

# ***STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL***

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page.In
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1.04
1.0 : The Title of the book. . . . .	1.08
1.1 : The Son of Man . . . . .	1.30
1.2 : Verses 1 - 3 : Introduction . . . . .	2.07
1.3 : Verse 2 : The Historical Setting . . . . .	3.04
1.4 : Verse 2 : Ezekiel's Place of Ministry . . . . .	4.01
1.5 : Verses 4 - 9 : The Visions of God Introduced . . . . .	4.33
1.6 : Verses 10 - 14 : The Detailed Appearance of the Beings . . . . .	8.48
1.7 : Verses 15 - 21 : The Wheels . . . . .	11.24
1.8 : Verses 22 - 28 : The Vision of God . . . . .	13.16
1.9 : Verse 28 : Summary of the Vision . . . . .	14.11
CHAPTER TWO: EZEKIEL'S CALL. . . . .	15.04
2.0 : Introduction . . . . .	15.07
2.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Greeting. . . . .	15.16
2.2 : Verses 3 - 8 : The Call. . . . .	16.13
2.3 : Verses 8b - 10 : The Scroll. . . . .	18.23
CHAPTER THREE: THE WARNING TO ISRAEL . . . . .	19.04
3.0 : Introduction . . . . .	19.07
3.1 : Verses 1 - 3 : The Scroll is Eaten . . . . .	19.16
3.2 : Verses 4 - 9 : The People with a Familiar Language . . . . .	21.22
3.3 : Verses 10 - 15 : The Conclusion of the Vision. . . . .	22.20
3.4 : Verses 16 - 19 : Israel's Watchman, Duty 1 . . . . .	23.30
3.5 : Verses 20 - 21 : The Watchman, Duty 2. . . . .	25.23
3.6 : Verses 22 - 27 : Ezekiel to be Bound and Gagged. . . . .	26.02
CHAPTER FOUR: THE SEIGE OF JERUSALEM . . . . .	28.04
4.0 : Introduction . . . . .	28.07
4.1 : Verses 1 - 8 : The Seige Predicted . . . . .	28.14
4.2 : Verses 9 - 17 : The Defiled Bread . . . . .	31.53
CHAPTER FIVE: THE SEIGE OF JERUSALEM - Part 2. . . . .	34.04
5.0 : Introduction . . . . .	34.07
5.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : The Burnt Hair. . . . .	34.14
5.2 : Verses 5 - 12 : God's Judgement Pronounced. . . . .	35.21

5.3 : Verses 13 - 17 : The Resulting Reproach. . . . .	37.21
CHAPTER SIX: AGAINST THE MOUNTAINS . . . . .	38.04
6.0 : Introduction . . . . .	38.07
6.1 : Verses 1 - 7 : The prophecy Against the Mountains	38.13
6.2 : Verses 8 - 10 : The Remnant . . . . .	39.21
6.3 : Verses 11 - 14 : Cry Out "Alas". . . . .	41.01
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE TIME OF THE END . . . . .	43.04
7.0 : Introduction . . . . .	43.07
7.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : The End!. . . . .	43.14
7.2 : Verses 5 - 9 : Disaster! . . . . .	45.01
7.3 : Verses 10 - 14 : The Rod has Budded. . . . .	45.20
7.4 : Verses 15 - 22 : Shame and Death . . . . .	46.25
7.5 : Verses 23 - 27 : Chains Prepared . . . . .	47.01
CHAPTER EIGHT: IDOLATRY IN THE TEMPLE. . . . .	49.04
8.0 : Introduction . . . . .	49.07
8.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : The Vision. . . . .	49.14
8.2 : Verses 5 - 6 : The First Abomination . . . . .	50.46
8.3 : Verses 7 - 13 : The Second Abomination. . . . .	51.11
8.4 : Verses 14 - 15 : The Third Abomination . . . . .	52.53
8.5 : Verse 16 : The Fourth Abomination. . . . .	53.10
8.6 : Verses 17 - 18 : Conclusion. . . . .	53.17
CHAPTER NINE: IDOLATRY PUNISHED. . . . .	54.04
9.0 : Introduction . . . . .	54.07
9.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Seven Men . . . . .	54.13
9.2 : Verses 3 - 4 : The Men Instructed. . . . .	55.04
9.3 : Verses 5 - 6 : The Slaughter begins. . . . .	55.42
9.4 : Verse 7 - 11 : Ezekiel Pleas for the Remnant . .	56.01
CHAPTER TEN: GOD'S GLORY LEAVES THE TEMPLE . . . . .	57.04
10.0 : Introduction. . . . .	57.07
10.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Burning Coals. . . . .	57.13
10.2 : Verses 3 - 5 : The Glory of the Lord. . . . .	57.45
10.3 : Verses 6 - 14 : The Coals are Taken. . . . .	58.12
10.4 : Verses 15 - 21 : The Glory Departs. . . . .	58.27
CHAPTER ELEVEN: JUDGEMENT OF THE LEADERS . . . . .	59.04
11.0 : Introduction. . . . .	59.07
11.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : The Cooking Pot. . . . .	59.12
11.2 : Verses 5 - 12 : "From the Frying Pan to the Fire"	60.43
11.3 : Verses 13 - 15 : Ezekeil Pleas Again for the Remnant	61.06

11.4 : Verses 16 - 21 : The Promise of a Return from Exile	61.41
11.5 : Verses 22 - 25 : The End of the Vision. . . . .	63.08
CHAPTER TWELVE: PORTRAYAL OF THE EXILE . . . . .	64.04
12.0 : Introduction. . . . .	64.07
12.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Introduction . . . . .	64.15
12.3 : Verses 7 - 16 : Ezekiel Packs His Bags . . . . .	65.42
12.4 : Verses 17 - 20 : Eating in Terror . . . . .	67.05
12.5 : Verses 21 - 25 : The End of the "Proverb" . . . . .	67.23
12.6 : Verses 26 - 28 : The Scoffers' Excuse . . . . .	68.01
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: THE FALSE PROPHETS . . . . .	69.04
13.0 : Introduction. . . . .	69.07
13.1 : Verses 1 - 7 : False Prophecy Defined . . . . .	69.44
13.2 : Verses 8 - 12 : The False Prophecy . . . . .	72.07
13.3 : Verses 13 - 17 : God's Wrath Poured Out . . . . .	72.42
13.4 : Verses 18 - 23 : The Women False-prophets . . . . .	72.52
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: IDOLATRY OF THE HEART. . . . .	75.04
14.0 : Introduction. . . . .	75.07
14.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : Idolatry of the Heart. . . . .	75.13
14.2 : Verses 6 - 11 : The Idolatry Condemned . . . . .	76.01
14.3 : Verses 12 - 20 : Noah, Daniel and Job . . . . .	77.13
14.4 : Verses 21 - 23 : The Ever Present Remnant . . . . .	78.32
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: THE USELESS VINE. . . . .	79.04
15.0 : Introduction. . . . .	79.07
15.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : The Allegory . . . . .	79.12
15.2 : Verses 6 - 8 : The Application. . . . .	79.30
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: THE LORD'S "LADY" . . . . .	81.04
16.0 : Introduction. . . . .	81.07
16.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : The Lady's Birth . . . . .	81.17
16.2 : Verses 6 - 7 : The Lady's Adoption . . . . .	82.10
16.3 : Verse 8 : The Lady is Engaged . . . . .	83.38
16.4 : Verses 9 - 14 : God's Provision for the Lady . . . . .	84.25
16.5 : Verses 12 - 22 : The Lady's Whoredom. . . . .	86.22
16.6 : Verses 23 - 34 : The Lady is Weak Willed" . . . . .	89.16
16.7 : Verses 35 - 43 : The Lady's Demise. . . . .	90.15
16.8 : Verses 44 - 58 : The Lady's Parenthood Haunts Her	91.22
16.7 : Verses 59 - 63 : The Lady Redeemed. . . . .	91.43
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE EAGLES & VINE . . . . .	93.04
17.0 : Introduction. . . . .	93.07

17.1 : Verses 1 - 8 : The First Eagle. . . . .	93.13
17.2 : Verses 7 - 10 : The Second Eagle . . . . .	96.10
17.3 : Verses 11 - 18 : The Meaning. . . . .	96.22
17.4 : Verses 19 - 21 : The Result . . . . .	96.29
17.5 : Verses 22 - 24 : The New Shoot. . . . .	96.35
 CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. . . . .	 98.04
18.0 : Introduction. . . . .	98.07
18.1 : Verses 1 - 20 : The Father/Son Relationship in Sin	98.14
18.2 : Verses 21 - 32 : Personal Responsibility. . . . .	100.20
 CHAPTER NINETEEN: A LAMENT FOR ISRAEL'S PRINCES. . . . .	 102.04
19.0 : Introduction. . . . .	102.07
19.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : The First Cub. . . . .	102.40
19.1 : Verses 5 - 9 : The Second Cub . . . . .	103.01
19.3 : Verses 10 - 14 : The Barren Lioness . . . . .	103.13
 CHAPTER TWENTY: MORE JUDGEMENT AGAINST ISRAEL. . . . .	 104.04
20.0 : Introduction. . . . .	104.07
20.1 : Verses 1 - 27 : Continued Rebellion. . . . .	104.23
20.2 : Verses 30 - 44 : Judgement and Restoration. . . . .	105.01
20.3 : Verses 45 - 49 : Judgement Against the South. . . . .	105.13
 CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: GOD'S SWORD - BABYLON. . . . .	 106.04
21.0 : Introduction. . . . .	106.07
21.1 : Verses 45 - 49 (chapter 20): Against The South. . . . .	106.12
21.2 : Verses 1 - 8 : The Parable Made Plain . . . . .	107.05
21.3 : Verses 8 - 17 : The Sharpened Sword. . . . .	107.51
21.4 : Verses 18 - 27 : The Two Roads. . . . .	109.03
21.5 : Verses 28 - 32 : The Other Road . . . . .	109.43
 CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: THE DROSS IN THE FURNACE . . . . .	 111.05
22.0 : Introduction. . . . .	111.08
22.1 : Verses 1 - 16 : Jerusalem's Sins Reviewed. . . . .	111.15
22.2 : Verses 17 - 22 : The Dross in the Furnace . . . . .	111.23
22.3 : Verses 23 - 29 : More Judgement . . . . .	113.04
22.4 : Verses 30 - 31 : The Open Gap . . . . .	113.09
 CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: THE ADULTEROUS DAUGHTERS . . . . .	 114.04
23.0 : Introduction. . . . .	114.07
23.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : Oholah and Oholibah. . . . .	114.13
23.2 : Verses 5 - 10 : Oholah's (Samaria's) Sins. . . . .	114.30
23.3 : Verses 11 - 21 : Oholibah's (Jerusalem's) Sins. . . . .	115.28
23.4 : Verses 22 - 35 : Oholibah's Judgement . . . . .	116.08

23.5 : Verses 36 - 49 : Judgement Again. . . . .	117.13
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: THE COOKING POT . . . . .	118.04
24.0 : Introduction. . . . .	118.07
24.1 : Verses 1 - 14 : The Cooking Pot. . . . .	118.18
24.2 : Verses 15 - 27 : The Death of Mrs. Ezekiel. . . . .	118.33
CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: AGAINST OTHER NATIONS . . . . .	120.04
25.0 : Introduction. . . . .	120.07
25.1 : Verses 1 - 7 : Against Ammon . . . . .	120.15
25.2 : Verses 8 - 11 : Against Moab . . . . .	121.05
25.3 : Verses 12 - 14 : Against Edom . . . . .	121.21
25.4 : Verses 15 - 17 : Against Philistia. . . . .	121.48
25.5 : Conclusion. . . . .	122.02
CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX: AGAINST TYRE . . . . .	123.04
26.0 : Introduction. . . . .	123.07
26.1 : Verse 1 - 6 : Introduction. . . . .	123.24
26.2 : Verses 7 - 14 : The Details. . . . .	124.08
26.3 : Verses 15 - 21 : The Outcome. . . . .	124.15

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

### 1.0: The Title of the book

The title of the book is "The Book of Ezekiel" (**NAS**) or "The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel" (**KJV**) or simply "Ezekiel" (**NIV**). The latter title is also the title given in the Hebrew Bible (**BH**) = (Biblia Hebraica) upon which this study is based.

The name "**Ezekiel**" is a compounded Hebrew word which means "Strengthened of God". We shall comment on the significance of this name later. It is sufficient to point out here that the prophet is referred to by this name only twice in the book (1:3, 24:24), once in I Chronicles 24:16 which refers to another person, and is not found at all in the New Testament. One might, however, have given this book another title by using the name by which this prophet is more often referred - **Son of Man**, or, in the Hebrew, "**Ben-Adam**". Just begin reading in this book and you find this title used over and over again - verses 2:1, 2:3, 3:6, 3:8, etc.. He is referred to by this title over seventy times in this book. Daniel is called by this name once (Daniel 8:17) but other than this, no one else in the Old Testament is ever given this title. What does it mean?

### 1.1: The Son of Man

While Ezekiel is the only Old Testament prophet referred to by this name (excepting the once reference to Daniel), the name is also to be found in the New Testament. It is found in the following verses: Matt 9:6, 10:23, 12:8, 12:32, 12:40, 13:37, 13:41, 16:13, 16:27, 16:28, 17:9, 17:12, 17:22, 18:11, 19:28, 20:18, 20:28, 24:27, 24:30 (twice), 24:37, 24:39, 24:44, 25:13, 25:31, 26:2, 26:24 (twice), 26:45 and 26:64, just noting the appearances in the book of Matthew. Every one of these refers to Jesus Christ. Thus, we find Ezekiel as the Old Testament "Son of Man", Jesus Christ as the "Son of Man" in the New.

On the other hand, there are many New Testament references to the "Son of God", references also to Jesus Christ. What is the difference between these two titles? When we speak of Jesus Christ the "Son of God" we are looking to the fact that he was God in the flesh - we look at his Godly attributes. When we refer to him as the "Son of Man", we make reference to the fact that he literally became man and identified himself with us. This is what is referred to in [Hebrews 4:15], "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin".

When we speak of the "Son of Man", we speak of the fact that Jesus Christ, having become man himself, can identify with us and know our weaknesses and cares. This, then, carries over into the Old Testament to Ezekiel, a man who was close enough to the people of Israel to be aware of their weaknesses and problems and to be able to communicate with them. We will have more to say about this later.

### 1.2: Verses 1-3 Introduction

It may be said of the book of Ezekiel the same that Peter said about some of Paul's epistles, "...in all

his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand..." [2 Peter 3:16]. There are many things in this book which are hard to understand and in which one can not be dogmatic. Verse 1 of chapter 1 is a good example of this.

"In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day..." is a very precise date except for one thing - the thirtieth year of what? No one really knows for sure. We are given a **synchronism** in verse 2, "...the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin", which means that the first of the thirty years was some twenty-five years earlier than this exile. But what happened then?

**K&D** give a number of possibilities for what this date references and then point out that none of them are reliable. **CLF** makes note of the same references. The most likely of these is that it refers to the birth of the Prophet, but all that we can take as being relatively sure is that the date was 623BC and that thirty years later is then 593BC.

The first verse gives us not only the time, but also the place of Ezekiel's ministry, "by the Kebar River". This is no clearer than the date, for we are unable to precisely locate this river today. All that can safely be said is that it was some place in the region of Babylon. This is to be determined from the fact that Ezekiel ministered "among the exiles" which, at that time, were living in that area.

We will not be dogmatic about the time or the place, but we can be specific about the remainder of verse 1. At this time we are told that "the heavens were opened" and that Ezekiel saw "visions of God". Nowhere else in the Old Testament are we told that the "heavens were opened". We do, however, find it in the New Testament, where we have Stephen saying "I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" [Acts 7:56]. Then Peter "saw heaven opened..." [Acts 10:11 NIV]. Finally, John writes, "...there before me was a door standing open in heaven..." [Rev. 4:1 NIV]. In each of these cases God was to make a significant revelation to the person, and so it is to the "son of man" of the Old Testament.

While we do not find these words in the Old Testament, we do find similar situations. Isaiah, in his commissioning writes "I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted and the train of his robe filled the temple." [Isaiah 6:1 NIV]. Aside from this, we know of no other such dramatic commissionings in the Old Testament.

### 1.3: Verse 2 - The historical setting

In verse 2 we have the mention that this account opens during the fifth year of the exile of **King Jehoiachin**. This not only gives us the opening date, but allows us to find out what was going on at this time. What we know of this king can be found in II Kings 24 and 25 (and a few other places). From II Kings 24:8,9 we learn that he became king at 18 years of age and "did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father (Jehoiakim) did".

From Jeremiah 22:24-27 we learn that it was during his time that the beginnings of the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians began. We also learn, then, that Jeremiah was a contemporary of Ezekiel. To get close to the date in question, we find from Jeremiah 28:1-4 that in the fourth year (one year earlier) of his exile (which is also the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah), a false prophet by the name of Hananiah prophesied that Jehoiachin would be returned to Jerusalem, along with all the temple treasures, within two years. However, II Kings 25:27 reveal that he did not return until over thirty years later.



## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

This gives us a glimpse of the ministry of Jeremiah the "weeping prophet" who was to remain in Jerusalem (or the vicinity) and try to convince Israel of the judgement God was bringing on them.

Turning to the book of Daniel (1:1) we find that Daniel was taken into captivity in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim. We reference this to II Kings 23:36 to 24:8, we learn that Daniel was taken into captivity some 13 years prior to the time recorded in Ezekiel 1:2. Hence, Daniel was also a contemporary of Ezekiel.

Thus, we have three major prophets on the scene, all at the same time. Each, however, had his own special ministry. We have already noted that Jeremiah was to minister in Jerusalem, which he did until Israel, in defiance of God, left for Egypt with Jeremiah accompanying them (Jeremiah 43:4-7) where he completed his ministry.

Daniel's ministry was altogether different. As a matter-of-fact, in the BH, Daniel is not included in the "Books of the Prophets". This may seem strange - such an important prophet as Daniel not a "prophet"? The fact of the matter is that Daniel was not a prophet - to Israel! Daniel was a prophet to the Gentiles and this is emphasized by the fact that most of the book is not even written in Hebrew, but in Chaldean. Since God was in the process of subjecting his people to captivity, he raised a prophet who could speak God's will to the Gentiles who would be their captors.

So, now we come to the ministry of Ezekiel.

### 1.4: Verse 2 - Ezekiel's Place of Ministry

Here we have a repeat of what was told in verse 1, that he was to minister by the river Kebar (wherever it may have been) "in the land of the Chaldeans" (v3) and "among the exiles" (v1). While Jeremiah was to remain in Jerusalem to minister to the Jews there, and Daniel was to minister to the Chaldeans, Ezekiel was to minister to those of Israel who had been taken captive into Babylon.

It is interesting to see God's provisions for His people. Before the fall of Judah, there was need of only one prophet (such as during the ministry of Isaiah), but now, one prophet could no longer minister to the needs of God's people. Isaiah could minister to the heads of government (Israel's leaders) and all of Israel. Now, Daniel is to minister to the heads of government, Jeremiah to part of the Jews, Ezekiel to the rest.

Finally, the instruction closes with the words, "There the hand of the Lord was upon him." It is interesting that the phrase "the hand of the Lord" is found in this book a quite a number of times, along with similar phrases where "...the Lord" is implied.

Some of these are: 3:14, 3:22, 8:1. We noted at the start of this study that the name "Ezekiel" means "strengthend of God" and these are just some of the examples of what is meant by this. As Ezekiel takes up this ministry, the hand of the Lord will lift him up and strengthen him so that he might fulfill the ministry.

This is not peculiar to Ezekiel. The Lord does not call us to a ministry without equipping us for it. As the Lord called Ezekiel, he placed his hand upon him and prepared him.

### 1.5: Verses 4-9 : The visions of God introduced

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

In these verses we have the beginning of the description of the "visions of God" (verse 1) that Ezekiel saw. The vision begins with a "windstorm coming out of the North", followed with a description of this storm.

The NIV, unfortunately, glosses over a Hebrew word in verse 4 which is usually translated "**behold!**". This word is "hin-neh" in the BH and has no real "meaning", which is why the NIV glosses over it. But, it has a function and this is to inform the reader that what follows is either something new or important or (usually) both. It introduces for us an important revelation to Ezekiel and to us. This is evidenced by the fact that some 25 verses are devoted to describing the appearance of the vision before getting to its purpose.

"Windstorm" is an unusual term in the BH. It is a combination of two words, the first of which is usually translated "spirit" but occasionally "wind" ("Ruah"). The second is a word which means "tempest" ("sgah-rah"). The latter word is found by itself in several places, the most important (for now) of which we shall consider here. First, there is 2 Kings 2:1,11 where Elijah was taken up into heaven in a "whirlwind". This "windstorm" then is the means of taking people into heaven directly. Then, in Job 38:1 and 40:6, God speaks to Job out of the "storm", hence it is the vehicle which brings God down to man from heaven.

Then, there is an interesting passage in Zecharah 9:14 which speaks of the Lord's coming in the "storms of the south". This is interesting in that the direction is the opposite of what we have here. The differences in direction are symbolic of the direction from which the judgement or deliverance (as the case may be) that accompanies this will come, in this case, out of the North. This is to say that the people whom God will use to bring this about.

The fact that the "storm" is here compounded is to emphasize the magnitude of this storm. This, then is a mighty storm which Ezekiel now continues to describe.

He gives three terms to describe this mighty storm: (1) "an immense cloud", (2) "with flashing lightning" and (3) "surrounded by brilliant light". Clouds are frequently associated with the presence of God. It begins in [Exodus 13:21] with the pillar of cloud that led Israel and ends with the cloud which will receive us into heaven, [1 Thess. 4:17]. This, however, is the only OT reference to a "great cloud". Again, then, the terms speak of an unusually important appearance.

Second there is "flashing lightning" (as if there were any other kind of lightning!). First the word here translated "lightning" is not the common Hebrew word for lightning. In fact, the KJV does not even translate this as lightning but as "fire", the usual translation of the word. The NIV interprets this "fire" in the sense we would normally assume. The Hebrew here is interesting in that it uses a word that means "to take hold of". It is here in the **Hithpael** stem which makes it both reflexive and intensive. Reflexive makes it mean "to take hold of itself" and the intensive, naturally, intensifies this meaning. The fire or lightning was "taking hold of itself" which means that the bolts were coming so close together that it appeared as if one was on the tails of the last. Nowhere in the Scriptures is lightning so vividly portrayed.

Last, it was "surrounded with a brilliant light" (as if the lightning were not enough!). "Surround" here is a favorite word of Ezekiel and we shall find it many times as we proceed. The "light" is from a Hebrew word ("noh-geh") which is almost always used in spiritual sense. Hence we have: [2 Samuel 22:29] "You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord turns my darkness into light."

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

[Psalm 18:28] "You, O God, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light."

[Isaiah 9:2] "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the shadow of death a light has dawned."

And so it is with most all of the other references to this word. The significance of this "light" surrounding the storm that Ezekiel saw, then, is that all that was within this storm was for the edification of the Son of Man and of us. It was knowledge from God on high.

With this general introduction of the windstorm, Ezekiel now begins to describe the specific parts of it. There are two distinct parts mentioned. These are (1) "something like glowing metal" in the center and (2) "what looked like four living creatures" around it. Ezekiel says no more about the first and spends the rest of the chapter trying to describe the later.

Before we look at the details, we need to ask ourselves how literally we are to take this description. There are some **eschatologists** who delight in translating visions such as these into common things we have today. They might, for example, determine that these four creatures with the wheels spinning are really helicopters. Are we to do this

First, it is quite true that, had Ezekiel seen a helicopter, with the limited technical knowledge he possessed he might have described it thus. This does not, however, make it true. The key to this whole point is found back in verse 1. He says he saw "visions" of God. This is a clue to us that the things he saw were to be signs to teach us a spiritual truth. They were not actual things that he saw. We shall, then, not attempt to translate this vision into some material form. We shall not even insist that the "windstorm" was a physical reality.

Since the item in the midst of the storm is not further described, we shall consider it in detail now and then proceed. We have not much to go on, it was simply something like "glowing metal". The KJV has "color of amber" which may be a more literal but not more helpful. The term is only found in these passages in Ezekiel and is thus something we can not be dogmatic about.

We can gain some insight into the meaning of this object when we turn to [Genesis 3:24] where God drove Adam and Eve from the Garden and stationed the cherubim there with a "flaming sword" in its midst. From Revelation 4, where John was allowed to see into heaven, and in verses 4 and 5 we have:

And from the throne proceeded flashes of lightning and sounds like peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God: and before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; in the center and around the throne, four living creatures...

[Rev 4:4-5 NIV]

We shall return to this passage later. For now, we see that the flaming sword of Genesis, the "glowing metal" of Ezekiel and the "throne with lightning" of Revelation are all one and the same, the vision of God himself (probably in the person of Jesus Christ).

We will return to this part of the vision when we reach verse 25 and, for now, we shall go on to consider the four "living creatures". To begin with "living creatures" is the translation of a Hebrew word which simply refers to things that are alive. It makes no inference in regards to the type of living thing. Perhaps the NAS translation "**living beings**" is the best. So, thus far, the only special thing

about them is that there were four of them. **Four** is the number of "**universality**" in the Scriptures. There is no mystical significance to this, it is simply the number of the compass points, East, West, North and South which, collectively signifies all possible directions - hence "universality".

The next part of the description is hard to comprehend and it is perhaps at this point that we need to consider the proper interpretation of such visions. Have you ever had a dream which made a great deal of sense while you were dreaming it, but when you awoke and pieced it together it was all mixed up? Why is this? It may be, in part, because by the time you awoke you had forgotten some of the parts. But, more importantly, it is because while you were dreaming it, you were not concerned with the overall picture but only the significance of what you were envisioning at the time.

The same sort of concept holds for these visions. We can not try to put all the pieces together to make some kind of a whole. We are to look at the individual parts and understand the significance of each. With this concept, we shall go on and look at the component parts of these living beings.

First, these beings had the likeness of a man (Hebrew "adam"). We have already discussed Ezekiel and the "son of man". The fact that these beings had the resemblance of a man is to be taken that there is to be some affinity here to man, that they are to represent something to mankind.

Then, in verse 6 the description enlarges with each creature having four heads and four wings. One might ask if Ezekiel didn't mean that, collectively, they had four heads, hence one each. This is not the case for the phrase regarding the heads is identical (in the Hebrew) to the phrase regarding the wings and it would not seem reasonable that each had only one wing.

Why four heads? Why four wings? Again, the number four is the number of universality. Collectively, the four beings spoke of a universal concept. Individually, each, through its heads (especially) and its wings, speaks of a universal concept. The compounding of the number four strengthens the concept.

In verse 7 we have three additional descriptions, their legs, the feet, and their coloring. The KJV translation "their feet were straight feet" is a literal but misleading translation of the Hebrew. The Hebrew word used here (regel), in a general sense refers to the part of man's anatomy from the trunk down, hence legs and feet and hence the more modern translations, "straight legs". Again, "straight" does not convey the total meaning. The Hebrew word has a root which means "righteous" or "upright". When used in a moral sense, it means "righteous". When used in a literal(?) sense as here, it means "upright". In other words, these beings were "standing up" (although the indication is that they were not standing on any material object). Perhaps this is to indicate their moral condition, that is righteous.

The second part of the description deals with their feet, literally, "the hands of their feet", which is, of course, what we call the "feet". These were like the feet of a calf. One has to wonder why these beings, generally having the appearance of a man, should have the foot of a calf. The answer may be found in the root of the word for calf (geh-gel), as demonstrated in Psalm 29:6: "...He makes Lebanon skip like a calf". The root means "to roll" or "to gambol" and hence speaks of a gamboling or agile or fleet animal. The significance then is the mobility of these beings.

Finally, their legs were like "burnished bronze". We have already noted the similar appearance in the center of the fire (verse 4). We note the similarity of this description to that of Daniel 10:6 (the only

other place this adjective is used), in his vision of the "Man of God". "Burnished" comes from a Hebrew word (Kah-lah) which also has the idea of swiftness (hence bronze which has been polished by rapid rubbing motions). Again, the concept of agility is involved.

Finally, in verse 9, the body is completed, with each of the beings having hands on each of their four sides. Taken literally, this means that each being had four hands (and arms). The hand is that with which we reach out and thus these could reach out "universally" in each of the four directions.

The last part of verse 9 and verse 10 then form a summary to this section. Each had four heads; below the four heads were four wings; below the wings were four hands and arms; below their torsos were (apparently) two legs with feet like those of calves. We can only surmise that there were only two feet on the basis we are given the number and that these are to be taken as resembling man (with two feet) except where otherwise noted.

If this is so, why only two feet? "Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved". The description answers the question, they moved in only one direction, straight ahead.

#### 1.6: Verses 10-14 : The Detailed Appearance of the Beings

These five verses give us a more detailed description of the four beings introduced in the last section. It begins with the faces of their four heads.

The appearance of each face is given and the position of these with respect to the sides of the being. It begins with the first face, the face of a "man" (Hebrew "adam"). We have already considered this aspect before. It is sufficient here to point out that the location of this face is not given explicitly and we are thus to assume it as being the "primary" face which faces forward and hence the more important of the four.

The second face was that of a **lion** and was to be found on the "right" side. We must presume it was their right and not the right as viewed by Ezekiel. We shall comment on the lion after we see the other faces. On the left side was the face of an **ox**. To the rear (implied) was the face of an **eagle**. We now consider the significance of these faces, both individually and collectively.

Collectively, we find these at only one other place, Revelation 4 which we referred to previously. There we find "The first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature was like a calf, and the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle" [Rev. 4:7 NAS]. There are a few minor differences in the description which may not be differences at all. The first difference is in replacing the OX with a CALF. However, the Greek word (mosco) signifies the young of any beast, COW, OX, etc. and so is not necessarily a contradiction.

The most significant difference is that John describes each of the four creatures as having a different appearance. But, consider this. Each of the creatures had four faces, as we described before. Each being was facing in a different direction. Thus, as John viewed the situation, the face he would see by him on each creature would have been a different face, and hence each being would have a different appearance, as he describes. Thus, John and Ezekiel both describe the same creatures.

There are some differences later, John says that each being had six wings, and Ezekiel says four. We shall not here consider this but continue to be concerned with the four faces.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

The second face was that of a LION. Why a lion? If you consider each of the faces, they all share something in common and they all have a distinct difference. The thing that they have in common is that they are each the "supreme being" of their class of being. The difference is that the lion is a representative of the wild animals. The ox is the representative of the domesticated animals. The eagle is the representative of the birds. Each is the master of their group. The thing that is missing is that there is not representative of the sea life.

Why there is not fish representative could be explained, but is rather involved (i.e. with other Bible passages) and we shall not delve into it here. To finish this up, let's consider some passages dealing with these animals.

First, in regards to the eagle, we find:

Judah is a lion's whelp. [Gen. 49:9]  
Dan is a lion's whelp. [Deut. 33:22]  
And the lion will eat straw like the ox. [Isaiah 11:7]  
Like a destroying lion. [Jeremiah 2:30]

Then there is a long passage in Nahum 2:11-13 which deals with the fierceness of the lion. And, of course, there is the saying that the lion is "the king of the beasts."

In regards to the eagle, there are a number of interesting passages such as:

They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions. [2 Sam. 1:23]

I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky...

[Proverbs 30:19]

They will mount up with wings like eagles. [Isaiah 40:31]

Behold, He will mount up and swoop like an eagle, and spread out His wings against Bozrah...

[Jeremiah 49:22]

So, as the eagle is the king of the beasts, the eagle is the king of the air. And then we come to the grass eating or domesticated animals, the Ox.

Where no oxen are the manger is clean. But much increase comes by the strength of the ox.

[Proverbs 14:4]

There are not a lot of verses such as the above that attest to the ox as the king of the domesticated grass eating animals. However, when one considers the large parts of Exodus 21 and 22 which deal with the value of the ox, it is apparent that it was a valued animal in Israel.

So, now, to summarize, why these animals? First, there is again the concept of universality, all of the (non-fish) life is represented in the faces and the most noble of each is represented. There is the universality in respect to life itself.

We turn now to their **wings**. We note from Exodus 25:20 and I Kings 6:24-27 (and other places of the wings of the cherubim and that the two cherubim on the mercy seat faced each other with their wings touching. It seems that each time we see these heavenly creatures, they have grown additional wings. The cherubim in the tabernacle and temple each had two wings. Isaiah saw six [Isaiah 6:2], Ezekiel saw four, and, finally, John saw six (Rev. 4). We then wish to determine why the differences.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

From Isaiah 6:2 we learn that the wings were used in pairs (obviously), one pair for covering their faces, one for covering their feet, and one for flying. From the description of the cherubim in the tabernacle, [Exodus 37:9], the single pair of wings covered the mercy seat as the cherubim faced each other. The deployment of the wings in Revelation 4 is not described. We would gather that the number of wings depends on the need at each individual time.

The cherubim on the mercy seat did not fly, they had a permanent station. In addition, facing one another, they did not need wings to cover their faces and feet as in Isaiah. In the case here in Ezekiel, they did not cover their feet as there was a message to be revealed in their feet. They did not cover their faces as there was a message to Ezekiel in the faces, and so there was only need for covering the rest of their bodies and for flying.

In conclusion, the wings show of of God's provision. He equips each of us with those things which we need for the particular ministry He calls us to.

Ezekiel then, in verse 12, describes the motion of the cherubim. He we have the picture of the obedient servant of God. Each followed the direction of the spirit without faltering to one side or the other.

Finally, verses 13 and 14 emphasize the picture we saw in the last paragraph, with the lightning and the glowing. Again, it is a very vivid picture which accompanies this revelation from God.

### 1.7 : Verses 1:15-21 : The Wheels

In this next section, Ezekiel describes something not seen in any of the other visions of the cherubim, **wheels**. What is a "wheel"?

The Hebrew word ("oaphan") is found some 30 times in the Old Testament, and most of these are in Ezekiel 1 and 10. The word is used to describe wheels of chariots in Ex. 14:25, Isaiah 28:27 and Naham 3:2. It is used several times in Proverbs, and the remaining appearances are in I Kings 7:30-33, where they are attached to the laver stands of the temple.

It is thought by some, then, that the wheels here in Ezekiel were part of a chariot on which the cherubim rode. However, there is no mention here of such a cart. Let us look at the description of these wheels.

They were, first of all, identical and four in number (one per cherub) and sparkled like chrysolite (NIV) or beryl (NAS, KJV). It is not at all clear what stone is referred to and we shall pass this over by noting that, again, the description is of that which glows with a brilliant shine is the lightning. The last part of the description is somewhat difficult. Literally, the Hebrew says that "appearance was as if there was a wheel in the midst of a wheel". How do we understand this?

We have already determined that there were four wheels, one per cherub, and each was the same. Thus, when it says the appearance was as if one wheel was in another, it can not mean that one was smaller than the other and surrounded by it. Hence, the NIV interpretation, "a wheel intersecting a wheel". This would tend to indicate that the wheels were at right angles with each other and hence the spokes of one wheel would stick through the spokes of the next. This is hard to picture and we shall leave this for now and continue the description.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

In verse 17, we are told that they would go in any of the four directions that the beings faced. This would seem to make sense, but then, it also says that the wheels did this "without **turning**" (NAS) or "did not turn about" (NIV). In interpreting this one needs to distinguish between "rotating" and "changing direction". This same phrase has already be used of the beings themselves, that they did not turn from the direction they were going. We take it, then that the wheels rotated on their hubs but did not change directions.

Going on to verse 18, we have a description on the **wheel rims** which were full of **eyes**. This is a very peculiar description! The KJV has "rings" rather than "rims". The Hebrew word refers to an object which is curved such as an eyebrow (Lev. 14:9), curved backs (Job 13:12) and so on. It is again found in I Kings 7 describing the wheels there along with the axels, hubs and spokes (7:33) and hence clearly refers to the rims of the wheels.

Why were the rims of the wheels filled with eyes? What was the purpose of these eyes? This is, obviously a very common word in the Bible, and we shall consider only a few passages:

My frame was not hidden from Thee. When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth, Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance, And in thy book they were all written.  
[Psalm 139:15-16 NAS]

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good. [Proverbs 15:3 NAS]

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears open to their cries. [Psalm 34:25 NAS]

The point of these an other passages is that the eyes of the Lord represent His awareness of what transpires here on earth. They signify both his judgement on the unjust and his watchcare of his own. The fact that the rims were full of eyes, as in the other pointts of the vision, speak of the scope and importance of this vision. That fact that they were in the rims and would thus be constantly in rotation, scanning the earth upon which the wheels reseted, is an indication of the fact that they were searching out every each of the four corners of the globe, especially in regards to Israel who was now scattered hitther and yon.

In the next two verses (19, 20) the movement is again noticed. It appears that in some cases the beings moved on the wheels and is others the flew with their wings. This is a picture of the Spirit's dealings with men and, especially, God's dealing with men through his angels. Turning to Daniel 10:10-13 we have Daniel's meeting with an angel who had struggled to come to Daniel for three weeks and was withstood by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" and was finally assisted by Michael the prince of Israel. In some cases these ministering spirits move about here on earth, superintending in the affairs of men - i.e. they move about on their all-seeing wheels. at other times, there are battles to be fought "against the forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" [Eph. 6:12] - i.e. they move about in the air on their great wings.

Finally, we are told that the spirit of the living beings was in the wheels. This might be explained by an analogy where we would say that the power that moves an automobile is in the wheels. It is the wheels of the automobile that apply power to make the vehicle move. The spirit of these beings was manifested in the wheels which picture the movement of the beings. These four beings were



motivated by the spirit in the wheels.

1.8 : Verses 1:22-28 : The vision of God

Now, Ezekiel turns from the four beings and returns to the one in the midst of the storm and a description of him. In verse 25 he catches this glimpse as the beings stand with lowered wings. Turning again to Revelation 4, the beings and the twenty-four elders are pictured as bowing before the throne (4:10). Here, then, these beings bow before Him and so allow Ezekiel to concentrate on Him who is the center of the vision.

Over their heads he sees an "**expanse**, sparkling like ice and awesom", or as the KJV has it, **firmament**. This term is found in only a few places in the Scriptures. It is used in Genesis 1:6- 20 in describing the creation. Aside from this, it is found only in the following three passages:

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of his hands.  
[Psalm 19:1 NAS]

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse.  
[Psalm 150:1 NAS]

And those who have insight will shine brightly like the expanse of heaven [Daniel 12:3 NAS]

The term itself, is not found in the N.T., but consider the words of John who says, "...before the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal" which is certainly equivalent. But, finally, John describes the New Jerusalem with a "brilliance like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal clear jasper" [Rev. 21:11].

This "firmament" or "expanse" thus is a picture of God's abiding place, both now and in the New Jerusalem to come. so Ezekiel's vision now turns to God himself.

Above this expanse he sees a **throne** which looked as if it were made of sapphire. The significance of the throne itself needs no explanation, it is the seat of the own in authority. This one appeared as if it were made of the "sapphire stone" (Hebrew: ebon- sapphire). Israel saw God on a pavement of such material (Exodus 24:10) and we might thus infer that both the "expanse" and the "throne" were of the same material. It is apparently very costly and very clear, speaking of the preciousness of God and the righteousness of God (or pureness).

Above the throne (presumably seated upon it) was one with the appearance of man whom we would take to be the Son of Man. The further description of this "man" is similar to the earlier description and is consistent with that description.

1.9 : Verse 1:28 : Summary of the Vision

The last verse in this chapter summarizes the vision which Ezekiel saw. He summarizes it with the picture "like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day". What a vivid description! It reminds us of the promise that God made to us through Noah when he placed the bow in the sky as a sign of no further judgement by flood. It is the sign of hope.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

This will be an especial sign of hope to Ezekiel in the light of the judgement and destruction being wrought upon Israel and Jerusalem. It is a picture of the hope that can be found in God as he appears to man and speaks to him.

As did others when confronted by God, Ezekiel bows down to listen to what the Lord has to say to him. The message is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO  
EZEKIEL'S CALL

2.0 : Introduction

In chapter 1, Ezekiel describes the vision he saw by the River Kebar and great detail. In verse 25 he heard a voice from the one seated upon the throne, the voice of the Lord. In this chapter he records the words that came to him from the Lord. This is Ezekiel's call into the ministry and will continue on into chapter 3.

2.1 : Verses 1-2 : The Greeting

In the last chapter, Ezekiel fell face down before the lord (verse 28). While in this position, the voice of the Lord comes to him, with the words "Son of man...". We have already commented at length regarding this title.

Then, there is a command and a promise. The command was for Ezekiel to **stand** up on his feet. The promise was that the Lord would then speak to him. The verb of the command is "stand up" (Hebrew "ghah-mad") and is an imperative. Such a command is given some 17 times in the Old Testament, not all of these being commands from the Lord.

The commands from the Lord "to stand" are all given to Ezekiel and his contemporaries:

Stand at the crossroads and look; [Jeremiah 6:16]  
Stand at the gate of the Lord's house and there proclaim...  
[Jeremiah 7:2]  
Stand in the courtyard ... and speak.. [Jeremiah 26:2]  
Stand by the road and watch... [Jeremiah 48:19]  
Stand up, for I have been sent to you..[Daniel 10:11]

Now, this is not the command the Lord usually gives his servants. Usually, the command is "Go!", Go ye into all the world....

There is a time to go and a time to stand. Before we can go, we must stand for instruction. We must stand to be strengthened that we might go.

Concerning the passages in Jeremiah, in two of them he was to stand and observe and hence to learn. In the other two he was to stand and the lord would bring people to stand before him to be instructed. In the verse in Daniel, he was to stand and receive instruction.

Now, Ezekiel was commanded to stand, but to this is appended the words "on your feet". Obviously, if he was to stand, it would be upon his feet, so why mention them? For emphasis. We already have commented on the significance of feet in the last chapter. It was upon these feet that Ezekiel would have to travel, to take a stand, to perform his ministry.

Now, as we come to verse 2, we learn a very important point. We commented on the fact that he

would have to stand upon his feet to execute his ministry. But, the Lord never asks us to serve Him in our own strength. When he asks us to perform a ministry, he enables us, gives us the ability and strength, to do it. Here, after commanding Ezekiel to stand upon his feet, we find that the Lord then provides the power, the Lord lifts him into that position.

## 2.2 : Verses 3-8 - The Call

Now we get into the message itself. We find that Ezekiel is being called to minister to the Israelites. This is not really news, that was the ministry of most all of the prophets, Daniel excepted. But, then the Lord is more specific about the people to whom he is to minister.

He uses several terms to describe Israel: rebellious, revolt, obstinate, and stubborn. How would you like to be described with these words? The meaning of the first two terms is quite clear - they were a people who did not wish to come under to control of God. Had they lived today, they would have been the ones with the bumper stickers "Question Authority". "Why should we obey God, let's do our own thing". Does this apply only to Israel in Ezekiel's time? One only has to read the Old Testament to realize that this was Israel, from their deliverance from Egypt onward.

But, does it have to apply only to Israel? Does it apply today? Go door-to-door with the Gospel message and what reception do you usually get from the unsaved? "Who needs it!". Ezekiel's ministry is really no different that our ministry today. True, some of the details may have differed, but the people are just as stubborn.

The second terms used are, literally, "grievous of face" and "strong hearted". I am not totally sure how an Israelite would interpret the term "grievous of face", but it is not hard to picture people with such faces today - people whose faces do not reflect the joy that comes from a right relationship with God. When one lacks such a relationship, the second term applies, a "hard" or callous heart. The adjective here is normally used in a good sense, "strong" or "mighty". A "strong heart" might be good if it is strong in unit with God, but apart from God it is not.

Incidentally, in the Greek translation of verses 3 and 4, The Lord says to Ezekiel that he is making him an "apostle" to Israel. He says that Ezekiel was to be a "man with a mission".

Now, humanly speaking, if you wished to bid someone to do a job for you, you would certainly not "encourage" him with the words we have seen. Most people are very timid when it comes to going out with the Gospel. They might be buoyed up with the hope that the people they would meet would be friendly and receive the message happily. But, given the "encouragement" which Ezekiel receives, it would be hard to get someone to go.

But, then, the Lord does encourage Ezekiel with these words, "Do not be afraid". Afraid of what? The Lord mentions a number of things which he should not be afraid of. These are (1) "them", (2) "their words", (3) "briars", "thorns", and "**scorpions**". Let us consider these items, one at a time.

First, do not be afraid of the people themselves. Why might we be afraid of other people. If they are bigger and stronger than us, they could inflict us with bodily harm. We do not know what Ezekiel's stature was. We would guess that he was one who could take care of himself in most cases. The simple fact of the matter is, however, that there seems to be a natural fear that we have of people we don't know, simply because we don't know them.

This leads to the second item, the "words". As children we were probably taught the old saying "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but nasty words can never hurt me!". We wonder who ever thought that up! Whoever it was must have never read James chapter 3! "The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell". [James 3:5-6 NIV].

More people are injured by other peoples words and more seriously than they are by physical blows. In this country, as in most, we have laws against inflicting physical harm on another. But there are no laws, in general, against inflicting psychological harm on another person (slander and a few such things excepted).

Finally, the other items listed and not obvious. Scorpions are only mentioned three other times in the Old Testament In [Deuteronomy 8:15] they are mentioned as being in the arid wilderness through which the Lord led Israel. They were mentioned as a means of torture in [1 Kings 12:11-14], where Rehoboam promised to discipline the people with scorpions. This is repeated in [2 Chronicles 10:11-14]. They are found in several interesting passages in the New Testament.

When the lord sent the Seventy out to witness, Jesus reminded them, saying "I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" [Luke 10:19]. Finally, in Revelation 9, locusts are described as having the power of scorpions (9:3, 5, 10). The "briars and thorns" would have similar significance in that they could inflict pain as did the scorpions.

Now, does this mean that he would have to suffer from actual thorns, briars and scorpions? It could, it could be that these people to whom God was sending him would punish him with this sort of torture. More likely, however, the terms are probably to be taken figuratively and applied in the mental and spiritual sense. In either case, this does not promise to be an easy ministry.

In verse 7, Ezekiel is given an interesting command. The Lord instructs him that he is to speak whether or not they listen to him. We tend to make excuses - "there isn't any point in speaking to that person, they won't listen anyway!". God says, it makes no difference whether or not they listen, we are to go to them regardless. This is a point which will be applied later.

Finally, there is an awesome and important warning given. "listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house". To keep from being ourselves like the people to whom we are sent, there must first be instruction from the Lord. If we go forth without the strength which comes from full knowledge of the Lord, there is a serious possibility that they will influence us, rather than the other way around, and we will be the losers. The Lord warns Ezekiel to be on guard.

### 2.3 : Verses 8b-10 - The scroll

Starting at the end of verse 8, is an incident which will be continued into the next chapter and we shall only introduce it here. The Lord instructs Ezekiel to eat what he is about to be given. In verses 9 and 10 this is described as a scroll.

Now, people like to eat rolls, but not a **scroll**. What is this scroll and why was he to eat it? The Hebrew word is "megilloth- sophar", a somewhat loose translation of which is a "rolled up document" - hence a scroll. This is also to be found in Jeremiah 36. In Revelation 10:9-11, John is similarly handed a book and told to eat it. Considering the context, the situations are similar. As John is

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

instructed to eat it, he is given the instruction "You must prophecy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." [Rev 10:11 NIV]. He, too, was being sent to deliver a message.

We are, finally, told that the scroll was written on both sides and contained lamentations, mourning, and woe. In other words, upon this document was prophecy against Israel in which all of the woes and sorrows promised them are recorded. This reminds us of Deuteronomy chapter 27 where the curses against those who rebel against the Lord were recorded and recited upon Mount Ebal (see especially verses 15-28).

Since the further discussion of this scroll is to be found in the next chapter, we shall not further discuss it here.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE WARNING TO ISRAEL

3.0 : Introduction

The first part of this chapter (verses 1-15) are a continuation of Ezekiel's call which began in chapter 2. The remainder of the chapter is God's initial warning to Israel which He will deliver through Ezekiel. Chapter 2 ended with the Scroll which was to be given to Ezekiel to eat and so we commence at this point in Chapter 3.

3.1 : Verses 1-3 : The Scroll is Eaten

As we begin this section, let us recall that these verses describe Ezekiel's vision. The eating of the scroll is part of the vision and we are not to assume that he actually ate a scroll. The Lord has never required such a thing of anyone.

The Lord gives Ezekiel a three-fold command. This is is, literally, from the Hebrew:

- 1) That which you find before you - eat it!
- 2) Eat this scroll!
- 3) Then go and speak to the House of Israel!

The fact that the going to speak to Israel is so closely connected with the command to eat the scroll indicates that the content of the scroll is associated with the message to be delivered. The eating of the scroll was preparation for the speaking.

Let's consider this three-fold command. First, there is the general command to "eat". There are many commands to eat in the Bible and we shall not consider those that have to do with ordinary food. In Genesis 2:16-17, Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil (which they did). They were driven from the Garden so that they would not eat of the "Tree of Life".

In Acts 10:9-13, Peter is shown a vision from heaven in which he sees all kinds of unclean animals and is commanded to eat - a sign that he was to go to the Gentiles. Finally, In Revelation 10:8-11, John, in a vision, was given a scroll to eat. In each of these cases, the man who was to eat was given a specific message to carry.

But, now, why eat the scroll? Why not take it to Israel and read it to them? The significance is that Ezekiel was to act as more than a herald. God could have commissioned most anyone to take a scroll and read its content before the people. One need not believe the message to read it. It is not unknown to have a preacher who, it turns out, really has no personal knowledge of God, and yet, through the reading of the Scriptures, has led others to a saving knowledge. But, in taking this scroll, he is to act as more than a simple herald. He is to go and speak the message from within himself. He is to speak from his heart and not from words on a paper.

As we come to verse 2, we note another interesting point. We are told that two things happened: (1)

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

Ezekiel opened his mouth, and (2) God feed him the book. Ezekiel did one thing, the Lord another. Ezekiel opened his **mouth**. "Mouth" is an interesting word in the Hebrew. In addition to the "normal" usages of this word (i.e. where it means mouth as we think of it), we find the following:

with the edge of the sword [Genesis 34:26]

at the command of the Lord [Numbers 3:39]

It is translated "command" since it was the mouth of the Lord that had spoken it. The "edge" of the sword is called its mouth since this is the "business" end of the sword, the end that performs the actions. We may use the mouth in our head or the mouth of a sword to injure another person. We may use the mouth of the sword or the mouth of our head to affect a person's deliverance.

Ezekiel opened his mouth; he yielded that organ which was to be the means of carrying out the commission God was to give him. Then the Lord "spoon fed" the scroll to him. We have commented on this aspect in the last chapter where the Lord raised him to his feet. Ezekiel did the yielding; God did the work. God asks us to be willing, He does the work.

In the beginning of this study we commented on the name of the prophet, Ezekiel = Strengthened by God. As we continue in the book, we find the fulfillment of this promise. In the last chapter, after commanding Ezekiel to stand, the Lord reached out and raised him up, the Lord reached out and strengthened him with regard to his stand. Now the Lord reaches out again and strengthens him. Here it is in regard to his mouth, that with which he would minister. We shall continue to look for the ways that the Lord strengthens him as his ministry unfolds.

Continuing on, the Lord then gives further instructions which were, literally,

1) feed you stomach (belly, womb)

2) fill your inner parts with the scroll

It would not be totally wrong to say that these commands mean for Ezekiel to "take these words to heart". The innermost parts of man, in the Hebrew mind, were the seat of the deepest emotions. The point is that the Lord is demanding a heart knowledge of the message and not a head knowledge.

Finally, Ezekiel ate of the scroll and found that it was "as sweet a honey" to his mouth. When John was commanded to eat the scroll [Revelation 10] he too found it a sweet as honey to his mouth but sour in his stomach. We are not told what effect this scroll had on Ezekiel's stomach. What is the meaning of this?

I think Paul expresses the emotion when he says:

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body; this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

[Philippians 1:21-23 NIV]

The feelings that Paul expresses is the privilege he has to be the Lord's apostle, to bring the Gospel to others and he appreciates this, but, on the other hand, as far as his inner feelings of his soul are concerned, he yearns for the personal satisfaction of being with the Lord.

To Ezekiel's mouth, that instrument which he has yielded to the Lord for service, the service is pleasing to him. But, as an Israelite himself, the curses contained in the message would not be sweet (but, of course, we read this of John, not Ezekiel).



### 3.2 : Verses 4 - 9: The People with a Familiar Language

The Lord now turns to the people to whom the message is given. There is a contrast given. Ezekiel will not be sent to people with "obscure speech" or "difficult language". In Revelation 10, when John ate the scroll, he was commissioned to prophecy to "many peoples and nations and tongues and kings" [Revelation 10:11NIV].

Two terms are used, literally, "with deepness of lip" and "heavy tongues". The latter term would refer to the difficulty of pronunciation, the former to difficulty with respect to difference in meaning. The Lord was not sending him to a people whose language he did not understand or could not pronounce. We have commented on the meaning of the term "Son of man". Ezekiel was a fellow Israelite with like feelings and speech and could relate with the people to whom the Lord was sending him.

Then we come to an interesting comment. God is not sending him to a foreign people, and so, one would expect, the mission would be easier. But, the Lord says that, had he sent Ezekiel to such a people, they would have listened to him. It is said the "familiarity breeds contempt". These people have already heard the message that Ezekiel is to bring - time and time again. They are like the people to whom Peter makes reference:

In the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of the creation.

[2 Peter 3:3-4 NIV]

The more often you hear the words and reject them, the less likely they are to have any impact upon you. This is the idea that the Lord expresses in verse 7, "the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate".

But then the Lord makes a promise to Ezekiel. He promises that he will meet stubbornness with stubbornness, in making Ezekiel the same as they are. He adds that he would make Ezekiel's forehead like the hardest stone. What does this mean?

The **forehead** is only mentioned a few times in the Scriptures. In [Exodus 28:38], a plate of gold with the words "Holy to the Lord" was to rest upon Aaron's forehead. It was on the forehead that David smote Goliath [1 Samuel 17:49]. In a number of places in Revelation there is reference to God's people having a seal upon their foreheads [Revelation 7:3, 9:4, 14:1, etc.]. In all of these, the forehead is singled out as that part of our anatomy which is the most exposed to others. God would harden and strengthen Ezekiel in the area in which would be apparent to Israel. God would make it obvious to Israel that this man was sent from Him and strengthened by him.

### 3.3 : Verses 10-15 : The conclusion of the Vision

These verses conclude the first of Ezekiel's visions. As the Lord leaves, he gives three final instructions:

- (1) Listen Carefully
- (2) Take to heart the words spoken
- (3) Go and Speak.

We shall comment on these shortly, but now we note that as the Lord departed, we are told "Then

the Spirit lifted me up". During the vision, the Lord strengthened Ezekiel. The Lord reached out and lifted him and strengthened him. Now the Lord is departing and the Spirit reaches out and lifts him up.

As Jesus was about to be crucified, he made a promise to his disciples. "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper that he may be with you forever" [John 16:26 NAS]. "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you in all things." [John 16:26 NAS]. When God is not materially present with us, the Spirit is there to strengthen us and to enable us to fulfill the ministry.

Before Jesus ascended, he gave the command to Go and to bear witness of the Good News. As the Lord here departs from Ezekiel, he gives him the command to go and to speak. Before he is to speak, however, there is an important command to be observed.

The first command mentioned above was to "listen carefully". The Hebrew is, literally, "hear with your ears" (as if there was any other way to hear). As you consider this chapter, you must realize that we are having a very complete anatomy lesson. We have considered the feet, the mouth, the inner parts, the forehead, and now, it is the **ears**. Just as the mouth was to be the means by which He was to minister to Israel, it was the ears that must be dedicated to God in order that they might be responsive to the words of God. The Lord does not want just a part of us, he wants all of us. If we are to be effective ministers of God's grace, we must yield up our whole beings. "I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." [Romans 12:1 NAS].

As the vision departs, Ezekiel pronounces words of praise, "May the Glory of the Lord be praised in his dwelling place." (verse 12). But, no sooner is the vision gone, and he experiences bitterness and anger of spirit. When we lose the vision of the Lord, our glory and praise turns to bitterness and anguish. We must continue to seek the Lord if we are to be victorious.

But, when it comes to the bottom line, the Lord is there to buoy us up. The section ends with the "strong hand of the Lord" upon Ezekiel. As we have noted several times already, the Lord provides the strength for the work ahead of us.

The section ends with Ezekiel sitting for seven full days, overwhelmed. Solomon has said that there is a time for everything. God has given Ezekiel a mission. But first, there is a time to be still. All of God's people need this. Before Jesus began his public ministry, there was 40 days spent in the wilderness. Before Paul began his ministry we went away into Arabia for a time. Ezekiel has had an experience with God that is unequalled for most people. There must be time for him to be quiet.

#### 3.4 : Verses 16 - 19 : Israel's Watchman, Duty 1

We now come to the message which is to be delivered. After the seven days in which Ezekiel sat dumbfounded, the Lord spoke to Ezekiel again. As we noted previously there is a time to wait and a time to act. We are reminded of the event in Acts 1 where the disciples stood gazing into the sky where Jesus had ascended and two men appeared to them and said "why do you stand here looking into the sky?" [Acts 1:11]. There is work to be done and the Lord calls Ezekiel out of his period of reflection.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

The Lord informs him that Ezekiel is to be a **"watchman"** for the house of Israel. This term, is not used frequently in the Bible. It is a good translation of the Hebrew. Some of the other watchmen in the Scriptures are:

- 1) Saul's watchmen [1 Samuel 14:16]
- 2) Joram's watchman [2 Kings 9,17-18]
- 3) The watchman of Ephraim [Hosea 9:8]

but, the mission of each of these "watchmen" is best demonstrated in the following two passages. First, there is the technical description given in Isaiah 52:

How lovely upon the mountains  
Are the feet of him who brings good news,  
who announces peace,  
and brings good news of happiness,  
And says to Zion, "Your God reigns".

Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices,  
They shout joyfully together;  
for they will see with their own eyes  
when the Lord restores Zion.

[Isaiah 52.7-8 NAS]

The Bible speaks often of those that are to be the bearers of God news (Greek: Evangelists). But, here we have the one who is to be on the lookout and report when the Good News arrives. This is pictured very graphically in [2 Samuel 18:19-27] (which should be read in its entirety). Here Ahimaaz wished to be an "Evangelist" and carry the news of Israel's victory to David. (note: "to bring good news", as we find in this passage, is the translation of the Greek word from which we get "Evangelize"). He then runs to David. Then, in verse 24, we find David's watchman, who "went up to the roof of the gate by the wall, and raised his eyes and looked..." (verse 24). The watchman was one who watched for the Good News. He watched for the signs of victory. He watched and, when the Good News was forthcoming, went and announced this good news.

In the first part of this chapter we noted the anatomy lesson which was given. Ezekiel was to present his feet as the means for bearing God's message. He was to present his mouth as the instrument by which this message would be delivered. He was to present his ears, as those instruments by which he would receive the message. And now, the Lord is asking for his eyes, that they might be dedicated to watching and waiting for the message of the Lord.

The difference between Ezekiel and the other watchmen is that, in general, he was not to be a bearer of Good News but of bad. He was to announce the condemnations of the Lord upon Israel for their transgressions. And yet, in all this, there was still to be Good News. God never pronounces judgment upon a person or nation without offering a chance to repent.

With this, God issues one of the most solemn warnings in all of the Scriptures. He places a responsibility upon Ezekiel which is not to be taken lightly. What is this warning? Before we look at the details, let us consider the responsibility of watchmen in general. In warfare, lookouts are placed in strategic locations in order that they might sound alarm if danger is spotted. What happens to such a lookout if he spots danger and fails to report it? In wartime, it is a capital crime!

But now, Ezekiel is appointed to be a watchman. What is the warning here? When the Lord has pronounced judgment upon a man and that man does not repent from his sin, he will die in his sin. That is simple enough to understand. Recall, however, that such a pronouncement has been made upon all of mankind. Except that a man believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he can not be saved. This is simple enough, but, what is that to us who are already saved?

What is the warning given to Ezekiel. If Ezekiel warns such a man, tries to get him to repent, and the

man does not listen, then all is well as far as Ezekiel is concerned. BUT if Ezekiel fails to warn this man, not only will the man die in his sins, but his blood will be upon Ezekiel! God tells Ezekiel that he must deliver the Good News or else! This reminds me of the words of those such as Pater; "...we can not stop speaking what we have seen and heard" [Acts 4:20 NAS] and Paul; "if I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel" [1 Corinthians 9:16 NAS]

I believe that we all take this warning from God much too lightly today. I think that, perhaps, we have a mistaken understanding of our roll in bearing the Good News. We all have some compassion (some more, some less) for the lost and have a desire for them to be saved. But do we have a compassion for our own well being? Do we realize that, if we fail to heed God's command to carry the Good News, do we realize the position we place ourselves? No! we can not lose our salvations - Christ has settled that, but what will our positions be at the Judgement Seat of Christ? Will the words "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things." [Matthew 25:21 NIV] be spoken of us?

### 3.5 : Verses 20 - 21 : The Watchman, Duty 2

In the last section we had the solemn warning given regarding the lost. If we have the opportunity to minister to a lost one and fail to do so - woe to us! But, there is another duty that the watchman must perform. This is spelled out in this section.

The last section dealt with the repentance of the unrighteous. This section deals with the backsliding of the righteous. "When a righteous man turns from his righteousness and does evil..." God says that if you fail to warn such a one, his blood will be upon your head. We can not ask the Cain's question "Am I my brother's keeper?" [Genesis 4:9]. There are, perhaps, more New Testament warnings concerning this matter than the previous.

Paul discusses this issue at length in I Corinthians. "Be careful that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak... When you sin against your brothers in this way, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" [1 Corinthians 8:9,12 NIV]. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." [Galatians 6:1 NIV].

Thus, the watchman has a two-fold responsibility. To restore those who are outside the faith, and to maintain those who are in the faith. You may say, "That's sure a big order, who can fill it?". Perhaps this is why Paul's encouragement is given to the "watchman" when he says "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." [Galatians 6:9 NIV]. He also urges "brothers, warn those who are idle, encouraging the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone." [1 Thessalonians 5:14 NIV].

### 3.6 : Verses 22-27 : Ezekiel to be Bound and Gagged

In the remainder of this chapter, Ezekiel receives a further revelation from God, one that is rather difficult to understand. The first vision came to him by the river. now he is to go into the plain to receive a vision.

The **river** is a place of blessing. The Hebrew word means, literally, "that which flows" and is used figuratively of God's blessing flowing down to us, hence "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God" [Psalm 46:4 NAS]. When you consider that the meaning of the Hebrew **Kebar** or **Chebar** is "plenty" or "abundance", this river is symbolic of the abundant blessing of God. But now, he is to go to the plain. The Hebrew has the article "the" plain, not just any plain. We are not told, however, the name of this plain. The word **plain** comes from the Hebrew verb for "to cleave" or "to divide". The first vision came in the place of God's abundant blessing. But now, it is in the place of division. The plain is where Ezekiel will see the dried up bones of Israel (chapter 37). The plain is where the final battle will take place, the plain of Meggido.

As in the first vision, the hand of the Lord was on Ezekiel and lifted him to his feet. He then reveals what is in store for him. He is told to go and shut himself up in his house. He is told that he would be bound so that he could not go out and that he would have his tongue stick to the roof of his mouth so that he would not be able to speak. Now, how affective can a prophet be in such a circumstance? What does this all mean?

Let us begin by noting that these can not be literal actions. In the very next chapter Ezekiel is commanded to go out and lay on his side. In chapter 5 he is commanded to go to the center of the city. Secondly, there is no indication in the book that he was literally bound. The words, then, have spiritual significance.

First, consider the word **house**. It has already been used in this book some eleven times. Beginning in 2:5, the Lord refers to Israel as a "rebellious house". God constantly refers to the "house" of Israel in these chapters, the most recent reference is in verse 17 where Ezekiel is appointed watchman over the "house of Israel". House, then, is a place of habitation; for a person, for a family, for an entire nation. We believe that Ezekiel was not to be locked up within the four walls of a building, but within the confines of his own house, the "house of Israel". He was not to be a Daniel, or a Paul, to minister to a strange people, he was to remain at home and to minister to those about him.

Then, consider that he was to be **bound and gagged**. These two actions are to be taken together. Paul writes "And now, behold, bound in the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem..." [Acts 20:22] Ezekiel, to our knowledge was never physically bound, but, like Paul, was to be so bound up with the Spirit of God that he would not be able to "go out among the people". In 2:8, God warned Ezekiel not to "rebel like that rebellious house". God warned him not to become like them. He now instructs him to be so bound in his spirit that he will not go out among the people, that is, he will not become intimate with them in their deeds and actions, he will not be a part of them in their rebellion.

Not only was he to be so bound, but his tongue was to cleave to the roof of his mouth. Before we discuss the **tongue** further, it might be well to note that there are many today who would be far better off if their tongues were similarly stuck! We find the same expression in Job, "The voice of the nobles was hushed, And their tongues stuck to their palate." [Job 29:10 NAS]. Solomon wrote that there is "a time to be silent and a time to speak" [Ecclesiastes 3:7 NIV]. When the Lord had a message to deliver, Ezekiel was to speak. But, on the other hand, he was to not "have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments..." [2 Timothy 2:23 NIV]. He was not to get taken up with the vain babbling of Israel. He was to keep his mouth closed when he didn't have something to say.

The Lord continues with this line. He tells Ezekiel to "keep his mouth" shut and not get into it with Israel and, on his own, to rebuke them. How well some of us need to know this principle. It is not

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

up to us to rebuke others who do not do as we believe God would have them do. If a new Christian is received in a church who has a lot of "bad habits", who has not yet given up the so-called "dirty dozen", it is not for us to go to this one and say, "Hey, you can't do that and be a good Christian!". Our position is to be that of Ezekiel, when the Lord gives us the opportunity to speak to such a person and to reason with him from the Scriptures, then we will be effective - and only then. Otherwise, all we do is inflate our egos and tear down the new Christian. Ezekiel was not to speak to Israel until the Lord gave him the message to deliver.

God says to him to prefix his words to Israel with the words "This is what the Sovereign Lord says...". Now, the Lord does not reveal new words to us today. The Lord does not appear to us in a vision and say, "This is what you shall say to Joe Doe". Instead, we have God's words recorded for us. When we go to Joe Doe, we need to open the Book and say to him, "This is what God has told us through his word...".

This chapter again closes with the note that some will listen, some will not. It is not up to us to decide who's who. We are to take the message to all.

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE SEIGE OF JERUSALEM

4.0 : Introduction

In the previous three chapters we have had Ezekiel's call and commission in the visions he had. We now get down to the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry as a prophet of God. It begins with a very unusual requirement on the part of Ezekiel.

4.1 : Verses 1 - 8 : The Siege Predicted

In the first three verses, Ezekiel is to act as a model builder. He is to construct a model of the city of Jerusalem showing it in the state of siege. Let us consider the materials of this model. He was to begin with a **"clay tablet"** (NIV) or "brick" (NAS) or "tile" (KJV). The root of the Hebrew word refers to something that is white. It is the root of some 14 Hebrew words, such as "moon", "frankincense", the "poplar tree" and also appears in proper names, such as Mt. Lebanon. The verb has an interesting use, for we find the following:

Come, let us make bricks. [Gen. 11:3 NAS]

Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow.

[Isa. 1:18 NAS]

The verb, thus, refers to making brick, it refers to making things white as snow. From this we conclude that, when Ezekiel is told to use this object (tile, brick, etc.), the term used to describe it is one that refers to its attributes rather than its substance. He is to begin with that which is pure and clean, hence "white". Finally, one other interesting aspect of this word is found in the book of Nahum;

Take hold of the brick mold. [Nahum 3:14 NAS]

Where the word, according to a number of Hebrew scholars, has taken on the added significance of that which is rectangular or square, and hence adds the concept of "rightness" to the original meaning of whiteness.

In modern day terms, Ezekiel might have been instructed to sit down with a clean, fresh, white piece of paper (and hence "clay tablet" of the NIV). He is to begin with that which is pure and undefiled.

He is instructed to take this tablet and to put it in front of him. Obviously, if he is to use it to construct a model, it must be in front of him. The instruction makes it emphatic, what is to be done is to be done in the full view of the prophet, with his full understanding. Last, he is to "draw" or "inscribe" or "portray" a city upon this tablet. The Hebrew word here has the root meaning "to cut into". "Inscribe" (NAS) is the most literal translation, "draw" (NIV) is more demonstrative to us. The word is used, in addition to this, to give or enact laws, since they were normally inscribed in stone. Recall the New Testament title "scribes".

The word here, imparts a note of seriousness to the situation. To put this in modern terms, we have an expression "cast in concrete". Ezekiel might have used a piece of charcoal to draw the city on the tile. He might have drawn the city in the sand with a stick. But, no, there is the element of finality to the actions he is directed to take. The NIV here misses the emphasis of the Hebrew which says to "draw a city on it - Jerusalem". There is emphasis on the fact that it is no other than Jerusalem that

is to be portrayed here.

Having inscribed the city on the tablet, he is then to include the following items: (1) a seige works, (2) a ramp, (3) camps, and (4) battering rams. Collectively, these are all terms used to describe the means of attacking a city which is under seige. The meaning of **seige**, in the Hebrew, is to confine or bind up. This is the way that cities were taken in Old Testament times. A city would be surrounded and closed up so that none could either enter or leave the city. If the city was too strong to take by force, the city was taken by simply waiting until the inhabitants were forced to surrender because of starvation.

In order to accomplish this, the above four items were used. The **seigeworks**. The root of the Hebrew is uncertain, but we may determine what these were. They are described in the following: Nebuchadnezzar ... camped outside the city and built seige works all around it. [2 Kings 25:1][Jeremiah 52:4]

These, and other referenes in Ezekiel, describe a seigework and, especially, the one predicted here. It is apparently a scaffolding from which one may either scale the walls of the city or from which one may attack the city with rocks and other misciles.

Secondly, a **"ramp"** was to be used. The root of the Hebrew refers to that which allows one to "rise up". In connection with a seige, it refes to a mound of dirt, stone, or other materials which are piled up outside the walls of the city to make a ramp via which the city walls might be scaled.

Thirdly, the **"camps"** would be that which would allow the enemy to remain outside of the city for a prolonged period of time. This is the meaning behind the following passage:

Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle... [2 Sam. 11:1 NAS]

When one laid seige to a city, it would be done in the Spring for several reasons, namely (1) it was before the city would have harvested their crops and hence would have a minimum of food supply within the city, and (2) those laying the seige would not want to be encamped outside the city in the middle of winter. The camps, then, indicated a long duration for the seige.

Last, the **"battering rams"**. This is a strange word in the Hebrew, refering in some cases to the ram as an animal, hence

as if they were rams, and lambs, goats and bulls.

[Ezek. 39:18]

The root of the word is not known and so we can only go along with the generally accepted idea that these were batrtering rams which would be used to break through the city walls, most likely, the gates.

Collectively, these items speak of a long, prolonged and bloody seige. The seigeworks speak of the human injury as they were to be used to hurl objects at the people inside. The ramp speaks of death as the enemy entered the city and slew its inhabitants. The encampments speak of longevity and of suffering and starvation. Finally, the rams speak of the physical destruction of the city. Together they paint a bleak picture of what was to befall Jerusalem.

In verse three, a new item is introduced, an iron plate. We need to decide the meaning of the iron plate and the words used in this verse. Let us begin with the **"iron pan"** or plate. We believe the



significance is not in the object, but the material. Such a pan would be readily available to Ezekiel, as was the tablet. But what of the iron? Iron is always spoken of in the Scriptures as that which is hard and unimpregnable. The following verse, perhaps, demonstrates the significance of the iron plate:

I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron. [Lev. 26:19 NIV]

This verse not only explains the significance of the iron, but also the meaning of the verse. Ezekiel, God's representative to Israel, was to place the iron pan between him and the city and to lay a siege to it. What does this mean? It means that when the Babylonians attack Jerusalem, not only with their be a siege from them, not allowing them to get out of the city, but a siege laid against them by God which means that their prayers for help will also be banned from leaving the city. They will be shut up in the city, separated from the Babylonians, but also shut up, separated from God.

In the remaining of these verses, Ezekiel was to lay on one side and then on the other. Let us first consider the significance of his laying first on his left side and then on his right side. When he laid on his left side, it was to be a sign to "house of Israel" and on his right, a sign to the "house of Judah".

It must be born in mind that, under Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided. This was prophesied in 1 Kings,

Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. ... However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to you for your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen. [1 Kings 11:11,13 NAS]

After Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided into the ten "Northern tribes", which became known as the "House of Israel" and the "Southern tribes" which were known as the "House of Judah". It is to be noted that two other tribes, Benjamin and Simeon were also included but not looked at as separate tribes by this time. Note also that, technically speaking, a "Jew" is a member of the "house of Judah", Jew being derived from Judah.

The "house of Israel" was taken into captivity in about 721BC, over 100 years prior to the time we are now considering. Only the "house of Judah" is left, and that not for long. It is difficult to know the reason (if any) that lying on his left side represented Israel. There are those who note that, for the sake of indicating direction, one faced east and hence the left side would be North. Then, there is the idea that, when he laid on his left side, he would be faced north. The fact of the matter is, where Ezekiel was ministering, both Israel and Judah would be to the north.

We would take the directions "left" and "right" in the sense that we find it in Genesis:

But his father called him Benjamin. [Gen. 35:18]

"Benjamin" meaning "son of my right hand", the place of promise and authority. Hence, as James peers into heaven, he sees,

The Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

[Acts 7:56 NIV]

Israel was, in a sense, separated from the good grace of God when Solomon died and the kingdom divided. It was through Judah, and the seed of David, that God's blessing would come.

The text makes it clear that the time involved, 390 days and 40 days, represent years, a very common representation in prophecy. Daniel's seventy weeks, or seventy sevens or days, represent 490 years.

The 40 years that Israel was wandering in the wilderness was a year for each of the 40 days the spies were in the land (and brought back a bad report).

Commentators differ on several aspects of these times. First, there is the question as to whether the 390 days is correct. The Greek text has it 150 days. Then, there is the question as to whether these are the years that Israel sinned, or the years in which she was to be punished for her sins. Concerning the 40 years for Judah, we know that Judah was in captivity for 70 years (Daniel 9,2, Jeremiah 25:11, etc.). We would believe that the numbers speak of the years of judgement, but all that can be safely said here is that Israel's judgement was much more severe than that of Judah.

In concluding this section, we note that we need not interpret this to mean that Ezekiel was to remain on his side for 24 hours each day. There would be no benefit in such action. We should probably assume that he was to assume this posture before the people each day as a sign to them.

#### 4.2 : Verses 9-17 : The Defiled Bread

The last part of this chapter has some symbols which are also difficult to understand. During the time he was to lay on his side, his diet was to consist of a rationed amount of bread and water. We are given the amount of each and the recipe for the bread. Let us begin with the recipe for the bread.

The bread was to consist of 6 different items (that are mentioned): Wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet and spelt. Nowhere else in the Scriptures is such a recipe given. We don't know a lot about some of these ingredients. We may, however, make note that there is a sort of progression in the items listed. Wheat, as always, was the desired ingredient of bread. Barley was also used but considered inferior to wheat. As you go down the list, you come to beans, which were not widely used, and lentils which were not used by the more well off people. Millet and spelt are at the bottom of the list and not generally used at all.

What is the significance of the recipe? Suppose you started to bake a loaf of bread and found you did not have enough wheat (flour). What do you do? You make up for what is lacking by adding barley. Suppose you do not have enough barley? Then you add what else you have. To make a bread with six different flours is an indication that flour would be so scarce, one would have to scrape together what little there was left of any edible flour in order to make one cake.

Regarding the amounts, this represented about 9 ounces of bread and less than a quart of water. Enough food to sustain a person, but not an ample diet. But, to return to the recipe, we turn to the method of baking the bread.

He was to bake this bread on stone which was heated with human dung. The significance of the various grains has been explained. The significance of using human dung to cook the bread is two-fold. First, under siege, the inhabitants of the city would have to resort to using everything possible for fuel, including human dung. Secondly, the use of this was not permitted and so speaks of the defiled condition of the city.

In verse 14 Ezekiel responds to God's request for him to thus bake the bread. He addresses God in a rather unusual way which is difficult to render in English. He addresses God as "**Adoni**" "**Yahweh**", both of which are translated "Lord" in most translations, the first being distinguished as "Lord" and the latter as "LORD" (all caps). The first word means "Lord" in the normal sense of the word, one to

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

whom a person is subject. The second is the name God has given Himself. Ezekiel thus, in this address, recognizes God in regard to his position before God and, at the same time, as a personal God.

In verse 15 we find God reacting in a way we would not expect. When Ezekiel objects to this form of fuel, God allows him to substitute cow manure which, incidently, is a rather common fuel source. We find this somewhat unexpected since using the cow manure will not present the graphic picture that we described earlier and hence the message will not be as forceful.

We then ask the obvious(?) question, of why God asked him to do this is the first places if he was willing to back off? While it is not really a literal translation of the Hebrew, the NIV, perhaps, catches most accurately the idea being expressed by Ezekiel. The Hebrew has the word "Behold" (which we have already commented on). It is used to emphasize what follows. The NIV, then has it "Not so, Sovereign Lord!" In other words, Ezekiel, in effect, refused to do what the Lord commanded him to do. What does the Lord do in such cases? Does the Lord ever force someone to the mission field or into the ministry against their will? Does the Lord ever force you to go out an witness? No! He asks you to, but if you refuse, he backs of and allows you to do less than what he would have you to do.

Ezekiel's ministry would not bew as effective with the cow manure, but it was better than no ministry at all. God only takes that part of us that we are willing to give to him. He can do no more through us than we allow him to do. So, he allowed Ezekiel to do less than "his best".

Verses 16 and 17 then summarize the picture that Ezekiel is to portray to the Israelites. The city will be forced in to a state of starvation, with little food and water. The seige would be so severe that the people would stoop to canniblim to survive. This was predicted to Jeremiah and also by Ezekiel in the next chapter. That Israel did stoop to such a thing is to be found in the seige of Samaria recorded in 2 Kings 6:24-31.

The prediction of this seige continues on into the next chapter and so we shall proceed on to that chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE  
THE SEIGE OF JERUSALEM - Part 2

5.0 : Introduction

The prophecy regarding the seige of Jerusalem began in the last chapter with Ezekiel lying on his side and eating bread and water. In this chapter the prediction goes on with Ezekiel being instructed to take other actions.

5.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : The Burnt Hair

In this section, Ezekiel is instructed to shave his hair and beard with a sword and divide the cuttings into three equal parts. These are to be (1) burnt within the city, (2) struck with the sword without the city, and (3) scattered by the wind. The instructions are clear. So is the significance.

First, what is the significance of the hair. As "hair" it has none. The word "hair" appears nowhere in the text. What is mentioned is his head and beard (where, of course, there is hair). The significance is that he is to cut of something that is living (in the broad sense of the term). The hair is symbolic of that which was alive.

Then, part of this living substance is to be burned within the city. This is symbolic of that part of Israel which is to perish within the city, during the seige. This is the group to whom God called Jeremiah to minister to. These would be burnt up in the seige of the city.

The second part was to be struck with the sword outside of the city. This refers to that part of Israel which would perish in as a group outside of Jerusalem and (in fact) the land of Canaan. This is the group to whom God called Ezekiel to minister to. These would die by the sword.

The last, and final third, was to be scattered to the wind. This then, is the part of Israel which would be scattered to the four corners of the earth and live among the Gentiles. This is the group for which God called Daniel to be a prophet.

But, then, there are a few of the hairs that were not to be so treated. First, a small number was to be bound up in Ezekiel's robe. These are those who are referred to as the "remnant of Israel" and are referred to again in verse 10. Jeremiah refers to this remnant many times:

Listen to the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah  
[Jeremiah 42:15 NAS]

The Lord, throughout the Scriptures, has left such a "remnant", a small group of people for himself. He saved Noah and his family. He called Abraham away from his land to make a people. Throughout history, God leaves a few people with whom he may continue his promises.

Lastly, he is to take some of these remaining hairs and he is to throw them into the fire to be burned. It is this last group that needs to be considered carefully. We might assume that this means that even part of the remnant will be lost. In the sense of the loss of life, it means exactly that. But we need to consider the last sentence in this section which says "A fire will spread from there to the

whole house of Israel". There are two schools of thought on the subject. Some would say that this indicates a further and complete judgement upon Israel. Others, note that fire is not only an instrument of destruction, but also of cleansing. Through the sacrifice of this small remnant, Israel would be purged and again come into the grace of God. We would adopt this latter concept. It is always this small remnant of God's elect that gives hope to the world. Were it not for them, the Gospel would have perished (humanly speaking) centuries ago. There is always a message of hope for the true believer.

## 5.2 : Verses 5 - 12: God's Judgement Pronounced

In these eight verses, we have the phrase "this is what the Sovereign Lord says..." repeated three times. The KJV has the expression "Thus sayeth the Lord God". It is a strong phrase. It is the phrase of judgement. It precedes the formal words of judgement spoken by God. It is a phrase that brings to remembrance a formal pronouncement from the ruler who is sitting upon the judgement seat.

The judgement is severe. It begins with the position which the Lord gave to Israel. It ends the the position that she assumed for herself. "...I have set you in the center of the nations..." says God. In other words, God made Jerusalem to be his "showpiece", to be the shining example of what a nation, under God, ought to be. God gave Israel, and Jerusalem, a high position in the world. Indeed, under David and Solomon, the nation received great recognition. This fact may be seen in the testimony of the Queen of Sheba:

The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the Lord's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness.

[1 Kings 10:6-9 NIV]

What a testimony to come from a heathen Queen, who traveled some distance to witness this for herself. God had truly made Israel and Jerusalem his showplace for the world.

But then, look at where Jerusalem now was. God says that she has rejected his decrees and laws. Well, who hasn't fallen down on living up to God's expectation? What man, beside the God-Man Jesus Christ, is perfect? But look! God doesn't stop there. He says that they have rejected his laws and decrees "more than the nations and countries around her". This city, which was to be an example to the world, has fallen into a state which is still an example to the rest of the world - an example of how bad you can get!

There is a trend today, which if it goes unchecked, will lead to the same condition for us. It is exemplified by the bumper stickers that say "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven" or "Be patient, God isn't through with me yet!". There are several others in the same vein. In other words, implied in this statements, "it doesn't matter how bad I am, God has forgiven me and that's all that counts!". It, in a way, expresses the feelings that Paul denounces in Romans:

Shall we all go on sinning so that grace may abound?

By no means! [Romans 6:1 NIV]

Since we have been saved by grace, we can go on doing bad things since they will be covered with

the blood of Jesus Christ. In Romans, Paul points out that, while this is doctrinally correct, it is spiritually wrong. Being saved should impell us to live lives as free from fault as possible.

When you look back at your life, who has hurt you the most? I don't know about you, but the ones who have hurt me the most are other Christians(?). Perhaps this is because we expect more from them and are then let down when we don't receive what was expected. But then, as Christians, we should expect more from them.

God set Isreal and Jerusealem up to be his showcase. They had slipped to a position worse than their neighbors. In the second decree (verse 7) God goes even further and says that Jerusalem has not only disobey his laws and commands, but they have not even lived up the mans standards. I think that, perhaps, we fail to realize God's position in this. What happens to you when one of your children commit some terrible act? It brings disgrace to you as well as to them. What kind of parent would bring up a child who would so such a thing? But consider God's position. What kind of God would have a people under him who would act the way that Jerusalem did? It is no wonder that God's wrath is stirred against them.

It is not all that different today. There are many "Christians" and "Christian Organizations" that bring disgrace to God today. We have used quotes in that many of these are not, in reality, Christian, but use the title. There is, perhaps, nothing we can do about persons or organizations who do terrible things in the name of Christ but are not, in reality, Christian. We can, however, make sure that we do all in our power to keep our witness and the witness of our church or other organization free from guilt in this respect.

In the third decree, God gets more specific and explains the significance of the sign given earlier. It is significant the way that the Lord says he will bring his punishment upon the people of Jerusalem. He says he will do so "...in the sight of the nations". It would not be enough that he secretly punish Israel. Since Israel has so grievously sinned in the sight of the nations about them, it is necessary that their punishment be performed in the sight of these nations. It is important that the other nations be aware that God does not condone the practices of Israel.

The degree of punishment is indicated in the notice that the people would resort to canniblsim in order to stay alive. This we have commented on before. He then describes how he will divide them into three groups and punish them. This we have already noted in the previous section.

### 5.3 : Verses 13 - 17 : The resulting reproach

In the remainder of the chapter, God speaks of the end result of his punishment. He says "my anger will cease", "my wrath will subside", "I will be avenged". There is a note of hope in these words. God will satisfy his anger and, when the punishment is complete, will cease his judgement. There is, thus, a sense of hope that, if onelived through the judgement, things might be ok.

But look at verses 14 and 15. he says that they will be a "ruin", a "reproach among the nations", a "taunt, a warning, an object of horror". Some will survive the active judgement, but they will remain as a warning to the rest of the nations. They will no longer live in the "apple of God's eye" as before. There is also a note of warning for us in this. God forgives us our sins, but we may have to live with the effects of that sin. If one committs an act of adultery and has a child out of wedlock, God will forgive this sin. As Christians we should accept God's forgiveness for that person. But the fact

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

remains that the child is born and the person must accept the responsibility for this and thus must live with the consequences of this sin. This concept applies to just about any sin we might commit.

The chapter ends with the solemn words, "I the Lord have spoken". This is God's way of saying that the pronouncement has been made. It is sure, it will come to pass. God had suffered with the sins of Israel and Judah for many years. God is long suffering. But there will come a day when he will suffer no longer and he pronounces a decree which is then unchangeable.

CHAPTER SIX  
AGAINST THE MOUNTAINS

6.0 : Introduction

This chapter begins with the words, "The word of the Lord came to me". This is an indication of a new section in which God reveals a new prophecy to Ezekiel and to Israel.

6.1 : Verses 1-7 : The prophecy Against the Mountains

God, in revealing this new prophecy to Ezekiel, begins with the words "Son of man, set your face against the mountains of Israel". As we begin this prophecy, we must determine the meaning of the term mountain. The term **mountain** (Hebrew "hor") is found very frequently in the Scriptures, usually regarding physical mountains.

Mountains also appear in a number of figurative senses. In this passage, and in a number of other passages in this book, the mountains have a particular significance. This may be seen in the following passages:

Because they have burned incense upon the mountains and scorned me on the hills.

[Isaiah 65:7 NAS]

Have you seen what what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. [Jeremiah 3:6 NAS]

Upon a high and lofty mountain, you have made your bed. You also went up there to offer sacrifice. [Isaiah 57:7 NAS]

and finally,

You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree.

[Deuteronomy 12:2 NAS]

The point is, then, that the mountains and the hills were the places where the Canaanites worshipped their gods. It was these same places that Israel, as she went after these strange gods, went to worship. The prophecy is, in a direct sense, against these mountains and high places. But, of course, God does not bring judgements on physical mountains, and hence the prophecy is really against Israel in their idolatry.

This concept is brought out in the verses that follow where Ezekiel is told not only to set his face against the mountains, but also against the hills. But, then, to this is added, the ravines and the valleys. While some of Israel's idolatry was carried out in the high places, some of the most detestible idolatry was carried out in the valleys, especially the valley of the sons of Hinnom (from which we get the Greek form, translating into "Gehenna" or Hell).

God then becomes specific. The altars and the incense altars (images, KJV) will be torn down. God will put an end to the places of idol worship. But, there is also judgement upon the people, as they will be slain in front of these altars and their bodies strewn about them.

God's judgement here is very severe. If there is one sin that God detests more than any other, it is



idolatry.

This judgement is concluded in verse 7 with the words, "Your people will fall slain among you, and you will know that I am the Lord." The newer translations have changed the archaic "ye" to "you" here which tends to be misleading. It was not just Ezekiel that would know this, but all who were not slain as a result of this judgement.

In this verse, then, we see part of the reason for this stern judgement on Israel. It is partly as a judgement on those who are slain, but it is also a warning and a lesson to those who are not.

### 6.2 : Verses 8 - 10 : The Remnant

As in the previous prophecy, there will be a small remnant that will not go through this judgement. It will be this remnant who, according to verse 7, will know that God is the Lord. This remnant will be scattered among the nations.

God says, that in the nations to which they will be driven, they will remember how God has been "grieved" (NIV), or "hurt" (NAS) or "broken" (KJV) by what they did. None of these translations fully explains the significance of the term. The Hebrew verb means, in a literal sense, "to break", "to break into pieces". But, it is here used in a figurative sense that is illustrated by the following passages:

Reproach has broken my heart, and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none.  
[Psalm 69:20 NAS]

My heart is broken within me, All my bones tremble.  
[Jeremiah 23:9 NAS]

These two passages refer to God as being the one with the broken heart, and especially of our Lord Jesus Christ (see the context of Psalm 68). But then there are also passages like those below.

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.  
[Psalm 147:3 NAS]

He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted.  
[Isaiah 61:1 NAS]

The Lord is near the brokenhearted, And saves those who are crushed in spirit.  
[Psalm 34:18 NAS]

These deal with our broken hearted condition and how the Lord's business is the healing of such as are brokenhearted. This brings to mind the passage in Hebrews,

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. [Hebrews 4:15 NAS]

God, himself, has been broken of heart and therefore, can have compassion on us who may also be broken of heart. It is interesting to note, however, that our way to him is through such a condition, as expressed in the following Psalm.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

[Psalm 51:17 NAS]

Perhaps you have never thought about God being broken in heart. We think of God, in his attributes as omnipotent (all-powerful) and omniscient (all-knowing), but the fact that God is the supreme being and all-powerful does not exclude him from having feelings and compassions. God can be broken of heart and saddened. As, for example, we find in Genesis before the flood,

The Lord was sorry that He had made men on the earth, and He was grieved in his heart.  
[Genesis 6:6 NAS]

So, to continue, he says that this remnant will remember this in their dispersion among the nations. What will bring this about? First of all, verse 9 calls this remnant of Israel "fugitives" in the Hebrew text. These people will live in a land that is not theirs and in fear and in want. As they find themselves broken of heart and in this condition, it will remind them of the condition that they put God in.

Secondly, according to verse 9, they will "loath" themselves. Most of the appearances of this Hebrew term are in the book of Ezekiel and we shall note them as they arise. A few other references are informative.

For forty years I loathed that generation, And said that they are a people who err in their heart  
[Psalm 95:10 NAS]

I behold the treacherous and loath them, Because they do not keep thy word. [Psalm 119:158 NAS]

A loathing is an intense hatred. A loathing against oneself is a sign of complete remorse and acknowledgement of one's past sins. As this remnant is spread abroad as fugitives, they will come to a place where they will realize their error and realize that the condition they find their souls in is not unlike the condition that they put God in.

This section closes with the words, "I did not threaten in vain to bring this calamity upon them". As this remnant turns to God and realizes their sins, the judgement that the Lord has brought to them will be satisfied, it will have served its purpose.

### 6.3 : Verses 11-14 : Cry Out "Alas"

Again, we have a solemn decree from the Lord "This is what the Sovereign Lord says...". This time there are three things that Ezekiel is to do. These are: (1) Strike his hands, (2) Stamp his feet, and (3) Cry out "Alas".

The striking of the hands is explained more fully in 21:17 which reads "I too will strike my hands together, and my wrath will subside". It is a gesture of extreme excitement and stress. It is something we might observe in a little child as he gets excited and, as a matter-of-fact, sometimes in adults as well.

The stamping of the feet is a rather illustrative phrase and is found again in 25:6, "Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet, rejoicing with all the malice of your heart..." The other

places the verb is found have the idea expressed in the following:

Can you, with Him, spread (stamp) out the skies, strong as a molten mirror? [Job 36:18 NAS]

namely, the beating upon a sheet of metal to spread it out into a thin sheet. The picture, then, is of one jumping up and down, of one pounding his feet upon the ground in a rage or in excitement.

Ezekiel was, by his manner, to express the message of the Lord. We wonder, as we think of this, if we might be more effective in our witness for the Lord if we could show a little excitement about the message we bring. Ezekiel was to get excited. He was to get the attention of Israel. He was to impart to them the seriousness of the pending judgement and then cry out, "Alas".

"Alas" here is from the Hebrew word "Ah" which, in reality, means what it sounds like. In other words, it is an **onomatopoeic** or "nursery" word - its sound is its meaning. It is only used here in several other places in Ezekiel. The word is coupled, in the Hebrew, to what follows - alas because of all the abominations practiced by Israel.

In other words, Ezekiel was, in a very real sense, to jump up and down and cry out to Israel, "Hey, don't you people realize what you have done?". He is to express alarm. He is to warn Israel.

The warning then goes into details of the manner in which the calamity will befall Israel, following the same lines as before, dividing Israel into three groups, but taking them in reverse order this time. Those that would be disbursed among the other nations would die from plague. Those who remained outside of Jerusalem would die by the sword, those who remained in Jerusalem would die of starvation.

As we summarize this chapter, we have a natural summation in verses 13 and 14. We have the words repeated "They will know that I am the Lord", a phrase we also saw in verses 7 and 10. What does this mean? It is so often repeated, it must be important. The answer is that the Lord insists that all men will know that he is Lord. In writing to the Philippians, Paul explains:

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed upon him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. [Philippians 2:9-11]

At one time or another, all mankind will bow down and admit that Jesus Christ is Lord. The question is, will a man do so before or after he has the opportunity to repent and accept Jesus Christ as Savior? Israel will know that God is Lord. After the judgement comes upon them, there will be no doubt of that. But, wouldn't it have been far better had they known him as Lord before He brought such a terrible judgement upon them? How much better to have acknowledged him as Lord before most of Israel dies by famine, sword, or plague?

Ezekiel, so far as we know, faithfully carried these messages to the people of Israel. Very few, that we know of, paid any attention to him, for the Lord did bring the judgement and many of them perished. But, we have been given notice of times even worse than these that could come at any time. Are we as faithful as Ezekiel in delivering this message?

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

True, many will not listen to us. The Bible does not predict a mass revival before the end of the age. There will be no more mass revival than there was in Ezekiel's day. But, Ezekiel was not to give up and say, "Hey Lord, these people won't listen to me, most of them will go their own ways, why should I bother?" The fact is, a few will listen, there is always a small remnant that will hear the message and repent.

We mentioned the coming of the last days. There was also such a period as this in store for Israel and this will be brought out in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
THE TIME OF THE END

7.0 : Introduction

This chapter, like the ones just covered, deals with the word of the Lord regarding the siege of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity. In this chapter, the fact that Israel has come to the end of God's current dealings with her.

7.1 : Verses 1-4 : The End!

This chapter begins with the words we have seen and commented upon before. "The word of the Lord came to me...". Hence the beginning of another message from God. "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord says...". Hence, the beginning of another of God's judgements against Israel.

The pronouncement begins with the statement "The End!". The Hebrew term is fairly common and not only signifies the end of something, but carries the connotation of an end obtained by the cutting off. Thus we find the verbal form in the following passages:

In those days the Lord began to cut off portions from Israel. [2 Kings 10:32]

You have devised a shameful thing for your house By cutting off many peoples.  
[Habakkuk 2:10]

And thus, when the "end" is mentioned, it usually does not denote a natural end, but a cutting off.

There are many such ends in God's dealing with mankind.

Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before me for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

[Genesis 6:13]

Our end drew near. Our days were finished. For our end had come. [Lament. 4:18]

The first reference refers to the end of mankind which God brought about through the flood. The second reference refers to the end we are now considering. Then there is the following:

But, as for you Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the time of the end...

[Daniel 12:4]

...Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. [Daniel 12:9]

These references speak of an end still to come. The end we are here considering is the end of God's dealings with Israel until after the Babylonian Captivity.

God is then more specific, this end has come to the "four corners of the land", a way of saying that the judgement will be complete, that no part of the land of Israel will escape this judgement.

God then gets even more specific with regard to times and actions. The "end is now" (NIV) or "the end is upon you" (KJV). God is long suffering and patient... up to a point. God had been patient with

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

Israel for many many years. But now, then end had come, there would be no more patience. God says that he will unleash his anger against Israel. We seldom think of God unleashing his anger. We tend to always see God as the "God of Love", which he is. But God is also righteous and, when judgement is needed, he will render justice with a fierce anger.

There is hardly a book of the Old Testament in which God's anger is not mentioned:

Then the anger of the Lord burned... [Exodus 4:14]

...the anger of the Lord was kindled... [Numbers 11:10]

...the anger of the Lord burned... [Deut. 29:27]

...the anger of the Lord burned... [Joshua 7:1]

And the anger of the Lord burned... [Judges 2:14]

And the anger of the Lord burned... [2 Sam. 6:7]

So the anger of the Lord was kindled.. [2 Kings 13:3]

And so it goes throughout the Old Testament. The word "anger" is itself, a fearful word. It is not only translated "anger", but also "face" and, more specifically, "nose" or "nostril". The concept of anger, then, comes from the facial expression that accompanies such an emotion. One can easily picture one who gets very angry and begins to snort with his nose and becomes all red of face. We see this in the verses above where the word is linked to burning and kindling.

It is interesting that, in his anger, the Lord chastens mankind, in general, and Israel in many cases. We are told that we are not to discipline our children when we are angry. We are told that we should wait until our anger cools down and then discipline the children in love. Technically, this may be a good idea, but practically, how many of us can truly do this? This is not to say that we shouldn't attempt to do this. But, what about God disciplining in great anger? Is there a difference? Most assuredly. We should not discipline while we are very angry because our anger affects our judgement and our discipline may not be properly administered. Not so with God. Regardless of how angry God might be, he is always in control and always acts according to his righteousness.

His righteousness is brought out in the next verse where he says "I will judge you according to your conduct." In spite of His anger, God judges us according to what we have done, or failed to do. God says, further, that he will repay them for all their detestable practices. Not only will he judge fairly, but the punishment will be appropriate for the sin committed.

7.2 : Verses 5 - 9 : Disaster!

Not only is the word "disaster" ("evil" KJV) found in this passage, but the whole passage is a disaster. Look at the words of this passage: "Disaster", "unheard-of disaster", "the end", "the end", "Doom", "panic or tumult", "wrath", "anger". When the time of judgement comes, it comes like a tidal wave upon those who are judged. But, this passage is only a small token of what the final judgement of mankind in Hell will be.

What is God's purpose in such awful judgement? Does God punish just because he is angry? We have, as the final words of this passage, the statement "Then you will know that it is I the Lord who strikes the blow." God's judgement is so that man will acknowledge him as Sovereign Lord. We may recognize his as such in his grace, or we may do so in his anger. How much better that we do so of free will and afford ourselves of God's grace than to wait until acknowledgment is forced upon us in His anger.

7.3 : Verses 10 - 14 : The rod has Budded

This passage continues the pronouncement of judgement begun in the previous sections. It brings several new facets to light. We have the words "the rod has budded". We shall consider the significance of the **rod** and of its **budding**.

Rod comes from a Hebrew word (Mat-teh) which is translated "tribe" or "staff" or "rod", depending on the context. When it refers to people, it is a "tribe", when it refers to vegetation, it is translated "staff". It comes from a root which means "to spread out" or "to extend". Tribes of people "spread out". A Staff of wheat "spreads out and grows". A Rod is that which extends out.

Turning to the "bud", we make note of the following passage:

In the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout. And they will fill the whole earth with their fruit. [Isaiah 27:6 NAS]

In the above passages, three stages of growth are depicted. There is, first, the taking root. A plant takes root without any external changes of appearance that give evidence of its growth. Then, it buds. The bud is small, but us a sign that the blossoming and sprouting forth is to come.

The arrogance of Judah had already taken root. It had begun to grow. But now, this arrogance was beginning to bud and to make its growth known to the world. It is at this point that judgement comes. It is not unlike the parable of the wheat and the tares where God said to wait until they begun to bud so that there would be no doubt of which was which. (Matt 12:24-30).

But, there are two rods mentioned in this passage. In verse 11, another rod is blossoming. This rod is a symbol of violence and is to be the means of Israel's judgement. The "rod" of verse 10 is Israel in its arrogance and defiance of God. The "rod" of verse 11 is Babylon, which God raised up as a means of bringing judgement upon Israel.

The rest of this passage then deals with God's judgement upon the "whole crowd" (NIV) or "multitude" (KJV, NAS). In this connection, there is a picture which needs some amplification. We are told that the "buyer" should not rejoice and that the "seller" should not grieve. When one was forced to sell property in Israel, it was with grief. The one who gained the property could rejoice in his good fortune.

But, in this case, all is meaningless. The one who purchased the property will not retain it. The one who sold it, would have lost it anyway. In verse 13 this is made clear, neither the buyer nor the seller would ever regain the land. The point of this discussion is that the judgement was to be universal. There would not be any groups of people who would be immune to the judgement.

The section concludes with the warning that, even though they prepare for war, even though they sound the alarm, it will all be useless when the judgement comes.

#### 7.4 : Verses 15 - 22 : Shame and Death

In this passage, we again have notice of the death and destruction that we have seen several times before. There will be death due to starvation in the city. There will be death by the sword without. We will not speak further of this.

This passage also speaks of those who flee and what is to happen to them. The passage speaks of weakness, of mourning and of terror. It speaks of humiliation. As one reads this passage, one wonders if those who die by the sword won't be the fortunate ones.

But, there is one facet of this passage that deserves special attention. It speaks of their "silver and gold". This was saved up as a thing to be cherished. But, when the judgement comes, what is its value. It makes us wonder about the wisdom of those who convert large amounts of their savings into silver and gold today, thinking it an escape from financial disaster in the times to come. We wonder at that? When you are starving to death, can you eat silver? How nourishing is a pound of gold?

What should one invest in, if not silver and gold? Our Lord has already given us the answer,

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. [Matt. 6:19-20]

In verse 19 we have the sad commentary, "They will throw their silver into the streets and their gold will be an unclean thing".

#### 7.5 : Verses 23 - 27 : Chains prepared

In this last section of this pronouncement, a new feature is added. The command is given to "make a chain". The word "**chain**" is very rare in the Old Testament. It is found in 1 Kings 6:61 for the chains of gold across the inner sanctuary. The verb is found in Nahum where its meaning is made clear:

Yet she became an exile. She went into captivity; And her small children were dashed to pieces. At the head of every street; They cast lots for her honorable men, And all her great men were bound with fetters.

[Nahum 3:10 NAS]

The Lord brings this upon them because the city is filled with "bloody crimes" (NAS, KJV). The term is a that which describes capital crimes, acts punishable by death. It does not necessarily mean the crimes themselves were bloody. It speaks of a people who turn the other way when serious crimes are committed, of a people who make mockery of justice.

One wonders how long the Lord will be long suffering toward this country. Men commit murder and



all sorts of grievous crimes today and our judicial system slaps their wrists and all but lets them go free.

Because of this, the Lord says that he will bring in the "most wicked of nations" (NIV). This, of course, refers to Babylon which came in later and devastated the city of Jerusalem. The Babylonians will be God's instruments to bring justice to Jerusalem. They will destroy the "holy places" which refers not to God's holy place, but to the various places of idol worship that had been set up.

In these days there will not only be death, famine, and all the other calamities we have noted, but one further source of distress. When this all comes to pass, they will seek peace, but there will be none. They will loose their most precious possessions, which are here enumerated:

- (1) visions from the prophets,
- (2) teaching of the law by the priests,
- (3) counsel of the elders.

In proverbs it is written,

Wherethere is no vision the people are unrestrained. But happy is the man who keeps the law.  
[Proverbs 29:18 NAS]

The prophets will be gone and so will the visions brought forth by them. With no vision, there is no hope, and the people soon flounder. The priests will be gone and hence there will be no more instruction in the law. Finally, with the elders of the people taken away or killed, there will be no more counsel given to aid the people.

This pronouncement is not just on Israel and Jerusalem. The same warning might be given to every church in the land. The first requirement is that there must be a vision. This is not to say that there must be "fresh visions" that our charismatic friends might have, but the kind of vision one obtains from reading the Scriptures and accepting the promises contained therein.

Secondly, if a church is to continue in God's grace, there must be instruction in the "law" (i.e. in the Scriptures). Of course, we do not have "priests", we have The High Priest and His undershephards. We are not living under the Mosaic Law, but we do have God's Word in which we need to be instructed. Take good sound Bible teaching out of a church and the church will soon lapse into nothingness.

Lastly, a church needs Elders who can guide the church with wisdom. Without sound counsel, a church can not continue to exist and do the work that the Lord has formed the church to perform. Take these three things away and a church will die. The Lord took these away from Israel and Israel fell to the Babylonians.

The chapter closes, then, with the decree of the Lord, "Then they will know that I am the Lord. And thus is closed the first major section of this book. With this verse, the prophecies regarding the fall of Jerusalem are completed.

CHAPTER EIGHT  
IDOLATRY IN THE TEMPLE

8.0 : Introduction

Chapter 8 begins a new section of the book which extends through chapter 11. It deals specifically with Israel's idolatry and its punishment for this. Chapter 8 serves as an introduction to this section.

8.1 : Verses 1 - 4: The Vision

In chapter 1, verse 2, we had a vision which appeared to Ezekiel on the fifth day of the fourth month of the fifth year (of the exile of Jehoiachin). The vision that we now consider came on the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year. A full 13 months later.

In the first vision, Ezekiel was, apparently, alone. This time he receives the vision with "the elders of Judah ... sitting before" him. In the some thirteen months of his ministry, it appears that the elders that were in exile with Ezekiel had recognized that he was God's prophet and were now coming to him to seek counsel.

As he sat there, the "hand of the Sovereign Lord came upon" him and he saw the figure of a man. This one who resembled a man is described as being like fire from the waist down and as bright glowing metal from the waist up. This is the same description as given in 1:27 and thus the same person (See comments on 1:27).

The Lord, as seen in the vision, reached out and grabbed Ezekiel by his hair and lifted him up and transported him to Jerusalem. This is the only case where man has been thus transported. The word here for "hair" is only found in one other passage:

...you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments. [Numbers 15:37-38NIV]

The word may signify that locks on the forehead (that hang down like a tassel) or, referring to chapter 5 where Ezekiel was to shave his head, it may refer to the "fringe" that had grown back by that time. One wonders at the significance (if any) of this particular mode of transportation. One wonders at how it might have felt to Ezekiel! But this may be answered next.

There is the question as to whether Ezekiel was physically transported thusly to Jerusalem. It is certainly possible that this could have been done since God is all-powerful and can do most anything. The point is, it was not necessary that he physically be transported and, since we are dealing with a vision, we may reasonably assume that he was transported in vision only (hence carrying him by the hair wouldn't hurt!).

Ezekiel is thus transported to a specific place in Jerusalem which is named very specifically: (1) the entrance to the north gate of the inner court and (2) where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. Ezekiel was placed at the North gate that provides passage between the inner and outer courts of the temple. Why the North gate? There may be significance to the direction itself, but the main reason is in what was placed there.

At the North gate stood the **"idol of jealousy"**. First, it is described as an "idol", using a rather rare Hebrew word which is found only in the following:

So watch carefully ... lest you act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure... [Deut. 6:16 NAS]

Then he (Manasseh) put the carved image of the idol which he had made in the house of God ... Thus Manasseh misled the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel. [2 Chron. 33:7,9 NAS]

Apparently, then, the word describes a specific type of idol, one that is fashioned in the form or likeness of man or animal. The second passage probably describes the establishment of this idol in the temple or, at least, one very similar to it since, according to 2 Chron 33:15 the first idol was removed and thrown outside the city.

The idol is then described more fully as the one that provokes jealousy. It does not say whose jealousy it provokes, but this is not hard to determine.

They made him jealous with strange gods, With abominations they provoked him to anger... They made me jealous with what is not God, They have provoked me to anger with their idols. [Deut. 32:16,21 NAS]

...I the Lord your God, am a jealous God...  
[Numbers 20:5 NAS]

For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. [Deut. 4:24 NAS]

God has made it very clear that he is to be worshipped as the only God and that we are to worship no other. When man turns to worshipping other gods, they provoke the Lord's jealousy and, thence, his anger. This image, then, was an image to another god and had been placed in God's temple, provoking him to jealousy.

### 8.2 : Verses 5 - 6 : The First Abomination

In these verses we have the idol of verse 3 described again. It is not further described, but the actions of the people are. Ezekiel is told to observe the "utterly detestable" (NIV) or "great abominations" (NAS, KJV) that the people were doing. The NIV has a grammatical error here which may be intentional, for the sake of emphasis. It describes the practices as "utterly" detestable and then goes on to say that he would see things even "more" detestable. Technically, "utterly" is as far as one can go!

God is using good psychology here (what other kind could he use?). He shows Ezekiel the least of the abominations first and how terrible it is. Then, to put it colloquially, he tells Ezekiel "You ain't seen nothing yet!". "You think that this is bad, wait 'till you see what else they are doing!". And, hence, the remainder of this chapter goes on to describe these abominable practices.

### 8.3 : Verses 7 - 13 : The Second Abomination

The next thing that is shown to Ezekiel is now described. It begins with a hole in the wall. Now, the term **"hole"** itself has significance. A gate would be a "hole in the wall", but the term here does not describe a gate or archway. Consider the following:

Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves. [1

Samuel 14:11 NAS]

So that they dwell in dreadful valleys, in holes in the earth and of the rocks. [Job 30:6 NAS]

The lions tore enough for his cubs, Killed enough for his lionesses, And filled his lairs with prey  
And his dens with torn flesh. [Nahum 2:12 NAS]

These make up most of the references where this term, hole, is to be found. Uniformly, they speak of places where man or lions)

go to hide. They describe places to go to avoid detection and destruction. Even in the one passage where the term is used in a good sense, the basic meaning is preserved,

But Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid and put it beside the altar ... and the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money which was brought into the house of the Lord.

[2 Kings 12:9 NAS]

Here, then, the idea is to keep the money out of sight. And hence, the term signifies a place of hiding.

Ezekiel is then commanded to enlarge the hole. Having done this, he finds a doorway through which he is commanded to go. It is there, in this place concealed from the eyes of men and, presumably but not in reality, from the eyes of God, that the second abomination is seen.

As the vision expands, he first takes notice of the graffiti drawn on the walls of the temple. The Bible (of course) does not use the term "graffiti", but it is an accurate description of what is here described. This graffiti is described as being "crawling things" and "detestable animals".

It was bad enough that they had been worshipping the "idol of jealousy", but here, in their "hidden places" they were worshipping "**creeping things**". First, according to Leviticus 20:25, these things were unclean. In Roman's, such creatures are placed at the very bottom of the list of idolatrous practices,

...exchanged to glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four footed animals and crawling creatures.

[Romans 1:23 NAS]

In front of these detestible images were the elders of house of Israel with censers of incense, offering up prayers to these creatures. Among these elders was Jaazaniah son of Shaphan.

Why is this man mentioned by name? No one is really sure, but a clue may be found in 2 Kings where his father was a very prominent man in Israel...

King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan... to the temple of the Lord. [2 Kings 22:3 NIV]

Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord." He gave it to Shaphan who read it.

[2 Kings 22:8-9 NIV]

Josiah was one of the good kings of Judah and Shaphan was, apparently, his right hand man and was faithful to the Lord. Perhaps, then, the reason for mentioning his son here is to show the complete about-face that Israel had made in the years between Josiah and the current time.

This section is closed with the comments to Ezekiel to note that condition into which the elders of his people had fallen into, worshipping these idols in the darkness of their secret chamber. It is noted

that they say "The Lord does not see us". It is of interest to determine the meaning of this statement. Do they mean that the Lord doesn't see them because they have hidden themselves from him, or that He doesn't see them because He is no longer looking?

The next phrase answers the question in part. They say "the Lord has forsaken the land". In other words, what has happened to Israel could not have happened had the Lord been in their midst. The Lord would not have let this affliction fall on them and so he must not be present. If the Lord is not present, He certainly can not see them.

But, if this were truly the case, why were they worshipping in secret places? Were they doing so "just to be safe". It all boils down to the common practice of man where he rationalizes his actions to suit his desires. They rationalized that he could not see them because he had forsaken them. And yet, in their rationalizations, they did not really believe this so they would have worshiped these other gods in the open.

This section then ends with the notice "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" (to put it in modern terms).

#### 8.4 : Verses 14 - 15 : The Third Abomination

Turning from the elders, Ezekiel is shown the woman of Israel. They were "mourning for Tammuz". He was the god of Spring vegetation and known by the Babylonian name of "Dumuzi" or the Greek name "Adonis".

This section consists of only one verse and gives no details. Its importance is that all of Israel be covered. The last section dealt with the elders. This with the women. The next will deal with the men of Israel.

#### 8.5 : Verse 16 : The Fourth Abomination

The men in this section were, first of all, with their backs to the temple. They had turned their backs on God. Secondly, they were worshipping the sun. We worship the Son, but not the sun. The sun was the object of Persian worship.

#### 8.6 : Verses 17 - 18 : Conclusion

These last two verses close out the chapter with God's summary to Ezekiel. He asks Ezekiel if it is "trivial" (NIV) or "a light thing" (NAS, KJV) that Israel is practicing these abominations. This has been said of others. For example,

And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam... that he (Ahab) married Jezebel... [1 Kings 16:31 NAS]

Israel has added abomination upon abomination until the anger of the Lord is kindled. God says to Ezekiel, "Look at them, putting the branch to their nose!" What does this expression mean? No one knows for sure. We shall not deal with all the various interpretations. We note that "nose" and "anger" are the same words in the Hebrew. Thus, it could be translated "put the branch to their anger"

Turning to the "branch" or "twig", the term is found only a few times in the Old Testament. It refers

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

to the branch of grapes brought back to the sons of Israel in the wilderness (Numbers 13:23). It is found in a two other passages which shed no further light on it. But then, we have the following:

For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge, Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine **slips** of a strange god.  
[Isaiah 17:10 NAS]

Apparently they had some custom of raising vines or branches to some strange god or gods. I believe the reference here is that they put them forth to their anger, anger at God. One commentator has paraphrased this as "adding fuel to the fire".

The message closes then with God's pronouncement of judgement against Israel. God would bring judgement and not repent of it. This judgement will be enlarged upon in the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE  
IDOLATRY PUNISHED

9.0 : Introduction

In the last chapter, God has shown Ezekiel the various abominations that Israel was participating in in their idolatry. This chapter will deal with God's punishment for this.

9.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Seven Men

In these two verses, we are introduced to seven men. First, there are six men who are called "guards" and who carry deadly weapons. Then there is the seventh man who is clothed in linen and carries a writing kit with him. We will begin by seeing who these men are.

The six men are called "guards" (NIV) or "executioners" (NAS) or "those that have charge" (KJV). The Hebrew word is a common word which means (in its verbal form) "to visit" or "to muster" or "to attend to". It might be better translated as "overseers" or, as a more general term "officers". The "office" of these men is determined by what they carried and what they were asked to do.

Each man had a "**destroying weapon**" (NAS) in his hand. The Hebrew text does not indicate what sort of weapon this might be. "Weapon" is the translation of a rather general Hebrew term which describes a "what-you-may-call-it". A "vessel" or "instrument" might be a good translation. It was simply some sort of instrument by which destruction might be wrought and, in this sense, then is a weapon.

The NAS has it that these men are "executioners", which describes them well (although this is an interpretation and not a translation). There were six of them, six being always in the Scriptures the number of man. In particular, it is the number of man in his sinful state. The number is culminated in Revelation with the man whose number is 666.

The seventh man was dressed in linen. We find a similar occurrence in Daniel,

I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen... [Daniel 10:5]

which is an obvious reference to the Lord himself. He is seen again in Daniel 12:6-7. The only other references to linen appear is in regards to the clothing for the priests.

In addition to his appearance, we are told that this man had an "**ink pot**" strapped to his side (NAS = writing case, NIV = writing kit). Literally, it is "the pot of a writer". No one else in the Old Testament is so described. The significance of the ink pot will be seen later in the chapter. At any rate, there is little doubt, when comparing this with Daniel, that the man was the Lord himself as he executed judgement upon Israel.

9.2 : Verses 3 - 4: The Men Instructed

At this point we have notice (verse 3) that the "Glory of the God of Israel went up from above the

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

cherubim, where it had been..." In 1 Kings when Solomon completed the temple and dedicated it, we read,

When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

[1 Kings 8:10-11]

God then appeared to Solomon (1 Kings 9) and warned him that if Israel turned their backs on him, he would desert the temple, saying,

I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated in My Name.

[1 Kings 9:7]

So, now, in Ezekiel 9, we have the "glory of God" moving from its location above the cherubim to the threshold of the temple. It will remain here only long enough to execute judgement.

From the position over the threshold, it calls to the man dressed in linen and speaks to him. Now, we said the man dressed in linen was the Lord himself. But the spirit of God speaks to him according to this passage. There are other instances in the Bible where God speaks to himself, and this is not a contradiction.

The command is spoken. The man with the pen is to go through the city and use it to mark out those who grieve over the abominations being practiced in Jerusalem. The mark is to be placed in the forehead. This situation bears a startling resemblance to Rev. 13:16 and 17 where people received the mark of the beast on their hands or foreheads. Here, it is just the opposite, those who are for God receive the marks.

### 9.3 : Verses 5 - 6 : The Slaughter begins

Following the marking of those who grieve of the abominations, the six men with the weapons of destruction are sent forth. These go forth and slay everyone, man, woman, and child, who was not marked in the forehead. They begin with the elders at the temple and work their way throughout the whole city.

At this point, it should be noted that what we are here studying is a vision that Ezekiel had. We do not have any record of such an event taking place literally in Jerusalem. The vision is an indication to Ezekiel of the slaughter that would actually take place when Nebuchadnezzar came and destroyed Jerusalem.

### 9.4 : Verse 7 - 11 : Ezekiel Pleas for the Remnant

As the slaying begins, Ezekiel falls face down and asks the Lord if his wrath is going to be the cause of the elimination of the entire remnant of Israel.

The Lord answers Ezekiel and points out that Israel had, themselves, claimed that God had forsaken Israel and Jerusalem and that God no longer heard them. Thus, God points out to Ezekiel, he is only respecting their wishes. They claim that God is no longer present with them, and so God will leave them.

With this the chapter closes and the notice that the man in linen returns, bringing word that the



## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

mission has been completed. The rest of the story is then taken up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER TEN  
GOD'S GLORY LEAVES THE TEMPLE

10.0 : Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of chapter 9, with God bringing destruction upon Jerusalem and the Glory of God leaving the temple.

10.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Burning Coals

In the last chapter, the seven men went through the city and slew all except those who were marked in the foreheads. Now, the destruction of the city itself is brought into view.

The chapter begins with Ezekiel seeing a throne of sapphire above the expanse. This is an identical description to that given in 1:22-28 (see commentary there). The man dressed in linen is instructed to reach in and fill his hands with the burning coals from among the coals and to scatter them over the city.

The use of **burning coals** as an instrument of judgement is to be found in several Old Testament passages. They all speak of the judgement of God.

Then the earth shook and quaked, The foundations of heaven were trembling. And they were shaken because He was angry. Smoke went up out of his nostrils, And fire from His mouth devoured: Coals were kindled by it. ... And He rode on a cherub and flew, And He appeared on the wings of the wind. ... From the brightness before him, Coals of fire were kindled.

[2 Samuel 22:9,11,14 NAS]

In the above passage, David describes the way the Lord delivered him. The passage is repeated in one of David's Psalms (18) and a similar passage is to be found in Job (41).

The man in linen was instructed to do this, and so he did as Ezekiel watched.

10.2 : Verses 3 - 5 : The Glory of the Lord

In these verses we have an amplified description of the actions of verses 1-2. The cherubim are noted as standing on the South side of the temple. All of the action thus far has been on the North side, at the Northern gate. But now, the action moves to the South. The significance of this is, most likely, that the city of Jerusalem lay, mostly, to the South of the temple and God's judgement is not being directed toward the city.

In verse 4, the glory of the Lord moves again. The description has this glory filling the temple and the courtyard. In a previous lesson, we noted that the men of the city said that God was no longer in their midst. As the glory of the Lord expanded and filled even the courtyard, there could be little doubt that God had not left the temple or city. Not only did God's glory expand and fill the courtyard, but the activity of the cherubim was increased so that the noise of their wings could be heard about.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

As one reads this, the idea of a makings of an awesome event was here. One can feel the excitement, the tension and the stir as the prepartations are being made.

### 10.3 : Verses 6 - 14 : The Coals are Taken

Again, we have recorded the instructions to take the coals. Then a rather detailed description is given of the cherubim and the wheels. The description is very similar to that given in chapter 1 and we will not discuss it further here. We might note, however, the significance of their being two such descriptions.

If there were only one such description in the Bible, we might be inclined to believe that this was a vision that was passing, that the picture was not a permanent one. But, here, some 14 months later, Ezekiel sees the same vision. Then, many hundreds of years later, John sees essentially the same vision. Thus, the vision of the cherubim and the throne is a lasting picture of the glory of God.

### 10.4 : Verses 15 - 21 : The Glory Departs

Once again the Glory of the Lord is on the move. It moves from the threshold where it has been and, taking its position above the cherubim, and then departs through the Eastern gate. The Eastern gate was the main entrance into the temple and hence the way of God's departure.

The vision then concludes in the next chapter with the judgement upon the leaders of Israel

CHAPTER ELEVEN  
JUDGEMENT OF THE LEADERS

11.0 : Introduction

This chapter finishes the section dealing with Ezekiel's second vision. It deals with the judgement on the leaders of Israel.

11.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : The Cooking Pot

Taking up with the Spirit of the Lord at the Eastern Gate, where we left off in the last chapter, we are shown twenty five men, including two particular men, Jaazaniah and Pelatiah, who are described as being leaders of the people. We would gather that these are the same men as seen in 8:16 worshipping the sun.

The term "**leaders**" (NIV, NAS) or "**princes**" (KJV) has not been used prior to this in Ezekiel. We have had reference to the elders and the priests, but here it is the leaders. The term is a rather general one in the Hebrew. We gather that these people were not the "official leaders" in the sense of being elders or priest, but "natural leaders", those who had commanded authority over the people and had become its leaders.

Two of the leaders are mentioned by name. The first, Jaazaniah, has been introduced before (8:11) where he stood with the Elders. The other is Pelatiah of which we know little. We are told that he was the son of Benaiah, but there were a number of men so named in the Old Testament and it would be hard to determine which of these, if any, was the father.

It might be noted that most of the Benaiah's who might have been Pelatiah's father were very good men of God, as was the father of Jaazaniah. What we might learn about these two men, then, must come from their names. The first, Jaazaniah, means "heard of the Lord" which the second, Palathiah, means "escape from the Lord". This reminds us of 8:12 where similar men were saying of God, "The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land". We might assume, then, that these two show the representative feelings of the group, that God does not hear them, that God has fled from them.

This then makes sense of the statement that these men were plotting evil and giving wicked advice. The advice that they gave was that it would be soon time to build houses. This meaning that they would soon be free from the power of Babylon and able to rebuild. Such was certainly not the truth, for the Babylonian captivity lasted for some seventy years, nearly the entire lifetime of Daniel.

The section closes with the statement of the leaders, "This city is the cooking pot and we are the meat". The "**cooking pot**" is mentioned a number of places in the Old Testament and is translated "caldron" in the KJV and simply "pot" in the NAS. It is first found when the Sons of Israel grumbled in the wilderness,

...Would that we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt when we sat by the pots of meat...

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

[Exodus 16:3 NAS]

A similar reference is found in 1 Kings,

[1 Kings 4:38 NAS]

But, there are several figurative uses of the pot in the prophetic scriptures that are of importance. These are listed below.

The word of the Lord came to me again: "What do you see?" "I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the North ... " [Jeremiah 1:14 NIV]

"Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of the house of Israel. Should you not know justice, you who hate good and love evil; who tear skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; who eat my peoples flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot." [Micah 3:1-3 NIV]

On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the Lord's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the Lord. [Zechariah 14:20-21]

In the first of these, the emptying of the boiling pot signifies the pouring out of judgement. It speaks of the warfare that would come on the land. But, in the second reference, it speaks of the leaders of Judah, cooking the flesh of the inhabitants in the pot. This is, of course, figurative. But, here in Ezekiel, the time of the end is coming and the elders now recognize that it is they themselves have become the flesh for the pot.

### 11.2 : Verses 5 - 12 : "From the Frying Pan to the Fire"

The leaders had claimed that the city was the cooking pot and they were to be the flesh. But God has other ideas. God declares to them that it is their hapless victims that will be the flesh for the pot. They will be left in the city to be destroyed within it.

God was not content for these leaders to die like the rest in Jerusalem. In verse 8, God reminds them that the thing they feared the most was the sword. That being the case, God chose the sword to be the means of their destruction. God then emphasizes the fact; "The city will not be a pot for you, nor will you be the meat in it." God then goes on to say that he would drive them to the borders and there they would fall by the sword. As before, the final and contemplated result of this judgement that man would recognize him as the Lord.

### 11.3 : Verses 13 - 15 : Ezekeil Pleas Again for the Remnant

During this time, Pelatiah dies and this prompts Ezekiel to again ask the question, "Will you completely destroy the remnant of Israel?" Jews all around Ezekiel are dying and it look as if there will be no end of it. But God has always left a remnant for himself, and thus Ezekiel needs to know what is to happen.

The Lord answers Ezekiel. He begins with "Your brothers". God then becomes emphatic, spelling out who it was that were his brothers, "Your brothers! Your brothers who are your

**kinsmen/redeemers** and who are of the house of Israel" He then caps this with "all of them". Then they are described as those who have fled from Jerusalem and not those who remain and claim title to the land and claim that they are the ones whom God is going to favor.

In other words, God is saying to Ezekiel, "Hey, don't worry about these imposters who are living in Jerusalem and are now dying there. These men are not your brothers. Your real brother are those whom have been dispersed to other lands."

Getting back to the terms to describe these brothers. They are first of all described as men who are "kinsmen/redeemers". The Hebrew term here comes from the root "to redeem" and is used to those who were blood relatives and of close enough relation that they could serve as a "redeemer". The most notable example is to be found in the book of Ruth where Boaz was Ruth's "kinsman/redeemer".

Secondly, the brothers are describes as "all the house of Israel". Not all who claim to be Israelites are "true Israelites". They may be descendants of Jacob, but they loose their inheritance by following after other Gods.

#### 11.4 : Verses 16 - 21 : The Promise of a Return from Exile

In these verses, God picks up the answer to Ezekiel's question and about his "brothers". God begins by noting that his brothers had been (1) Sent far away among the nations, and (2) Scattered among the countries. "Send far away" is one word in the Hebrew. They had a word for it when they wanted to send someone a long ways away. The meaning may be found in the following passages.

He has removed my brothers from me. And all of my acquaintances are completely estranged from me.

[Job 19:13 NAS]

You have removed my acquaintances far from me.

[Psalm 88:8 NAS]

You have removed lover and friend far from me; My acquaintances are in darkness.

[Psalm 88:18 NAS]

There is in the word the idea of seperation and solitude. The people had been driven into strange lands and away from those whom the loved. Secondly, they were scattered. In sending them out, they were all sent to the same place. They would be scattered like seeds in the wind.

God had scattered them, but God did not desert them there. He continues with "I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries were they have gone." Nowhere else in the Scriptures does God say this. The term "**sanctuary**" is faily common in the Old Testament and has been used to refer to the temple three times, so far, in this book (5:11, 8:6, 9:6). Earlier it was used to describe the Holy Place. The verb has the meaning "to set apart" and hence, in many places, "to sanctify".

God is saying that He has been what set them apart in the lands to which they went. He was with them and built a wall about them to keep them in these foreign lands. It is like Satan said as he accused Job before the Lord,

"Does Job fear God for nothing? ... Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has?" [Job 1:9 NAS]

God, indeed, did send them far off - far off from Israel, but not far off from Himself. He went with

them. He watched over them in the places where they went.

Now, God makes a two-fold promise. He promises to "gather" them back from where they were scattered. He promises to "give back" the land to them from which they had been driven "far off". God would restore them to their former position.

Finally, God says he will do more for them. As they return and tear down the idols and images that had been placed there, God would do the following:

- (1) Give them an undivided heart
- (2) Put a new spirit in them
- (3) Take away their heart of stone
- (4) Give them a heart of flesh

All four of these involve the heart. Three of them mention the heart explicitly. the fourth involves the spirit which would abide in the heart. First, he gives them "one heart" (Literal from the Hrebrew, hence NAS). There would be a unity among them and within them. Their desire would all be aimed at the same goal, at God.

Secondly, God would but a "new spirit within them". In their midst would be a new spirit. This, again, speaks of oneness and singleness of purpose. Their would be a new sweet spirit in their midst.

Thirdly, God would take away their heart of hard stone and give them a heart of flesh. In other words, he would give them a heart that was responsive to others and not hardened.

Why would God do this? So that they could follow God and be His people and could respond to him. They would have an attitude that was had in the early church (Acts 2:42-47).

#### 11.5 : Verses 22 - 25 : The End of the Vision

The Glory of the Lord then departs from Jerusalem and from the temple. It stopped over the mountains east of the city. It doesn't take much imagination to figure what the principal mountain was that the Glory of the Lord stopped over. Just East of Jerusalem was the Mount of Olives. The Glory of the Lord departs from their, just as did Jesus Christ.

As the vision departs, Ezekiel relates the content of the vision to the elders of the house of Israel that had gathered about him. They came to Ezekiel for counsel and they received first hand counsel from the Lord himself, as revealed thourgh this vision.

CHAPTER TWELVE  
PORTRAYAL OF THE EXILE

12.0 : Introduction

This chapter constitutes the next section of the book. It begins with the words "The word of the Lord came to me...". The next chapter begins with the same phrase, hence this chapter is an isolated account. It deals with the Lord's command for Ezekiel to portray the exile of Israel.

12.1 : Verses 1 - 2 : The Introduction

The Lord appears to Ezekiel and informs him that he is living in the midst of a rebellious people. The Lord then enlarges on this by noting that they have "eyes to see but do not see" and they have "ears to hear but do not hear". This same expression appears elsewhere in the Old Testament.

In regards to dumb idols, the psalmist says...

They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk. [Psalm 115:5-7 NIV]

[Psalm 135:16-17]

In speaking to the prophet Isaiah, the Lord warned that this would be what would happen to Israel, saying;

Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed. [Isaiah 6:9-11 NIV]

By hearing and hearing and yet disregarding what is heard, the ears grow dull and we reach a point where we do not even hear the message anymore. The same goes with our eyes. Think of it in a material sense. You can see some object that is out of place in an area and it immediately comes to your attention. Leave that object out of place for a number of days and you finally get to the point where you no longer notice it.

The same is true of our eyes and ears in a spiritual sense. We can hear the Gospel message over and over again and the effect, if we choose not to accept it, is that we really no longer even hear it. We become like the idols fashioned by Israel as described by the Psalmist above.

The Lord tells Ezekiel that his people are rebellious. They have heard and seen for so long and yet disobeyed, that their eyesight and hearing have gone to pot.

12.2 : Verses 3 - 7 : The command, "Pack Your Bags!"

In these next verses, Ezekiel is again asked to do a rather strange thing in order to deliver a message to a people whose eyes and ears have become dull. The first thing he was to do was to pack his



belongings for exile. The NAS has "baggage for exile" while the KJV has "prepare thee stuff for removing" which is not very clear. The Hebrew has very general terms here, saying "take for yourself what-you-may-callit for going into exile. Practically speaking, what he was to do was to take those few essential items that could be carried on ones person as they flee from one place to another.

Having gathered these few items together, he was told to wait until the people were watching him. The second thing he was to do was to gain the attention of the people. Then, he was to leave where he was and to go someplace else. Where he went was not important, it was the going that was important. He was to present a picture to them of men fleeing from their homes and going to a strange place with only what belongings they could carry on their backs.

The Lord then adds to the phrase perhaps they will understand. It is not a phrase of hope. The inference is that most of them will pay no attention. But, there may be one or two who will pay heed and benefit from this action.

In the remainder of this section, the instructions are repeated in more detail. During the day he was to pack his belongings and pass among the people so that they would see him. Then, at dusk, he was to put these on his shoulders and leave. But, he was not to leave by the city gate, but, as one who was fleeing from invaders, he was to dig a hole in the wall and escape that way.

Finally, as he left he was to cover his face as if he had no idea of where he was going. So would it be with Israel. They would have to flee, through holes in the wall, in the dark of evening and go to a place which was then unknown to them. This, then, was the picture to be presented.

### 12.3 : Verses 7 - 16: Ezekiel Packs His Bags

As a faithful servant, Ezekiel goes through the actions which the Lord asked him to do. He packs his bags and leaves the city. We may assume that, later, after the message had been portrayed, he circled back and returned to the city. Then the Lord asks him a question, one which appears to be rhetorical, "Did not that rebellious house of Israel ask you, 'What are you doing?'" We are not given an answer to this question. There is no indication that Ezekiel answered God. There was no need to answer it. The answer was certainly No!

Now, wasn't that ridiculous? Ezekiel had to go to all that trouble and yet no one really paid any attention to him. Why did the Lord make him go to this trouble when He knew that no one would ask him what he was doing? Because the Lord gives all of us a chance. He gives some of us a chance to accept. To others he gives the opportunity to reject. Here the opportunity to reject was offered and accepted.

The Lord then goes on to say that this **oracle** concerned the prince in Jerusalem and the whole house of Israel. The KJV and the NAS have "burden" in place of "oracle" The fact of the matter is there are two meanings attached to the Hebrew word found here. The KJV always translates it "burden". The other meaning of the word is best found in Jeremiah.

Now when this people or a prophet or a priest asks you saying "What is the oracle of the Lord?" you shall say to them, "What oracle? The Lord declares, "I shall abandon you". ... For you will no longer remember the oracle of the Lord, because each man's own word will become the oracle, and you will have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.

[Jeremiah 23:33,36 NAS]

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

How true the words of Jeremiah are today. "Christians" are over and over again having "fresh revelations from God". Each man adds his own word to the "oracles" of God, and thus perverting the true "oracle" of God, the Word of God. The oracle was delivered, first of all to the "prince of Jerusalem", meaning its king and, perhaps, those under him, and then to all the house of Israel.

God tells Ezekiel that he is to tell the people that he is a "**sign**" to them. The term is usually translated "wonder" but is not applicable in this case. God uses men, not as "wonders" but as "signs" hence Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts who dwells on Mount Zion.

[Isaiah 8:18 NAS]

Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you - indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My Servant the Branch.

[Zech. 3:8 NAS]

But, the prophet Ezekiel is used by God as a sign several times.

Ezekiel's actions were to be a sign to the people. He was then to explain to them that they would have to pack up their belongings as he had done. They would have to dig a hole in the wall and escape as he had done. They would have to flee with their faces covered, not knowing where they were going, as Ezekiel had done.

Then the Lord has Ezekiel go on and tell them what His part in this would be. God would spread his net for them and catch them up in it. He would bring them to Babylonia. The king and his men would die in Babylon. The rest would be scattered to the winds. We have already noted this a number of times before. as always, there is the promise that a remnant, "a few of them", would be saved and come to acknowledge God as their Lord.

### 12.4 : Verses 17 - 20 : Eating in Terror

The prophecy continues with the instructions for Ezekiel to tremble as he ate his foot and to shudder as he drinks his water. We are to assume that he was to do so before the people as a sign to them. This, again, is a picture of the way the house of Israel would eat and drink under the Babylonians. It is the shuddering and trembling of fear and anxiety that is noted here.

Consider yourself. How do you eat when you are very anxious about something? Perhaps it is in our eating and drinking that our anxieties are best revealed to others. We may sit quietly and say nothing even though there is a tempest brewing within us. But, in our eating, our fearful state is displayed to others.

The reason for the terror is as before, the land would be stripped and laid waste by the Babylonians.

### 12.5 : Verses 21 - 25 : The End of the "Proverb"

This section deals with a **proverb**. There are a lot of proverbs in the Bible - a whole book of them! Several proverbs of the type referred to here are:

What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul among the prophets? And a man there answered and said, "Now who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

[1 Samuel 10:11-12 NAS]

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

As the proverb of the ancients says, "Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness". [1 Samuel 24:13 NAS]

The proverb that had arisen here was "The days go by and every vision comes to nothing.". A similar New Testament "proverb" is to be found in:

Know this first of all, that in the last days, mockers will come with their mocking, following their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of the creation."

[2 Peter 3:3-4 NAS]

God's answer to this proverb is the same as His answer to the mockers in 2 Peter. God will one day put an end to it. The visions of God will be fulfilled. The false visions will be wiped out. God emphasizes that the time of this fulfillment is at hand, "...it shall be fulfilled without delay". We also live in the last days where the promise of his coming for the terrible destruction of Israel is soon at hand.

12.6 : Verses 26 - 28 : The Scoffers' Excuse

The scoffers always have an answer for their unbelief, for their lack of concern. They say, "Oh, I guess what God says through the prophets is true, but we have lots of time left before these things will come true." The concept is like that of Felix as he heard the Gospel from Paul, and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

[Acts 24:25 NIV]

The word that Ezekiel is to bring to this people is that there is no time left. The Lord is patient and long suffering. But there comes a time when that runs out and the Lord fulfills his promises and warnings. The time had run out for these people and there would be no further chances.

One would think that, with a message like that, the people would respond. But, that is not the way we are. Today, the Lord could return at anytime to take those who have trusted in him to Glory. That should be enough. But how many are there today who put off making a decision? One can only give the message and leave it to the Lord to convict the hearts of those who will listen and follow through.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN  
THE FALSE PROPHETS

13.0 : Introduction

This chapter, like the last, stands by itself as a section of the book. It deals with the subject of false prophets. Before we begin the chapter, let us deal first take a look at the subject of **false prophets**.

The Greeks had a word for this, pseudoprophetes. Jesus taught about them.

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them

[Matthew 7:15-16]

He also taught that they would increase in the last days.  
people.

[Matthew 24:11]

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible [Matthew 24:24]

Peter writes that there were many false prophets in the past.

But there were false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.

[2 Peter 2:1]

John writes the same.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[1 John 4:1]

And, finally, there is the false prophet mention in Revelation (16:13, 19:20, 20:10).

The Hebrew language has no word that means "false prophet", nor is any prophet referred to with these words. However, this chapter, like several others in the Old Testament, describes such prophets and God's pronouncement against them.

13.1 : Verses 1 - 7 : False Prophecy Defined

As we begin this section, we might note that there was no HPA that might correspond to our AMA. It is extremely difficult to get one doctor to say anything, in public against another doctor; the AMA sees to that. But there was no Hebrew Prophets Association and hence we have that Ezekiel, who is a prophet himself, is to speak a prophecy against the other prophets of Israel, against his contemporaries (i.e. those that are now prophesying).

These are then defined as being false prophets by the words "who prophecy out of their own imagination" (NIV) or "...their own inspiration" (NAS) or "...their own hearts" (KJV). The Hebrew says, literally, "from their hearts". One may ask why the other translation do not use "heart" and the answer is that Hebrew anatomy is not the same as American anatomy. The heart, to the Hebrew mind, did not mean the same thing as it means to us today.

To us the heart is the seat of our emotions, whereas to the Hebrew it was the center of his being, of

his intellect. When the text says that they prophesied from "their hearts" it does not refer to an emotional experience that some of our more charismatic friends may claim today, but rather from their own minds, from what they have worked out on their own.

The description then goes on and describes them as those who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing. This is an emphasis of the previous description. In spite of the fact that no vision has been given them, they take it upon themselves to prophecy from their own thoughts. When we consider this further description, and apply it today, it not only refers to our charismatic friends who claim to have visions, but also to us sometimes when we counsel others to do things for which there is no Scriptural backing, things which we think ought to be (or not to be) done. To put it another way, it comes down today to legalism and similar types of Christian philosophy.

Next, the Lord gives a description of them that is very vivid. He calls them "jackals among the ruins" (the KJV has "foxes in the deserts"). The same thought is expressed in Lamentations; prowling over it. [Lament. 5:18 NIV]

The significance of this animal is found in Psalm where it is listed as being a scavenger which feeds on the carcasses.

They will be given over to the sword and become food for jackals. [Psalm 63:10 NIV]

Their insignificance is attested to in Nehemiah who says...

"What are they building - if even a fox climbed up on it, he would break down their wall of stone."

[Nehemiah 4:3 NIV]

The significance here, then, is that these false prophets feed off the misery and despair of fallen Israel. Instead of being a help in time of need, they devour Israel with their false prophecies. This is then emphasized by the statement that they had not gone up to the breaks in the wall to repair it so that it will stand firm in the battle of the day of the Lord.

We should not interpret this statement in a literal sense. It was not the duty of a prophet to do physical repairs on the wall. The statement is to be taken in a spiritual sense. This is proven later in the book, namely,

The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice. I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand for me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.

[Ezekiel 22:29-30 NIV]

At the time when Israel needed real spiritual help, she had none, she had a herd of jackals devouring her instead.

Things were bad enough as they were. But God warns that things will get worse. That there will be battle to do in the "day of the Lord". There are a number of such "days" in the Scriptures. This speaks, specifically, of the day when Babylon would completely destroy Jerusalem. But there is still an even more awesome day of the Lord yet to come.

Considering these several days, we might note the parallel. Paul, in writing to Timothy warns him that the last days are coming and that, as the last days approach, there will be false teachers who will lead many astray. Thus it is today. We have the real far out ones, the Jim Jones of our day, but also the ones who are not so obviously off base. There are those who are the jackals of today, feeding off of the need that people have for spiritual leadership, for guidance, and who lead them astray.

Finally, God says of these false prophets that they state "The LORD declares..." even though the Lord did not send them. They not only so state this, but the text goes on to say that they actually expect what they say to happen!

At this point, we might ask, how does one know a false prophet? How was Israel to know that these prophets were not real? This was spelled out for Israel (and for us) many years prior to this time. A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" If what a prophet proclaim in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously.

[Deuteronomy 28:20-22 NIV]

The first test is to see if what is prophesied comes true. If it doesn't, then one must consider the person to be a false prophet. That is not hard to figure out. But, does that mean that if what he says does come true, he is a true prophet? Consider also the following.

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you havenot known) "and let us worship them",you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul.

[Deuteronomy 13:1-3 NIV]

Here we are told that, not only must what is prophesied come true, but also, what is said must not be contrary to God's word. One can not lead people to a false God and be a true prophet, regardless of whether his prophecies come true!

### 13.2 : Verses 8 - 12: The False Prophecy

Now we get to the heart of the matter, the things that were being said by these false prophets. God says that they are crying "peace" when there will be no peace. Returning to the metaphore of building a wall, he says that they put whitewash on a flimsy wall. Not only do these prophets not build up the wall, but they lie to the people, making them think that what they are doing is sound by covering up the weakness and deceit with "whitewash". It brings to mind the words of Paul, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you violate the law... [Acts 23:3 NIV]

And also, Jesus words in a slightly different context,

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

[Matthew 23:27 NIV]

Because of this, God announces three judgements against them:

- 1) expulsion from office
- 2) expungement from the official rolls of Israel
- 3) exile from the land of Israel

In regards to the first, when their false prophecies are discovered, they will have no more following in Israel. In regards to the last, they will never be allowed to return to the land.

In regards to the second item, the meaning and fulfillment of this is to be found in the book of Ezra. These are the family heads and those registered with them who came up with me from Babylon during the reign of king Artaxerxes: ... [Ezra 8:1 NIV]

### 13.3 : Verses 13 - 17 : God's Wrath Poured Out

In these verses, we come face to face with God when he is angered. He promises a violent storm which will pull down the whitewashed wall. When the wall tumbles, it will fall on the false prophets and destroy them as well. It is important to remember that this is not a physical wall. Hence, it is not a physical storm that is spoken of. What is being spoken of is the destruction carried out by the Babylonians

### 13.4 : Verses 18 - 23 : The Women False-prophets

The last part of this chapter deals with the fairer sex. Not all of the false prophets in Israel were men. And so God here turns to the "daughters of your people". There were, from time to time, women prophets - prophetesses in Israel.

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand...[Exodus 15:20]

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel... [Judges 4:4]

wife of Shallum... [2 Kings 22:14]

remember also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophetesses who have been trying to intimidate me.

[Nehemiah 6:14]

Then, there is one more prophetess in the Old Testament, who is not mentioned by name, and appears to have a different roll than the others,

Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. [Isaiah 8:3]

It appears here that, in this case at least, a prophetess was the wife of a prophet (i.e. Isaiah). Several of the other prophetesses above are also mentioned as being "the wife of..." and it may be that there is a twofold significance in the title.

Most of those mentioned above were good and true prophetesses. The ones we find here in Ezekiel were not. This, incidently, is the only place in the Bible were false prophetesses are called out and denounced.

In addition to making up their own prophecies, the Lord speaks of several of the acts performed by these women. They sewed "magic charms on their wrists" and they made "veils of various lengths for their heads". What this means, no one knows for sure. One thing that is for certain, God never instructed that such things be done. The description makes them sound a bit like the gypsy fortune tellers of today, and, perhaps, there is a bit of commonality here.

One of the judgements against these women was that, for a few handfuls of barley and scraps of bread, they had allowed people to live who should have died and vice-versa. They were just the opposite of the type that Paul speaks of,

For we are the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other the fragrance of life. ... Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit.

[2 Corinth. 3:15-17]



STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

To be continued

CHAPTER FOURTEEN  
IDOLATRY OF THE HEART

14.0 : Introduction

We saw God's condemnation of idolatry in a previous chapter. This chapter again deals with idolatry, but in a slightly different sense. In the previous chapter it was outward idolatry. This chapter deals with inward idolatry.

14.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : Idolatry of the Heart

As in several previous chapters, some of the elders of Israel came to Ezekiel for counsel. The Lord then provided this counsel through Ezekiel.

The Lord tells him that these elders had (1) set up idols in their hearts, and (2) put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Let us examine these two phrases carefully. According to K&D, the words of the first phrase mean "to allow anything to come into the mind, to permit it to rise up in the heart, to be mentally busy therewith". In other words, it is not that they intentionally setup the idols in thier hearts, but, through lack of diligence, allowed them to rise up. The concept here is important since it is all to easy for us to allow this to happen in our hearts.

The second phrase follows after the first. If we are not diligent, these idols can arise in our hearts. Then, if we do not recognize this and put them away, they will be constantly before us, in our minds, and keep us from access to God. So, we need not consider these elders as men who had deliberately turned from God. They were people just like you and I who simply let other things get between them and God.

God thus asks Ezekiel a rhetorical question; should he pay any attention to them because of this? If they had broken communication with God, should God try to reopen it? From the sake of righteousness, probably not. But God is also a loving God and will still try to commune with them.

God then tells Ezekiel that, when such a person seeks him (i.e. goes to a prophet), that he will answer that one. The answer, howver, is given in the negative sense. He will "answer" him by showing him that, as long as he clings to the idolatrous practices, God will not have fellowship with him. In other words, Gods response tosuch a one will be a warning.

Finally, in the end of this section we find God's purpose. God's desire is to "recapture" (NIV) the hearts of the people of Israel. God's eternal purpose is to have man repent, willingly, and to come to Him.

14.2 : Verses 6 - 11 : The Idolatry Condemned

This section is an amplification of the previous. The warning against idolatry of the heart is given, clearly and surely. "Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices" The principal that is then laid down is one that is also to be found in the New Testament. First, John's last words in 1 John,

Little children, guard yourselves from idols  
[1 John 5:21]

And then Paul writes concerning what had happened at Thessalonika,

For they themselves report about us what kind of reception we had with you, how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God.  
[1 Thess. 1:9]

One can not worship both God and idols. One must turn away from them in order to turn to God. So God's command is to "Repent" and to turn away from these idols.

The section then is an amplification of what God said in the previous section. However, God adds one new facet to it. He then concerns himself with not only the idolator, but also the prophet to whom he turns.

In verse 9, we have the words, "And if a prophet is persuaded to utter a prophecy, I the Lord have persuaded that prophet..." (NIV). The NAS has "prevailed" rather than "persuaded", the KJV has "deceived". What does this mean? Consider the following:

And the Lord said, "who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramaath-Gilead?" And one said this and another said that. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord and said "I will entice him". And the Lord said to him "How?". And he said, "I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of his prophets". Then he said, "You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so." [1 Kings 22:20-22 NAS]

Calvin remarks "it teaches that neither impostures nor frauds take place apart from the will of God". The same concept is to be found in the New Testament, in the end times, as Paul writes:

They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.  
[2 Thess. 2:10-12 NIV]

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

The warning to the prophet is this. If he allows himself to be persuaded to say things that God has not commissioned him to say, God will send a deceiving spirit who will persuade him to say things which are contrary and hence he will not only condemn the idolator who has come to him for encouragement, but he will condemn himself as well.

Again, the bottom line to all this, as always, is that God will do this in order that there will be some who will see the light, who will keep themselves from idolatrous practices and will love the Lord.

### 14.3 : Verses 12 - 20 : Noah, Daniel and Job

In this passage, God speaks of four ways that he might bring judgement upon a nation who is unfaithful to him. These are:

- 1: By Famine (12-14)
- 2: By Wild Beast (15-16)
- 3: By Warfare (the sword) (17-18)
- 4: By Plague (19-20)

In each of these, three men are mentioned (twice by name, twice by inference), Noah, Daniel and Job. Of them God says that all they would be able to do is to save themselves. They would not even be able to save their own sons and daughters.

Why these three men? Why does God single them out? What about Abraham, Moses, David? What about Joshua, Elisha, Elijah, Isaiah? Why only these three men?

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time: Noah walked with God. [Genesis 6:9]

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the kings choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. [Daniel 1:8]

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil. [Job 1:1]

The Bible has so much to say about men like Moses and Abraham, that we tend to think of them higher than others. The Bible has little to say about Noah, but this does not mean that he was any the less important in God's eyes.

But, then, these three men shared something else in common. Beginning with the first mentioned, Noah, we have:

By faith, Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of righteousness which is according to faith. [Hebrews 11:7]

Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives, were all that escaped the judgement of God. All others perished. Noah was only able to save himself and seven others.

"Please test your servants for ten days...then let our appearance be observed in your presence...and deal with your servants according to what you see." ... So he listened to them and tested them for

ten days. And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence..." [Daniel 1:12-17]

It was Daniels faith and dedication to God and to God alone by which he and his three friends were saved. Of all who were carried off into captivity, all perished, eventually, except Daniel and his three friends. Noah and seven others were save. Daniel and three others were saved.

When we turn to Job, he lost all he had, his children, and even his health (until at the end when God restored it). Job was not able to perserve the life of any but himself, and hence his being mentioned last. All three of these were righteous men, men who refrained from idols. All three were saved while those about them perished.

So, now, God calls out these names and tells Israel that the judgement that is comming upon them will be like the judgement that befell these three men. Only those who were truly righteous were to be saved. There was to be no salvation on "the coat tails of another".

#### 14.4 : Verses 21 - 23 : The Ever Present Remnent

The chapter concludes with the fact that there would be some who would be saved. God says that as these are spared, the people would see "their conduct and their actions" and would therefor be consoled regarding the disaster.

What is God saying here? The fact that God would save the few, those who truly worshipped him was to be a comfort to those about Ezekiel who would see that God was not arbitrary. God did not simply wipe out a whole nation because of the sins of most if it. If there were any righteous at all, they would be spared. God is not capricious. God does not execute mass judgement. God, in spite of external appearances, judges each man individaully. And there is always a remnant that will remain true to him.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN  
THE USELESS VINE

15.0 : Introduction

In this very short chapter Jerusalem is likened to the wood of a vine. It begins with the allegory and then concludes with the application.

15.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : The Allegory

The Lord speaks to Ezekiel and asks him a question, one that is not hard to answer. It deals with the comparison of the wood of a vine and the wood of any tree. Have you ever seen a wooden object, such as a piece of furniture, made from the wood of a vine? I think not. The wood of a vine is not only too small to make much from, but it has not strength. This is the question asked Ezekiel. To emphasize the point, God even asks if it is possible to make such a small thing as a peg on which to hang things. Even such a small item can not be made from vine wood.

Then, to make the contrast even stronger, God suggests that, if the wood of the vine has been burnt on both ends and charred, it is even good for less than before. Again, the answer to the questions are obvious, the wood of a vine is useless for anything.

15.2 : Verses 6 - 8 : The Application

In the last half of this chapter, the application is made. Jerusalem was the vine. God had given it over for burning and as such, it would have no value. In verse 8 he says, "I will make the land desolate". Jerusalem would not be good for anything after this, good for no more than the wood of a vine is.

The allegory is simple. But what does it teach? The scriptures have a quite a lot to say about vines and, generally, it is not bad as it is here.

Jesus taught about the vine:

I am the vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch that does not bear fruit, He takes away: And every branch that bears fruit, He prunes that it may bear more fruit. ... I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in me bears much fruit; for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up, and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. [John 15:1,2,5,6]

A vine has only one useful purpose, to bear fruit. If it bears none, it has no purpose whatever. Jerusalem was no longer fruitful for God. Since it no longer was fruitful, and since a vine that does not bear has no value, there is only one thing to be done, to burn it with fire. And thus it was for Jerusalem.

But, what about us? Do we bear fruit? Jesus says that we too must bear fruit. If we do not bear fruit, we too are useless.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN  
THE LORD'S "LADY"

16.0 : Introduction

In chapter 15, an allegory was made in which Jerusalem (and Israel in general) was likened to a vine - an unproductive vine that had no value and hence was to be burned. In this chapter a second allegory is given in which Jerusalem (and Israel) is pictured as a girl who is cared for by the Lord and who grows up and becomes unfaithful. It is a very detailed allegory taking up 63 verses. Chapter 15 was the shortest, this is the longest in the book.

16.1 : Verses 1 - 5 : The Lady's Birth

In these verses we have the allegorical birth of Jerusalem. It begins by noting that her father was an Amorite and her mother was a Hittite. Now, we know that the Israelites were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with Abraham coming from Mesopotamia. Remember that this is an allegory, not a history lesson! The meaning is that Israel was born in the presence of these people, she was born into their "family" - the land.

On the day she was born, the following was not done for her:

- 1) The cutting of the cord,
- 2) The washing of the body,
- 3) The rubbing with salt,
- 4) The wrapping with cloth.

Collectively, these are all indications of a neglected baby. It is a picture of an abandoned baby that such as those found from time to time in garbage cans in back alleys - a very unpleasant picture!

Only the third item above needs special attention. The other are all things done today. In the times this was written, it was a customary practice to go over an infant's body with salt in order to cleanse it to kill any germs, etc. that might be present.

So, the section concludes with the statement that no one would do these things for her and, as a result, she was cast into a field and left to die. Leaving the allegory, if you trace the beginnings of Israel as a nation in the land of Canaan, you find that this is completely true. Israel was not welcomed in the land of Canaan. Any land that was acquired by Israel was done only by battle and hard work and with the divine aid from the Lord. To this day, Israel is not wanted by the other inhabitants of the land.

Before we leave this section, we might bring it closer to home and note that we, as Christians, are no better off. The pagan world has no use for Christians. We are born into a world that has the curse of sin upon it. We are born into a world in which the majority of the people do not know God. Jesus so stated this when he said,

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. [John 15:18-19]

16.2 : Verses 6 - 7 : The Lady's Adoption

Taking up with the child in the field, the Lord then passes by, sees the child, lying there in need and ready to die, and takes pity on it.

He took the baby girl and said to her, "Live!". This is consistent with John 15 noted above, in which God chose her. The allegory continues with the notation of how the baby girl grew and developed. The words used to describe this are most vivid but differ from translation to translation. The things noted are:

- 1) She "grew up"
- 2) She "developed"
- 3) She "became the most beautiful of jewels"
- 4) Her "breasts formed"
- 5) Her "hair grew"
- 6) She "was naked"
- 7) She "was bare"

First, she "grew up". The Hebrew word means "to become many" or "to become much". We don't know of any other passages where this verb is used to describe the growth of a baby girl. We would gather that, considering the other uses of the word, and the context of this passage, it would mean that she "filled out", that she developed curves in all the right places!

Secondly, the "developed". The Hebrew verb means "to become great". It is variously used, but consider the following use.

The Lord be magnified! [Malachi 1:5 NAS]

This word, then, just accents the previous term. She grew up and filled out and did so abundantly!

The third term is the most obscure. The NIV says she "became the most beautiful of jewels". The NAS has "reached the age for fine ornaments", the KJV has "art come to excellent ornaments". There are several interpretations of what the Hebrew term really means. There is some evidence that "jewel" may refer to the cheek and, to put it loosely, means that her cheeks have become reddened or beautiful. Others take the phrase to mean that she has come into menstruation. Whatever the technical meaning of the term, in the context found here it means she has become sexually ripe!

The fourth and fifth terms are easily interpreted. The two parts of the body which make her most attractive to men, and also indicate a sexual ripeness, the hair and, especially, the breasts, have grown. Thus far, then, the terms used to describe the growth of this girl indicate that she has become sexually attractive. The women's "libers" would have us believe that for a woman to be sexually attractive to a man is sexist and not to be desired. They would have us believe that this is not what God intended for women. But this passage is a contradiction to that notion. When, of course, God is speaking in an allegory, He would still not use an allegory to describe his action toward Israel which would be contradictory to his general will.

Finally, the sixth and seventh things mentioned are that she was naked and bare. One might think that these two terms meant the same thing. In the Hebrew they do not. To put it bluntly, the first term means to "have the skin exposed" and the second term means to "have the pudendum exposed". The first term speaks generally of the lack of covering, the second speaks of "indecent exposure". The significance is that she was not only open to the world about her, but also shamefully exposed.



as she grew.

Altogether, the Lord commanded that this girl should live a grow and, under this commandment she did - she grew into a sexually attractive young womam. But so did Israel! As Israel lived in the land, under the Lord's command to take over the land and to grow as a nation, she prospered until, under David and Solomon, she was one of the most powerful nations on earth. As such, she became attravive to the other nations of the world who wanted what they could get from her.

One point which we shall come back to later needs to be mentioned here. The verse finds the baby girl without those things mentioned in the previous section. It finds her "kicking in her blood". But, nowhere in this passage does it say that the Lord did any of these things for her either! Why not? Does the Lord expect us to get cleaned up and presentable before he selects us? No! We are first chosen and become his, then is the time for the clean up work.

### 16.3 : Verse 8 : The Lady is Engaged

Later, in the allegory, the Lord passed by and saw that this young lady had become sexually attractive ("...old enough for love" NAS, "...at the time for love" NAS,KJV). So he did the following:

- 1) Spread his garment over her
- 2) Covered her nakedness

One, not acquated with Old Testment terms might think that he took a blanket and covered her with it so she would no longer be exposed. That is not what is meant here.

The first term may be explained in the book of Ruth:

I am Ruth your maid. So spread your covering over your maid, for I ama close relative.

[Ruth 3:9 NAS]

It means to take the girl as a wife. The second term is to be explained as follows.

The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover; it is they fathers nakedness.

[Leviticus 18:8 KJV]

Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

[Leviticus 18:8 NIV]

(see Leviticus 18:6-17). Comparison of these two translations shows the meaning of the term. A man's wife is called "his nakedness", meaning that she is to be exposed, for sexual relations, to him only. To "uncover her nakedness" means to have sexual relations with her.

Here, then, covering her nakedness means to take her for a wife so that her nakedness can not (should not) be exposed to anyone else. Thus, the lord claimed this young woman as his bride and chose her to be his and his alone.

The last part of this section need not be considered as part of the allegory. The Lord reminds Israel that he made a promise to them and they became his covenant people. Israel, as their part of the covenant promised to be his people and his alone. This section can also apply to us as we enter into the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### 16.4 : Verses 9 - 14 : God's Provision for the Lady

In the first section of the allegory, Jerusalem was a baby girl for whom none of the things necessary for were had been done. The cord had not been cut, she had not been washed, she had not been

rubbed with salt, she had not be wrapped up. But, now, the Lord will provide these, in type.

In verses 9 and 10, it is said that the Lord did the following:

- 1) bathed her with water,
- 2) put ointments on her,
- 3) clothed her.

The first of the four requirements has already been met. The "cutting of the cord" God accomplished when he took her for His bride. This then seperated her from the Amorites and the Hitites among whom she dwelt. The cord has been cut.

The second requirement has now been met. He washed her. But the original requirement was only that she be washed to be made clean. But here the description is more emphatic. She was cleansed with water and had the blood washed away. This is a picture of what we have in Isaiah,

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool" [Isaiah 1:18]

All that her Amorite and Hittite parents could have offered her was an external washing. But the Lord provided a washing that cleansed her of the bloodguilt of sin.

The third need was the rubbing on of salt. We noted this before, that is was a common custom. It was common because salt was not all that precious and could be easily used for this purpose. But here, the Lord put ointments on her. The KJV and NAS have it more properly, the Lord anointed her with oil. Now, oil in the Scriptures is always a picture of the Holy Spirit. Thus, while the Amorites and the Hittites could have only offered her a rub down with salt, the Lord poured out his Spirit upon her.

The fourth need was the wrapping in cloth. This was all that Joseph and Mary could do for the infant Jesus,

She wrapped him in strips of cloth and placed him in a manger. [Luke 2:7 NIV]

Joseph and Mary were not wealthy people, this is all they could afford. This is all that the Amorites and the Hittites could offer the baby Israel. But the Lord provided her with "fine linen and costly garments". The text goes on to describe the clothing and jewelry which the Lord provided for her.

As we consider these four basic needs, we see that the world, that is the Amorites and the Hittites could not, nor would they, provide her with the bare essentials. On the other hand, the Lord provided far above that which was needed, and provided for her lavishly.

But, what of us? The Apostle Paul writes concerning us,

Now to him who is able to do immeasurable more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen. [Ephesians 3:20 NIV]

and also, in the same book,

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. [Ephesians 1:7-8 NIV]

God, it seems, takes delight in pouring out his blessings on those who are faithful to him, to those

whome he has chosen. This is also brought out in the provision of food and of her becoming a queen.

The section closes with the statement that "the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect." In the Greek text, the statement is;

Thy name went forth among the nations for thy beauty: because ut was perfected with the elegance and comliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord

[Ezekiel 16:14 LXX]

The term we are especially interested in is "**perfected**". The Greek word here is derived from the word "teleiou". Paul uses this word several times,

Epaphras ... always laboring for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. [Colossians 4:12 NAS]

as does Jesus,

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect. [Matthew 5:48 NAS]

Thus the section closes with the baby girl who was thrown into the field to die reaching the state of perfection through the work of God. We too, thourgh our Lord Jesus Christ are reaching toward this goal. Thus far the allegory is possitive. It is positive because it describes what the Lord did for Israel. It is a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

The picture changes in the next section. Here we tum to what Israel did for the Lord. It is a picture of what we often do for the Lord. This picture is not rosy like the one we have seen thus far in the chapter.

#### 16.5 : Verses 12 -22 : The Lady's Whoreom

The first part of this chapter has been positive. It has dealt with God's provision for the "lady", for Israel, for us. Now it turns nagative as we deal with the "lady"'s response to the Lord, to Isreal's response, to our response.

In the previous section were listed the things that God had provided the lady. These were:

- 1) oil and incense
- 2) embroidered dress
- 3) leather sandals
- 4) fine linen
- 5) costly garments
- 6) jewelry (bracelets, necklaces, ear and nose rings)
- 7) crown and queenhood
- 8) fine food
- 9) perfect beauty
- 10) fame

All but two of these ten items are the subject of this section. Here God describes what the lady did with these things which the Lord had lavished upon her. These are indicared below.

- 9) perfect beauty

10) fame

These, the Lord says, she trusted in and used in order to become a prostitute. This is an interesting statement. First, we note that logic of it. If a gal wishes to become a prostitute, she must first of all be attractive and do what she can to remain so. The Lord says she trusted in her perfect beauty. Secondly, to make a living at it, she has to make herself known to potential customers. The Lord says that she used her fame for this. This is all logical. But, let's turn to the ethical and moral points. It is not necessary to dwell on the moral aspects of prostitution. But, what about "misappropriation of resources". Why were these things given the lady? Why did God give them to her? Because he wanted her to be attractive - to himself! No one else wanted her and he rescued her and made her attractive for the communion he could have with her. Turning from the allegory, God did just about everything for Israel in giving her the land of Canaan and driving out the amorites and the Hittites (and etc.). God made her a great nation, but then she turned her back on Him.

Of course, you and I would never do such a thing - or would we? It is human nature (or, more specifically, our old sin nature) to quickly forget favors done for us and work things out on our own. How often do we pray for our needs, the Lord supplies them, and then we quickly forget and begin to assume that it was our own hard work that accomplished this?

Next the Lord mentions

5) costly garments

The lady took these costly garments and made them into shrines for her lovers (other gods). She took what was given to her to "cover her nakedness" and used them to cover the shameful of her idolatrous worship and, presumably, uncovered herself in the process! But what has God clothed us with? God has clothed us in righteousness through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, so that we are perfect in his eyes. Paul thus writes,

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature...  
[Galatians 5:13]

That which God has given us for our freedom in Him, is not to be used as an indulgence.

Next mentioned is

6) jewelry (bracelets, necklaces, ear and nose rings)

These were also listed in this section as "gold" and "silver". The things which the Lord provided for the beautification of his "kingdom" (of which she was the queen). Leaving the allegory, we would refer to two passages:

The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.  
[Exodus 12:36]

Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold and silver and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen, goat hair ... etc. ...and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. Then have them make a sanctuary for me...

[Exodus 25:2-8]

The Lord had provided Israel with gold and silver and jewels and all, for the purpose of building his sanctuary. But Israel, later on, turned to building idols with the gold and silver the Lord provided them with. But what of us? Do we ever use the "gold and silver" the Lord gives us for the building of his

"sanctuary" (the church) and use them to erect idols for ourselves?

Next, the Lord mentions

- 2) embroidered dress
- 1) oil and incense
- 8) fine food

Again, that which the Lord had given her for his own purposes, she used in her harlotry. But, what of the other items remaining in the list. There remains,

- 7) crown and queenhood

What about this. Crown and queenhood speak of having subjects. They speak of a family. God hits hardest here! It is bad enough that she became a prostitute and turned her back on God. But this only had an effect on her. But now we consider the effect on others. God says that she slaughtered her children and sacrificed them to idols.

What does this mean? Are we to take this figuratively or in reality? Both!

They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin. [Jeremiah 32:35]

This is in reference to Jerusalem. (See the entire section, verses 30-35). There were a number of occasions where Israel, literally, sacrificed their children. But is there a figurative sense as well? None of us, I presume, have ever actually offered a child as a sacrifice. But, what do we do to a child if we live a life before it that is a witness of evil rather than to the Lord. To follow the analogy, what kind of an adult is the child of a prostitute to grow into? We can easily "sacrifice" a child to Satan by not being the proper influence. This was the case of Israel which led her children into idolatrous practices.

After that ... another generation grew up that knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served Baals. [Judges 2:10-11]

Why was that? Why did they not know the Lord? Because someone was remiss in demonstrating God to them.

This leaves two items not yet mentioned:

- 3) leather sandals
- 4) fine linen

Why about these? What is the significance of these two? Look at the last verse of this section, verse 22. "you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare, kicking about in your own blood. The fine linen covered her nakedness. The leather sandals covered the feet with which she kicked. The Lord has used these to take away her reproach. But now, with that taken away, she forgot about her past, what the Lord had provided for her. Not that she abandoned the benefits received, but she forgot the obligation that accompanied it.

We too can be guilty of this sin. We tend to forget the lost state in which the Lord called us. After being Christians for a time, we forget the lost feeling we had before. We certainly wouldn't want to return to it, we want to keep the advantage we now have, but we take it for granted.

We have thus considered what the "lady" did with the Lord's provision. We now go to the next section to see what the Lord says about this.

16.6 : Verses 23 - 34 : The Lady is Weak Willed"

This section begins with the words "**woe**, woe". The word is found some 20 other places in the Old Testament. Many of these are in the context found in Isaiah:

"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man with unclean lips" [Isaiah 6:5]

where it is pronounced by a person upon himself. It is found several places where God makes such a pronouncement on Israel's foes:

Woe unto you, O Moab! [Jeremiah 48:46]

What does the word mean? It has no "derivation". It is another homnopoetic word, its meaning is in its sound. Its sound in Hebrew is not too much difference than it is in English - Woe! The significant point here is that God pronounces it upon his own people Israel. Why?

Read this passage carefully to verse 29. There are several words, used in connection with her prostitution, that are emphatic, that appear several times. These are:

"increasing promiscuity" (NIV) or "multiply your harlotry"(NAS) or "multiplied your whoredoms" (KJV)

"insatiability" - not satisfied

What is this a picture of? What is the source of this insatiability?

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst." [John 4:13]

The Lord gave the "lady" all that she needed or could even imagine. But she was not satisfied with what the Lord provided and went after others. The problem is that what she was seeking could never satisfy her. If we seek outside of the Lord's will, we will never be satisfied.

To this is added one other point, a very devastating point. What does a woman become a prostitute? There are many reasons, but one common one is that it is (supposedly) the only thing some women can do to earn a living. It is said that prostitution is the world's oldest profession (I don't know that I agree with this) but the point is, many times women are forced into this because of need, or, at least they think they are.

But what of this woman? God says that every prostitute receives a fee. But not Israel. She takes no fee for her prostitution. She is just the opposite, she pays others to make use of her services. In other words, Israel has sunk "lower the low". She has become degraded below even the minimal standards of the world.

16.7 : Verses 35 - 43 : The Lady's Demise

In this section God explains what the punishment for this prostitution will be. He also describes the means of this punishment.

The means of her punishment will be those to whom she played the harlot with. It seems fitting that God should use these for, in the end, had God not directed so, these would probably been a source of punishment anyway. If she played the harlot and forced herself on these others as accused in the

last section, they would grow to hate her and she would eventually pay the cost.

There is significance to all this. If one ignores God and leads his life as an alcoholic, God does not have to reach down and zap him with some mysterious judgment - the sclerosis of the liver will be the means of condemnation. God does not need to resort to extraordinary punishment for ordinary sin!

The punishment would be that God would have her stripped naked and she would end up where she began. This might seem harsh but consider this! According to the previous sections, most of what God gave her she has already taken off and given away. She has done most of the work herself. She began the work, God only completes it. This is like the case of Pharaoh in Egypt in which we read:

When Pharaoh saw there was relief, he hardened his heart.. [Exodus 8:15]  
[Exodus 8:32]

But, then eventually, we read  
But the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart...  
[Exodus 9:12]

Pharaoh began the process, the Lord completed it. Thus the Lord's judgement is always fitting.

The Lord then makes an interesting statement in verse 42 where He says his wrath will subside, his jealous anger will turn away, and that he will be calm and no longer angry.

Is it right that God should punish Israel when he is in such a state? We are told by psychologists that we should not reprimand children when we are in a fit of rage, so, is it proper for God to do so? Is it really true that God can go into a fit of rage - God who is in all ways perfect? God who is a "God of love"?

The concept that anger is always wrong is not correct. One can not have the capacity to love without having the capacity to become angry. One can not have the capacity to have one emotion and not the other. Paul advises us, and in fact, commands us to get angry when necessary but not to let the sun go down on that anger. In other words, when the situation warrants anger, we should express that emotion and then be done with it, We should not harbor the emotion.

God became angry at Israel and vented that anger against her. Then, when justice had been done, the anger was gone and God returned to a normal state of being.

#### 16.8 : Verses 44 - 58 : The Lady's Parenthood Haunts Her

We've often heard the proverb "like father, like son" but, apparently, the original form of it was "like mother, like daughter". God says that Israel has turned out to be every bit as bad as her "mother" (i.e. the Hittites). He says her sister was the Samaritans, whom the Jews despised and who turned from God earlier than the rest of Israel. He says another sister was the Sodomites, whom met their destruction in the time of Abraham. But God caps it all off by noting that none of these were as bad as she was.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

Why was Israel so much worse? Because God favored her and gave lavishly to her. God provided all she needed. She, of any nation, should have been loyal to God and followed him. But she stooped lower than the others.

God closes this section by saying, to put it loosely, "these other people weren't so bad after all!" God says that he will restore these others, simply to disgrace Israel.

### 16.7 : Verses 59 - 63 : The Lady Redeemed

The last part of this chapter has been a "downer". It has been filled with God's judgement on a whoreing nation. God's pronouncements have been stern, his punishment severe. One might stop at this point in despair. You might think, "well, I am not perfect either. If I slip and go the way of Israel, is there no hope for me?"

God does not close the book there. In these last five verses we have the ever present promise of redemption. Verse 63, "Then I will make atonement for you and for all you have done". At the end of the road, there is atonement and fellowship with those whom God has called out.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN  
THE EAGLES & VINE

17.0 : Introduction

This chapter is the last in a group of three allegories. The first dealt with a vine, the second with a prostitute, this deals with two eagles and a vine.

17.1 : Verses 1 - 8 : The First Eagle

This chapter, unlike the others, begins with the note that what is to follow is an allegory. God says to Ezekiel, "set forth an **allegory**" and "tell ... a parable" (NIV), or "put forth a **riddle**", "speak a parable" (KJV,NAS). The Hebrew text has an interesting way of putting it. It has "riddle a riddle" and "parabol a parable". In other words, the verbs and the nouns come from the same roots.

The first word comes from a root which has the idea of something which is not direct. It can, therefore, refer to a riddle (as in the KJV) or an allegory (as in the NIV). The word is found a number of times in Judges 14 where Samson gives the Philistines a "riddle" to figure out. Then it is found in the following:

With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles.

[Numbers 12:8 NIV]

When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon... she came to test him with hard questions.

[1 Kings 10:1 NIV]

On the basis of these verses, one might conclude that an allegory or riddle is something told when you don't want the hearer to understand or want to trick him. At any rate, it would appear that one does not use such a thing if one wants the message to be clear. But consider the following:

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young- let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance - for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise. [Proverbs 1:1-6 NIV]

What is Solomon saying? To put it simply a riddle or alegory is only difficult to understand for those who wish it to be that way. For those who seek understanding, the understanding will be there. Solomon says that the proverbs are provided to help one gain understanding of the riddles of the wise.

What does this mean in connection with our study? God is proposing to Ezekiel a riddle or allegory that will not be understandable to those who do not wish to seek an understanding. It will not be understanding to those whose ears and eyes had become dulled. On the other hand, for those who seek the understanding, it will come. How will it come? Not from just the book of Proverbs, but from the other 65 books as well. It means, then, that if we are to understand the meaning of the allegory,

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

we must seek it in the Scriptures.

The second term "**parable**" comes from a Hebrew root which has the idea of putting something in parallel, along side, of another. It has the idea of comparison. Hence the idea of using one thing to represent another. This may be seen in the following passages:

But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish.

[Psalm 49:12 NIV]

He has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes [Job 30:19 NAS]

To whom would you liken me? And make me equal and compare me? [Isaiah 46:5]

Putting both of these terms together tells us that, if we are to understand the allegory, we must first make use of other Scriptures and, secondly, make a comparison of what we have in the allegory to what we find elsewhere in the scriptures.

The parable, then, begins with an **eagle**. Following the above advice, we need to determine the significance, the parallelsim, of the eagle. What do we know about eagles? What do the Scriptures teach?

They were swifter than eagles...

[2 Samuel 1:23]

His horses are swifter than eagles...

[Jeremiah 4:13]

Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the sky...

[Lamen. 4:19]

Thus the eagle is noted for its swiftness. Then also

Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens..

[Proverbs 23:5]

Though you make your nest as high as the eagle's...

[Jeremiah 49:16]

It is also noted for its elevated position and grandeur. But, then also, recalling an earlier lesson, the eagle is also a symbol, it was one of the faces of the chubim. At that time we also noted the exalted position of the eagle. Here too, the eagle is spoken of as an exalted creature.

But, there are several other aspects of the eagle to be considered from the Scriptures. These are indicated below.

The Lord will bring a nation against you ... as the eagle swoops down... [Deut. 28:49]

Like an eagle swoops down on its prey

[Job 9:26]

Like an eagle, the enemy comes against the house of the Lord. [Hosea 8:1]

The eagle is also noted for its swiftness in swooping down on its pray and snatching it away. This is the subject of this section. This eagle is pictured as coming to Lebanon and flying off with some items (tobe considered later).

But also consider,

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest in the stars, From there I will bring you down, declares the Lord. [Obadiah :4]

Despite the exalted position of the eagle, the Lord can always bring him down. Furthermore,

You yourselves have seen ... how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself.  
[Exodus 19:4]

The Lord can also use the wings of an eagle to protect his people and affect their deliverance. So, now, let us look at the chapter.

What does the Lord say about the eagle? First, it was a great eagle with powerful wings. In other words, it was an eagle capable of a great deliverance, of carrying a great load. Secondly, the eagle had long feathers and full plumage. This speaks of the maturity and completeness of the eagle, as does the full plumage.

This eagle then took of the top cedar of Lebanon. In addition, he took some of the seed. Of what does these speak? Cedar was used in the construction of the tabernacle (Lev. 14) and in the temple (1 Kings 4-7). But, then, cedars are also mentioned in the passage below.

Therefore thus says the Lord in regard to Jehoiakim the son of Josia, king of Judah..."You who dwelt in Lebanon, Nested in the cedars...  
[Jeremiah 22:18,23]

The topmost branch was the king of Judah and Jerusalem. The seed was some of her young princes - namely Daniel, Shadrack, and so forth.

With this background, we may make the parallels and see the teaching of the section. The eagle was Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He was swift, as an eagle, to come to Jerusalem and plunder the city and take the king and her princes into captivity. Like an eagle, he swooped down on his prey and took it way to his nest (Babylon). But, we know from the Scriptures, that this was ultimately the providence of God as God protected the Israelites in Babylon and later brought the remnant back to Israel. The "seeds" he planted in fertile soil and it flourished in grew into a vine. In chapter 15, Judah was a worthless vine. But this eagle came and took some of the seed and transported it to Babylon where it was planted and grew into a fruitful vine.

### 17.2 : Verses 7 - 10 : The Second Eagle

A second eagle appears on the scene, one like the first. The vine that sprouted up starts reaching out to this second eagle. The second eagle was the king of Egypt to whom Israel looked for deliverance. But, what did the first eagle do? It planted the seed in "good soil" and by "abundant water". God ordained a place where Israel might flourish in captivity. But Israel was not content with God's choice for her. She looked toward the king of Egypt for deliverance. Uprooted from the good soil and taken from the abundant water of God's blessing, the vine failed.

### 17.3 : Verses 11 - 18 : The Meaning

So that we need not guess that this is the proper interpretation, these verse are given to supply us

with a definit statement of the meaning. We shall not dwell on this section for we have seen a similar description in earlier chapters.

#### 17.4 : Verses 19 - 21 : The Result

In this section, then God describes what he is about to do because of the rebellious king and Israel's rebellion. Again, we shall not dwell on this as it has been pronounced before.

#### 17.5 : Verses 22 - 24 : The New Shoot

We have purposely skimmed over the preceeding two sections. We have seen the judgement before. One does not need a steady diet of judgment and gloom. But we turn now to this section which has an altogether different tone.

In spite of the previous judgement, God promises that He will take a shoot from the top of a cedar and plant it in a high place. Initially, the term used here is the same as that in the beginning of the chapter. Like the eagle, God would take a shoot from the top of the cedar tree. But then the picture is enlarged. The NIV has "tender young sprig", the NAS has "of its young twigs, a tender one"

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot...

[Isaiah 53:2]

This passage is taken from the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53 and refers to the Messiah. So does the passage before us.

God says that this will grow and bring forth fruit. Note in particular that birds of all type will nest in it and will find shelter in its branches. What is the significance of the birds?

An eagle is a bird. Two birds are mentioned in this passage, the king of Babylon and the king of Egypt. This passage does not say that they are eagles. They do not necessarily represent kings. They represent people in general. The fact that there are all types means that the influence of this "shoot" will not be felt by Israel alone, but by all nations!

God, then closes the chapter with the great promise that there will be the Messiah whose coming will not only be fore the benefit of Israel, but for you and I and all the rest of the world.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN  
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

18.0 : Introduction

This chapter is rather long because of the need for emphasis. It may be divided into two subjects with a common theme - who will live? Who will die? The two subjects deal with our family ties and our personal responsibility.

18.1 : Verses 1 - 20 : The Father/Son Relationship in Sin

We have taken a large section of the chapter here as it is not possible to break it into smaller sections. These verses must be considered as a whole. The section is introduced with an interesting proverb:

The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.

All of the standard translations agree on this proverb. The Living Bible gives its interpretation, "The children are punished for their fathers' sins?". Note that all end in a question mark? The proverb is not so much a statement of fact, but a question of those stating it. It seems to them that such is the case and hence the question.

It is the same sort of question that we find in the following:

His disciples asked him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?"

[John 9:2]

Then, perhaps, it is a natural question, for we have

The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgressions; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third generation and the fourth generations.

[Numbers 14:18]

The purpose of this lesson, then, is to dispel the notion that we suffer from the sins of our parents and to emphasize the principal set forth in verse 4, "The soul who sins in the one who will die." Let us, then, proceed with the lesson and seek the answer.

The section deals with three generations. A proverb (i.e. a poetical saying) is made regarding each. For the sake of showing the contrast, we have split the three sayings and mixed them together, below. the a), b), and c) refer to each of the three generations.

- a) Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right.
- b) Suppose he has a violent son who sheds blood or does any of these other things.
- c) But suppose this son has a son who sees the sins his father commits, and though he sees

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

them, he does not do such things.

- a) He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look at the idols of the house of Israel.
- b) He eats at the mountain shrines.
- b) He looks to idols.
- c) He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look at the idols of the house of Israel.

- a) He does not defile his neighbor's wife or lie with a women during her period.
- b) He defiles his father's wife.
- c) He does not defile his father's wife.

- a) He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan.
- b) He oppresses the poor and needy.
- b) He does not return what he took in pledge
- c) He does not oppress anyone or require pledge for a loan.

- a) He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked.
- b) He commits robbery
- c) He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked.

- a) He does not lend at usury or take excessive interest.
- b) He lends at usury and takes excessive interest.
- c) ... and takes no usury or excessive interest.

- a) He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between man and man.
- b) He does detestable things.
- c) He withholds his hand from sin.

- a) He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws.
- c) He keeps my laws and follows my decrees.

- a) That man is righteous; he will surely live.
- b) ...he will surely be put to death and his blood will be upon his own head.
- c) He will not dies for his father's sin; he will surely live.

We have a grandfather and a grandson who are righteous, who sin not. They will live. The one in between is not righteous and will die. What is the picture. It says that:

- 1) The righteousness of a father can not cover the sins of a son.
- 2) The sins of a father can not deprive a son of righteousness.

In other words, what the lesson is teaching us is that each person is responsible for his own position before the Lord. One can not gain access to heaven by virtue of having righteous parents. One is not prevented from obtaining salvation because of being the son or daughter of sinful parents.

The teaching is very clear. No one in the world except for yourself can prevent you from being saved

or prevent you from being condemned to everlasting punishment. It is on your own head.

But, then, what is the passage in Numbers and other similar passages? This is the point of the last half of this chapter.

### 18.2 : Verses 21 - 32 : Personal Responsibility

How do we reconcile the first part of this chapter with the passage in Numbers? Let us review Bible history.

Jotham, son of Uzziah king of Judah began to reign ... He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 15:32,34]

Ahaz, son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign ... he did not do right in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 16:1,2]

Hezekiah, son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign ... He did right in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 18:1,3]

Manasseh rested with his fathers. And Manasseh his son succeeded him as king. ... He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 20:21, 21:2]

Ammon rested with his fathers ... And Ammon his son succeeded him as king. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 21:18,20]

(Ammon) was buried ... And Josiah his son succeeded him as king. ... He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 21:26, 22:2]

The people took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and .. made him king in place of his father. ... He did evil in the eyes of the Lord.  
[2 Kings 23:30,32]

In the above passages, with but one exception, there is a complete illustration of this chapter in Ezekiel. One man did right in the eyes of the Lord, his son did evil, his grandson did right.

But consider, in a more general sense the fact of Adam's sin. Because Adam sinned, we are all born into sin. This is in agreement with the passage in Numbers. Had Adam not sinned, we would have not been born in sin, we too would have been sinless. So, then, does that make this passage in error? Not at all! Suppose Adam had not sinned and we, therefore, were born sinless. Is this any guarantee that we will remain sinless? No! We can fall into sin just as Adam did. But Adam did sin, does this mean that we have no hope since we were born into sin? No! We have the opportunity to repent and turn to God and be made righteous through faith in him.

Do you see what the point is? Yes, the condition we are born into depends on our father's situation. The condition in which we remain depends on us. We may be born into sin, but we need not remain there.

This, then, is the point of the last half of the chapter. In verses 21-23 we have the promise that a wicked man may turn from his sins and do right and live. Furthermore, we are told that God is pleased when a man does this.

On the other hand, in verse 24, we have the opposite. If a righteous man turns from it and begins to live in sin, his righteousness will not be remembered.

So, then, in verses 25-29 God asks who is just? Certainly, from what we have read, it is God that is

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

just.

The chapter concludes, then with the command, Repent and live! We can not close here, however, without noting that, since Christ died to satisfy the law, in Christ we can not do like the righteous man who sins and is lost. Our sins are forever forgiven and need not worry about becoming lost.



CHAPTER NINETEEN  
A LAMENT FOR ISRAEL'S PRINCES

19.0 : Introduction

This entire chapter is a lament which the Lord gave to Israel. It begins with the words "Take up a lament concerning the princes of Israel". It ends with the words "This is a lament and is to be used as a lament." That, then, is a **lament**?

We have one book in the Bible which is a collection of Laments - Lamentations (although it is not called that in the Hebrew Bible). The Bible dictionary tells us that a lament is a "dirge" a words which is probably no better known than lament. Let us consider a few scriptures passages.

David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and ordered the men of Judah to be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the book of Asher). [2 Samuel 1:17-18]

Then the king sang this lament for Abner ... And all the people wept over him again.  
[2 Samuel 3:33]

Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah, and to this day all the men and women singers commemorate Josiah in their laments. These became tradition in Israel and are written in the Laments" [2 Chronicles 35:25]

Note that the "Laments" is another book, not our book of Lamentations.

What is a lament? It is a sad funeral song that is sung upon the loss of a loved one, the loss of a great person. It is a song to be sung in the time of bereavement. Let us then look at this lament.

19.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : The First Cub

The lament is in the form of an allegory. In the allegory, Israel is pictured as a lioness, a great lioness. In the allegory she has two cubs. This section deals with the first.

The first cub was snatched away to Egypt. It is not hard to see that the cub represents the king of Judah. Which king can be learned from Bible history.

The king was Jehoahaz, of whom we read:

Pharaoh Neco put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem.

[2 Kings 23:34]

19.1 Verses 5 - 9 : The Second Cub

The second cub is described in these verses. This too was a king. This king was taken to Babylon and is identified with Jehoiachin of whom we read:

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon.  
[2 Kings 24:15]

In the short span of several years, these two "cubs" were dragged off to foreign lands, leaving the lioness barren.

### 19.3 : Verses 10 - 14 : The Barren Lioness

This leaves the lioness barren as is a dried up vine. We have considered the vine in a previous lesson and will not review it here. The point is, that there is no hope in a barren mother. It is a time of loss and mourning.

It is even more sad when you consider that it was not necessary for Israel to be barren. Had she kept the Lord's statutes and walked in His ways, she would have been fruitful. Do you have a barrenness in your life? Ask yourself if you are committed to the Lord and to follow him. Perhaps you, like Israel, are barren though lack of communication with God.

CHAPTER TWENTY  
MORE JUDGEMENT AGAINST ISRAEL

20.0 : Introduction

We shall not spend a lot of time in this chapter. The time is the seventh year, fifth month, tenth day. This is to be compared with:

The fifth year, fourth month, fifth day: Ezekiel 1:1,2

The sixth year, sixth month, fifth day: Ezekiel 8:1

A total of about two years have passed since Ezekiel began his ministry. About a year has passed since God pointed out, through Ezekiel, the idolatry and rebellion of Israel in chapter 8.

Ezekiel has been declaring this message for a full two years and yet the message from the Lord is the same!

20.1 : Verses 1 - 27 : Continued Rebellion

The message of this section is very similar to the previous messages. One point to be noticed, in verse 3. This time the Lord says, "I will not let you inquire of me.". The elders came before Ezekiel in chapter 8 and Ezekiel represented them before God. God had a message for them.

But God does not forever wait for men. God's patience has run out. Why? Consider some excerpts from this section:

On the day I chose Israel...but they rebelled against me. ... But for the sake of my name I did what I could to keep it from being profaned...  
5,8,9

Therefore I led them out of Egypt ... Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert ... But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned... 10,13,14

I swore to them ... that I would not bring them into the land I had given them. Yet I looked on them with pity ... But the children rebelled against me. ... But I withheld my hand and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned...  
15,17,21,22

God, time and again, gave Israel another chance. For the sake of His reputation and keeping a remnant for himself, he allowed them to continue. But, time after time, they rebelled against him and went their own way, after other gods.

God's patience is about to run out.

20.2 : Verses 30 - 44 : Judgement and Restoration

God pronounces an interesting judgement on them. Go ahead and worship the idols (verse 29), but

judgement for this is sure. God will punish Israel before all the nations (verse 35). But why? Why not just let them go like the rest of the nations?

We are told that "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth". God has chosen Israel to be his people. He will bring judgement and punishment on them until they finally come around and recognize Him as they ought to.

20.3 : Verses 45 - 49 : Judgement Against the South

Verses 45 to 49 of this chapter really belong to the next chapter, as they are found in the Hebrew text. We shall therefore take up this subject with the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE  
GOD'S SWORD - BABYLON

21.0 : Introduction

This chapter, in the Hebrew text, begins with verse 45 of chapter 20 which we shall consider before going into this chapter.

21.1 : Verses 45 - 49 (chapter 20): Against The South

In previous chapters we have had dealings with the North. This now takes up a prophecy against the South, specifically, the "forrest of the south". In this passage, three different Hebrew terms are translated "south". In fact, all three appear in verse 46. The first word found in verse 46 is the Hebrew word "tehman" It comes from the Hebrew word for the "right hand" and hence means "that which is to the right". It also appears as a proper noun for the region called "Teman" (25:13).

The second word in this verse is "Darrohm". The word is found 13 times in Ezekiel and only three other places. It has as a root the idea of abundance, a shining, like a pearl, such as its translation in Esther 1:6 - "mother of pearl". The third word is "Negev" which we get the proper noun "Negev". The root of the word means "dry" or "parched" and hence became both the name and the description of the area known as the Negev and, from this, the "southland" in general.

We might paraphrase verse 46 thus:

Son of Man, stand facing the east and turn your face to your right and speak out against that land that glitters like a pearl, and prophesy against the forest that is set in that dry and arid wasteland.

What does this all mean? The prophecy is against Judah. God hewed out a place for them in the (spiritually) barren land in the south of Canaan. He provided for them a dwelling place in this land. He supplied them with their needs and hence they became a place that "glittered and shown". We shall not dwell on the first part except to note that one's proper stance is "facing the east", and hence with Judah to the right.

The judgement, then, is that this fertile forest in the Negev will be burned up and destroyed.

Ezekiel's response to the Lord is both interesting and natural. He has been preaching to the people for two years. He has painted "word pictures" for them in terms of allegories. But they have paid no heed. So, his response is "Lord, these people keep taunting me, saying 'Isn't he just telling us a bunch of stories?'" In other words, "Lord, these people do not pay any attention to me!" What was the Lord's response? The response is in chapter 21, and that is why this passage belongs to chapter 21. Let us go on.

21.2 : Verses 1 - 8 : The Parable Made Plain

"The word of the Lord came to me". Here is the Lord's response to Ezekiel's complaint. "Set your

face against Jerusalem...Prophesy agains the Land of Israel...". Alright, Ezekiel, lets speak plainly to them. Let's not speak to them in parables but speak to them the cold hard facts.

In this section God speaks of the **sword** The Hebrew root of this word means "to attach", "to smite down", and is closely related to the word meaning "to be ruined", to "lie desolate"and hence the name speaks of its purpose. The sword, then, is the means of attacking, smiting, and bringing down a people.

The sword is often the symbol of God's judgement. It is also a picture of the Lord himself as he executes judgement. It is first met in Genesis:

So he drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword ... to guard the way to the tree of life.

[Genesis 3:24]

In Judges we have,

"A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!"

[Judges 7:20]

God is not speaking in allegory or parable here. Israel well knew the significance of the sword. Several things are mentioned in connection with the sword. In this section, God speaks of drawing the sword from its scabbard, of unsheathing it.

The significance of unsheathing it should be clear,but consider especially the following:

Ah, sword of the Lord, How long will you not be quiet? Withdraw intoyour sheath; Be at rest and stay still. How can it be quiet, whenthe Lord has given it an order? Against Ashkelon and against the seacoast - There he has assigned it. [Jeremiah 47:6-7]

There are times when the Lord has the sword in its sheath,when he is not bringing judgement upon a people. There are times when God pulls the sword from its sheath to bring Judgement. How is that time!

### 21.3 : Verses 8 - 17 : The Sharpened Sword

When one has learned the way of warfare, he knows how to take care of his equipment and to prepare it for battle. In this section, notice is given on the preparations to be made. To be specific, it is to be "sharpened" and "polished" (or "furbished", KJV).

First, let us consider the "**sharpening**" of the sword. The text saws that the purpose of the sharpening is for "the slaughter". It also says that the sharpening is to make it ready for "the hand of the slayer". Its purpose is to make it effective, hence:

How sharp does the sword need to be? There are several passages that speak to this. First, it has to be sharp to doits job well, hence:

And Ehud stretched out his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh and thrust it into his belly. The handle also went in after the blade...

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

[Judges 3:21-22]

The sword did its job well. Sometimes we do not need a sword as sharp as this:

For the lips of an adultress drip honey, And smoother than oil is her speech; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.

[Proverbs 5:3,4]

But, then, referring to the sword of the Lord, we recall that it is sharper than any other sword we know of,

For the word of the Lord is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart.

[Hebrews 4:12 NIV]

Secondly, the sword is to be **Polished**. This is also to prepare it for battle. It is to be polished until it "flashes like lightning". The Hebrew word used here is used mostly in this passage. In most of the other passages it appears it means "to make bald" (i.e. to cut the hair). The other passage is:

And the pails and the shovels and the bowls...were of polished bronze. [1 Kings 7:45]

The idea of the word is to purge the sword from any impurities so that it will gleam - gleam because it is free from contamination.

To be a useful instrument, there must be a keenness and a cleanness. The instrument must be keen so that it can perform its function, it must be clean so that it will be fit for the task.

This passage will deal with Nebuchadnezzar as God's instrument, a sword. We, too, may be used. We too must be "keen and clean". We may become keen by noting the following:

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

[Proverbs 27:17]

The passage then goes on to speak of the use of the sword to execute judgement upon Israel.

### 21.4 : Verses 18 - 27 : The Two Roads

In this section, Ezekiel is to mark out two roads for the "sword" to choose from. Both of these roads are to start out from the same place, from Babylon. Then he is to make a "signpost" to put on the road. The Hebrew says, literally, he is to hue out "a hand" which, in modern day terms, we see in signs which have a hand with a finger pointing in a particular direction. It is, then, a sign post as translated.

At the fork of the road, then, is a sign to indicate that one way leads to the Ammonites and the other to the Israelites. Then it is explained that when Nebuchadnezzar comes, he will "flip-a-coin" to see which way to go. The text indicates he will do three things:

- 1) Cast lots with arrows
- 2) Consult his idols
- 3) Examine the liver

Casting lots with arrows is somewhat like drawing straws. Arrows were placed in the quiver with

notations on them and then one was drawn out. Consulting the idols is a general description. Examining the liver was a rather odd practice of looking at the condition of the liver of a sacrificial animal. The liver was selected because "the life of the flesh is in the blood" and the liver is the organ of the body which is generally perceived as being blood filled.

But, what does this have to do with God? Consider the following:

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. [Proverbs 16:33]

Regardless of whom the king looked to for direction, it is the Lord who, above all, controls the decision.

The section closes with the warning that Nebuchadnezzar was to come and deport the king and bring the promised judgement to Israel.

#### 21.5 : Verses 28 - 32 : The Other Road

The chapter concludes with a warning against Ammon. The warning is for Ammon not to gloat over the defeat of Israel. Israel was defeated because God caused Nebuchadnezzar to select the road to Israel and to devastate it. But, Nebuchadnezzar was to, on another day, take the other road and come against Ammon.

God intervenes in the lives of men to bring about his desired result in the lives of his people. This does not mean, however, that in so doing he does not do what is right and just for other people. God deferred Nebuchadnezzar, temporarily, from what he really intended to do to do what God intended for him to do. But this did not prevent Nebuchadnezzar from pursuing his original goal. Ammon, too, fell before Nebuchadnezzar.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO  
THE DROSS IN THE FURNACE

22.0 : Introduction

This chapter is another lengthy chapter in which Israel is judged for her sins. As we noted before, we will not spend a lot of time going over these judgements. There are two passages in this chapter, however, that merit some attention.

22.1 : Verses 1 - 16 : Jerusalem's Sins Reviewed

In these verses, God speaks judgement on Jerusalem. God speaks to Ezekiel with the words, "Son of man, will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed?". God then goes on to enumerate the many sins of the city. The verses should be read; we will not elaborate on them.

22.2 : Verses 17 - 22 : The Dross in the Furnace

After speaking the judgement, God likens Jerusalem to **dross**. The root of the Hebrew word refers to that which is taken away. Hence, in the smelting of metals, it is what is to be taken away in order to purify the metal. In other words, it is impurity. Dross is spoken of several times in the Scriptures.

You reject all who stray from your decrees, for the deceitfulness is in vain. All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross; [Psalm 119:119]

Remove the dross from the silver, and out comes the material for the silversmith; remove the wicked from the king's presence, and his throne will be established through righteousness. [Proverbs 25:4-5]

Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross are burning lips and a wicked heart.  
[Proverbs 26:23]

How the faithful city has become a harlot, She who was full of justice. Righteousness once lodged in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, Your drink diluted with water. [Isaiah 1:21-22]

But, note what dross might be! God says that they are copper, tin, iron and lead. Are these not all valuable metals? Consider the following:

Copper: According to Exodus 25,26 and 27, many of the fittings in the tabernacle were to be fabricated of this.

Tin: It is mentioned with the rest, including gold and silver, as something which may be purified, Numbers 31:22. On the other hand, we have the following:

I will also turn My hand against you, And will smelt away your dross as with lye, and will remove all your alloy. [Isaiah 1:25 NAS]

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

The KJV has "tin" rather than "alloy". Here it is related to dross.

Iron: This is mentioned many times in the Scriptures and many useful items are made from it.

Lead: We find this mentioned in an interesting verse.

All of them are stubbornly rebellious, going about as a talebearer. They are bronze and iron; They, all of them, are corrupt. The bellows blow fiercely. The lead is consumed by the fire. In vain the refining goes on. But the wicked are not separated. They call them rejected silver, because the Lord has rejected them.

[Jeremiah 6:28-30 NAS]

Some of these metals are useful, some were not considered useful.  
The same is true in the New Testament.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

[2 Timothy 2:20-21]

God has ordained people to various roles. Some are prestigious roles, some are not. The fact remains that, if we are clean, we are a fit vessel, whether silver or wood. It is not the type of material, it is the purity. If one is trying to get silver, brass and iron are impurities. If one is trying to refine lead, silver and gold could be considered to be impurities.

Impurities may seem small but they are, none-the-less, important. The computer industry would have never got off the ground except for some very minute impurities. An integrated circuit (IC) is fabricated from almost pure silicon. In fact, it starts out life as pure silicon as is possible to obtain. But, in this pure state, a piece of silicon would not function as a transistor, the basic building block of an integrated circuit. Very small amounts of impurities are diffused into the pure silicon to alter its characteristics and make the integrated circuit. These are measured in quantities like 1 in a million!

In God's plan, impurities destroy the characteristics he needs. Sin is an impurity. Small amounts of unconfessed sin and destroy a useful servant. Sin had crept into Israel and, as a result, they became impure and had to be cast out.

### 22.3 : Verses 23 - 29 : More Judgement

Again, God continues to judge Israel for her sins. He pronounces more judgement which we shall not here enlarge upon.

### 22.4 : Verses 30 - 31 : The Open Gap

The chapter closes with two verses which are very pointed. What does it take to stay God's judgement? Remember Abraham when he pled for Sodom?  
What if there are fifty righteous people in the city?

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

What if the number is five less than fifty?  
What if only forty are found?  
What if only thirty can be found?  
What if it be only twenty that are found?  
What is only ten can be found there?  
[Genesis 18:24,28-32]

What does God say here? "I looked for a man..." What did this man have to do? In chapter 13, God told Israel that they "had not gone up into the breeches nor build a wall around the house of Israel" (13:5). Isaiah prophecies that Israel should do this:

And those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the old foundations. And you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.  
[Isaiah 58:12]

The marines say that they are looking "for a few good men". God says that he looked for only one. How many did he find? The text says "none!". God did not bring judgement on Israel because some of the people had rejected him. He did not bring judgement because most of the people rejected him. They all did!

Has it ever occurred to you that you may be the one man (or woman) whom God is looking for? That there is a role thanb no one but you will fill? Will you fill the gap, or will God find none?

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE  
THE ADULTEROUS DAUGHTERS

23.0 : Introduction

This chapter deals with yet another allegory, an allegory concerning a woman's two daughters who turned to be prostitutes in Egypt.

23.1 : Verses 1 - 4 : Oholah and Oholibah

The two sisters are introduced in this section. We are given their names which is unusual in a parable or allegory. Generally, people in allegories have no formal names. We take it, then, that the names here are significant.

The first name means "she who has a tent" or, in other words, the "tent lady". The second name is similar and means "tent in her" and may be regarded as having a similar meaning to the first. We shall comment on the significance of the names later.

We are also told, explicitly whom these women represent. Oholah represents Samaria and Oholibah represents Jerusalem. The section displays, very graphically, what happened to these two sisters as they became prostitutes in Egypt.

23.2 : Verses 5 - 10 : Oholah's (Samaria's) Sins

This section deals with the first sister, who represents Samaria. It deals with her prostitution with, at first Egypt, and then with Assyria. The section is quite graphic and we shall not comment on the picture. Rather, we shall comment on what it represents.

The questions we need to answer is when the Northern Kingdom (Samaria or Oholah) played the prostitute with Egypt and with Assyria. Let us consider the latter first.

In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem son of Gadi became the king of Israel and he reigned in Samaria ten years. ... Then Pul king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver to gain his support and to strengthen his own hold on the kingdom.

[2 Kings 15:17,19]

There are also references to this in the following:

When Ephraim saw his sickness and Judah his sores, then Ephraim turned to Assyria and sent to the great king for help. [Hosea 5:13]

Ephraim is like a dove, easily deceived and senseless - now calling on Egypt, now turning to Assyria. [Hosea 7:11]

In the above two passages, the Northern Kingdom is referred to as Ephraim, the major tribe of the Northern Kingdom. It was with the alliances she made with Assyria that she came to her downfall

with the Assyrians eventually plundering them (See 2 Kings 15:27-31 and especially 2 Kings 17:1-6).

It is not as clear what the earlier alliances with Egypt might have been. We would rather suspect that Egypt is to be dealt with here symbolically. Egypt is always a picture of the (godless) world in the Scriptures. Living in Egypt is always a picture of living away from God in the world. Dealing with Egypt, then, is a picture of dealing with the world.

We would take it, then, that the prostitution with Egypt is to be taken as the first step in apostasy. Samaria first let down her guard for a little and dealt with the ungodly, made alliances with them. This done, with this as history, it was all the more easy to make the fateful alliance with Assyria.

Her attraction to the "warriors clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, and mounted horsemen" can be extended beyond the allegory and applied to Samaria's anticipation that the armies of Assyria would be useful to them.

### 23.3 : Verses 11 - 21 : Oholibah's (Jerusalem's) Sins

In Feinberg's commentary, he quotes the philosopher Hegel who said, "We ask men to study history. The only thing that man learns from the study of history is that men have learned nothing from the study of history". (page 133). Judah had the example of her northern sister, but learned nothing from her history and fell into the same pit.

At this point we might again ask what the significance of the two names might be. The second sister's name means "tent in her". Now, "tent" is not the only translation of the Hebrew. It very often appears in the Old Testament as:

Thus the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was completed... [Exodus 39:32]

The word is used somewhat interchangeably in the KJV for "tabernacle". Other times it refers to the "tent of meeting" as above, the principal part of the tabernacle. The temple of God rested in Jerusalem, not in Samaria, so Judah was "Tent in her", she had the dwelling place of God within her. Samaria, the Northern kingdom, had access to the tent of meeting "Tent woman" but it did not abide within her.

So, not only did Oholibah have the history of her older sister to guide her, but she had the privilege of having the dwelling place of God within her territory. All the more reason why her judgement should be more severe! Can you picture that, Judah had the very temple within her midst and yet went astray. But wait! We can talk about the "heathen in Africa" and his need for salvation. But how much more is the responsibility for those around us who have the Gospel right in their midst and ignore it!

### 23.4 : Verses 22 - 35 : Oholibah's Judgement

We, again, shall not deal with this passage in detail as God pronounces judgement upon Israel. We shall look at a few particulars.

In verses 32 through 35, God speaks of Oholibah drinking from her sister's **cup**. What does this mean? Do you recall Jesus's words when he said,

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.  
[Matthew 26:39]

Consider the following Old Testament references

Upon the wicked he will rain snares, Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.

[Psalm 11:6]

For a cup is in the hand of the Lord, and the wine foams; It is well mixed and He pours out of this; surely all of the wicked of the earth must drain and drink down its dregs. [Psalm 75:8]

But, the cup is not always bitter, for we have:

The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup, Thou dost support my lot. [Psalm 16:5]

Thou hast anointed my head with oil, My cup overflows.

[Psalm 23:5]

In the New Testament, there is also both aspects of the cup. In Revelation, we have,

he (a follower of the beast) also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed full strength in the cup of his anger. [Revelation 14:9]

And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of that nation fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. [Revelation 16:19]

But, there is also the good side,

Is the not cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? [1 Corinthians 10:16]  
In our passage, the cup is said to be "large and deep". It is said that it "holds so much". What does this mean? What is the purpose of a cup? Is not a cup that which holds that which we are about to partake until it is time to take it? God has stored up the punishment for Judah like wine in a cup. The cup is deep, as is God's longsufferingness. But, the time is come to partake of the cup.

In verse 34 it is said that "you will drink it and drain it dry". When the punishment comes, it will be complete. When the time of punishment comes, God does not hold back. At that has been stored up for the time of judgement is poured out.

### 23.5 : Verses 36 - 49 : Judgement Again

This passage thus speaks judgement upon Judah. We have considered the judgement before and we shall not further elaborate.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR  
THE COOKING POT

24.0 : Introduction

This chapter, like several previous, contains notice of a specific date. It is now the ninth year, tenth month and tenth day. This makes it about four years since Ezekiel began his ministry. He has preached for four years, but with little effect.

There is one noticeable difference. Ezekiel is not told to speak of a future judgement. The time of judgement has come!

24.1 : Verses 1 - 14 : The Cooking Pot

In verse 2, Ezekiel is told, "record this date, this very date, because the king of Babylon has laid seige to Jerusalem this very day." The promised judgement has come. Prophecy has become history.

In verses 3 to 12 the seige of Jerusalem is likened to a cooking pot. This is an allegory we considered back in chapter 11. we shall not dwell on this here.

In verse 14, then the Lord declares that the time has come. The Lord states that he will not hold back nor relent. The judgement is sure!

24.2 : Verses 15 - 27 : The Death of Mrs. Ezekiel

The last part of this chapter carries a strange message.

"Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away the delight of your eyes!". This is a reference to Mrs. Ezekiel, who the Lord was going to take suddenly. What follows is not difficult to understand. Ezekiel is not to mourn for her publicly. Why? For the same reason that the Lord is not mourning over the death of his bride, Jerusalem. Ezekiel, as a prophet, is to be a picture of the Lord in his relation to Israel and Jerusalem.

This part is not hard to see. But, why is it necessary for Ezekiel to lose "the delight of his eyes" just for the sake of a public example? We find the same expression in;

They will seize everything you value and carry it away.

[1 Kings 20:6]

His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely

This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

[Song-of-Sol. 5:16]

We have here a term which describes the love that Ezekiel had for his wife, but the Lord is going to take her from him. Why? We can never answer such a question, specifically. We may always claim Romans 8:28 that, whatever happens, is for our best good, even though we, with our finite minds, can not see it at the time.

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

It must have been tough for Ezekiel to refrain from proper mourning. The Lord sometimes gives us a "tough row to hoe". We may only say that it is for our good in the long run.

This chapter, for the present, concludes the judgement on Israel. In the chapters to follow we shall have judgements against the other nations.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE  
AGAINST OTHER NATIONS

25.0 : Introduction

This chapter is the first of several chapters in which judgement is made against the nations that surround Israel. In this chapter the subjects are Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistis. This is followed by several chapters dealing with Tyre and then several chapters dealing with Egypt.

25.1 : Verses 1 - 7 : Against Ammon

These seven verses deal with Ammon. These people dwelt East of the Jordan River. These people were the descendants of Lot through his younger daughter (Gen. 19:38). They were not one of the nations which Israel was to destroy, but never were very friendly toward Israel.

God's judgement against them is summarized by one word. God says that because they said "Aha!" when Jerusalem fell, he was going to judge them. We find the expression in several other passages.

For they do not speak peace, But they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land. And they opened their mouth wide against me. They said "Aha, aha, our eyes has seen it!" [Psalm 35:19-20]

Let those be appalled because of their shame, who say to me Aha aha! [Psalm 70:3] [Psalm 40:15]

He also warms himself and says "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." [Isaiah 44:16]

It is an expression of happiness, of glee. Why does God judge them for this? Because of their source of their glee. They were gloating because of the judgement that God had brought to Israel. They were happy that Jerusalem had been destroyed. Because of this, God was judging them. He goes on and emphasized this with the words, "because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet, rejoicing with all the malice of your heart against the land of Israel."

This is a solemn warning for us. Let us not take delight in the fact that God brings judgement upon another. If God brings judgement on someone we do not like, we should not gloat over it. Rather we should be sorrowful over that person's plight.

So, what happened to Ammon? Unger cites Thompson book "Land and Book", saying, The doom of desolation prophesied against Ammon has been literally fulfilled. Nothing but ruins are found here by the amazed explorer. Not an anhabited village remains, not an ammonite exists on the face of the earth.

25.2 : Verses 8 - 11 : Against Moab

Next is the judgement against Moab. The Moabites were also descendants of Lot, by his older daughter, and lived east of the Jordan. Moab had refused to let Israel pass through her land as the

were on their way to Canaan. But God is judging them for that.

What was Moab's sin? God says because they had said "Look, the house of Judah has become like all other nations." While it does not say that they said "Aha", they took delight in seeing that Israel had her weakness and became "like the other nations".

Again, we too should not be delighted to see another brought down because God has judged them.

### 25.3 : Verses 12 - 14 : Against Edom

We are moving South. First Ammon, then southward to Moab, and now further south to Edom. These people were the descendants of Esau. On several occasions, Israel had subdued them.

Like the other two, Edom gloried in Jerusalem's downfall. She not only did this, but took an active part in it, "because Edom took revenge on the house of Judah". God had called Nebuchadnezzar to be the instrument of Israel's judgement. But Edom linked up with him and this got her revenge.

From the practical standpoint, what does this mean?

Do not repay evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written "It is mine to avenge" I will repay" says the Lord.

[Romans 12:17-19]

God will take care of those who need judgement. We need not participate in it and, as Paul says above, we should leave this to God. This, then, is the judgement that came upon the Edomites.

### 25.4 : Verses 15 - 17 : Against Philistia

The last nation to be judged in this chapter is Philistia. These people were not related to Israel. They were to have been eliminated by Israel. Goliath, whom David slew, was from this nation. Under David, and afterwards, Judah did subdue these people and God's judgement on them is similar to the judgement of Edom.

### 25.5 : Conclusion

We have seen, in this chapter, the judgement on four nations. We have spoken briefly on the specific indictment God brought against them. We might conclude with a more general note.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse. [Genesis 12:3]

This, then, is a fulfillment of the original promise made to Abraham. It is a special promise made to Israel. These judgements were brought about even though, at the time, God had turned his back on Israel. God is not currently dealing with Israel and in a special sense. The promise still holds, though, and the nation that is today guilty of these things is in no less peril than the nations in this chapter.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX  
AGAINST TYRE

26.0 : Introduction

This chapter continues from the last, this time with an extended judgement against Tyre. This continues for three chapters with this chapter containing the judgement, the next a lament for Tyre and the third, a lament for the king of Tyre.

It will become evident, as we proceed through these chapters, that the prophecy goes beyond the actual city of Tyre (city-state) but goes to Satan himself. This becomes readily apparent when we come to verses 28:11-19 where the words can be applied, literally, to no one but Satan.

As we go into these three chapters, then, we need to be concerned with how much of them deals with the literal city of Tyre and what has more spiritual significance.

26.1 : Verse 1 - 6 : Introduction

This prophecy comes at a specific time, some 6 years after the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry. The specific judgement is the same as that given for Ammon, that Tyre had said "Aha!" at the downfall of Jerusalem. However, the situation is worse than in the previous nations. Look at the words!

"Aha! The gate to the nations is broken, and its doors have swung open to me; now that she lies in ruins I will prosper."

Not only did she gloat over the downfall of Jerusalem, but she intended to take advantage of the situation. Tyre planned to become prosperous as a result of God's judgment on Judah. And for this the Lord pronounces judgement.

In connection with what we said in the introduction, we already begin to see beyond the literal. Man gloats over the downfall of another. Satan not only revels in it, but moves in to take advantage of the situation.

The judgement against her is harsh. Not only would she become desolate, but God says "I will scrape away her rubble and make her a bare rock. Out in the sea she will become a place to spread fishnets". How literally this was fulfilled!

The city of Tyre was in two parts, "a rocky coast defense of great strength on the mainland, and a city upon a small but well protected island." (Unger). Because the city proper was on this small island and well protected, it was difficult to attack. But it was attacked and leveled. In order to do this, it was necessary for Alexander the Great to build a causeway out to the island. Of what did he build the causeway? "I will scrape away her rubble...". This is precisely what was done. The causeway was constructed by leveling the mainland city and using the rubble to build the causeway. Unger says "The town is in ruins now, consisting of miserable huts and people". Since the time of this judgement, Tyre has been, indeed, a place where fishermen spread their nets for drying.

26.2 : Verses 7 - 14 : The Details

## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

In these verses, the details of what was noted above are spelled out. It is only necessary to read these verses and to note that what is said here was literally fulfilled. Note, particularly, the words, "You will never be rebuilt".

### 26.3 : Verses 15 - 21 : The Outcome

In this section, we can see a two-fold prophecy. Consider what is said here. "all the princes of the seacoast will step down from their thrones .. etc." With regard to Tyre, it was a seacoast town and noted for its shipping. World Book says, Tyre was an important shipping port, handling goods from Mesopotamia and Arabia. The city was also noted for the purple dye and fine glass that was manufactured there. The people of Tyre were noted as sailors as well as for their cultural and intellectual activities. The fall of such a city, which had resisted invasion for centuries, caused no small stir among the maritime nations of the Mediterranean Sea.

"How you are destroyed, O city of renown, peopled by men of the sea! You were a power on the seas, you and your citizens."

Going beyond this, the seas mentioned here has Biblical significance. For example, in Rev. 20:13 we have mention of the "sea giving up her dead". The sea and the islands of the sea have always been a picture of the mass of humanity on the earth. From this standpoint, we have a picture of mankind being astonished over the fall of Tyre, or, of what it represents.

In the next chapter we shall have the lament over the king of Tyre and here we shall consider what this broader picture teaches.



## STUDIES IN EZEKIEL

In verse 10 the allegory fades and we speak on more general terms. There were soldiers from Persia, Lydia and Put. Watchmen from Arvad and Helech and Gammad. Again, as far as protection is concerned, she chose from the cream of the crop.

In verses 12 to 24 we have the "shipping manifest". On board this ship were wares from all over the world.

Items	Location
Silver,iron,tin,lead	Tarshish
slaves,bronze	Greece,Tubal,Meshech
horses,mules	Beth Togamah
ivory,ebony	Rhodes
many products	Aram
wheat,honey,etc.	Israel,Judah
etc.	

Going through this list, most of the countries of the world at that time are mentioned. Tyre, then, must have been a truly great and universal city. Such a city could never fall. Such a city could never be destroyed. This brings us to the next part of the chapter.

The ship analogy is resumed in verses 25 to 36. Out on the high seas, the east wind breaks up the ship - the great and beautiful ship, laden with the precious wares of the world. All aboard sink to the bottom of the sea. Verse 27 speaks of the material, wealth, merchandise and wares, going to the bottom of the sea and also of men, mariners, seamen and shipwrights, all lost at sea.



