationship with God.

There are now four points that need to be considered,

- 1 If this new state is to be imposed upon the Jewish Nation, who is going to implement it?

The IDF with its 10,000 personnel have already signed a petition that they would refuse to forcibly move any Jews from the settlements. This would then involve the necessity a very large ‘peace-keeping’ force.

2 Both Europe and America have offered trade deals to both sides in an attempt to establish two states.

If the Arabs are given this land, then whoever aids, decrees, and abets the deal will be transferring the very land that God is speaking about through Ezekiel.

3 Two further items now become very interesting,

a. There have been many predictions that if this happens, God will bring about a massive earthquake,

b. In 2007, the Heads of Israeli disaster response team were not considering how they would respond to a terrorist strike, but were planning, with all haste, EXPECTED MASSIVE EARTHQUAKES! From many Christians, including senior Messianic Jews, the feeling is that if the Americans are involved in any way, THEN RUN FOR COVER AS DIVINE JUDGMENT WILL FOLLOW CLOSELY BEHIND.

(This information has been gathered from known sources on the Net).

Edom had slandered Israel because of Israel's relational connection with God, intimating that God would be unable to save them, yet what was happening was exactly what God had forewarned the nation what would happen, "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee", Deuteronomy 28:37, yet nearly eight hundred and thirty years later Jeremiah was to prophecy, "And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them", Jeremiah 24:9.

The difference between the two statements. In Deuteronomy God said He would lead, but in Jeremiah God stated He would drive them out.

The land of Israel had become both a prey and derision to the heathen that were round about, verse 4.

Ezekiel was preaching a message of restoration to a people who had no desire to hear the truth.

So many of the churches today permit Satan to enter into 'their divine worship time'. How does one recognise this? Children race about the church. Adults sit there smiling benevolently at the children. Teens and adults communicate with one another via the mobile phone. Adults walk out to have a quick smoke.

The arch-enemy of the church will use any reason he can, and the hierarchy of the church make no attempt to stop him.

A prophecy of Israel's restoration. 36:16-38.

Before spending any time on their future restoration, Ezekiel reminded them of what they had come out from ‘When they – Israel – were in the land they defiled it by their conduct and actions...’ How had they defiled the land? By bloodshed and idolatry, cp Ezekiel 33:25, and after God had scattered them, what did they do? Profaned God’s Holy Name.

In verses 22–23 God states that the nations surrounding them have been watching the Sovereignty of God through the actions of Israel, but the Israelites had given them no reason to believe in the God of the Israelites.

Therefore the basic value God could find and use was for the sake of His Name. Why? Because the people had never promoted God as being central in their lives.

God had demonstrated His impartial justice when He punished Israel, now He was about to display His grace and faithfulness.

In verses 24–32 the sprinkling of water was not related to the current act and rite of water baptism, the sprinkling of water in the Old Testament times was purely an act of being cleansed from a ceremonial defilement. Earlier in this chapter, God likened Israel’s sin to the ceremonial impurity of menstruation, verse 17, and her cleansing was now compared to the ceremonial act of purification, “And whosoever toucheth her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even. And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even”, Leviticus 15:21–22.

When Israel is restored, the land will become as the Garden of Eden.

The valley of dry bones. 37:1–28.

Following the threats and the prophetic decrees against Jerusalem and Judah, followed by the Promised Restoration, this is one of the most graphic, yet picturesque chapters in the Bible.

1. The vision, 1–14.

This is a glorious picture of a resurrection of death back to life, yet so contrary to the principles of nature.

The resurrection of a soul from eternal death to a life of righteousness, by the use of dead bones, bleached by the sun, and any flesh removed by the scavengers of the area, is all done by Divine Power through the natural life of one man.

Let us consider the following points,

a. By a divine power Ezekiel was carried out and set in the midst of a valley, verse 1.

- b. Could the valley here, and the valley spoken of in chapter 3:22 be one and the same?

For the Hebrew word translates either 'valley' or 'plain'.

Now consider the following,

- a. Chapter 3:22 was the start of Ezekiel's ministry, (593 BC)
- b. Chapter 37:1 takes place immediately after all the judgements have been prophesied, (580 BC),
- c. Chapter 37:1 is located by the Holy Spirit immediately after the Promise of a Restoration has been given.

That the Jews in Babylon had become spiritually dead, and as dry bones, cannot be denied, but whilst the bones of Gog and Magog would be buried, chapter 39:12 and 15 – for their destruction is final – the bones of Israel remained in the open valley, for under the Covenant, there was hope for them.

The bones of the body are as a 'fence' to the two most important areas of the human body – the chest with the heart and lungs, the very organ God used to start life in man, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul", Genesis 2:7, but, because man had lost his faith in God, he had become dead and defenceless.

The Israelites in Babylon were so spiritually dead, that they believed Israel had died in the flames of the Babylonian attack.

This remnant was pining away, and were becoming as unburied skeletons, yet the only way these bones could – and would – become life was by prophecy and prayer, at which point the 'spirit of life entered into their habitation'.

Consider now these points,

- a. The reviving of the dry bones could only point to the fact that it was a national restoration.
- b. In verse 12, God states, "I will open your graves...", thus God's intention was also that they would return to the land He had given them, making the house of Israel as one again.
- c. The vision very clearly demonstrates that man is to rely on God's Power, not outward circumstances.
- d. Finally, when God restores Israel nationally, He will renew them spiritually, for the breath of life imparted to the corpses represented the giving of the Holy Spirit, promised in Ezekiel 36:24.

The Israelites currently in Palestine have not fulfilled this prophecy,

but it will be fulfilled when God re-gathers believing Israelites to the land, and the Lord returns to establish His kingdom, “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”, Matthew 24:30–31.

2. The two sticks made one, 37:15–28.

To understand the meaning of the two sticks, we need to understand relationship between Ephraim and Judah.

Following the ten tribes (Ephraim) desertion from the house of David under Jeroboam, feudal outbreaks and animosities had been the order of the day between the two kingdoms.

Some 130 years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied, “The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them”, Isaiah 11:13–14.

Here, in Ezekiel verse 14, Ezekiel is told that there would be a reunification of the two kingdoms, by using two sticks as an example.

The people of the two kingdoms would have found this to be so unlikely, that God commanded Ezekiel to take two stick, labelling one Judah, and the other Ephraim, that when placed in one hand, they would when displayed, have become one.

Thus Ezekiel was able to tell the people who asked the meaning that God, and no other, would bring Ephraim and Judah back as ONE, as they had been under the kingship and rule of David, but this time under the rule and kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ, who their children, in a time to come, would crucify.

The Apostle Paul; wrote some 640 years later, .”For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace”, Ephesians 2:14–15.

This then, is one of those instances where God has orchestrated everything to HIS TIME FRAME, using three separate people to confirm a Word of God that is still yet to be fulfilled.

Armageddon and the Great White Throne Judgement. 38:1–39:29.

This is another of those incidents in the Scriptures where the Old Testament prophet has not been made aware of the time frame of the ‘Suffering Messiah’ and the ‘Victorious Messiah’.

1. Gog to be driven back, 1–13.

It would appear that Gog is the chief or king, and Magog the kingdom area, giving us the possibility of two equations,

- 1 Gog and Magog are like Pharaoh and the Egyptians, or,
- 2 Ahasuerus and his 127 provinces, each governed by a prince, Esther 1:1.

Either is totally acceptable, for with the names supplied, the area from Russia through to Syria, Iraq, and Iran is covered.

Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that God is against him, “Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal”, verses 2–3.

Leaving Ezekiel for a minute, we find that Meshech and Tubal are the sons of Japheth, “The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras”, Genesis 10:2, and are the founders of the nations from which the Scythians descended, and have since become the people of Northern Europe.

Note, God does not only see those that are now the enemies of his church, but He sets himself against them, and lets them know by his word that he is against them.

Now consider the confusion that God places in the hearts of His enemies. They do not know God, but from what they have been told, God knows them.

He is,

- 1 Going to turn him back, verse 4.
- 2 Going to put hooks into his jaws, verse 4.
- 3 Going to, from the country they despised, bring for their army and their horseman, verse 4.

2. God’s purpose, 38:14–23.

Whilst this is very much a re-iteration of the first part of the chapter, what we need to understand is that because God is re-iterating what

He said earlier, we need to take extra care and apply extra attention to what has been said, and note that it also opens up some extra pointers for us.

Consider the following points,

- 1 The attackers would come with one intent – a desire to hurt the inhabitants of Israel. They would also come in such vast numbers, to bring about a natural fear among the Israelis. It is interesting to note God’s Words in verse 15, “And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army”.

Consider the following applications to this verse,

- a. Gog will come from the north. Syria – one of the most vehement anti Israel countries shares the northern border with Canaan – and is a close ally of Russia.
- b. The second interesting point here is the ‘vast numbers’ aspect, is that “...many will come riding horses...’, who are also allies of Russia and known horsemen, for we have
 - i. From the east Persia, including Iraq and Iran,
 - ii. From the south Sudan, including Southern Egypt, and Northern Ethiopia,
 - iii. From the west Libya.

All advancing towards Israel like a cloud covering the land. Micah recorded yet another prophecy regarding this era, “Now also many nations are gathered against thee. that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD. neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor”, Micah 4:11–12, all this to bring about an unsuccessful campaign, for Israel will be delivered and God will be glorified.

- 2 It is of these very events that Ezekiel encourages the people by referring back to the former prophets.
 - a. Moses prophesied to the Israelites just before his death, “Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people”, Deuteronomy, 32:43. (BC 1423)
 - b. David, after the Syrians had gone to help Had–ad–ezer of Zobah, attacked and slew twenty–two thousand Syrians. “The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken”, Psalm 9:15. (BC 1010)

- c. Joel prophesied, “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision”, Joel 3:9–14. (BC 828)
- d. Isaiah, said, “In that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea”, Isaiah 27:1. (BC 713)
- e. Zephaniah prophesied, “The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD”, Zephaniah 3:15–20. (BC 624)

The one point that is so noticeable here, is the fact that all the prophets wrote in total agreement over a period of some 800 years, it immediately becomes obvious that they were all led and guided by the same Holy Spirit.

- 3 At this point Ezekiel describes a formidable enemy who would be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel, AND BRING ABOUT HIS OWN RUIN.

It is here that we need to look at secular history, where we find a satanic version of the 'scriptures' designed by Satan to make God's Word appear to be false.

Antiochus Epiphanes, a cruel and violent persecutor of the Jews was chosen by Satan to do his work.

Daniel writes of him "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up", Daniel 8:23.

Throughout his time, he is seen as a an indication of the Antichrist who was to come in the days ahead, and is, therefore, described by Daniel as 'the abomination of desolation', for, during his time, he,

- a. Defiled the temple at Jerusalem by forcing the high priest to sacrifice a swine upon its altar.
- b. According to 1 Maccabees, the High Priests at Jerusalem were appointed by Antiochus for the sole purpose of changing the traditions of the Jews based on the laws of Moses, thereby making them conform to Greek beliefs.
- c. A gymnasium was constructed in Jerusalem, and instead of learning their ancient law, the priests engaged in wrestling contests in the Greek fashion, which meant they were naked.

Any difference today?

In this final section on Armageddon and the Great White Throne Judgement, there are three distinct sections. Here, each in only a few verses, whilst the full version can be found in the 'Book of Revelation'.

The prediction of Gog and Magog's utter destruction, 39:1-7.

The prophecy continues in exactly the same manner as it started in chapter 38:3-4, "I am against thee, and I will turn thee back..."

However, it is at this point that we see an even greater 'opening up' of God's Intentions regarding the events in the world then, and even today.

Consider the following, all of whom came from the north,

- 1 "Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times", Isaiah 14:31.

The gate was the where the people gathered to obtain the latest reports of anything that might affect their city. Thus the 'smoke' would be a warning sign from the watchmen looking to the north.

- 2 "I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the

rising of the sun shall he call upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay”, Isaiah 41:25.

Although God states that He has ‘raised up one from the north’, it took a further one hundred and fifty years for it to be fulfilled. The princes referred to are the governors from the various provinces, and made up the Chaldean army under Cyrus.

- 3 “I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth”, Isaiah 43:6.

Several interesting points arise in this verse,

- a. “Give up...”. God is literally demanding that those of the north will surrender ‘My people’.
- b. By using both the masculine and the feminine, God is emphasising that the surrender must be total and unconditional.
- c. Thus the re-gathered ones who will be CALLED BY GOD’S NAME and ARE THOSE HE CREATED AND FORMED, FOR HIS GLORY, and WILL DISPLAY HIS ATTRIBUTES.

Paul also alludes to this verse in 2 Corinthians 6:18.

- 4 “Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction”, Jeremiah 4:6.

By setting the standard toward Zion implies a call from God to the people of the countries around to at least look, if not go, to what would be the strongest of their fortresses.

- 5 “Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth”, Jeremiah 6:22.

What we do need to realise is that the modern day magnetized compass did not appear until the 8th century AD. Therefore the people in Isaiah and Jeremiah’s day were quite oblivious as to where ‘north’ might, or might not be, and for the lack of a better reason, it was referred to as ‘the sides of the earth’.

The better rendition would have been ‘the remotest regions of the earth’; the Hebrew word for ‘sides’ also means ‘remote’.

What becomes even more dramatic in this verse is the fact that the same damage and distress that the Chaldeans had inflicted on Zion would be their own retribution; God would bring it from the north – Gog and Magog – Russia and its neighbours! Jeremiah 50:41–43.

- 6 “Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither”, Jeremiah 31:8.

This will, in the eyes of the people and the generations to come, will be a greater restoration than the exodus from Egypt.

This restoration will be supplemented by songs of joy and praise, not as with the complaining in the wilderness.

God will gather His people from the ends of the earth, there will not be one who is too far away for the Lord to reach. It will include the blind and the lame as well as expectant mothers.

Jeremiah uses the image of a father/son relationship to demonstrate God's love for His people, for, He is Israel's father, Deuteronomy 32:6, and Ephraim's – the Northern tribes of Israel – is his firstborn son, Hosea 11:1 and 8.

Returning now to the prophecy, let us consider what Ezekiel was to write in the following verses,

- 1 Verse 2, "...will bring him upon the mountains of Israel...", not only a place of temptation, but a place where his immoral behaviour will be measured against him, which then becomes his place of execution, and his ruin completed.
- 2 Verse 3, God shall smite their "...bow out of their left hand and their arrow out of their right", therefore their weapons will not prosper.
- 3 Verse 4, his army shall be slain in the field of battle where they will become the food for the birds of prey and the wild beasts.
- 4 Verse 5, his army will fall in the open field, NOT IN THE CITIES.
- 5 Verse 6, "I will send a fire on Magog, and among those that dwell carelessly...". They came to destroy the land of Israel, but God's Word is as a consuming fire, and by that Word he was defeated.

The three consequences of that destruction, 39:8–22.

- 1 The burning of their weapons, verses 8–10,
Those who come to steal from Israel will be found to be making very large donations to Israel, for Israel will use their weapons for fuel for seven years.
If this is not figurative, but factual, then the weapons of war will be – shields, bows, arrows, clubs, and spears, 38:4–5 and 39:9; if, however, if it is figurative, Scandinavia has already perfected guns made from wood.
With the worldwide catastrophes prophesied in first three and a-half years of Daniel's 70th Week, Matthew 24:6–8 and Revelation 6, it is quite possible that man may have to revert to the more primitive methods.

Thus the Israelites who remain on the earth after the rapture will be blessed with having a free fuel supply that would burn freely as it would not be green.

Some interesting points now arise,
Burning the enemy's weapons conveys the meaning that at that time

nothing pertaining to Gog would be left from Gog's invasion to pollute the land.

The seven years implies the completeness of a Godly cleansing, aligned the people's zeal for purity.

The desolation by Antiochus began in the one hundred and forty-first year of the Seleucidae, the dynasty established by Seleucus I – one of Alexander's generals – until the Temple worship was restored. This period, in round numbers, was seven years.

Mattathias was the patriotic Jewish leader, and his third son, Judas, the military commander who defeated the Syrian generals retook Jerusalem and purified the temple.

His brothers, Simon and Jonathan, succeeded him, thereby securing independence for the Jews, placing a trust in the Asmonean family, which continued until Herod the Great.

2 The burning of their slain, verses 11–16.

Gog, and his men of war, came seeking riches, lands, and above all the adulation general given to victors, instead they became a mass graveyard. Usually, after a battle, the combatants desire time to bury their own dead; here the number killed will be so great that Gog will have insufficient people left alive to bury the dead.

Because of the innumerable number of Gog's dead, it will need a large valley to bury them, and a city in the area, Hamonah, which translates as 'multitude', will be the designated place for the dead to be brought to, bringing about the title Hamongog.

Because of the somewhat strong, and definitely unpleasant smell, people travelling on the high road east of the Dead Sea from Syria to Petra and Egypt would come to recognise it as an area of God's judgments, especially as these graves would be close to that of their ancient prototypes, Sodom and Gomorrah in the Dead Sea.

3 The feasting of the fowls on the bodies of the unburied slain, verses 17–22.

At this point God reverses the roles where people normally slaughtered the animals, Gog's armies become a sacrifice for the animals.

Note God's invitation to the animals from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog, although prophesied here, it is not fulfilled until AFTER the Tribulation, "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great"., Revelation 19:17–18.

We now see that the three sections above not only glorify God, but that God also makes Himself known to the heathen.

A declaration of God's graciousness and providences concerning Israel, 39:23–29.

These verses bring to a conclusion 'The Everlasting Kingdom' section regarding Gog and Magog, and ALL prophecies concerning the captivity of the house of Israel.

At this point the heathen became aware that sin against the Chosen of God is sin against God. The same applies today.

Repentance and a return to God brought about a return of God's Blessings. The same applies today.

Therefore, the power of an enemy in our lives was never brought about by the power or strength of that enemy, but because through sin God's Favour and Grace has been forfeited, and we have lost our strength.

THE MILLENNIAL TEMPLE

We have just read of God's order of events in the re-establishing as Israel is gathered to the Promised Land, and restored into a fellowship with God.

What is possibly most astonishing is the relationship between these nine chapters, and the final two chapters of the Book of Revelation, with these chapters adding much more detail.

However, the Jews will not allow any person under thirty years of age to read this portion of the Scriptures, and tell those who do read it to —ask Elias to explain it when he comes., which, after looking at it diligently, we see that it goes much further than the Book of Revelation,

- 1 It assures the captives that they would return and settle in the Promised Land, which had been Promised to Abraham, and their forefathers led by Moses and Joshua into the land, and again promised in the earlier chapters of the book, they would be encouraged to build another temple, which God would own, and would meet with them
 - a. The ordinances of worship, and the sacred priesthood would be revived.
 - b. They would not have a king as they had previously asked for, but they would have a prince or ruler (who is often spoken of in this vision). This points to David, who, in his lifetime showed leadership in seeking God.
- 2 It also directs them to look for – and expect – the Promised Messiah, who, had been prophesied of through the name of David,
 - a. Because he carefully planned the building of the temple,
 - b. The glory would far exceed Solomon's temple, which would continue until the end of time.
- 3 The New Testament gospel-temple, erected by Christ and his apostles, whilst materially connected to the earthly Temple, was established at the time when the Temple established by those returning from the captivity fell into decay.
- 4 Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, all are perfected in the kingdom of glory.

This section, although one prophecy, is best split into three sections.

A new temple built signifying God's presence among his people, Ezekiel 40–43.

Ezekiel is transported to see the restoration. 40:1–4.

Once again, note how precise Ezekiel is with his dating. It was in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity, making it about the thirty-third year after the first captivity. It is also the "...fourteenth year after the city

was smitten...”.

What Ezekiel sees is distressing to him, but he is also seeing just what God has in store for those who remain faithful to His Word.

The first time Ezekiel was transported in this manner was when God took him to Jerusalem to see its iniquity and shame, page 22; at this point he is shown what a depopulated and dismal place it would become through God’s intervention.

Ezekiel was taken to “...a very high mountain...”. Moses went to the top of Pisgah. Thus two men were taken to a high point to view the “...land of promise...”, a land that is not yet in the possession of the people it was Promised to.

There are two further points we need to take notice of here,

- 1 Ezekiel is taken to Jerusalem – not to see the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:2.
- 2 It has a wall surrounding the city to protect it, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”, Matthew 6:19–20.

Before going any further, we need to look at verse 1 carefully, for the words “...in the beginning of the year...”, poses some problems on two separate points,

- 1 The Israelite religious new year begins in Nisan (our April–May), and was established at the time of the Exodus, Exodus 12:1–2, to commemorate the Passover.
- 2 Later in history, Israel established the seventh month, Tishri (our October–November) as the first month of their civil New Year. However, Tishri was the month set aside to commemorate the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 23:27.

Whilst either the Passover or the Day of Atonement would be apt points at this time, for the Passover represented deliverance from death, and the Day of Atonement would represent the Day of At–one–ment with God, the Day of Atonement would be the preferred date when compared to the notes covering Leviticus 16, page 158.

There are also a further two points that need to be understood,

- 1 “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”, Revelation 21:22.
- 2 Here, verse 2, Ezekiel saw ‘...as the frame of a city...’., but what he describes is not a city, but a temple as large as a city.

There is NO dispute between these two Scriptures, for we find the answer in John's Gospel, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.", John 4:23.

Ezekiel's equation now becomes,

1. It is a city for men to dwell in.
2. It is a temple for God to dwell in.
3. On earth God dwells with men – in heaven men dwell with God.

The man in verse 3, "...a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass...", was not an angel, but the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ who brought Ezekiel to the city, for we have no other way to obtain either the benefits or privileges of God's house but through the builder.

Two Scriptures attest to this,

- 1 "Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both", Zechariah 6:13
- 2 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you", John 14:2.

However, this verse goes far beyond the two 'nice scriptures' above, for the man has "...a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.

The Church – Tabernacle, Temple, or New Testament – were all formed by the words given to Moses on Mount Sinai – the Law Covenant and the establishment of the Aaronic Priesthood – "...the pattern in the mount". Thus the line is representative of the Law, and the reed the way we have adhered to the Law.

Two basic directions are given in verse 4,

"Behold with thy eyes...", not only see, but examine intently,
 "...hear with thy ears...", listen intently.

The details of the Temple. 5–49.

This is the Millennial Temple, but what makes it so special as compared with its predecessors? Whilst there are several interpretations, there are also many similarities.

- 1 Solomon's, Ezra's (Herod's), and the Millennial Temples have very nearly identical widths and lengths for both the holy place and the holy of holies.
- 2 Solomon's, Ezra's (Herod's) never included a surrounding sacred area, whilst Ezekiel's plans/prophecy does.
- 3 In Roman times the city of Jerusalem, including the Temple was approximately one mile square, whilst according to Ezekiel, 48:30,

the city in the prophecy is about one and a half miles square.

- 4 The Tribulation Temple, which will be no more than a showcase to enhance Satan's presence in Jerusalem, is only described in Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3–4; and Revelation 11:
- 5 Other than the fact that it will be desecrated by a false god, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, very little else is known about it.
- 6 Ezekiel, in chapter 43:7, prophesies that the temple he describes will be the throne of the true God. Since God has stated in His Word that "Thou shalt have no other gods before me., Exodus 20:3. Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment., Matthew 22:37–38. God, through Moses said, 'For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God', Exodus 34:14.

Thus God has clearly and definitively stated that He would never share His glorious temple with another, Ezekiel's temple cannot be the tribulation temple.

Therefore, the temple that Ezekiel is describing must refer to the Millennial Temple that is referred to in many other Biblical passages, e.g. Isaiah 2:2–3; Ezekiel 37:26; Micah 4:1–2, 7; Joel 3:21; Malachi 3:1.

Archaeologically, excavations appear to show steps or ramps leading to an area of raised ground; Ezekiel's temple is stated to have steps.

There are also some differences between the temples,

- 1 The tabernacle and Solomon's and Ezra/Herod's Temples were associated with the Mosaic Covenant. The Millennial Temple is associated with the New Covenant.
- 2 Ezekiel's, temple is built using the 'the long cubit' or 'cubit of the sanctuary'.
- 3 The major differences between Ezekiel's Temple and the Tabernacle, Solomon's and Ezra's Temples are,
 - a. No Ark of the Covenant, Mercy Seat, Cherubim, Golden Candlesticks, Shewbread, or Veil,
 - b. No High Priest and a change in the Order Of the Priests,
 - c. No Evening Sacrifice, Feast of Pentecost, or Day of Atonement.

But there are, Living Waters, Healing Trees, Suburbs, New Distribution of Land, A new name for the City, A Prince.

What, then, is the purpose of the prophecy of a New Temple since it will have a provision for animal sacrifices?

We have established that Ezekiel's Temple is the temple of the New Covenant. Why, then, the necessity of an animal sacrifice – which only

ever covered sin, when, under the New Covenant the Blood of Christ provided not only forgiveness, but a complete blotting out of sin?

Moses wrote “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them”, Genesis 3:21, thus sin was only covered. The Holy Spirit, through the writer of Hebrews, takes this even further, It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”, Hebrews 10:4.

Thus animal sacrifices have only ever represented what was to come, and can only be accepted as the illustration of the greater Sacrifice that was to establish the New Testament Church.

Likewise, the Lord's Supper is an illustration aiding us to remember our Lord's Sacrifice – it does not provide forgiveness of sins.

Therefore animal sacrifices could well be performed in the Millennial Temple for two reasons,

- 1 It would remind the Jews that although they had lived in the era of Grace, they had lived under the Law,
- 2 It would remind the Jews of Christ's Work fulfilled on the Cross at His First Advent, and that forgiveness was still available THROUGH FAITH.

Therefore, the Lord's Supper is to the Church what animal sacrifices in the Millennial Temple will be to the nation of Israel – REMEMBRANCE.

The reasons for these nine chapters then were to prove to the Jews in Babylon that their God was greater than the gods of Babylon.

The outside wall, verse 5.

“And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed”.

At first sight, the above verse appears to be fairly insignificant and straightforward. The owner is planning a wall around his house, and wants it to meet certain specifications.

There are two give-away points here,

- 1 The details of the Temple – the title of this section,
- 2 And details of the measuring reed – it is known as ‘the long cubit’ or ‘..cubit of the sanctuary’.

With the common cubit the wall would measure nine feet wide, and nine feet high.

With the cubit of the sanctuary, the measurement becomes vastly different. The wall would become eleven feet (3.30m) wide, and eleven feet (3.30m) high.

Thus the outer wall that is being placed around the house is a formidable obstacle to those wishing to break and enter.

We now have a further two points to consider,

- 1 This denotes the separation of the church and the world on every side by the divine protection.
- 2 “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”, John 10:9.

Although gates are mentioned and discussed later in the chapter, there is no mention of either ‘The Court of the Women (sometimes known as The Treasury), and no mention of an outer court, generally called the ‘The Court of the Gentiles’, for in this house all are equal.

It is, then,

- 1 A city for men to dwell in.
- 2 A temple for God to dwell in.

For with the church on earth God dwells with men, BUT, in heaven men will dwell with God.

The gates, verses 6–31.

1. The East Gate and chambers.

Note the following two points regarding the East Gate,

- 1 The east gate was especially sacred, as it was through this gate that the Glory of God had departed, Ezekiel 11:23, see notes page 43, and it would be through the gate that the glory would return, Ezekiel 43:1–2.
- 2 The usual way to enter the temple was through the East Gate, causing the person to immediately face the holy of holies at the west, thus Ezekiel immediately starts off with his narrative at that point.

Those who worship gods other than the True God always turn and face the east for their worship.

In verse 6, it is stated that Ezekiel walked up to the gate via the stairs, this brings forth two interesting concepts,

- 1 That Ezekiel went up to the gate by stairs. Excavations for previous temples have not shown the use of steps to the gates, therefore this would appear to indicate that the gospel–church will be exalted above that of the Old Testament.
- 2 This also correlates the call, “Come up hither...”, Revelation 4:1, of Lifting up our hearts when we come to worship.

Adjoining the gates, and about eleven feet square, were small chambers, spaced about nine feet apart, verse 7, and most probably are there for the use of the gate–keepers.

2. The Outer Court

Entering the Outer Court, Ezekiel saw a paved courtyard surrounded by thirty chambers.

Note also the pavement of the court, for the Hebrew word implies that the pavement was made from ‘porphyry’ – a stone the colour of burning coal. If this is the case, then what other glories will we find to feast our eyes upon? This highlights two Scriptures,

1 “In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you”, John 14:2.

2 “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass”, .Revelation 21:21.

We are even given the distance between the East Gate and the gate leading to the Inner Court, verse 19, “Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without. 100 cubits eastward and northward”, a distance of 175 feet.

These chambers served as lodgings for the priests on duty in the temple, and were, at times, used as store chambers/receptacles of the tithes, salt, wine, and oil. These days we would call them ‘guard-chambers’.

“For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them., 1 Chronicles 9:26–27.

3. The North and South Gates

Since these two gates follow the dimensions of the East Gate, yet are mentioned separately, indicates the detail God applies to His Church.

Jesus, referring to His Father’s overriding concern for His Creation, said, “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?”, Luke 12:6. Surely then, if God takes that much notice of five sparrows, then how much more notice will He take with the details of His Church, for which His Son gave His Life? Likewise, how much notice to detail should His Ministers give as they minister, and we had better remember that each and every one of us is a MINISTER, fir we were ALL given the same commandment, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world”, Matthew 28:19–20.

This temple had only three gates for general use, towards the East, towards the North, towards the South, the gate towards the west would be for the prince to enter in. Let us look at the significance of these three gates,

- 1 The gate towards the east, to let in the children of the east, who were famous for their wealth and wisdom.
- 2 The gates towards the north and south, to enable those from the poorer and less civilized nations to enter.

This does not mean that God promotes class distinction, anything but. To understand the real reasons here, we have to look at the above statements a little more deeply.

- 1 The gate towards the east, to let in the children of the east, who were famous for their wealth and wisdom.

Under the Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12:1–3, God would bless the people, and curse those who cursed His People. HE DID NOT, AT THAT TIME, SAY HE WOULD CURSE ALL OTHER PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.

Earlier in this study we saw how God protected and blessed those who relied upon Him. Throughout the entire period of Gentile domination, God has always remained true to His Promise of blessings.

God’s Blessings were not just cattle, sheep, oxen, servants etc; consider also the following regarding Israel,

Israel, the 100th smallest country, with less than 1/1000th of the world's population, can lay claim to the following:

Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees to the population in the world.

Israel produces more scientific papers per capita than any other nation by a large margin – 109 per 10,000 people – as well as one of the highest per capita rates of patents filed.

In proportion to its population, Israel has the largest number of start up companies in the world. In absolute terms, Israel has the largest number of start up companies than any other country in the world, except the US (3,500 companies mostly in hi-tech).

Israel is ranked number 2 in the world for venture capital funds right

behind the US.

Outside the United States and Canada, Israel has the largest number of NASDAQ listed companies.

Israel has the highest average living standards in the Middle East. The per capita income in 2000 was over \$17,500, exceeding that of the UK.

With an aerial arsenal of over 250 F-16s, Israel has the largest fleet of aircraft outside of the US.

Israel's \$100 billion economy is larger than all of its immediate neighbours combined.

On a per capita basis, Israel has the largest number of biotech start-ups.

Twenty-four percent of Israel's workforce holds university degrees – ranking third in the industrialized world, after the United States and Holland – and 12 percent hold advanced degrees.

Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East.

In 1984 and 1991, Israel airlifted a total of 22,000 Ethiopian Jews at risk in Ethiopia to safety in Israel.

When Golda Meir was elected Prime Minister of Israel in 1969, she became the world's second elected female leader in modern times.

When the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, was bombed in 1998, Israeli rescue teams were on the scene within a day – and saved three victims from the rubble.

Israel has the third highest rate of entrepreneurship – and the highest rate among women and among people over 55 – in the world.

Relative to its population, Israel is the largest immigrant-absorbing nation on earth. Immigrants come in search of democracy, religious freedom, and economic opportunity.

Israel was the first nation in the world to adopt the Kimberly process, an international standard that certifies diamonds as

"conflict free."

According to industry officials, Israel designed the airline industry's most impenetrable flight security. U. S. officials now look to Israel for advice on how to handle airborne security threats.

In 1991, during the Gulf War, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra played a concert wearing gas masks as scud missiles fired by Saddam Hussein fell on Tel Aviv.

Israel has the world's second highest per capita of new books.

Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees, made more remarkable because this was achieved in an area considered mainly desert.

Israel has more museums per capita than any other country.

Medicine...Israeli scientists developed the first fully computerized, no-radiation, diagnostic instrumentation for breast cancer.

An Israeli company developed a computerized system for ensuring proper administration of medications, thus removing human error from medical treatment. Every year in U. S. hospitals 7,000 patients die from treatment mistakes.

Israel's Givun imaging developed the first ingestible video camera, so small it fits inside a pill. Used to view the small intestine from the inside, the camera helps doctors diagnose cancer and digestive disorders.

Researchers in Israel developed a new device that directly helps the heart pump blood, an innovation with the potential to save lives among those with heart failure. The new device is synchronized with the heart's mechanical operations through a sophisticated system of sensors.

Technology... With more than 3,000 high-tech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of hi-tech companies in the world (apart from the Silicon Valley).

In response to serious water shortages, Israeli engineers and agriculturalists developed a revolutionary drip irrigation system to minimize the amount of water used to grow crops.

Israel has the highest percentage in the world of home computers per capita.

Israel leads the world in the number of scientists and technicians in the workforce, with 145 per 10,000, as opposed to 85 in the US, over 70 in Japan, and less than 60 in Germany. With over 25% of its work force employed in the technical professions places Israel first in this category as well.

The cell phone was developed in Israel by Motorola, which has its largest development centre in Israel.

Most of the Windows NT operating system was developed by Microsoft-Israel.

The Pentium MMX Chip technology was designed in Israel at Intel.

Voice mail technology was developed in Israel.

Both Microsoft and Cisco built their only R&D facilities outside the US in Israel.

The AOL Instant Messenger was developed in 1996 by four young Israelis.

A new acne treatment developed in Israel, the ClearLight device, produces a high-intensity, ultraviolet-light-free, narrow-band blue light that causes acne bacteria to self-destruct – all without damaging surrounding skin or tissue.

An Israeli company was the first to develop and install a large-scale solar-powered and fully functional electricity generating plant, in southern California's Mojave Desert.

All the above while engaged in regular wars with an implacable enemy that seeks its destruction, and an economy continuously under strain by having to spend more per capita on its own protection than any other country on earth. This from a country just 55 years young having started off life on a very frontiers-like basis, whose population had mostly just emerged from the devastating World War II years.

The gates towards the north and south, to enable those from the poorer and less civilized nations to enter.

The question now arises “Who are the poorer and less civilized nations?”.

South Africa tops the list for rapes world-wide, is also number two in terms of murders and is in the top ten for burglaries as well.

However, the United States is also in the top ten for rapes world-wide and number eight for overall crime as well.

Australia tops the list with the highest ratio of burglaries worldwide and is number three in terms of the number of rapes per capita.

Does economic success breed contempt? The short answer is ‘NO’, for many ‘third world powers’, they just did not make the ‘top ten’. (Condensed from an article by John Schroder of Ascot Advisory Services).

Technically, it is not a matter of poorer and less civilized nations; it relates more to who are forefathers were. After the Flood, Noah left the ark with his three sons,

Ham. The descendants of Ham settled towards the south west along the Mediterranean into North Africa and southward into the rest of the continent.

Shem. The descendants of Shem settled the northern area of the Persian Gulf and westward into toward the Indian Ocean. Included in this area are the lands of Syria, Chaldea and parts of Assyria, Persia and the Arabian Peninsula. The spiritual blessing promised by Noah, came to all people on Earth through the lineage of Shem to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Japheth. The descendants of Japheth migrated west and north. The sons of Japheth's sons are listed, giving more detail than is found in the list of Ham's or Shem's sons.

Our compatibility with other human beings is not reliant on the colour of our skin, the way we dress, the food we eat or even the language we speak. At the very core, what separates us is the way we think!

4. The inner court, verses 32–38.

For reasons not exactly clear, no gates are mentioned on either the outer or inner court towards the west.

The writer of Chronicles states, “In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south”, 1 Chronicles 9:24, that there were western gates. Josephus, however, records for us that in Herod's temple there were no gates on the western side.

Everything in the inner court was exactly the same as those in the outer court, the gates, the chambers, galleries or rows round the court, and the engravings on the posts were the same.

However, there is one subtle difference, the ascent to the outer

court at each gate was seven steps; the ascent into the inner court at the gate is eight steps. This would appear to symbolically imply that the closer we come to God the more we should rise above this world and the things of it; likewise, the priests who attend the inner court must rise even higher.

Each child of God is like another, for they are all brethren, and bearing the same image.

Thus the work of grace is the same as a grown Christian as a young Christian at the beginning of his walk.

5. The tables, verses 39–43.

A very interesting point arises at this time. Ezekiel describes the tables that were found in the porch of the gates of the inner court, yet there is no mention of altars of burnt-offerings in that court until chapter 43:13.

John wrote, “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”, Revelation 21:21 and 23.

Two points become clear at this time,

- 1 Ezekiel is describing the temple at Jerusalem, which is both the city and temple of God on earth.
- 2 John is describing the New Jerusalem, which is not a temple, but THE City of God IN Heaven.

Then why the tables and no altars of burnt-offerings? The simple answer is, the altar under the law was exchanged for all the many tables under the gospel. It is possible that the eight tables also represent,

- 1 The four Gospels,
- 2 The Book of Acts,
- 3 The Epistles of Paul,
- 4 The three Pastoral Epistles,
- 5 The Epistle to the Hebrews,
- 6 The two Epistles of Peter,
- 7 The three Epistles of John,
- 8 The Book of Revelation,

whilst holding the instruments for preparing the sacrifices on the altar in the inner court.

It is not difficult to ‘marry’ these concepts together if we accept the following, Animal sacrifices never took away sin; they only ‘covered the sin’.

The sacrifice of Christ took AWAY sin, NOT covered it, Hebrews 10:1–4 and 10. Israelites in the Old Testament were saved by grace, Matthew 8:10; Matthew 15:28; Mark 2:5; Mark 5:34; Mark

10:52; Hebrews 11, etc, other instances can be found with a concordance.

When the church supplanted the Levitical sacrifices, the core of Israel's worship of God, Romans 11:11–24, a new dispensation began, for, the Levitical sacrificial worship, which had always looked toward Christ, was replaced by the Lord's Supper, which, in turn looked back to His death BUT forward to His second coming, 1 Corinthians 11:24, and 26.

When Israel resumes her statute of prominence at our Lord's Second Coming, the Lord's Supper will be eliminated as a memorial, because our Lord will be present, 'in the flesh' at Jerusalem.

6. The lodgings for the singers and the priests, verses 44–47.

At this point we are told that these chambers are for the singers, verse 44, and some for the priests that kept the charge of the house, verse 45, and for those who kept the charge of the altar, verse 46.

The court of the priests was a square, measuring fifty yards. The altar was placed in the centre, and stood in a direct line with each gate, enabling those who came through the gates to watch any service performed at the altar.

Unused chambers were used for either storage, or those that ...came near to the Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house shall enjoy the comforts of it.

7. The porch of the house, verses 48–41:26.

Starting at the penultimate verse of chapter 40, the description is spread over the entire forty-first chapter as well.

Ezekiel, having given us a great amount of information regarding the gates and chambers now moves his attention to the temple building itself, describing, in detail, the building in great detail as he is led through it.

Approaching across the courtyard, as it were, Ezekiel proceeded to a porch style entrance into the temple via some steps, verses 48–49, and entered the Outer Sanctuary, 41:1.

As a priest, Ezekiel 1:3, Ezekiel was permitted to enter the outer sanctuary BUT NOT THE MOST HOLY PLACE, instead, an angel was sent into the inner sanctuary to measure it.

Consider the following Scriptures,

1. Leviticus 16.

The lord spoke to Moses AFTER the death of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Leviticus 10:1–2, after they had approached the Lord in an unauthorised way.

In this chapter, at the establishment of the Day of Atonement, God gave Moses the instructions regarding the time and self-preparation of himself, the High Priest, to enter the Inner Court without dying.

The High Priest, Aaron, could only enter once a year, AFTER preparing himself, and the animals for the ceremonial cleansing.

2. Hebrews 9:6–8.

“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing”.

Thus Ezekiel, as a priest – not a High Priest – could not enter the Inner Court, and God used an angel to get the measurements for him.

In verses 5–11 we are told that on every side of the temple there are three stories of thirty rooms, generally following the pattern of the rooms in Solomon’s temple.

Malachi, writing about 175 years later states, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”, Malachi 3:8–10.

Since there would be no reason for Malachi not to have known Ezekiel’s prophecy of the Millennial Temple, there is no reason that God should not cause the people to be told a home truth, they were not giving, they were robbing God.

Once again we can assume that these rooms were being used to store the temple equipment, and as storage chambers for the people’s tithes and offerings. Compare Deuteronomy 26:2–5.

In these verses, 12–26, Ezekiel records the dimensions, decorations, and furniture of the temple itself.

In verse 12, we have a building to the west of the temple, and named, quite aptly, ‘the building facing the temple courtyard on the

west side’.

Whilst Ezekiel gives no explanation of what it was used for, Solomon’s Temple had a similar type of building, again, without an explanation.

There are two possible explanations for this building,

- 1 It is a distinct building to be used for possibly housing supplies to service the temple.
- 2 It signified the setting up of the church among the Gentiles not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of grace, not the Law.

The first would appear to be the likeliest reason; the second would appear to be contrary to God’s Word for the following reasons. It is not until Genesis 12 that there is a separation between men, “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing”, Genesis 12:1–2.

The last mention of ‘gentiles’ in the Scriptures comes AFTER the sixth trumpet judgement, and as the antichrist takes control of the temple, “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”, Revelation 11:2.

The temple measured 871½ ft wide, and 175 ft in length, add to this the inner and outer courtyards, walls, and chambers, Ezekiel’s Temple would have left very little room within the city walls for anything else, for in the days of Jesus, the circumference of the city was about 4 miles.

Etched into the wood panelling covering the interior walls were cherubim, representing the angelic guardians of God’s dwelling, and palm trees, possibly representing the providence of God.

Each of the cherubim – unlike the cherubim described in chapters 1 and 10 which had four faces – had two faces, the face of a man and of a lion, promoting the human and kingly attributes of Jesus.

The altar mentioned here, because of its size, must be the ‘Altar of Incense’ when compared with Exodus 30:1–3, and 1 Kings 7:48.

Chapter 42 continues – and concludes – the description of what might well be termed a ‘futuristic temple’.

8. The Chambers, verses 1–14.

There are two points that we need to understand here,

- 1 Whilst the temple, which was the place of public worship and public prayer,

- 2 The chambers would afford those at the temple to also spend 'closet' time with God, for private or intercessory prayer, they could also be used for a quiet time with God, or meditation on His Word.

They could also have been used as 'retirement rooms', "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day", Luke 2:36–37. Verses 13–14 also make it quite clear that the chambers – also at this time called holy chambers – were there for the primary use of the priests, where, after they had finished ministering for the day, they would be able to,

- 1 Be joined by their families.
- 2 Lay out their vestments until needed for their next turn to minister.

9. The Outer Court, verses 15–20.

One of the first things we notice within these verses is the size of this Court – north, south, east, and west, each side is 500 reeds.

500 reeds = 5085 feet

5085 feet = nearly 1 mile,

thus the distance between the sanctuary and the profane place is very large.

This also starts to emphasise the vast difference between our thoughts and God's thoughts, and the distance that should be between our worldly actions, and our religious claims.

In chapter 43 we are told of the re-entrance into the temple of God's Glory, and the re-establishment of the order of worship.

There are many parallels between these verses and the Gospel temple of Revelation,

"Took me up...", verse 2. Compare Revelation 4:1.

He has seen the temple coming together, but no people are mentioned, Ezekiel 37. Compare Revelation 19:11–21.

Ezekiel now sees "...the Glory of God...", verse 2. Compare Revelation 21:1–7.

Ezekiel, taken to the East Gate now sees the Glory "...coming from the way of the east...", verses 1–2. Our Lord's Birth was heralded by a star in the east. Compare Revelation 7:2.

In verses 1–6 Ezekiel receives a vision of "...the glory of God...", verse 2.

God has renewed His Covenant with Israel, and they – the Israelites

– now serve and worship Him.

The Lord has "...come from the way of the east...", and has come back to the gate He departed from, Ezekiel 11:23, thereby causing the Lord to immediately face the holy of holies at the west.

Note the two things Ezekiel perceived at the Lord's appearance,

- 1 The power of his word caused His Voice to sound like "...a noise of many waters...", and heard very far away,
- 2 A brightness at His appearance, for God is light, and none can bear the strength of his light.

In Exodus 34:28–35 we read that Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights in the presence of the LORD.

We are then told on three separate occasions that the face of Moses 'SHONE', verses 29, 30, and 35.

Is it not time that we, as Christians – the LIVING Church of God – started

- 1 A minimum of forty minutes per day with the Lord?
- 2 Once again, we need to heed what the a little girl states, "Mommy, the preacher's sermon this morning confused me. The mother said, "Oh! Why is that?. The girl replied, "Well, he said that God is bigger than we are. Is that true?". "Yes, that's true," the mother replied. "He also said that God lives within us. Is that true, too?" Again the mother replied, "Yes". "Well," said the girl, "if God is bigger than us and he lives in us, wouldn't he show through?" If God lives in us, then there's no way of keeping Him from 'showing through' That's the essence of Christian living – living in such a way that people around will see God in our lives.

Consider the following, 'The glory that we permit God to shine in the church – US – is the amount of light that we permit God to shine through US to the world'.

Therefore, the Glory of God that appeared to David dispersed the clouds, "At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed...", Psalm 18:12.

This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel was the same when God came to destroy the temple as when God came to re-establish the temple. God is not variable.

Although God may appear to forsake his people for a time, He never fails to re-appear with an everlasting loving-kindness.

- 1 God's glory filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle", Exodus 40:34.
- 2 God's glory filled the temple that Solomon built, "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD", 1 Kings 8:10.
- 3 Although the Glory of God was present, there is no record that the Shechinah ever did take possession of the second temple. Ezekiel, as with Moses, Leviticus 1:1, heard God speaking to him FROM the house, and not as before 'through the clouds', Exodus 16:10; 19:9; 24:15; 34:5.

The Glory of this temple then is in the Grace that shines through the present day Gospel Church.

In verses 7–12 God is technically renewing His covenant with Israel, for, with the Shechinah Glory is present in the house, it is stated categorically in verse 7 that it is where the Lord's Throne is, where the Lord will put His Feet, and where the Lord will DWELL.

They had, in the past, defiled God's holy name, and abused the sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, now, they had four commands of what not to defile,

- 1 The Lord's throne.
- 2 Wherever He placed His Feet.
- 3 The house He would dwell in.
- 4 His holy Name.

Their priests and kings had built a wall of separation with their religion, and as the curtain in the Temple had been ripped on the Day of Crucifixion, so had the religious wall of separation been broken asunder.

But, as the saying goes, 'There is more'. In every temple before this one the sanctuary was most holy; in this temple verse 12, we are told that the whole mountain, including all the courts and chambers, will be holy.

Verses 13–27 deal with the Brazen Altar, which, when talking of a temple that is built for the time when our Lord is on earth, and ruling from Jerusalem, would appear to be somewhat ambiguous.

John, writing of the vision he was given, says, "And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials

full of odours, which are the prayers of saints...And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth", Revelation 5:8 and 10.

Since John is writing of people before the Throne of God BEFORE the Great White Throne judgement has taken place, and BEFORE the appearance of the Heavenly Temple, where the New Jerusalem is the Temple, we are now able to correlate Ezekiel's Temple, and its need for a Brazen Altar.

The 'four and twenty elders' in verse 8 would appear to represent the twelve tribes of Israel as the priests, verse 10, and the twelve Apostles would then appear to represent the kings, verse 10.

- 1 Regarding the priests, this would restore the original Mount Sinai commandments regarding the Jewish form of worship where the burnt offerings looked towards the death of Christ, but in the New Temple the burnt offering will be as a memorial to Christ's sacrifice.
- 2 Regarding the kings, this would confirm Paul's writing to the Romans, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together", Romans 8:17, for John wrote of Christ, "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS", Revelation 19:16.

Never was it said on Mount Sinai that the Jews would have to suffer as their leader would suffer, yet Mark quotes Jesus as saying, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved", Mark 13:13.

Note at this point the measurements and design of the altar, and, as will be seen, it is not a small altar.

The base of the altar is twelve cubits square, verse 16. Using, as everywhere else in the temple measurements, the 'cubit of the sanctuary', the base of this altar would measure some 22 feet (approx 7½ m) on each side.

The top of the altar measured some 19 feet (approx 6½m) on each side.

The height of the altar was 13½ feet (approx 4.2m).

At a height of nearly 3 feet, a shelf – nearly 2 feet wide – was attached; 6 feet above the lower shelf, a further shelf was attached. Priests stood to minister on both of these shelves.

The sacrificial animals were killed on the table described page 151, Ezekiel 40:39; it is also here that we have a wonderful illustration of the people working together in – and to – the glory of God, for those

who killed the sacrifice passed what was to be burnt to those on the lower shelf, they, in turn passed it to those on the higher shelf.

- 10 Directions are now given for the dedication of the altar. On the first day, a young bullock for a sin-offering was to be offered, verse 19, along with a goat, verse 25. For the remaining six days, only a goat was to be offered for the sin offering. The teaching here then becomes a warning to offer ourselves to God on a 7 day a week principle.

Following the dedication procedure above, on the eighth day a bullock and a ram were offered as a burnt-offering, verse 24, with the command to use salt. According to the law, all sacrifices had to be seasoned with salt, —All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee”, Numbers 18:19.

The people of the ancient Near East regarded salt as being totally indestructible by fire, ‘a covenant of salt’ would appear to an eternal covenant.

A NEW SERVICE OF WORSHIP ESTABLISHED WITH GOD IN THEIR MIDST.

The first ten verses of chapter 44 are very much of a review of what Ezekiel has seen and described before. Thus the one lesson for us at this point not to read the Word of God just once, but to re-read it that God may teach us even more.

Several points need to be clarified here,

- 1 This East Gate at the outer court opened toward the Kedron Valley and the Mount of Olives, leading to the thought that the 'Golden Gate' of Jerusalem, which is currently sealed, is also the gate spoken of here. There is one major problem with this thought, the dimensions of the 'Golden Gate' and East Gate are not the same,
- 2 Ezekiel saw the Lord enter the East Gate on His return to His temple, chapter 43:4, thereby hallowing the gate.
- 3 Taking the 2,500 years since Ezekiel described how the gate was shut, and the presence of the Lord is still not in the temple at Jerusalem, he is talking FUTURE not our PRESENT.

In verses 1–3 Ezekiel is brought to the East Gate, AND IT IS SHUT. Let us, for a minute, look at the East Gate, and its importance in the scriptures.

- 1 This immediately implies that the North and South gates would be open.
- 2 This, when related to Eastern Protocols, acted as a mark of respect for the monarch to enter through, and then immediately closed to all other people.
It also went much further, and related back to what God commanded Moses, "And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them", Exodus 19:24.
- 3 Only one other person – AFTER THE LORD HAS ENTERED THROUGH THE GATE – will be permitted to sit in the gate, verse 3; or to enter through the gate – the prince of Israel, chapter 46:2.
- 4 The vestibule of the East Gate faces the outer court, Ezekiel 40:1–4, thus the prince must be David, and cannot be the Messiah – the KING of KINGS, for He would never offer a burnt offering for Himself, as the prince is commanded to do, Ezekiel 46:4.
- 5 This prince has already been identified by Ezekiel, as King David, chapter 34:24, see page 96; who will be permitted to eat in the gate, and according to what is possible, eat and fellowship of the offerings which will be eaten

AFTER those worshipping in the temple will eat after offering them to the Lord. Compare the Law, Leviticus 7:15–21.

- 6 The prince then, is not just a civil ruler under the Messiah, but His Emissary, a king yet a shepherd, a man after God's own heart.

Ezekiel is now overcome by what he is seeing, and falls prostrate to upon his face, verse 4. But note what he is told in verse 5,

1 "...behold with thy eyes...", in particular those who enter the house, what they do in the house, and those who leave the house.

2 "...hear with thy ears all that I say unto thee..." regarding the rules of the house, with which he was to instruct the people.

Those who are appointed to be teachers have to be very diligent about what they teach, and not forget or make a mistake concerning the calling they have been entrusted with.

The Levites downgraded to servants. verses 9–14.

Verses 10–14 are addressed to the Levites. If we now leap forward some 500 years, Matthew, chapter 21, recorded a parable of a householder, verses 33–46, which pointed straight back to the events we are going to look at in Ezekiel, which, historically, they would have been well aware of.

At this point we are able to see the full implications of the words,

1 "...behold with thy eyes...",

2 "...hear with thy ears all that I say unto thee...",

from verse 5.

For, because of their sinful practices in not watching what was happening around them, and not listening to God's call for improvements before Israel's fall to Babylon, they lost their positions as ministers, and were downgraded to servants.

Thus, for their new duties in the new temple they were to be gatekeepers, slayers of the sacrifices, and helpers of the worshippers, and not allowed to serve the Lord as priests or go near any of His holy things.

The Master of the house, as the husbandman in Matthew 21:40 will re-appraise His servants to see who should be kept, and who should be shut out.

The faithful priests raised up. verses 15–31

Ezekiel's attention is now turned towards the priests, verses 15–31.

Those who have been faithful are honoured and established, verses 15–16. Let us, for a minute digress a little at this point for Zadok was a

branch of the priestly line, and therefore part of a 'limited group of Levites, the very group of people who were demoted in the previous section'.

We need to return to the time of Eli and his sons. Eli's priesthood was condemned by his failure to control his sons, 1 Samuel 2:31–36.

In that reading, another remarkable verse is found – verse 35, “And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever”.

That man was Zadok, whose name translates as 'one proved righteous', and whose sons kept their integrity at the time of Jerusalem's general apostasy, see the section 'Presumption by the Jewish leadership, 11:1–14', page 43, for they did not err from the path of righteousness when others did.

Thus, in verse 15 God is pleased to say of Zadok's sons “...they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table...”. God marks and honours those who remain true to Him, no matter what is surrounding them.

Therefore, the sons of Zadok will be restored to their position of honour, and when this temple is finally in place, they will serve as mediators between Israel and her God as the priests did in Old Testament times.

Likewise, their vestments were to be linen, the same pattern as given on Mount Sinai, Exodus 28:39–41.

After ministering, and before entering the Outer Court, the priests were to change their vestments, that the people did not touch the holy to get a 'blessing'.

Rules were also stressed at this point by which they were expected to govern themselves,

- 1 They must not shave their heads, thereby imitating the Gentile priests, verse 20,
- 2 They must not drink wine, lest they should drink to excess, verse 21,
- 3 They could not marry if the woman had divorced, verse 22,
- 4 They could marry if the woman had been the wife of a priest, verse 22,
- 5 They were to teach the people, verse 23,
- 6 They were to live from the altar at which they served, verse 28,

The summary then for this section is “I am their possession...” verse 28. As the priests had no possession in the Land when it was originally apportioned, so in the future God will be their portion.

The division of the holy land. verses 1–8.

As we go through these verses, it soon becomes clear that this temple does not strictly follow the pattern that was given to Joshua; in fact, it is a lot larger, for it also allows the Gentiles to access the area.

Once again, we have the pointer that nothing of this is in any way related to John's vision, therefore it is still to be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which Canaan has always been a shadow.

The land into 3 distinct plots,

1 The sanctuary, verse 1–5.

This sanctuary, and the living quarters of the priests and Levites was to be measured, and the borders fixed at 25,000 reeds in length, and 10,000 reeds in breadth, and was further divided into two equal parts.

To put this into present day terms, it would read 25 miles (40 km) in length, and 10 miles (16 km) wide.

Therefore the sanctuary and the priests occupied an area of $12\frac{1}{2}$ (20 km) by 5 miles (8 km), whilst the Levites occupied an area of $12\frac{1}{2}$ (20 km) by 5 miles (8 km) instead of being scattered throughout Israel as established by Joshua, Joshua 21:1–42.

2 The city, verses 6 and 8.

As opposed to the dividing of the land by Joshua, we are told –And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel., verse 6, therefore the tribes are to become as ONE.

The people living in the city probably represent the heads of the father's houses as in the days of Jacob. Compare 'The two sticks made one', 37:15–28.

To put this into present day terms, it would read 25 miles (40 km) in length, and 5 miles (8 km) wide.

One might well ask why was the city that much smaller? The answer is quite simple, and there are two reasons,

- a. for the city would be used for trading, and would therefore have no need of lands.
- b. not everyone will be living in the city, for the majority of the people would inhabit the 'Promised Land' – according to their tribes – an area that covers approximately 104625 square mile, or 270211.1 square km.

3 The prince, and the people, verse 7.

The third portion of the division would today be called government or crown-lands, with the Prince, as administrator for the Lord, possessing two sections of land, one to the east of the temple, and stretching to the Jordan River, whilst the second section stretched from the west of the city to the Mediterranean Sea. See Ezekiel

48:21–22.

Thus, with his land attached to the temple, his dignity is worthy of respect; whilst his land beside the city eliminates any temptation to oppress the people, for the promise stated here “...My princes shall no more oppress My people...”, verse 8, yet, reading Nehemiah we find that the people complained after their return from captivity, the princes were demanding ore that their right, whilst Nehemiah led by example, Nehemiah 5:15 and 18.

A re-iteration of the Mosaic Laws. verses 9–46:24.

- 1 The rulers to be just, verse 9. They were not to oppress any man by their position.
- 2 They were to use just weights, verses 10–12. They were to use the same weights when buying or selling. Deuteronomy 25:13–16.
- 3 Offerings, verses 13–17. The amounts listed are to be given to David (the Prince), see THE KINGDOM OF DAVID TO BE RESTORED, 34:23–31, page 96, and will be proportionate to the individual’s wealth, and used to maintain the temple sacrifices, including burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons, and the Sabbaths. Leviticus 1:1–7:38.
- 4 Each person, where applicable, will give
 - a. a 60th of their wheat and barley, verse 13,
 - b. one percent of their olive oil, verse 14,
 - c. and 1 sheep from every 200 of their flocks, verse 15.
- 5 The offerings and the times to give the offering, verses 18–25.

God has no need of or may be benefited by anything that we can give him. Note what David has to say on this matter, “I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”, Ps. 50:8–15.

We cannot give a gift to God, for we own nothing. We can give Him our praises. We can give Him ourselves. And to offer Him our love, is to offer Him the gift He extended to us.

These verses have also brought about a lot of discussion. If we take the saying “God said it, I believe it, THAT IS IT”, and re-paraphrase it to a

biblical context, it becomes “God said it, THAT IS IT”, it removes a lot of the discussion!

Levitical	Millennial
N/A	New Year – Ezekiel 45:18–20
Passover – Leviticus 23:5	Passover – Ezekiel 45:21–24
Unleavened Bread Leviticus 23:6–8	Unleavened Bread Ezekiel 45:21–24
Pentecost – Leviticus 23:9–22	N/A
Trumpets – Leviticus 23:23–25	N/A
Atonement – Leviticus 23:26–32	N/A
Tabernacles – Leviticus 23:33–44	Tabernacles – Ezekiel 45:25

There are several points in the chart above that need to be looked at here to clarify the matter even further,

Out of the original six Levitical Feasts, only three are transferred to the Millennial Period,
 Passover,
 Unleavened Bread
 Tabernacles,
 for they are all regarded as ‘memorial feasts’.

The three Millennial feasts that are not celebrated,
 Pentecost,
 Trumpets,
 Atonement.

Pentecost and Atonement have been fulfilled for the Jew as they remember their deliverance from Egypt and for the Gospel Church by the Death and Resurrection of our Lord.

Trumpets, points towards the destruction of Jericho, and the heralding by the Angelic Host of our Lord’s birth.

Pentecost is also replaced by a new feast, New Year – Ezekiel 45:18–20.

The other major difference between the Mosaic Law and the Millennial Feasts are that the offerings are richer and more abundant.

Ordinances for the Prince and the People in Their Worship. verses 1–24.

As with this section 'The Millennial Temple' being looked at as three distinct sections, so also is the last chapter of this part of the study

1. Further rules for the priests and the people, regarding worship, verses 1–15.

It would appear that God never intended these new rules for public worship to be observed when the Jews returned from their captivity, but that they were established in readiness for the Millennial Kingdom based upon the following.

The east gate was kept shut, chapter 44:2, whilst the north, south, and west gates were opened every day,

- 1 The east gate, which was kept shut at other times, was to be opened on the Sabbath days, on the moons, verse 1,
- 2 The east gate was only opened for the prince to enter in on high days and special occasions, verses 2 and 8,
- 3 The east gate was to be opened whenever the prince offered a voluntary offering, verse 12.
- 4 David, the prince, Ezekiel 34:24, has still not been told by God to resume his position.
- 5 Furthermore, the people who entered the court of the people by the north gate were to exit via the south gate, whilst those who entered by the south gate were to exit by the north gate.

2. The law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, verses 16–18.

The prince could gift to a son, but not to a servant, for the 'right of ownership' was to remain within the family.

The prince will not be allowed to claim any land outside his allotted inheritance, a stark contrast to the evil princes in Ezekiel's day, Ezekiel 45:8–9, and "...thrust them out of their possession...", Ezekiel 46:18.

Thus John, quoting the words of Jesus, "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever", John 8:35; however Jesus expanded this even further, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed", John 8:36.

Jesus, through John, expanded this even further,

- 1 "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am", John 13:13.
- 2 "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you", John 15:15.
- 3 "Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and

your God”, John 20:17.

Therefore, looking at verse 18, “Moreover THE PRINCE SHALL NOT TAKE OF THE PEOPLE’S INHERITANCE by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: THAT MY PEOPLE BE NOT SCATTERED EVERY MAN FROM HIS POSSESSION”, we can, perhaps, appreciate the following a little more,

- 1 The possessions in the promises through our Lord’s Death AND Resurrection have been placed in readiness for us to receive,
- 2 The prophecies given to Ezekiel have also been established, both to be given in the Millennium, to those who have accepted ‘God’s terms and conditions’.

A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices and the baking of the meat-offerings, verses 19–24.

At this point Ezekiel describes further details of the buildings in the temple. Since they were used for the cooking of food of the offerings, they had been situated in two prime locations,

- 1 At the western entry into the inner court, and close to the priest’s chambers, verse 19, for the priests to prepare the trespass offering, and bake the meat offering, verse 20.
- 2 In the four corners of the outer court, verses 21–23, where the priests boiled the sacrifice of the people, verse 24.

There are 3 important points made here,

- 1 There was only ONE kitchen allotted to the priests to boil or bake their offerings.
- 2 There are FOUR kitchens allotted for the priests to boil their offerings for the people.
- 3 Thus the temple will be a place for fellowship as much as worship.

THE SHARING OF THE LAND.

In these two chapters God is seen as 'wrapping up' the prophecy, the depth of the water – to the ankles, knees, and the loins, before becoming "a river which cannot be passed over' becoming clearer with the scriptures that we have at our disposal today.

The Water of Life. verses 1–12.

Even though Ezekiel's vision so far has become clearer and clearer as we have progressed through it, we have had to remember that the prophecy – as a whole – has continued with its mystical and spiritual meanings.

Therefore, we again have both the mystical and spiritual meaning here; for this cannot apply to water being brought into the temple by pipes to wash the sacrifices, or keeping the temple clean, for that would cause the pleasant river to become a common sewer, hardly clean enough to accomplish the following, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish", Ephesians 5:26–27.

Consider the following scriptures,

"And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be", Zechariah 14:8.

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb", Revelation 22:1.

Thus 'the mystical and spiritual' meaning here, with Ezekiel's temple pointing directly to the Millennial Age, and John's temple in Revelation pointing directly to 'The New Heavens and the New Earth', appears to represent the 'Gospel Age'.

To take this a step further, with both emanating from Jerusalem, we now have the following analogy,

- 1 God's Glory and Grace begun, Ezekiel 47:1,
- 2 God's Glory and Grace perfected, Revelation 22:1,

but the analogies do not finish there

- 1 Ezekiel had walked round the house many times, yet it is not until God approaches the end of the prophecy that Ezekiel sees the waters, for God only makes His plans known as we are able to receive,

- 2 We read the Word of God many times, and each time, as we are able to build upon the knowledge already received, God opens up His Word more and more to us.

In verses 1 and 2, we read, “Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar, Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side”, Ezekiel 47:1–2.

Compare what the Lord said through Isaiah of the ‘Last Days’, “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”, Isaiah 2:3.

At the beginning of this chapter, we read, ‘In these two chapters God is seen as ‘wrapping up’ the prophecy, the depth of the water – to the ankles, knees, and the loins, before becoming ‘a river which cannot be passed over’ becoming clearer with the scriptures that we have at our disposal today’. Consider the following,

- 1 Jesus, in the second year of His Ministry spoke to the Samaritan woman about ‘the water of life’, “Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”, John 4:10.
- 2 Towards the end of our Lord’s third year of ministry Jesus, at the temple, stated, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”, John 7:38–39.
- 3 In the command of Jesus to the disciples, “They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must begin at Jerusalem”. Luke 24:47.
- 4 The Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, that they might carry these waters to all nations, Acts 2:4.
- 5 In the temple, the disciples stood up and **PREACHED THE WORD (WATER) OF LIFE**, Acts 5:20.

The origin of these waters was not above-ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold **AFTER** the Glory of God had re-entered the temple, and they came out the same way as the Glory of the Lord and the prince went in – the east gate, Who is,

- 1 the temple – Jesus,
 - 2 the door – Jesus,
 - 3 the fountain – Jesus, from whose pierced side the waters flow.
- As David – the prince – said, “...all my springs are in thee., Psalm 87:7.

If it has not been mind blowing enough so far, it will be from now on.

The water flowed towards the east country. At this point of the narrative we have ‘he’ as a companion to Ezekiel.

- 1 ‘He’ cannot be the pre-incarnate Lord, for there had been no Death and Resurrection,
- 2 ‘He’ cannot be the prince, for at that time David had not been ‘resurrected’ to go with his Lord to a heavenly place,
- 3 Thus ‘he’ must be an angelic being.

They, Ezekiel and the angel, were directed to travel eastward towards the sea.

Leaving the temple grounds by the north gate, Ezekiel and the angel saw the water flowing out on the southern side of the east gate towards the Kedron Valley.

Zechariah, prophesying of our Lord’s Second Advent records, “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be”, Zechariah 14:8.

The water, flowing out from Jerusalem will divide, with half flowing east toward the Dead Sea, and the other half flowing west toward the Mediterranean.

This is another wonder of God’s Planning, with the waters dividing, for to the east would be towards the Jews; towards the west would point towards Rome and the Gentiles.

Ezekiel and the angel followed the branch that went toward the east. There are now a number of points that need to be looked at seriously,

- 1 The angel carried a measuring line in his hand. Each measurement of 1000 cubits would have been equal to 1/3 mile ($\frac{1}{2}$ km)
 - a. After 1000 cubits the water was ankle deep, verse 3,
 - b. After 1000 cubits the water was knee deep, verse 4.
 - c. After 1000 cubits the water was waist deep, verse 4.
 - d. After 1000 cubits the water was deep enough to swim in, not walk in, verse 5
- 2 a and b above could well represent the 2000 years of the Gospel period;
- 3 c would then represent the Millennial period;
- 4 d would then represent an impassable crossing, for no one outside

the New Heaven would be able to walk in.

- 5 Returning to the river bank, verse 6, Ezekiel saw many trees on each side of the river, where the trees would bear fruit all year, whilst their leaves would be used for healing. How healing will come from the leaves is not clear, but sickness will be virtually eliminated. God will use these trees to meet people's physical needs.
- 6 The millennial river, flowing toward the eastern region enters the sea via the Jordan Valley, running from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea and ultimately to the Gulf of Aqabah.
- 7 Making the Dead Sea fresh, but leaving the swamps and marshes salt, for the Dead Sea area is Israel's chief source of salt.

The borders of Israel. verses 13–23.

God promised Abraham – Genesis 13:14–17 and 15:17–21 – and his descendants the land of Palestine.

That promise was conditional on Israel's obedience, Deuteronomy 28. Israel has experienced many blessings in the land, and her right to possess the land has never been revoked.

When God fully restores His New Covenant with Israel in the Millennium, see notes Ezekiel 36–37, pages 99–105, she will be restored to her place of blessing in the land.

To validate His Statement of a restoration, God, through Ezekiel, again defines the boundaries, which are similar to those given at the time of Moses, Numbers 34:1–12.

There are three points here,

- 1 As with Joshua, Numbers 34:1, the starting point of the boundary becomes the finishing point; however, the only other major difference is that Joshua started in the south, but Ezekiel starts with the northern boundary.
- 2 The division of the land relates to Canaan only on both occasions, with neither plan noting the possession of the land by the 2½ tribes beyond the Jordan.
- 3 Israel's God given portion of land has always been very much a separated land with its mountainous northern and southern borders, a vast sandy desert to the east, and an inhospitable sea-shore to the west, but it has never been an island.

The divisions of the land. Ezekiel 48:1–35.

Ezekiel now lists the seven tribes that are to reside north of the temple,

- 1 Dan

- | | | |
|---|----------|----------|
| 2 | Asher | verse 2, |
| 3 | Naphtali | verse 3, |
| 4 | Manasseh | verse 4, |
| 5 | Ephraim | verse 5, |
| 6 | Reuben | verse 6, |
| 7 | Judah | verse 7. |

This list immediately raises an interesting point, the Tribe of Dan is listed here, BUT NOT ON THE LIST IN REVELATION 7.

- 1 In Genesis 49:16–17, Jacob says of Dan, “...he is to be like a serpent”.
- 2 ‘In Book of Judges, Dan hired a priest for the tribe, and called him ‘father’, Judges 17:10. The priest was an idol-worshipper and a thief, Judges 18:20.
- 3 Moving forward to when Jeroboam was king of the Northern Kingdom, the king made two golden idols for worship purposes, and gave one to Dan, 1 Kings 12:30, where we read “And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan”. At this point Dan became the centre of pagan worship for the 10 tribes in the north.
- 4 Finally, the people, speaking of Dan, were saying, “They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again”, Amos 8:14.
- 5 Yet immediately after Jacob’s blessing and prophetic word, God, through Moses said, “Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you; (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth”, Deuteronomy 6:14–15.

Thus, the consequence of worshipping a pagan image is complete and total destruction.

Since Ezekiel’s temple is on earth during the Millennial period, it is an ‘earthly’ temple; the sealing of the Jews in Revelation 7 is representative of the Jews entering the Heavenly Temple, and would appear to be the most likely explanation.

There is one further point here, Dan, because of his pagan leanings, is given the least honourable place – the extreme north.

Jewish traditional lore relates the north as being a region of darkness, “Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land”, Jeremiah 1:14.

Add Jacob’s prophetic words, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an

adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward”, Genesis 49:17, Deuteronomy 33:22 where the wording is “And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion’s whelp: he shall leap from Bashan”, it did not take long before Jewish traditional lore, with help from Jeremiah, who prophesied, “The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein”, Jeremiah 8:16, and designated the Antichrist to come from the Tribe of Dan.

The central portion, verses 8–22.

This central portion includes the city of Jerusalem, its suburbs, and its pasture lands for the cattle and herds. It will also house the prince, the priests, and Levites.

The city will cover an area of 2.2 square mile, with pasture lands on each side measuring about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile wide. At either side of Jerusalem, there will be a plot of land measuring just over $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles long and $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles wide to supply the food for the city.

Ezekiel now lists the five tribes that are to reside south of the temple,

Benjamin	verse 23,
Simeon	verse 24,
Issachar	verse 25,
Zebulun	verse 26,
Gad	verse 27.

Thus the location of each Tribe has now changed, from when Joshua allocated their positions, Joshua 13–19.

Jehovah–Shammah – THE LORD IS THERE, verses 30–35.

Ezekiel has taken us in a complete circle through this study. We have gone from the ‘doomed city’ to the restored city, now standing proudly and gloriously. The new city will have twelve gates, three on each side if the city.

Whilst we have no tangible reason, it is interesting to see who has been placed at each gate.

The north wall, Ezekiel 48:30–31, the closest to the sanctuary,

Reuben	the first born of Jacob’s sons,
Judah	the tribe to be used to bring the Redeemer into the world,
Levi	the tribe of the priesthood.

All were the children of the ‘hated’ wife – wife Leah, Genesis 29:31–35.

The east wall, Ezekiel 48:32, the entrance for the prince,
 Joseph Levi was given a gate on the north wall, thus Ephraim and Manasseh were linked as one under Joseph,
 Benjamin The tribe of Benjamin were known as brave and skilled archers. Yet their prominent place in history is that the tribe supplied Israel with its first king,
 Dan The plot leader in 'disposing of' Joseph,
 Joseph and Benjamin were the sons of Rachel. Dan, however, was the first son of Rachel's servant Bilhah.

The south wall, Ezekiel 48:33,
 Simeon The tribe was "divided and scattered" as prophesied by Jacob, Genesis 49:5-7, decreasing in the wilderness by about two-thirds. Moses pronounces no blessing on this tribe.
 Issachar Jacob's prophecy described Issachar as a beast of burden who would submit to forced labour, Genesis 49:14-15. However, Issachar is mentioned in a favourable manner regarding the tribe's battles with the Canaanites,
 Zebulun Zebulun was allotted the area of Galilee, and is probably best known for his mention in the Gospels, "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand", Matthew 4:12-17, the very call God had been making earlier in Ezekiel's prophecy, see 'God now speaks to the remnant' ff, page 92.

These three were born to Leah, and being placed on the southern wall, they faced their inheritances.

The west wall, Ezekiel 48:34,
 Gad Very little is known of his private life,
 Asher Again, very little is known of his private life, other than that he failed to drive out the Canaanites, and

dwelt amongst them,
 Naphtali Other than the fact that Jacob was the common
 father, the only other common fact we have is that
 very little is known of him either.

These three tribes descended from sons of Jacob's concubines, with Gad and Asher born to Zilpah, whilst Naphtali was born to Bilhah.

The final verse of this book is possibly the most dynamic, for, with all the problems they were suffering, all brought about by their personal living, causing the Glory of God to depart from Jerusalem, Ezekiel 10-11, as an introduction to the judgement they had to have, that when God's Glory re-appeared, THE LORD IS THERE.

Ezekiel has, repeatedly throughout this work, stated that we – the Gospel Church, and His People – the Israelites, will enjoy the Lord's Holy Presence throughout the Millennium.

As was said at the beginning of this study, 'VISIONS OF GOD AND THE SINS OF JERUSALEM', page 4, "The book has a prime theme running through it dating from the time of Jacob until even this very minute. It deals with OUR promises to God".

The main question now is

"AM I PART OF THE VINE OR THE WILD VINE?"