

Ezekiel

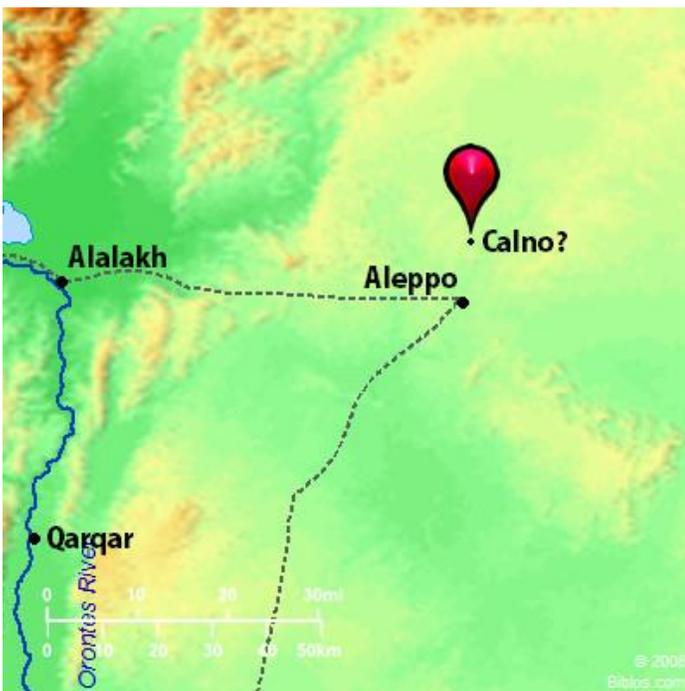
By Dr. Alan Cobb

Author: The title of the book in Hebrew is Ezekiel and it means “God strengthens / hardens” or “May God strengthen / harden.” It must also be the name of the author as verse 3 says “the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians.” Also in chapter 24 verse 24 the Lord says, “Ezekiel will be a sign to you.” Since he is called a priest even though he is not in Jerusalem, we know that he must have been raised and trained to become a priest by his father who would have also been a priest. And when he reached the age of 30 (Num 4:3, 23, 30, 39, 43; 1 Chr 23:3), he would have been expected to begin serving in the temple in Jerusalem. That explains his concern about ritual cleanliness seen in 4:9-13; his knowledge of the requirements of the Law in 22:1-31; and his descriptions of the temple and rituals seen in 40:1-46:24. He was married because his wife died suddenly (24:2, 15-18) but there is no mention of them having any children.

Date: Ezekiel would have been taken captive during the second time Israelites were taken captive in 597 BC when Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jehoiachin and this is the event by which Ezekiel dates all his visions. His first vision from God came in the fifth year of the exile, so that would have been 592 BC. Since he was 30 years old at that time (1:1), it means he was born in 622 BC during the reign of Josiah (640 – 609 BC). He lived at Tel Abib (also written Tel Aviv) near the Kebar (Chebar) river which is really an irrigation canal (1:1-2). The canal split off from the Euphrates River north of Babylon, bypassed the city to the east, and then rejoined the Euphrates south of Babylon near the city of Uruk (biblical Erech). His last vision is dated in the 25th year of the exile so that would be 572 BC and Ezekiel would have been 50.

This is not the present day Tel Aviv which is located on the west side of Israel near the Mediterranean Sea. The modern city called Tel Aviv was founded in 1909 by the Jewish community in Jaffa on the outskirts of that port city. In 1910 they chose to call the city Tel Aviv as a fitting idea embracing the idea of a renewal of the ancient Jewish homeland. The Hebrew word “aviv” (abib) means “spring” and symbolizes renewal. A “tel” is a mound of accumulated layers of man’s civilization in a location and symbolizes the ancient. Thus, Tel Aviv is renewal of the ancient.

At one time, some scholars thought Tel Abib was located in the upper Mesopotamian area west of the Euphrates near the modern city of Aleppo in Northwest Syria near Turkey. They suggest that the Chebar was the river “nar Kabari” and Tel Abib was near the city of Niffer (identified with Calneh of Gen 10:10).



Ezekiel's Dating of his Messages			
Message	Verses	Ezekiel's Date	Modern Date (BC)
First	1:1—3:15	4/5/5	July 31, 592
Second	3:16—7:27	4/12/5	Aug. 7, 592
Third	8:1—19:14	6/5/6	Sept. 17, 591
Fourth	20:1—23:49	5/10/7	Aug. 14, 590
Fifth	24:1—25:17	10/10/9	Jan. 15, 588
Sixth	26:1—28:26	? /1/11	? 1, 586
Seventh	29:1-16	10/12/10	Jan. 5, 587
Eighth	29:17—30:19	1/1/27	Apr. 26, 570
Ninth	30:20-26	1/7/11	Apr. 29, 586
Tenth	31:1-18	3/1/11	June 21, 586
Eleventh	32:1-16	12/1/12	Mar. 3, 585
Twelfth	32:17—33:20	?/15/12	? 17, 585
Thirteenth	33:21—39:29	10/5/12	Jan. 9, 585
Fourteenth	40:1—48:35	1/10/25	Apr. 28, 572

The messages are in chronological order except for the seventh and eighth which are put with the other messages about Egypt. There are differences among scholars in determining the exact modern date especially since some have Jehoiachin's captivity beginning in 598 BC. Still, they give you an approximate idea.

Daniel was taken captive 605 BC when he was a teenager, so he was probably born around 620 BC and only two years younger than Ezekiel. Daniel was a member of the royal family so he probably would have known Ezekiel. Since Babylon was where King Nebuchadnezzar had his throne and the Kebar canal is just east of the city, it is not only possible but very probable that Ezekiel and Daniel conversed during their ministries.

Jeremiah	early life	ministry		
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	b. 643 BC	627 BC	560 BC?	d. ?
Ezekiel	early life	ministry		
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	b. 622 BC	593 BC	571 BC	d. ?
Daniel	early life	ministry		
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	b. 620 BC	605 BC	536 BC	d. ?

Overlap of the lives of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel

Historical Background: In the 18th year of Josiah's reign (622 BC) the Book of the Law was found during a repair of the temple. It had been so long since it had been seen, read and obeyed that it was a distant memory. Because of reading the Book of the Law, Josiah led the people to renew their covenant with God and brought about a number of reforms including tearing down pagan altars, getting rid of the quarters where the male shrine prostitutes lived and women did weaving for Asherah, and ridding the nation of mediums and spiritists. Until he was killed in a battle with the Egyptians (609 BC), Josiah led the nation to return to worship and obey God.

The prophet Jeremiah began his ministry in Judah in 627 BC so the first chapters of his writings or the verbal preaching of them would have been heard by the people before they were taken captive. This was the influence under which Daniel and Ezekiel grew up. (See 2 Kings 22-23) In 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and took Jehoiakim (grandfather of Jehoiachin) captive to Babylon in shackles, Ezekiel would have been 17 and not yet of age to serve in the temple. Nebuchadnezzar also took the items used in the temple services back to Babylon with him so no services could be held in the temple from that time forward. (See 2 Chron 36:5-8) This was the time that Daniel and his three friends were taken captive along with many of the other wealthy, learned, and influential individuals in the nation.

Although the people were taken captive, they were not made slaves. Daniel and his three friends were not slaves but put into training to hold very respectable and highly influential positions in the Babylonian kingdom. The other captives were allowed to own their homes, establish businesses, and travel within the surrounds of Babylon. The wealth of Babylon was very great, so that the exiles enjoyed a very good life. Thus, seventy years later, when King Cyrus allowed any captives that wanted to do so to return to Jerusalem, most of the captives chose to stay. The fact that some of the Israelites remained in Babylon after Cyrus declared they could go is an indication that some still disobeyed God's will after 70 years of captivity.

Audience: Ezekiel wrote and ministered for the benefit of the captives where he lived to encourage them in their captivity, but his visions went beyond just the time of their captivity to provide them hope for the future. He reminded the captives of their unfaithfulness in obeying God and the faithfulness of God. Like Isaiah, he showed them that the exile was meant to bring them back into faithful obedience and, thus, a return to the blessings of God and a restoration of the land.

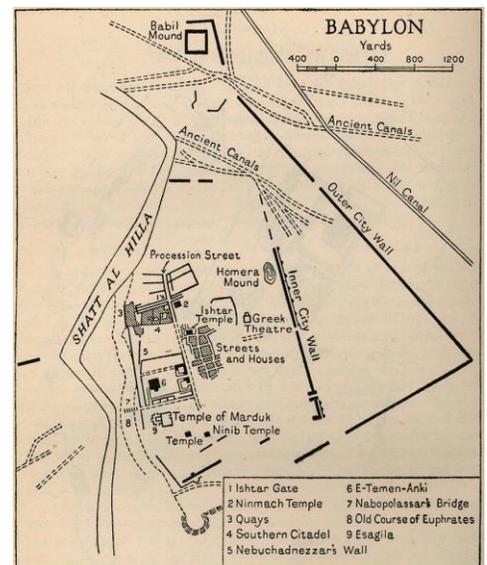
Style: Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation are generally called apocalyptic literature by most scholars because their form and content describe events surrounding the "end times" return of the Messiah. I would also include the latter chapters of Isaiah in this same type of literature. Dream visions like these written by Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and John usually follow the form of (1) the setting when the vision was given, (2) the time of the vision, (3) the recipient of the vision, (4) the general circumstances of the vision, and (5) the description of the vision as seen by the recipient.

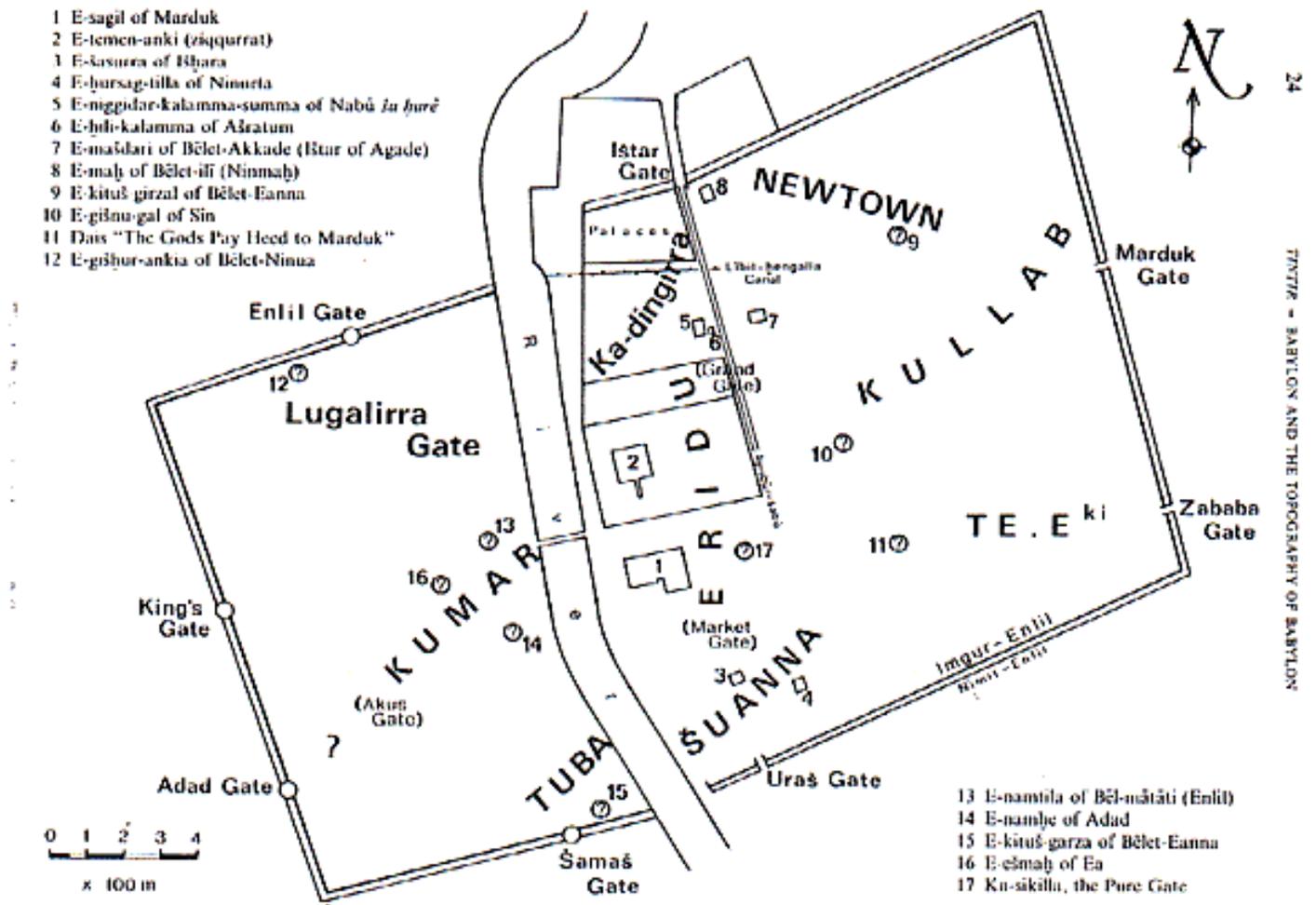
Chapters 1 – 24 of Ezekiel predict the fall of Jerusalem which occurred in 586 BC. Chapters 25 – 32 predict judgment on upon the Gentile nations. Chapters 33 – 48 predict the restoration of the nation of Israel.

Ezekiel not only saw the reason for Israel's misery in his time, but he also saw that in the future Israel would be restored because of God's faithfulness. Perhaps it is this view of Israel's future that kept him from becoming a weeping prophet like Jeremiah. Daniel also saw and wrote about Israel's future, but he didn't write as much about Israel's present like Ezekiel. But Ezekiel gives us much more than Daniel about Israel's future. Daniel's writings about the future were focused more on political upheavals. Ezekiel's focus was more on spiritual matters. He wrote specifically about a future covenant of peace and future worship.

Chapter 1

Verses 1 – 3. The word of God came to Ezekiel where he lived by the Kebar River (Chebar Canal) east of the city of Babylon. The canal is referred to in the Murashu documents discovered at Nippur. The modern day Shatt el-Nil canal leaves the Euphrates north of Babylon and reenters it south of Warka (biblical Erech; Akk. Uruk) about 50 miles SE of Babylon. So, the Chebar canal is most likely the modern day silted-up Shatt el-Nil. The Euphrates originally ran through Babylon, but through time shifted nine miles to the west.



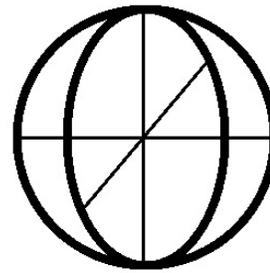


Verses 4 – 28. This is the vision of the glory of God that came to Ezekiel when the heavens were opened. It began with a windstorm out of the north which formed an immense cloud with flashes of lightning. Not at all unusual for a storm cloud, but this cloud was surrounded by a brilliant light and in the middle it looked like glowing hot metal. In the Old Testament, God often represented his presence by a something that appeared to be burning but wasn't or with a cloud or storm (Ex 3:2-6; 13:21; 19:16-19; Lev 16:2; Job 38:1). God appeared to Moses as a burning bush and to the wandering Israelites as a pillar of fire or cloud. To get Ezekiel's attention, he appeared as a cloud that was burning from within.

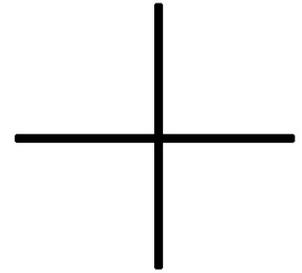
Within the fire in the cloud were what looked like four living creatures. They had the form of a human being but each creature had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight (which may indicate that they didn't have knees) but their feet were like the hoofs of cattle and gleamed like polished bronze. On each side, the creatures had the hands of a man under their wings and all their wings touched one another. In chapter 10 verses 15 and 20, Ezekiel identifies these creatures as cherubim. That would mean they looked like the depictions of cherubim that he would have seen during his times of training in the temple (Ex 25:17-22; 26:31; Num 7:89). Each creature had four faces. The front face was like that of a man. The right face was like that of a lion. The left face was like that of an ox. And the rear face was like that of an eagle. Some scholars see these four faces as representing the most impressive of each animal type – the lion as the chief of the wild animals, the ox as the chief of the domesticated animals, the eagle as the chief of birds, and man as chief over all the animal kingdom (Gen 1:28). Two of the wings of each creature reached upward and each touched the wing of another creature. Each creature used its other two wings to cover itself. Each creature moved straight ahead,

without turning, wherever the Spirit would have them go. When the creatures moved, the sound of their wings was like that of the roar of rushing waters, the tumult of an army, or the voice of the Almighty. When the creatures stood still, they lowered their wings. The appearance of the creatures was like burning coals of fire and fire moved back and forth among the creatures with lightning flashing from them.

On the ground beside each creature was a wheel intersecting another wheel that sparkled like chrysolite (olive green). The wheels didn't change directions as the creatures moved in any direction. The rim of each wheel was filled with eyes all around it. When the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels beside them rose with them because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. The wheel within a wheel might have looked like the drawing to the right.

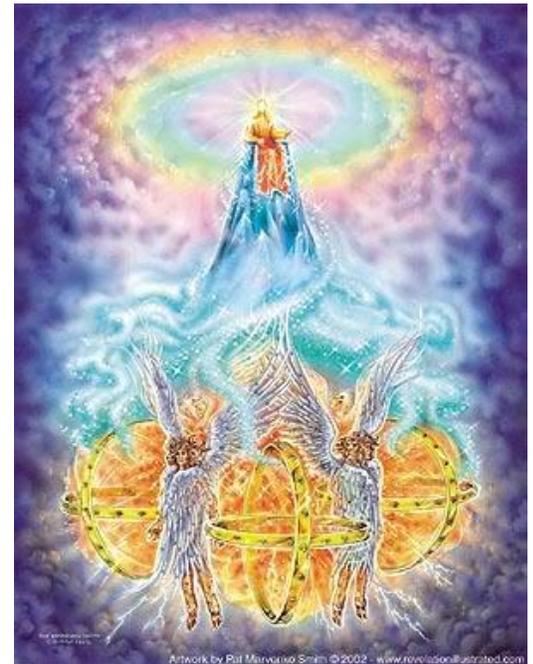


Side



Top

Spread out over the heads of the living creatures was an expanse that sparkled like ice. Above the expanse was what looked like a throne of sapphire (blue). High on the throne was a figure like that of a man. From his waist up he looked like glowing metal and from the waist down he looked like fire. A brilliant light surrounded the man and the radiance around him was like a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day. This is Ezekiel's description of his vision of the glory of God appearing before him. When he saw the image, Ezekiel fell down on his face in worship of God. An artist's rendition of what the vision may have looked like to Ezekiel is at the right. The image is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus (theophany).



Most expositors interpret the creatures as pulling the throne-chariot of God. Some early church writers equated the four faces of the creatures with the four gospels. The lion would be Matthew. The ox would be Mark. The eagle would be John. And the man would be Luke. They make these comparisons because of the characteristics of the writing of each author.

The extent of Ezekiel's ministry is described in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2

Verses 1 – 8. Ezekiel hears God speak to him from the image and tells him to stand on his feet before he speaks to him any further. As he hears the voice, he feels the Spirit of God raise him to his feet. God tells Ezekiel that he is sending him to the Israelites, a rebellious nation that is obstinate and stubborn. He says that whether they listen or fail to listen to what Ezekiel says, they will know that a prophet has been among them. He tells Ezekiel not to be afraid of their words or even if he is among thorns, briars, and scorpions. God tells Ezekiel to speak what he tells him to way no matter what the people say or do. Then God says for Ezekiel to open his mouth and eat what he gives him.

Verses 9 – 10. Then Ezekiel sees a hand holding a scroll stretched out to him. God unrolled the scroll before him so Ezekiel could see that on both sides of it were written words of lament, mourning, and woe. This would be the message that Ezekiel gives through chapter 32 about the fall of Jerusalem that would occur in 586 BC and the judgment that God would bring upon the Gentile nations. After that his message changes dramatically to the hope of restoration.

Chapter 3

Verses 1 – 3. God tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll and then go speak to the Israelite people. This was a command to internalize the message so that he was mentally and emotionally empowered by it. When Ezekiel ate the scroll it tasted sweet like honey in his mouth. In Revelation 19:9 -10, John is told by an angel to take and eat a little scroll and it was sweet in his mouth but turned his stomach sour. This was because of the message contained within it. Ezekiel's stomach should have turned sour with the message that he was going to give the people.

Verses 4 – 11. Then God tells Ezekiel that his ministry and message will be to his own people, the nation of Israel (the captives in Babylon) and not to people of obscure language (the Babylonians or any other peoples taken captive by the Babylonians). The people to whom he will minister will be able to understand him but they will not be willing to listen and hear what is really being said because they don't want to hear it. But God promises to make Ezekiel as hardened and unyielding in presenting God's message as the people are in being rebellious. Ezekiel is to speak to the captives and tell them "This is what the Sovereign Lord says." Ezekiel isn't to be worried about whether the people like his message or respond to it. He is just to speak God's word to the people. The people have to decide whether to listen and respond or not. The same is true for all people speaking God's word (the Gospel story about Jesus) to other people. It is the responsibility of the hearer to respond or not. That response is not the responsibility of the one giving the message.

Verses 12 – 15. Ezekiel then hears the sound of the Cherubim's wings and the moving of the wheels beside them and is lifted up by God's Spirit. He goes to the exiles at Tel Abib (Tel Aviv) near the Chebar (Kabar) River (canal) and he sits among them for seven days overwhelmed by what he has seen and heard.

Verses 16 – 21. At the end of the seven days God again comes to Ezekiel with the message that he is to be a watchman for the house of Israel. A watchman for a city stood guard and warned the people of any impending danger. Ezekiel was to be a watchman for the people of Israel and give them God's warning to change their wicked ways. If he fulfills his mission to warn people and they don't heed his warning then they will die for their disobedience but God will not hold Ezekiel accountable for their shed blood. But if Ezekiel doesn't fulfill his mission to warn people and they die for their disobedience because of his failure to warn them, then God will hold him accountable for their shed blood.

Verses 22 – 27. When he writes "the hand of the Lord was upon me there," it indicates the Lord was empowering him. God tells him to go out to the plain where God again displays his glory to him like he did in chapter 1 and Ezekiel falls face down in worship. Then God's Spirit entered him, raised him up, and God spoke to him. God tells Ezekiel that he is going to be shut in his house, bound with ropes, and unable to speak unless the Lord tells him what to say. Then his mouth will be opened so he can say, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says." Then those rebellious people who hear will have to choose to obey or refuse to obey what the Lord says. There is nothing in Ezekiel's writings to say how long he remained mute but it may have lasted until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC (592 – 586 = 6 years). So Ezekiel didn't wander around speaking God's message all over the place like other prophets. He remained in one place and only spoke what God told him and when he told him to speak.

Chapter 4

Verses 1 – 3. God tells Ezekiel to take a clay tablet, draw a representation of Jerusalem on it. Then lay siege to it and set up enemy camps and battering rams around it. Finally he was to place an iron pan between himself and the city. The entire scene was to be a sign to the nation of Israel. The sign was that Jerusalem would be destroyed and nothing would stop it. Notice that Ezekiel didn't speak this message to the people but acted it out.

Verses 4 – 8. Then God tells Ezekiel to lie on his left side while putting the sin of Israel upon himself and to stay there one day for each of the 390 years of their sin. After that he is to lie on his right side while bound by ropes for 40 days bearing the sin of Judah, one day for each of 40 years. It is possible that during the 390 days (390 – 360/yr = 1 yr 1 mon) Ezekiel was also bound with ropes. It may be like fasting was only done during daylight hours that Ezekiel was only bound by ropes during the daylight hours and God gave him the strength to lie quietly during that time.

Solomon became king of Israel in 1015 BC and when he died in 975 BC the nation was divided between the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes. The reason for this was that Solomon, in his old age, had angered the Lord because he turned his heart away from God and started allowing the worship of the foreign gods of his 700 wives. There is not an exact date for this but it probably happened sometime after the Queen of Sheba visited in 992 BC. That would be the only event close to 390 years before Ezekiel's actions in 593 BC (593 + 390 = 983 BC). Some scholars come up with other interpretations based on their determination of the date of the division of the kingdom because from that time the northern kingdom never followed God.

An interpretation by some scholars for the 40 years is that it represents the time from the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC to the release from captivity by Cyrus in 539 BC. The problem with this is that it isn't exactly 40 years. In the 37th year of Jehoiachin's exile, Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk) became king of Babylon (early Oct 562 BC by ancient Babylonian records) when Nebuchadnezzar died. In the first year of his reign (Mar 561 BC), he released Jehoiachin from prison and gave him a seat of honor higher than the other kings that had been captured and were still living in Babylon. (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jer 52:31-34) Amel-Marduk is murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, in Aug 560 BC and he then becomes king. Neriglissar dies in 556 BC and the throne was seized from his son, Labashi-Marduk, by Nabonidus who lived in the northern part of the kingdom, in Harran, and turned the city of Babylon over to his son, Belshazzar in 549 BC. Belshazzar reigned there until the city was captured by Cyrus in Oct 539 BC.

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in 609 BC after Josiah died and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years (609 – 606 BC). Then Jehoiakim revolted so Nebuchadnezzar returned and took the first captives in 605 BC and takes Jehoiakim to Babylon in shackles. When Jehoiakim dies in captivity in 598 BC, Jehoichin, living in Jerusalem, becomes king at 18 years of age. He only ruled for three months before Nebuchadnezzar had him brought to Babylon in Mar 597 BC. At that time Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoichin's uncle, Mattaniah, in charge of the city and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah held his position for 11 years until he tried to revolt and Nebuchadnezzar returned to destroy Jerusalem in 586 BC and took the last wave of captives. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple on the 9 Ab (Aug) 585 BC.

So exactly what 40 years God is referring to in verse 6 has to remain unknown at this time.

Verses 9 – 17. God tells Ezekiel to take 6 types of grain and put them in a storage jar to use to make bread for him to eat during the 390 days. Normally the Israelite people would only use wheat to make bread. So mixing wheat with other coarser grains like barley indicated poverty. Ezekiel is to use 20 shekels (8 ounces) of the mixture each day to make bread to eat and drink a sixth of a hin (2/3 quart) of water. He is to bake the bread using human excrement for fuel (a defiling thing). This is to be a sign to the people that Israel will eat defiled food among the nations where God will drive them. It also indicates they will be poor. Ezekiel complains about eating defiled (unclean) food since from his youth he has eaten nothing but clean food. So God allows him to use cow manure. God says he will cut off the supply of food in Jerusalem so that the people will ration their food and drink in despair and anxiety. The people will be appalled at the sight of each other and waste away because of their sin.

Chapter 5

Verses 1- 17. God tells Ezekiel to take a sharp sword and cut his hair and beard and divide it up. When his 40 days of lying in siege against Jerusalem are completed, he is to burn a third of the hair, strike a third of it all around the city, and scatter the last third to the wind. But he is to take a few strands of the hair and hide them in the fold of his garment and take a few more and burn them in a fire. These actions were to represent the punishment God would inflict on the nation for their continued disobedience. God said he would do what he has never done before and will never do again. He would inflict punishment on them and scatter the survivors to the winds. He would withdraw his favor and not look on them with pity or spare them because they had defiled his sanctuary with vile images and detestable practices. As a result, a third would be killed by plague or famine within the city as parents ate children or children ate parents. (2 Ki 6:24-29 a previous famine; Jer 19:8-9; Lam 4:10) A third would be killed by the swords of invading armies. And a third would be scattered to other countries. What we find in chapter 6 verse 8 is that the few strands hidden in the folds of his garments were a sign that there would be a remnant of the people who will survive. After the nation has been punished, God's anger and wrath against them will cease. But the nation will remain reproach and a taunt, a warning and an object of horror to the nations around. This was God's warning to the world about disobeying him.

All of these actions were to take place without God once telling Ezekiel to explain his actions to the captives around him.

Chapter 6

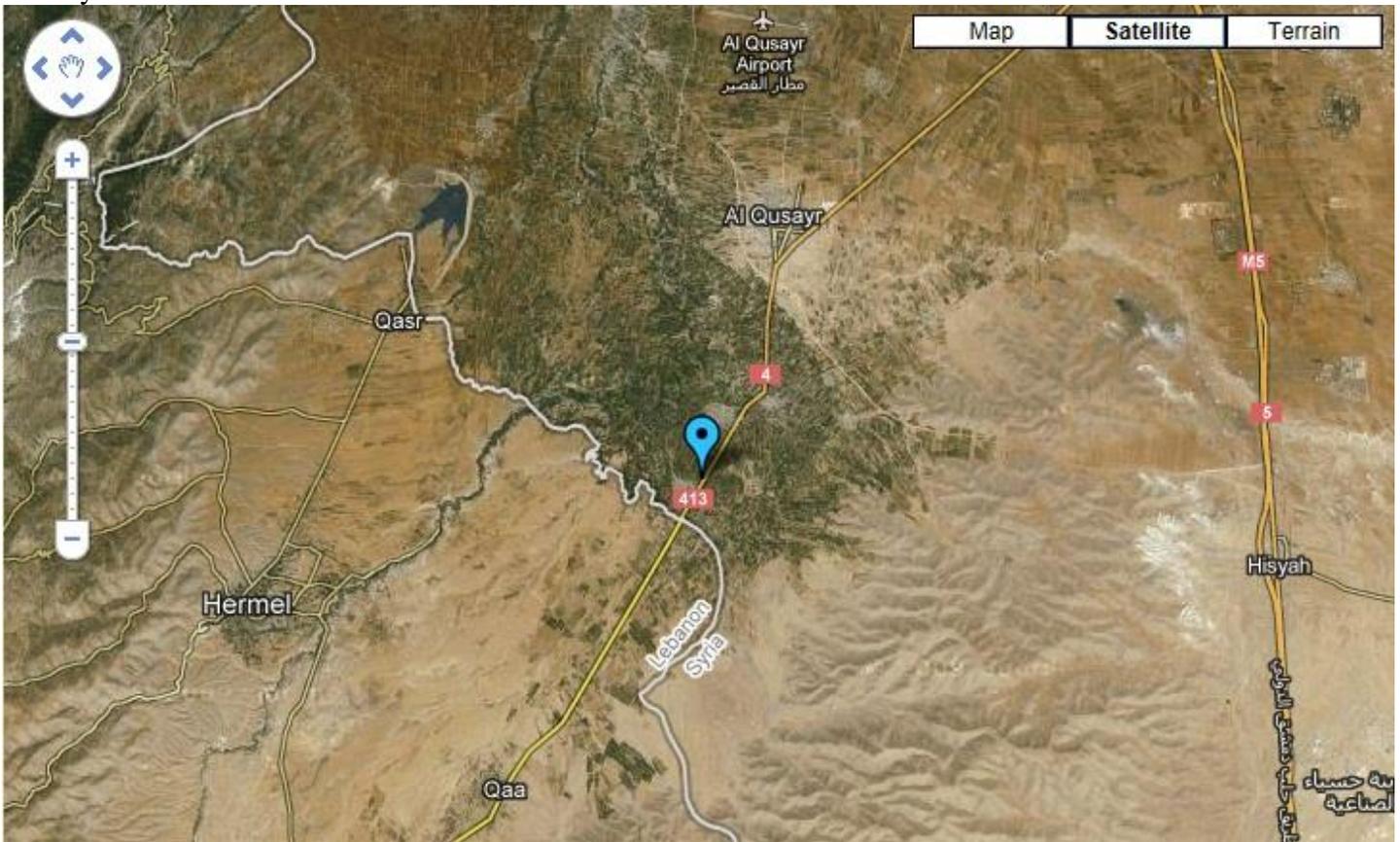
Verses 1 – 10. Now God tells Ezekiel to speak to the people and prophecy against the mountains of Israel. He is to tell them that the Lord is about to bring a sword against the hills, the ravines, and valleys to destroy the high places (altars). Not only would the altars be demolished and smashed, but the people worshipping there would be slain and their dead bodies lay before the destroyed altars. In this way the people would know that God is the Lord (YHWH). But God would spare some of the people from the sword when they are scattered among the nations. Then those in the nations where they have been carried would remember God and how he had been grieved by the people turning away from him and practicing evil things. Then they will acknowledge that God is the Lord (YHWH).

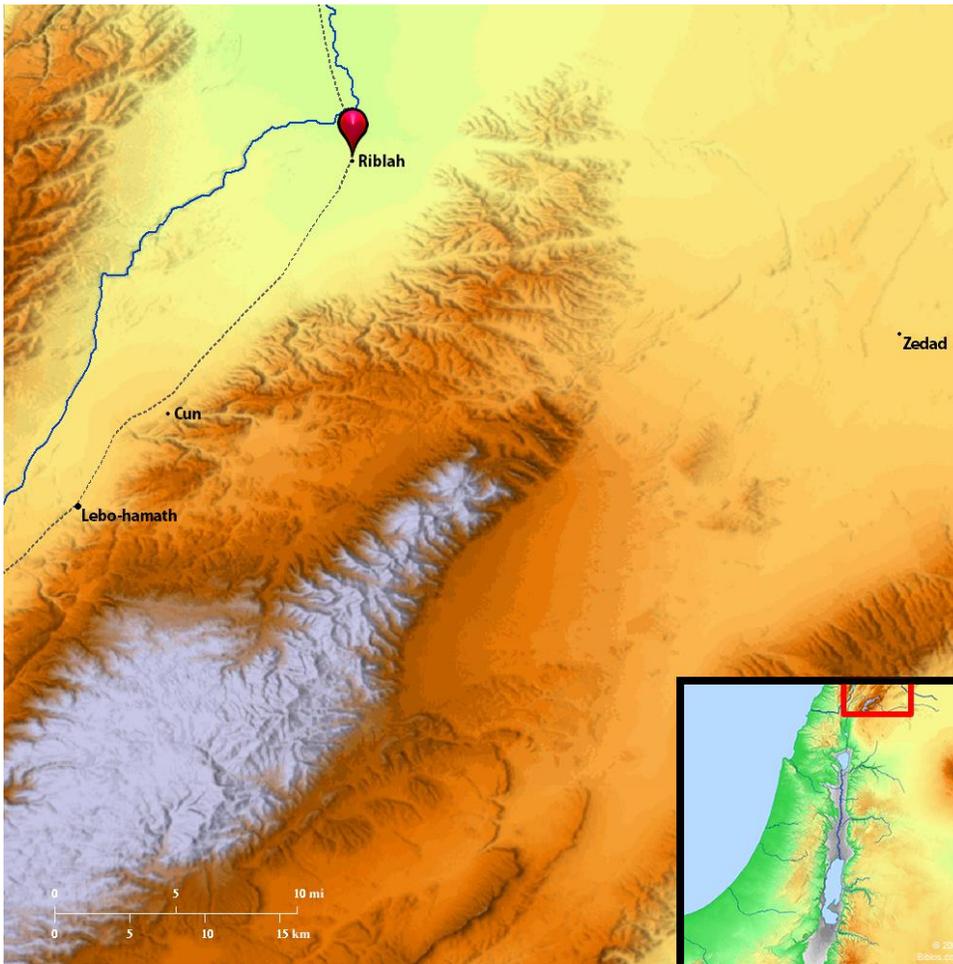
Verses 11 – 14. Then Ezekiel is told to clap his hands and stamp his feet and dry out the message that God is going to judge the people by plague, sword, and famine and that the people will be slain in front of their detestable idols and those idols will be destroyed. God will stretch out his hand against the people and make the land desolate from the desert to Diblah (Riblah) and then the people will know that God is the Lord (YHWH).

ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א
Teit (T)	Cheit (Ch)	Zayin (Z)	Vav (V/O/U)	Hei (H)	Dalet (D)	Gimel (G)	Beit (B/V)	Alef (Silent)
ס	ן	נ	ם	מ	ל	ך	כ	י
Samekh (S)	Nun (N)	Nun (N)	Mem (M)	Mem (M)	Lamed (L)	Khaf (Kh)	Kaf (K/Kh)	Yod (Y)
ת	ש	ר	ק	ץ	צ	ף	פ	ע
Tav (T/S)	Shin (Sh/S)	Reish (R)	Qof (Q)	Tzadei (Tz)	Tzadei (Tz)	Fe (F)	Pei (P/F)	Ayin (Silent)

Note the difference in the Hebrew D and R is so slight it would be easy mistake them. Jeremiah 52:9-10 and 2 Kings 25:6 says Zedekiah was captured when fleeing and taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in the land of

Hamath where he pronounced sentence on him. That town of Riblah would be on the Orontes River in what is now Syria near the border of Lebanon.





Riblah location

Chapter 7

Verses 1-4. Ezekiel says the word of the Lord came to him again. This time, the Lord tells him to announce that the end has come and that he will unleash his anger against them in judgment for all their detestable practices and then they will know that he is God (YHWH). Ezekiel has shown by his actions for over a year how this judgment would proceed. Now, God says the time has come. Whether or not that means we should date this as coming just a short time before Nebuchadnezzar attacked the city is debatable because often God says something is happening soon, but we don't see it coming in what we consider soon. Soon, in God's time, often takes much longer in our timing. But as far as God is concerned, since he exists outside of time, not only is the judgment on the people coming soon, it is already completed.

Verses 5 – 9. The Lord repeats himself, but this time calling his judgment an un-heard-of disaster that will come upon those dwelling in the land because he will pour out his anger against them to repay them for their disobedience and detestable practices. He says he will not have pity on them or spare them. Then they will know that he is YHWH who strikes. YHWH is often translated as Jehovah and combined with another word to describe God's character. An example of this is Jehovah Jireh which means God (YHWH) provides. In verse 9 the phrase is Jehovah (YHWH) Makkeh which means God strikes.

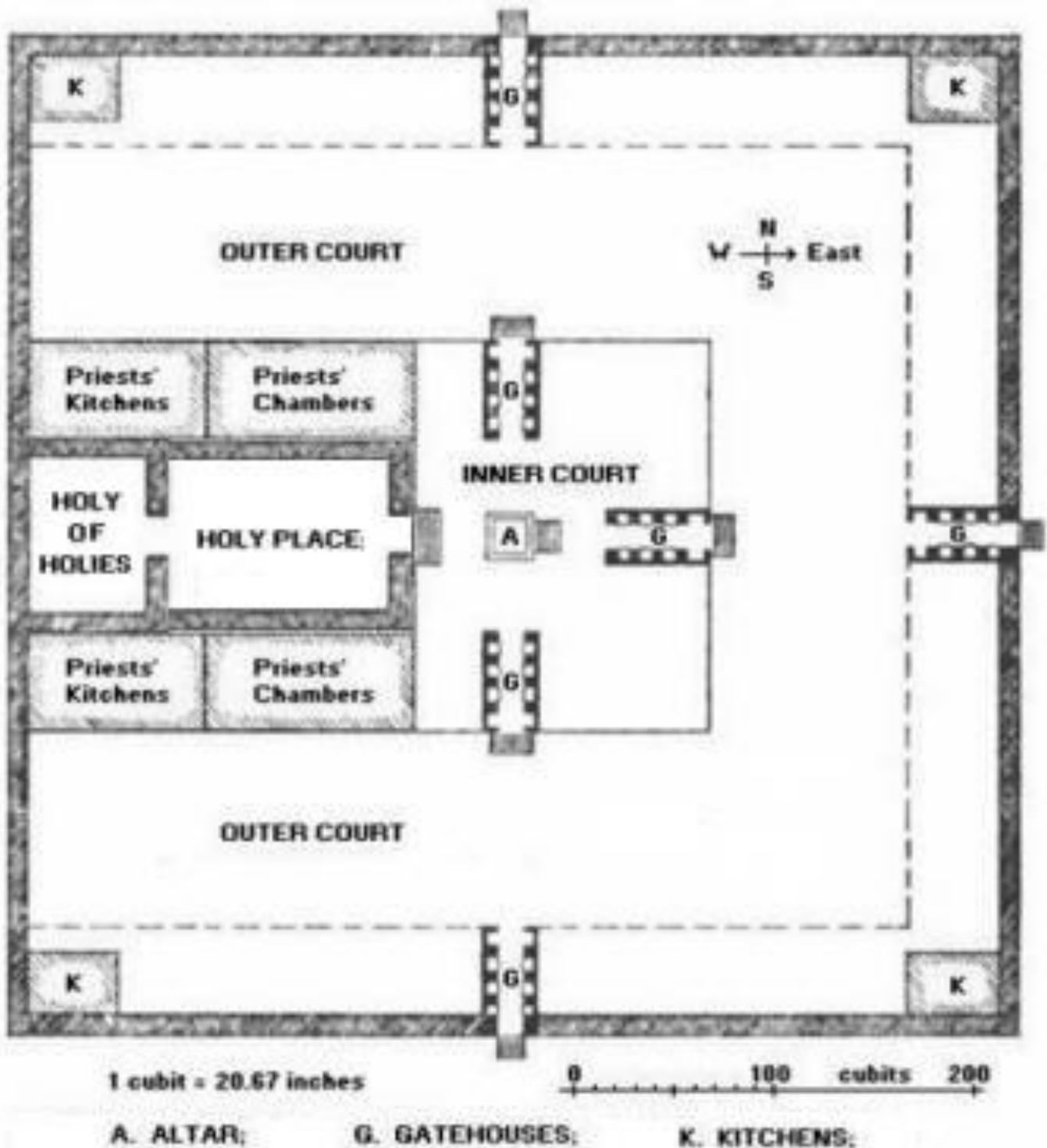
Verses 10 – 14. Again God announces the day is here and it would come like buds bursting forth on a branch (rod). And the buds would grow into a rod to punish the people leaving nothing of value. Neither the buyer or seller should rejoice because both of them will lose what they have and it will not be reversed. In fact, not one of them will preserve their life. If they don't die of the sword or plague, they will still die during the years of captivity. Even though they blow the trumpet (shofar) to warn the people and call them together, no one will go into battle and the judgment will not be stopped.

Verses 15 – 22. Now God explains what will happen to the people. We see that those in the country will die by the sword. Those within the city walls will die of famine and plague. Those who survive will escape into the mountains while moaning like doves because of their sin. The people will become weak. They will put on sackcloth and shave their heads to show their shame. Gold and silver will be worthless in the day of the Lord's wrath because they can't buy anything to ease their hunger. They used jewelry (possibly from the Temple) to make their detestable idols and were proud of what they had done. So God will turn those things into unclean things as he gives it as plunder to foreigners who will defile it. God is planning to turn his face from his people and allow foreigners to desecrate his treasured place.

Verses 23 – 27. God says to prepare the chains for the people because he is going to bring the most wicked of nations to take possession of the houses of the people. He is going to put an end to the pride of the mighty Israelite nation and desecrate everything the people thought of as sanctuaries. When the terror comes they will seek peace but it won't come, but calamities and rumors will become numerous. They will seek a vision from God through the prophets, look for the priests to give them a teaching from the law, and seek knowledge from elder people but none of it will happen. The king will mourn, the prince will despair, and the people will tremble, but the Lord will deal with them according to their conduct and their own standards and then they will know that he is Lord (YHWH).

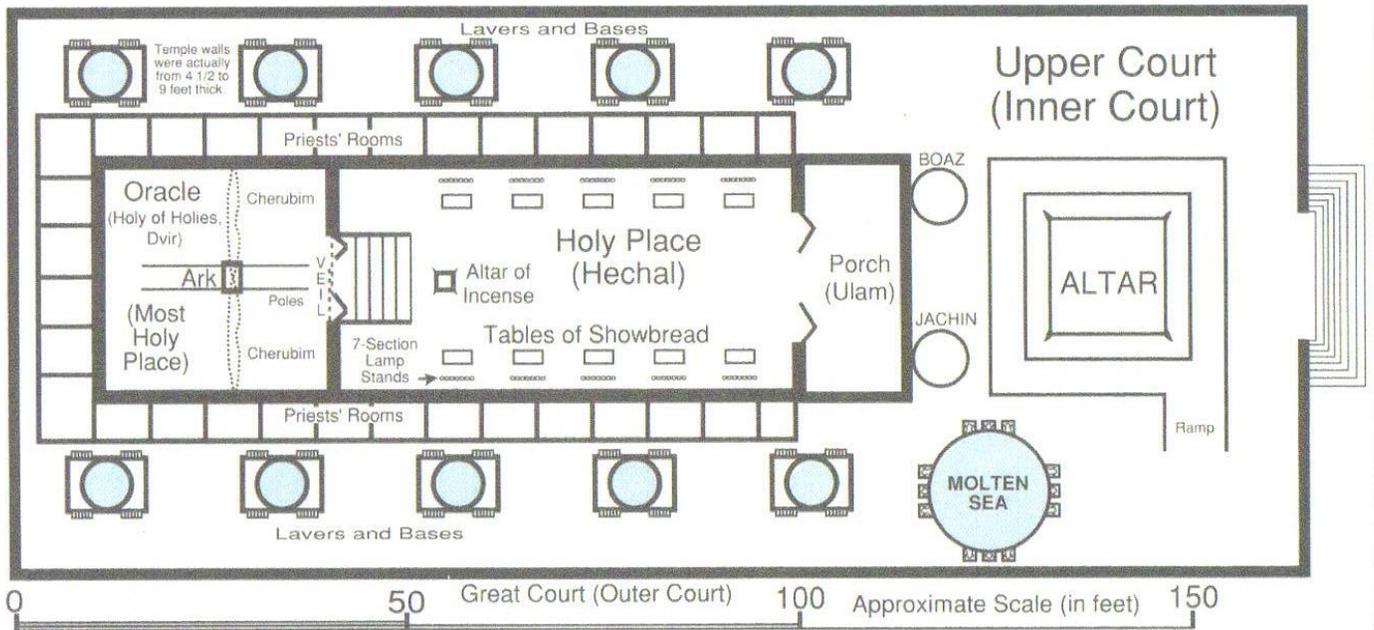
Chapter 8

Verses 1 – 4. Now after the 390 days of laying on his side for Israel's sin and during the 40 days of laying on his side for Judah's sin, an angel (literally fiery one) appears to Ezekiel while he is sitting in his house with the elders sitting with him. God's Spirit lifts him up by the hair on his head (which had not been cut yet) and in visions took him to Jerusalem to the north entrance of the inner court. There is where an idol had been placed that provoked God to jealousy. And there, Ezekiel sees the glory of God as he had in his first vision.



Solomon's Temple (possibly) in Ezekiel's time

There is some evidence that the north and south gates weren't built by Solomon (2 Kings 15:35) but added later. The north gate is given names in Scripture that indicate this. See Jer 20:2 (upper Benjamin gate), Jer 26:10; 36:10 (the new gate), Ezek. 8:5 (the altar gate), and 2 Kings 15:35; and Ezek. 9:2 (the upper gate).



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

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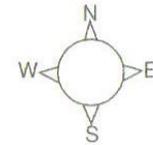


Illustration of Solomon's Temple

1 KINGS 6

A structure was built around the walls of the temple containing three levels. The lower chamber was 7.5 feet (2.3 m) wide, the middle chamber was 9 feet (2.7 m) wide, and the upper chamber was 10.5 feet (3.2 m) wide (1 Kings 6:5-6, 8, 10).

Two ornate wooden doors, overlaid with gold, separated the inner sanctuary from the nave (1 Kings 6:31-32).

The nave had clerestory windows with recessed frames (1 Kings 6:4).

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The vestibule was 30 feet (9.1 m) wide and 15 feet (4.6 m) deep (1 Kings 6:3; cf. 2 Chron. 3:4).

The hollow bronze pillar on the north was called "Boaz," and the one on the south was called "Jachin" (1 Kings 7:21; cf. 2 Chron. 3:17).

Two ornate wooden, folding doors, overlaid with gold, separated the nave from the vestibule (1 Kings 6:33-35).

The bronze altar for burnt offerings was 15 feet (4.6 m) high and 30 feet (9.1 m) long and wide (cf. 2 Chron. 4:1).

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1 KINGS 6

Temple Floor Plan

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Solomon began to build "the house of the Lord" in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah in the spring of 967 or 966 B.C. (1 Kings 6:1, 2 Chron. 3:1-2) and completed it seven years later in the fall of 960 or 959 B.C. (1 Kings 6:38). The temple itself, not including the surrounding chambers on three sides, was 90 feet (27.4 m) long, 30 feet (9.1 m) wide, and 45 feet (13.7 m) high. It resided in the middle of a court with boundary walls.

The inner sanctuary (or Most Holy Place) was a 30-foot (9.1 m) cube (1 Kings 6:15-20; 2 Chron. 3:8-10). Such rooms were often elevated in temples of the ancient Near East. Two massive golden cherubim were on either side of the ark, each 15 feet (4.6 m) tall with 15 feet (4.6 m) wingspan (1 Kings 6:23-28). The ark of the covenant was between the two cherubim (1 Kings 6:1-11; cf. 2 Chron. 5:2-10).

The nave (or Holy Place) was 60 feet (18.3 m) long and 30 feet (9.1 m) wide (1 Kings 6:15, 17-18; cf. 2 Chron. 3:5-7). It contained the golden altar for incense, the golden table for the bread of the Presence, and ten golden lampstands, five on the north and five on the south (1 Kings 7:48-49; cf. 2 Chron. 4:7).

Ten bronze wheeled stands and basins held water for rinsing off what was used for the burnt offerings (1 Kings 7:27-38; cf. 2 Chron. 4:6).

The "Sea" was a metal basin 7.5 feet (2.3 m) tall and 15 feet (4.6 m) in diameter; it held 12,000 gallons (44,000 liters) of water for the priests to wash in. It was supported by twelve bronze oxen in sets of three, facing in each direction (1 Kings 7:23-26; cf. 2 Chron. 4:2-5).

Over 40 all-new illustrations were developed exclusively for the ESV Study Bible. Created by the world's leading biblical archaeologists in partnership with a renowned architectural illustration firm, these drawings set a new standard for accuracy and beauty.

Concise captions describe each aspect of the illustration, including biblical references, measurements, and function.

A precisely rendered top-down view is included for most illustrations, showing exact measurements and the direction that the structure faced.

A summary caption provides an overview of the illustration, along with a concise description of where the places and events shown in the illustration are located in the Bible.

Verses 5 – 6. God tells him to look to the north. When Ezekiel looks he sees the altar of jealousy. God asks if he sees the detestable things the house of Israel are doing, things that will drive him far from his sanctuary. But he warns him that he will see even more detestable things.

Verses 7 – 13. Then God takes him to the entrance to the court where he sees a hole in the wall. God tells him to dig in the wall and when he does he finds a door. God tells him to go in and see what is happening. When he goes in and looks he sees all kinds of crawling animals and detestable things depicted on the walls. Not only that, but he sees 70 of Israel's elders, each with a censer in his hand worshipping the depicted things. They are doing this in seclusion because they think God does not see them because he has forsaken the land. So they are taking matters into their own hands to seek protection for the people and their land. They didn't have faith in God and weren't trusting him any longer. But their distrust didn't come after God brought judgment disaster upon them, but before. Shaphan was apparently King Josiah's godly secretary of state (2 Kings 22:8-14; 2 Chron. 34:15-21) but his son and other elders have taken it upon themselves to act like priests. God tells Ezekiel that he will see even more detestable things.

Verses 14 – 15. Then God takes Ezekiel back to the north gate and he sees women sitting there mourning for Tammuz (also written Dumuzu), an ancient Sumerian and then Akkadian fertility deity who was supposedly the husband and brother of Ishtar (or Astarte) who corresponds to the goddess Aphrodite of Greek thought. Tammuz is the same as Adonis in the Greek pantheon. According to the myths about the two of them, his death is supposed to indicate the long, dry summers in that region during which vegetation dies. And then his return to life indicates to return to life brought by the rainy season. Considering that this vision was in September at the end of the dry summer, it shows the extent of the influence of that cult in Israel, because they were crying for Tammuz. Tammuz is also the name a month in the Hebrew calendar. Exactly when the month became known as Tammuz is not known but that may also show influence for the cult. God says Ezekiel will see even more detestable things than these.

Verses 16 – 18. Then God takes Ezekiel to the inner court at the entrance to the Temple which would be on the East side. There, Ezekiel sees 25 men with their backs to the Temple, bowing down to the sun rising in the East. Since only priests were allowed to go into the inner court, these were priests doing what was forbidden by God in Deut 4:19, which said they were not to bow down in worship of the sun, moon, or stars. Apparently Manasseh, when he became king of Judah in 696 BC, erected altars to Baal and Asherah (probably Astarte) and restarted worship of the starry hosts which his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed. (2 Kings 21:3-5) How could the priests accommodate the worship of the sun in God's Temple? Since God created the sun, perhaps they considered in just a part of worshipping the totality of God. But God saw it as disobedience of his command not to worship anything that he had made. God considered none of this to be a trivial matter. It was all detestable and the people had filled the whole land with it. What is the meaning of "putting the branch to their nose?" It may have been part of the worship of the sun or some scholars think it may mean that their worship was putting a stench in God's nose. So God says he will deal with them in anger and will not have pity on them even if they shouted in his ears.

Chapter 9

Verses 1 – 6. While he is still standing in the inner court of the temple, Ezekiel hears him (the Lord) call for the guards of the city to come to him, each with a weapon in their hand. These would be the angels that God had given the task of guarding the city for him. Along with them came another angel dressed in white linen with a writing kit. They came and stood at the bronze altar, the place where sacrifices were burned, that stood in the inner court. Then we are told that the glory of the Lord moved to the threshold of the temple. That would be the entry to the Holy Place. There, the Lord told the angel in white linen to go through the city beginning with the temple and mark the foreheads of everyone who grieves over the detestable things that are going on in the temple and in the city. The Hebrew word "mark" is *tav* (also written *tav*) which is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There is a difference between the way *tav* is written in modern Hebrew and the ancient Hebrew script

used in Ezekial's day. The difference is seen in the example on the right where it is easy to see that the ancient *tav* looks like a cross sloped to one side. Although Ezekiel would not see any significance in the *tav* looking like a cross, on this side of Jesus' death on a cross and the giving of the Holy Spirit is a sign that every believer is sealed as a guarantee of eternal life with Jesus, we would see a great significance that the ancient *tav* looked like a cross. We see from this that the Lord marks those who trust in him and takes care of them. They may go through difficult times and even die by the hands of evil people, but God will take care of them by taking them to be with him. Then he told the guards to follow the one in linen and kill everyone who does not have a mark, whether a man, woman, or child. They were to begin with the elders in front of the temple. Those would be the 70 with censers that were worshipping detestable, creeping things in the dark.

Modern Hebrew
letter *tav*
(Hebrew square)



Hebrew letter
tav at the time
of Ezekiel
(Paleo-Hebrew)



Verses 7 – 11. Then God tells the guards to defile the temple and fill the courts with the slain. Any dead animal in the temple area, outer courts or inner courts, that was not part of a sacrifice would defile the temple and make it unclean. So dead people laying throughout the courts would defile all of it. When the guards begin killing people and Ezekiel was left alone, he cried out to God, asking if he was going to destroy the entire remnant of the nation with his wrath. God answers him that the sin of Israel and Judah is great. The people say the Lord has forsaken the land so he says he will not look on them with pity but bring down on their heads what they have done. At the end of that, the one in linen returned saying God's command had been done. The people that were considered the Lord's because they wanted to follow him and grieved over the detestable things had been marked as his so his angels would not kill them.

Chapter 10

Verses 1 – 14. Now Ezekiel looks and sees the image of God and hears God tell the one in linen to fill his hands with burning coals from the midst of the Cherubim above which he sits and scatter the coals over the city. The Cherubim, and therefore the image of the Lord, were on the south side of the temple while the one in linen had just come back in the north gate from marking God's followers. After God told the one in linen to take the burning coals, a cloud, the symbol of God's presence (Ex 33:9-10; 1 Ki 8:10-11), filled the inner court and the glory of the Lord moved to the threshold of the temple which is the entrance to the Holy Place where only the priests who were ministering to the Lord throughout the day could enter. Then the cloud filled the entire temple and the court was filled with the radiance of the glory of God. Ezekiel says the sound of the wings of the Cherubim could be heard all the way to the outer court and was like the voice of the Almighty when he speaks (loud and commanding). The one in linen went in among the Cherubim and stood beside one of the wheels (wheel within a wheel was the description in Chapter 1). Then one of the Cherubim scooped up some of the burning coals and put it in his hand and the one in linen went out from among them. Then Ezekiel gives us another description of his vision of God and we see it is the same as from Chapter 1.

Verses 15 – 22. Then the Cherubim rose upward and the glory of the God departed from threshold of the temple and stopped above the Cherubim. They rose from the ground bearing with them the glory of God and stopped above the east gate of the temple area. In 1 Kings 8:10-11, God showed his approval of the Temple Solomon had built for him according to the design given to Moses and David. His presence also shows his protection of his house. Now this appears to be God preparing to remove his presence and thus his protection from the Temple.

Chapter 11

Verses 1 – 13. Now the Spirit of the Lord takes Ezekiel to the entrance of the east gate of the temple complex. There he sees 25 men, including Jaazaniah, son of Azzur, and Pelatiah, son of Benaiah, who were leaders of the

people. These are not the same men as seen in chapter 8:16 who were worshipping falsely in the inner court where only the priests could go. This Jaazaniah is not the same as in chapter 8:11 because that one was the son of Shaphan and this is the son of Azzur. God says they are giving bad advice to the people. That they are like meat in a cooking pot may indicate they are safe from the fire like meat in a pot would be safe from being burned up in the fire. There is scholarly debate as to whether the Hebrew statement before that says “will it not soon be time to build houses” or “this is not the time to build houses.” Either way, the advice is bad because God has told them through Micah (1 & 2), Isaiah (42:24-25; 3:26) and Jeremiah (Jer 21:8-10) that judgment is coming, the citizens of the city will be captured and taken to a foreign country, and they should build houses in that foreign land and work for the prosperity of the place where they are living. So Ezekiel is to prophesy that they have killed many people in the city and filled the streets with the dead and that those bodies are the meat in the cooking pot, but the living will be driven out of the city by the sword, and handed over to foreigners who will inflict punishment on them. God says he will execute judgment on them at the borders of Israel and then they will know he is the Lord (YHWH). They will not be the meat and the city will not be a cooking pot for them. While he is speaking this prophecy in his vision he sees a leader named Pelatiah die. The name Pelatiah means “Yahweh rescues” so this was an indication that God would not rescue the people. Distraught over the idea that God would not save, Ezekiel cries out in a loud voice asking the Lord if he will completely destroy the remnant of Israel.

Verses 14 – 25. God replies that the people are saying that the ones under judgment are the ones who have been taken into captivity but he says that although he has sent them into exile among the countries he is a sanctuary for them. And he says that he will gather them from the nations, bring them back, and give them the land of Israel again. He says they will return to the land, remove all its vile images and detestable idols and he will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them. Then they will follow his decrees and be careful to keep his laws.

When the captives were allowed by Cyrus to return to the land and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple that was only a partial fulfillment of this promise because they were not given control of the land. And until 1948, when the modern nation of Israel was established, there has always been someone besides the descendants of Jacob who were in control of the land. Even the modern nation of Israel is not in complete control of the land and the detestable images (like the Dome of the Rock) have not all been removed. So this promise is yet to be fulfilled.

But, God says, those who hearts are devoted to the detestable images and vile things, he will bring down on their heads what they have done.

Then Ezekiel sees the image of the Lord in all his glory depart from the city and stop over the mountain east of it (Mount of Olives). At that point, the Spirit brings Ezekiel back to Babylon and the vision departs from him. Now that the vision is completed, Ezekiel tells the leaders who were sitting with him everything the Lord had shown him.

Chapter 12

Verses 1 – 7. God speaks to Ezekiel again and since this is not dated we must presume it was right after he had finished telling the leaders of his vision, his completion of lying on his side for 40 days for the sin of Judah, and his shaving his head to scatter his hair (chapters 4 & 5). This also applies to chapters 13 to 19. God says the people he is living among are a rebellious people. These would be those who have already been taken captive to Babylon and among whom he is living outside the walled city. God tells Ezekiel to pack his belongings for exile during the day while the people are watching. Thus he would have packed only the barest of necessities. Then in the evening, he is to dig through the wall (probably of his house or courtyard), crawl through the hole with his belongings, and carry them out. And he is to do this with his face covered so he cannot see the land. All of this is to be a symbol or sign to the house of Israel. Ezekiel does all this during the day and at the beginning of nightfall while the elders watched.

Verses 8 – 16. The next morning God asks Ezekiel if that rebellious people had asked him what he was doing. God tells him to explain that his actions are a sign concerning the prince in Jerusalem and the whole house of Israel who are there. The prince will put his things on his shoulder at dusk and leave through a hole dug in the

wall. He will cover his face so he cannot see the land, but God will spread a net and catch him and bring him to Babylon. The prince will not die until after he comes to Babylon but he will not see Babylon. God says he will also scatter to the winds all those around the prince, his staff and troops, and pursue them with the sword. Then the people will know that he is God (YHWH) when he disperses them among nations and scatters them through countries. But God promises to spare a few of the people from the sword, famine, and plague so that in the nations where they go they may acknowledge their detestable practices and know that he is God (YHWH).

In *Antiquities of the Jews*, 10:7:2, Flavius Josephus wrote that Zedekiah heard about this prophecy by Ezekiel but did not believe it because it seemed to contradict Jeremiah's prophecy about what would happen to Babylon which he took to mean they would not overcome him. This apparent contradiction was the reason Zedekiah gave for rejecting both prophecies. Both prophecies proved true: the Babylonians took Zedekiah to Babylon, but he never saw the country because Nebuchadnezzar blinded him at Riblah (plains of Jericho); and the Babylonian kingdom was overthrown by Cyrus as he led the Medes and Persians against them.

According to Jeremiah 52:4-11 and 2 King 25:1-7, Zedekiah and the army of Judah tried to escape from the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem at night. But the Babylonian army pursued and overtook them in the plains of Jericho. All the Jewish soldiers scattered and Zedekiah was captured. Zedekiah watched as the Babylonians killed all his officials and his sons. Then they blinded him so that was the last sight he would see, put bronze shackles on him, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison where he stayed until his death. Ezekiel's acting this out as a sign was in 592 BC and the capture of Zedekiah was in 587 BC, just 5 years later.

In the ancient nations of the middle east, it was a common thought that a nation was related uniquely to a protecting deity. So if some disease or famine fell upon a nation, it was because their deity did not care enough for them. And if a nation was defeated in battle, it was because their deity was not as powerful as that of the winning nation. To prevent this idea from spreading about him, God would spare some of the people and scatter them throughout the nations to be his witness that he did care for his people and that he brought all of these things upon his people because of their own disobedience of him, not because he failed in some way.

Verses 17 – 20. Then God tells Ezekiel to perform another sign by trembling as he eats his food and shuddering as he drinks his water. And he is to tell them people that this is a sign about those living in Jerusalem and the land of Israel that they will eat their food in anxiety and drink their water in despair because the land will be stripped of everything because of the violence of everyone who lives there. The inhabited towns will be laid waste and the land made desolate so that the people will know that he is God (YHWH).

Verses 21 – 28. Apparently when the people heard what Ezekiel said, they quoted a common saying about the days go by and visions don't happen as predicted. In other words, the people had come to believe that because the prophecies of Isaiah (760-698 BC) and Micah (750-710 BC) and Jeremiah (629-592) hadn't been fulfilled yet that it meant the fulfillment was a long way off, if ever. And the false prophets in Jerusalem had been saying that everything would be good because the Lord would not harm his land, or city, or people. But God says the days are near when the prophecies (visions) will be fulfilled – that it will happen in their days – that they will see it.

Chapter 13

Verses 1 – 7. Now God proceeds to condemn the false prophets and describes their characteristics. They speak out of their own imaginations and not his words. They are foolish, following their own spirit and have seen nothing. They are like jackals among ruins. They have not helped prepare the people to stand firm in the battle on the day of the Lord. Their visions are false and their divinations are lies. Remember that God expressly forbade his followers from practicing or participating in divination (Deut 18:14). They have uttered lies when they say, "The Lord declares" when he has not spoken to them and yet they expect what they have said to happen. Today, we have many false prophets throughout the church who claim to have a message from God yet have not. And the evidence is that their messages do not conform to what God has already said.

Verses 8 – 16. Now God gives his judgment upon the false prophets who should have been males leading and teaching the people God's ways. He says they will not belong to the council of his people or be listed in the records of the house of Israel nor will they enter the land. Because they lead the people astray by saying there will be peace when there will be none and encourage the people to cover over their faults like whitewashing a flimsy wall, God will send disasters that will break down their flimsy walls. Then the people will ask the false prophets where the whitewash is with which the prophets told them to cover their walls. God says he will expend his wrath against the whitewashed walls and those who did the whitewashing by prophesying peace when there is no peace. The false prophets had helped the people build a flimsy wall of hope that they would be protected and covered it with the whitewashing of lying visions. But God was going to send his disastrous judgments upon those flimsy walls and tear them to the ground. If church leaders today encourage people to do things that contradict God's will (like approving of lying, stealing, adultery, homosexuality, or abortion) then they are doing the same as the false prophets and bring God's condemnation upon themselves.

Verses 17 – 23. God usually used males to lead the people and prophesy to them, but he occasionally used females when it was his desire (Ex 15:20; Judg 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh 6:14; Luke 2:36) and in the early church (Acts 21:9; 1 Cor 11:5). But like the men, there were women who were claiming to be God's prophets and have a vision (message) from him but were false prophets (liars). God told Ezekiel to prophesy against these false women prophets. They have sewn charms on the wrists of their garments and made veils for their heads to ensnare (trap the people with false things) the people into listening to lies for a few handfuls of barley or scraps of bread. Do they expect to have their lives spared? God will tear the charms from their arms and the veils from their heads and set the people free from their lies and they will no longer be able to see false visions or practice divination (probably meaning they will die).

Modern day fortune tellers act similar to these false female prophets. Their dress is often elaborate and includes jewelry associated with the occult (like the charms on the wrists). They often use incense and aromas during their "advice" giving (like veils to ensnare people). Their "advice" is dangerous because it leads people away from God's truth that the only way to live and not die spiritually is to believe in Jesus as God and have faith that his death has paid for their disobedience so that they can have a right relationship with God. Their "advice" is made up from their own minds just as was that of these false female prophets.

Chapter 14

Verses 1 – 11. Then some of the elders come and sit before Ezekiel. Since Ezekiel has been speaking the word of the Lord, this is their intent to seek guidance from God. God speaks to Ezekiel with a statement about the men having set up idols in their hearts and having put up stumbling blocks before their faces and then a question about whether in their condition he should even let them come to him to seek his guidance. So he tells Ezekiel to tell them that God, himself, will answer them directly but in keeping with their great idolatry. Then God tells Ezekiel to tell the house of Israel to repent, turn from their idols, and renounce their detestable practices. Then God has Ezekiel tell them that any Israelite or alien living in Israel who separates themselves from God, setting up idols in their heart and stumbling blocks before their face, and then comes to a prophet (that would be the false prophets of which they had so many) seeking a word from God will hear directly from God and that God will make an example of the person by cutting them off from his people. Then everyone will know that God is YHWH (I Am). And if the prophet is persuaded to give a prophecy (God obviously has not given him a prophecy but allows him to speak) then God will stretch out his hand against the prophet and destroy him from among the people. The person coming to the Lord in such a condition will bear their sin, but the prophet will also be as guilty as the one inquiring of him (if he decides to give a prophecy – obviously a false one). This will be done so that the people will no longer stray from God or defile themselves. That will establish their relationship with God and they will be his people.

Verses 12 – 23. Now God says that if a country sins against him so that he decides to bring judgment upon them (like was happening to Israel, Judah and Jerusalem), then no amount of righteous people living in the country will spare the entire country from judgment. The elders and priests were probably remembering the

God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah if the angels had found 10 righteous men living there (Gen 18:16-39) and thought surely there are enough righteous people living in Judah and Jerusalem so that God would have to spare them from judgment. But God gives an example of three individuals the people would have seen as righteous (Noah, Job, and Danel – Daniel would be from 26 to 31 years old at this time, in charge of the province of Babylon, and head of all the wise men in all the kingdom of Babylon so he would be widely seen as righteous). God says that even if these three were living in the land they could only save themselves. God gives the examples of bringing a famine, wild beasts, a sword (army), or plague against the land and says that in all those examples the three men would only be able to save themselves, not anyone else. Then God asks people to ponder how much worse will it be when he sends those four dreadful judgments against Jerusalem to kill its men and animals. Yet, he promises there will be some survivors, sons and daughters, who will be brought out of it and when they come to the elders in Babylon, those elders will be consoled about the disaster by the survivors' conduct and actions because the elders will know that God has not done any of it without cause. These survivors would be the one taken captive after Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem, destroys it and the temple, and brings the last wave of captives back to Babylon in 586 – 585 BC.

Chapter 15

Verses 1 – 8. This is the first of three parables that God gives Ezekiel to impress upon the exiles that there is no possibility of Jerusalem escaping the judgment and destruction that Ezekiel has been prophesying to them. This parable is about a vine. The wood of a vine is different from that of a tree in the forest and not useful for making things, not even a peg on which to hang something. A vine (that would be a grape vine) was only useful for producing fruit and if it was burned partly then it was not even useful for that. A vine was the most common symbol for Israel in the Old Testament (Gen 49:22; Deut 32:32; Ps 80:8-16; Isa 5:1-7; Jer 2:21; Hos 10:1) and even later in the New Testament (Matt. 21:33-41 and John 15:1-6). Israel's purpose was to be a blessing to the nations by showing how to live in a right relationship with God (Gen. 12:1-3) but if they didn't fulfill their purpose they were as worthless as a vine that had been burned and that's the way God will treat the people of Jerusalem. God will make the land desolate because the people have been unfaithful.

Chapter 16

Verses 1 – 5. This second parable is the longest chapter in the book of Ezekiel and scholars say it is the longest parable in the Bible. God's word comes to Ezekiel again and he tells him to confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices. Remember in the vision of the temple that God gave Ezekiel in chapter 8 that the elders were hiding in the dark worshipping vile, creepy creatures; women were weeping for Tammuz at the north gate; and priests were bowing to the east in worship of the sun which put their backs to the worship of God in the temple. Now begins the parable by telling the history of the beginning of the city of Jerusalem. It was not founded by the Hebrews for in Abram's time it was already a city. It was started by the Canaanite people as represented by an Amorite father and a Hittite mother. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the Jebusites were living in the city (Jos 15:63). God says the city (a child) was not wanted (highly valued) and, like an unwanted child of the Canaanites, was thrown out into the field because it was despised. Even when Joshua and the Israelites entered the land they did not capture Jerusalem and destroy the Jebusites, but allowed them to continue living there.

Verses 6 – 14. God continues to describe the history of Jerusalem like that of a baby growing up and says he passed by and, having compassion on the city, commanded it to live. And it grew and matured until later he noticed that it was old enough for love so he made it his possession, like a man putting his garment over a woman to marry and make her his wife, and by his solemn oath, God entered into a covenant with the city to make it his. This would have been the time when David made the city his and established his throne there. Then God says he washed the city and clothed it in the finest of garments, showing his special relationship with the city, so that it became beautiful and like a queen, its fame spread throughout the nations. This would have been the time when the nation reached the height of its glory under Solomon, when its territory extended the farthest and its wealth became the greatest and the kings and queens of other nations came there to seek favor.

Verses 15 – 34. But, God says, the city trusted in its beauty and used its fame to prostitute itself. It lavished its favor (affections) on anyone who passed by. It took the fine jewelry made of the gold and silver given to it by God (the items of the temple and wealth of the city) and made idols which they worshipped. They took the fine clothes, incense, and food God had provided and offered it in worship of the idols. And the children were even sacrificed to the idols. This happened during the time of the divided kingdom after Solomon's death and up to the time of Ezekiel. And God says in it detestable practices the city didn't remember the days when as a baby it was naked and kicking around in its own blood before he decided to have compassion on it and love it. So, God pronounces a woe upon it because it built a mound and lofty shrine (high places of worship) in every public square (every place). By this it degraded its beauty, offered it body with increasing promiscuity. It prostituted itself with the Egyptians, their lustful neighbors, and provoked the Lord to anger. So God decreased its territory and gave it over to its enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were shocked by the lewd conduct (2 Chron 21:16-17; 28:16-19; Isa 1:7-8). It engaged in prostitution with the Assyrians but still was not satisfied (2 Kings 15:19-20; 16:7-18). And it even prostituted itself with the Babylonians (2 Kings 20:12-19; Isa 20:5-6; 30:1-5; 31:1). In all of this, God says it was weak-willed and not even as noble as a prostitute because it refused (scorned) payment for its prostitution. Then he calls it an adulterous wife (remember he put his garment over it to make it his wife) and says it prefers strangers to him, her husband. And he says that unlike a prostitute which receives payment for prostitution, it gave gifts to bribe people to seek its illicit favors (paying tribute to make alliances instead of receiving bribes from other countries to make an alliance.)

Verses 35 – 43. In light of all of this God says, therefore, he will gather all her lovers (those with which she has done this prostitution) and bring them against her and strip her naked before them. He will sentence it to the punishment of women who commit adultery (stoning to death as in Lev. 20:10). He will bring upon it the blood vengeance of his wrath and hand it over to those lovers who will tear down the mounds and destroy the lofty shrines. They will strip it of all its finery and leave it bare. They will bring a mob against it, stone it, hack it to pieces with swords, and burn down its houses. This all happened with Nebuchadnezzar's taking captives to Babylon in three waves, taking the items of temple worship back to Babylon, and in the final wave destroying the temple and city. God says it will put an end to their prostitution and they will no longer pay its lovers. When all of this happens God says his wrath will subside and his jealous anger will turn away and he will be calm and no longer angry. God ends by saying that because they (the inhabitants of Jerusalem) enraged him with all these things and added lewdness to their detestable practices he will surely bring punishment upon them for what they have done (captivity and deportations in 605 BC – Daniel's deportation, 597 BC – Ezekiel's deportation, and 586/5 BC – the destruction of Jerusalem and final deportation).

Verses 44 – 59. Now God describes how depraved the inhabitants of Jerusalem were. He reminds them of a proverb, "Like mother, like daughter." Then he says Jerusalem is a true daughter of its mother who despised her husband and her children. Again, he reminds the people that the city's mother was a Hittite and its father was an Amorite. Its older sister was Samaria and its younger sister was Sodom. Although Jerusalem copied those cities' detestable practices, it went far beyond them. The people of Sodom never did what the people of Jerusalem did. Sodom and her sister cities (Gomorraah and the cities of the plain – Gen 19:1-29) were arrogant, overfed, unconcerned, did not help the poor, were haughty, and did detestable things (homosexuality) so he did away with (destroyed) them. Samaria did not commit half of the detestable things that Jerusalem did. So Jerusalem makes both of them look righteous in comparison. So Jerusalem should be ashamed and bear their disgrace. But God promises to restore the fortunes of Sodom and her cities and Samaria and her cities along with that of Jerusalem and they will be returned to what they were before their fall into disobedience and in this way Jerusalem may bear her shame. In Deut 30:1-10, God describes the future of Israel after the blessings and then curses discussed Deut 28 have come upon them and he says the people will be gathered from all the nations where they have been scattered and they will again take possession of the land and their hearts will be circumcised so that they may love him with all their heart and soul and they will be prosperous. (This will happen during the end of the Tribulation and through the Millennium.) But for now, Jerusalem is scorned by the nations around it, including Edom and the Philistines. God says Jerusalem will bear the consequences of its lewdness and detestable practices.

Verses 60 – 62. God says he will remember the covenant made with Jerusalem in its youth and will establish an everlasting (eternal) covenant with it. Jerusalem will remember its shame when Sodom and Samaria are made its daughters, but not based on his covenant with Jerusalem, and will know that he is Lord (YHWH). Then he will make atonement for all the city's inhabitants have done, and they will be ashamed and never open their mouth again because of the humiliation. The atonement will be in the Millennium and the city will be remade as the New Jerusalem that comes down from Heaven upon the new earth that is made after the old universe has been destroyed and remade.

Chapter 17

Verses 1 – 2. God tells Ezekiel to tell the people a parable in the form of an allegory (riddle). An allegory or riddle is a story that has a meaning that is deeper than the surface story and needs explaining for people to fully understand it. In the ancient world a riddle was often used to test a hearer's intelligence or cleverness. Think of the stories like Jason and the Argonauts where the hero had to figure out the meaning of a riddle given by the gods so he could overcome evil or perform dangerous feats to accomplish the saving of someone or town or country. Riddles were also used between kings in place of a battle to determine the winner and often the subjugation of the other nation. What we want to determine is why God is having Ezekiel tell the people a riddle.

Verses 3 – 10. In this riddle a great, powerful, and beautiful eagle comes to Lebanon, takes hold of the top of a cedar tree and breaks it off. Then he carries it to a land of merchants (traders) and plants it in their city. Then he takes some of the seed of the hearer's land (Judah) and puts it in fertile soil where it grows like a willow tree planted by a source of abundant water. The seeds sprout and become a low, spreading vine that grows toward the eagle while its roots remain under it. The vine produces branches and becomes leafy. But there was another great, powerful eagle, but not as beautiful as the first. The vine sent out its roots from where it was planted toward this new eagle and stretched out its branches toward it for water. The seed had been planted in good soil so that it could produce branches, bear fruit, and become a splendid vine. So Ezekiel is to ask the people whether they think the vine will thrive or will it be stripped of its fruit and wither. It won't take a really strong person or many people to uproot it. Then they are asked if the vine will thrive even if it is transplanted, but won't it wither when the east wind (hot and dry) hits it.

Verses 11 – 21. Now God tells Ezekiel to ask the people do they not know what the things of the riddle mean. And then he is to give them the interpretation. The first eagle represented the king of Babylon who invaded the land, went to Jerusalem, and carried off the king and the nobles to Babylon. This first happened in 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and took King Jehoiakim (the top of the cedar) and the nobles (the young were the seed) back to Babylon (a city of merchants) and gave them a life there (planted them and gave them what was needed to be thrive – an area in which to live and opportunity to make a living using their talents). Daniel and his three friends were chosen for special training because their intelligence was recognized. Daniel quickly became the most important man in the kingdom other than King Nebuchadnezzar himself. Jehoiachin (Jehoiakim's grandson) became king for three months and ten days before Nebuchadnezzar also took him to Babylon. Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah was made the king and his name was changed to Zedekiah. He was forced to accept a treaty with Babylon, and with the nobles and leaders of the land taken into captivity, the land would only survive by keeping the treaty. But Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon and sought to raise an army from Egypt. The people are asked if he will succeed in breaking the treaty and yet escape. Egypt is the second eagle with Judah reaching out to him. Nebuchadnezzar would return to place a siege around Jerusalem, capture and destroy the city and temple in 586 BC. Zedekiah attempts to escape through a hole in the city wall but Nebuchadnezzar pursues and captures him, killing his sons before him and then blinding him before taking him to Babylon where he eventually dies. This puts an end to Israel as an independent nation that rules itself. Even after Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians, defeats the Babylonians and allows the Jews to return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, the land is still governed by Cyrus. Then they are ruled by the Greeks when Alexander defeats the Medo-persian empire until the Romans defeat the Greeks.

Verses 22 – 24. Then God provides hope for the future saying he, himself, will take a shoot from the top of a cedar and plant it on a high and lofty mountain and that shoot will produce branches, bear fruit, and become a splendid cedar so that birds of every kind will find a place in it to nest and have shelter. Then all the tress of the field will know that it is God who has brought the tall, green tree down and made the low, dry tree (shoot) grow and flourish. The people of Ezra's time might see the return of the Jews from captivity after Cyrus defeated Babylon as the fulfillment of these words, but they go far beyond what happened at that time and up to the present day. It is a promise that will be fulfilled during the Millennium.

Chapter 18

Verses 1 – 4. Back in Chapter 12:22-25, God corrected a common saying of the people. Now he corrects another one. The saying implies that children suffer because of their father's wrong doings. While this is a correct observation of how a parent's actions/inactions can affect their children, God tells Ezekiel to ask the people what they mean by applying it to the land of Israel. Obviously they meant that the present generation was suffering for the disobedience of past generations. But God says they will no longer quote this about the people of the land because everyone belongs to him and the soul who sins is the one who will die (this is a reference to the second death which is eternal separation from God). While it is true that the sin of a parent (or anyone else) can cause a person to suffer, it is not true that God punishes anyone for someone else's sin. It is the person's own choice how to react to what is happening to them. Blaming others for how you are living is a victim mentality and God says that is not acceptable. Everyone is responsible for their own choices and the way they react to what is happening to and around them.

Verses 5 – 18. Then God explains what he means by looking at the examples of a man who chooses to live righteously, his son who chooses not to live righteously even though his father did, and his grandson who again chooses to live righteously even though his father sinned. In each case God affirms that the individual will live or die for their own actions, not the actions of their parent.

Verses 19 – 24. Then God proposes that they would ask why the son would not share in the father's guilt, and he answers the question. It is because the soul who sins is the one who will die. The righteous acts of the one will be credited to him and the wickedness of the other will be charged against him. Then he continues to say that if a wicked man turns away from his sin and does what is right, none of his offenses will be remembered and he will live because of the righteous living that he turned to. God declares that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but is pleased when a person turns from their wickedness to righteous living. But then he says that the opposite is also true. If a person who has been living righteously turns away from that to live wickedly, then none of his righteous acts will be remembered and he will die for his wickedness. Every person had to have faith in God's promise of a Messiah who would make things right and live in obedience to his commands. The purpose of the sacrificial system was to pay the price for their sin if they failed to live in obedience.

This was the way of life for everyone who lived from the time of Adam and the first disobedience until Jesus paid the price for everyone's disobedience and sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in believers as a guarantee that they would have eternal life and could never lose it. People who have not accepted that Jesus is God and trusted his death to give them a right relationship with the Triune God can no longer depend upon a sacrificial system to pay for their sin because Jesus has already done that. So if they don't believe in and trust Jesus then they have no recourse for their disobedience and will die (the second death). So anyone who turns from their disobedience and accepts Jesus will not have their disobedience charged against them. If someone who has believed in and trusted Jesus turns from obeying him, then that person doesn't lose their eternal life because they have the Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing it, but God may decide to take them home early because of their disobedience (1 John 5:16).

Verses 25 – 29. Then God poses another question that they might ask about whether God is just (in the way he punishes people). And he declares that it is not unjust to punish a person for their disobedience and forgive them if they change their way to obedience. And he turns back upon them the fact that their ways are unjust.

Verses 30 – 32. Finally he says he will judge everyone of the house of Israel according to their ways and encourages them to rid themselves of their disobedience and get a new heart and a new spirit. And he ends by telling them to repent and live.

Chapter 19

Verses 1 – 9. Ezekiel is told to take up a lament about the princes (rulers) of Israel. God uses the image of a lioness and her cubs to describe the Davidic line and two of its kings and to show that there was no one left of the royal line that could lead the nation to its former glory. Verses 3 – 4 describe Jehoahaz and end with him being led by hooks to the land of Egypt. After Pharaoh Neco defeated and killed Josiah, the people made Jehoahaz king of Judah. But Jehoahaz was brutal to his people and unmanageable so after 3 months Neco took him to Egypt where he finally died. (2 Kings 23:29-34; 2 Chron 35:20-36:4; Jeremiah 22:10-12) After Neco took Jehoahaz to Egypt he put Eliakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, on the throne, changed his name to Jehoiakim, and imposed a tax upon the people of the land and continued doing evil in the land. So God brought Nebuchadnezzar to capture and take Jehoiakim to Babylon in shackles. So Jehoiachin succeeded his father as king of Judah. (2 Kings 23:35-24:7; 2 Chron 36:5-8) Verses 5 – 9 describe Jehoiachin and end with him being taken to Babylon where he was effectively imprisoned because he no longer had any influence in the land of Israel. Jehoiachin only ruled 3 months and 10 days before Nebuchadnezzar commanded him to be brought to Babylon. Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken to Babylon. Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle and Jehoahaz's brother, was made king of Judah and his name was changed to Zedekiah. (2 Kings 24:8-17; 2 Chron 36:9-10) In the 37th year of the exile (598 BC) Jehoiachin was released and ate at the table of the King of Babylon until his death. (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jeremiah 52:31-34) [By Babylonian records of the succession of its kings, Evil-Merodach, also known as Amel-Marduk, became king succeeding Nebuchadnezzar in 562 BC and was killed by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, in 561. Neriglissar died in 556 BC and the throne was seized by Nabonidus who lived at a desert oasis and left his son, Belshazzar, in control of the city of Babylon, until it fell in 539 BC to Gobryas, the general in charge of Cyrus' army besieging the city.]

Verses 10 – 14. Now the lament changes images and refers to the nation of Israel like a vine. It was fruitful and full of branches because it had an abundant supply of water. It was God's chosen nation and he blessed it with everything needed for it to grow strong and prominent among the nations of the world. During the reign of David and Solomon, its influence was felt throughout the known world by the trade that was done. Solomon's wisdom was so well known that rulers came from far away to meet with him. But God allowed the vine (nation) to be uprooted by other nations. The east wind (Assyrians and then Babylonians) caused it to shrivel and stripped the fruit from it. The Assyrians devastated the ten northern kingdoms, spreading the tribes throughout the lands they controlled and bringing in people from other areas to settle in the land. The Babylonians took the leaders of Judah, the bright youth, and most of the wealth back to Babylon. The nation's strong branches (rulers) have withered (done evil) and fire has consumed them. The nation was left with Zedekiah as its ruler and he caused much evil to be done in the land. This proclaims that even the last of the ruling branches will be destroyed so that there is none left to hold the ruler's scepter. In about five years from this lament, Zedekiah will be captured as he tries to escape from the Babylonians. His sons will be killed as he is forced to watch and then his eyes will be stabbed so their deaths is the last thing he sees as he is taken to Babylon in shackles to spend the rest of his life in prison. (2 Kings 24:18-25; 2 Chron 36:11-21)

A lament is a type of funeral dirge and is appropriate to end this section (chapters 12 to 19) which is God's response to the invalid hopes of the people, fueled by the promises of the false prophets, that God would not allow the nation to be brought down and taken captive by other nations. God has clearly proclaimed through prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that the glory of Israel will be destroyed because of the sinful disobedience of the people. A ruler will not take up the scepter again until Jesus returns to earth to rule.

Chapter 20

Verses 1 – 3. Ezekiel gives the date of this section and it equates to about August of 591 BC. In the summer of 591 BC, Egypt's pharaoh defeated the kingdom of Kush in the Sudan. The news probably reached Babylon as he then looked at a campaign into Palestine against the Babylonian occupation. This was what Zedekiah decided was his opportunity to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. Hearing this news would give the captives hope that Israel could recapture some of its glory and gain its freedom from Babylon. Eleven months would have passed since Ezekiel's previous proclamation from God that ended with a lament. Apparently, the elders have not completely accepted Israel's future and come to Ezekiel to seek information from God. But God tells Ezekiel that he will not allow them to ask him anything.

Verses 4 – 9. Instead of giving the elders any further insight to the judgment that he had already given them about Jerusalem and Judah, God begins to confront them with how they have been rebellious. He begins with their time in Egypt. God chose them, revealed himself to them. He promised to take them to a land flowing with milk and honey (prosperity). He told them to get rid of and forsake the vile images and idols they had and not to defile themselves because he is their God. But they rebelled and wouldn't listen. They did not get rid of their images nor did they forsake their idols. So God wanted to pour out his wrath on them in Egypt, but for the sake of his name and to keep it from being profaned before the nations he didn't do that but brought them out of Egypt.

Verses 10 – 20. God led them through the Red Sea on dry ground and took them to a mountain in the desert to give them his laws because the person who obeys them will live. He gave them the Sabbath as a sign so they would know that it was him who made them holy. But the people rejected his laws and desecrated the Sabbath so God wanted to pour out his wrath on them in the desert. But for the sake of his name he did what was necessary to keep it from being profaned before the nations. He promised that he would not take them into the land that he had promised because of their disobedience. But he looked on them with pity and did not destroy them. He told their children not to follow what their fathers had done but to obey his laws and keep the Sabbath. Then they would know that he is their God. It was for their disobedience that all the people over 20 year old who came out of Egypt died during the next 40 years in the desert before those under 20 and those born in the desert could enter the Promised Land.

Verses 20 – 26. Then God confronts them with the disobedience of the children. They did not obey his laws and keep the Sabbath. So God wanted to pour out his wrath on them in the desert, but withheld his hand for the sake of his name and to keep it from being profaned among the nations. He promised them that he would disperse them among the nations because they had not obeyed his law and kept the Sabbath. He let them become defiled through the sacrifice of their first-born to idols so that he might fill them with horror and they would know that he is God.

Verses 27 – 38. Then God reminds them that while in the Promised Land the people defiled the land and blasphemed his name by offering sacrifices on every high hill. God asks if they will continue to defile themselves. So God declares that he will not let them inquire of him. He reminds them that they wanted to be like the nations and peoples of the world who serve wood and stone. But he says that will not happen. He will rule over them with a mighty hand and with outpoured wrath. He will bring them from the nations and gather them from the nations where they have been scattered. He will bring them into the desert and execute judgment upon them as he judged their fathers in the desert. He will purge them of those who revolt and rebel against him, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Then they will know he is God. This correlates with Rev 12:6 that tells of the woman (Israel) fleeing "into the desert to a place prepared for her by God where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days." That's 3 ½ years, so at the midpoint of the Tribulation Israel will flee into the desert and God will judge them there like he did when they rebelled during the exodus in the desert.

Verses 39 – 44. God says that after they have finished serving idols they will no longer profane his name with their idols. On the high holy mountain of Israel the entire house of Israel will serve him and he will accept

them. They will bring their choicest gifts and he will accept them. He will show himself holy among them in the sight of the nations and then they will know that he is God when he deals with them for his name's sake and not according to the evil ways and corrupt practices. This will occur during the Millennium when the Jewish people have returned, each tribe to the land given to them when they entered the Promised Land, and they will again bring their gifts and offerings to the Millennial Temple to honor God.

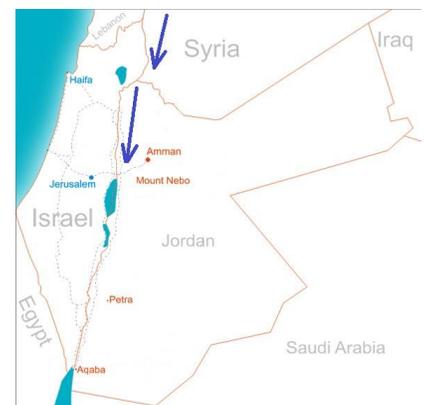
Verses 45 – 49. God has explained that the people have been rebellious from the time they were in Egypt until the present. Therefore judgment was going to come upon them, but eventually God would finish his judgment and they would return to the land. But so these elders from the Southern Kingdom (Judah and Benjamin) don't get the idea that the Southern Kingdom is exempt from the judgment, he gives Ezekiel a message to preach toward the south and give a prophesy against the southern forest (that would be the Negev that was the southern edge of Judah). When he says he is about to set fire to you he means the kingdom of Judah. The fire consuming all the trees from south to north (Negev northward – literal translation) means all the people will be judged. Since God has kindled the fire (judgment), there is nothing to quench it. Then Ezekiel says that the people are saying he is just telling parables, meaning they don't believe it will really happen.

Chapter 21

Verses 1 – 7. Just in case the elders didn't get what he just said, God tells Ezekiel to set his face against Jerusalem, preach against the sanctuary, and prophesy against the land of Israel. He is to tell them that God will draw his sword from its sheath (scabbard) and cut off both the righteous (green tree) and wicked (dry tree). And again he says from the south to north (Negev northward) to indicate the land of Judah. The fact that his sword will not return again to its sheath says the prophesy will not be stopped or averted. Therefore Ezekiel is told to groan before the elders with a broken heart and bitter grief. When the people ask why he is groaning he is to say because of the news that is coming which will cause hearts to melt, hands to go limp, and every spirit faint. Ezekiel's groaning would show God's groaning over the judgment that is coming and will surely take place.

Verses 8 – 17. Again God tells Ezekiel to prophesy about the sword which was sharpened and polished for the slaughter and was already in the hand of the slayer (Nebuchadnezzar). Ezekiel is to cry out and wail because it is against all the princes (leaders) of Israel and also against all the people. Because of the continual disobedience God had previously revealed of which all of them were responsible, all of the people would experience the wrath of the judgment. Therefore Ezekiel was to beat his breast which was a sign of despair over what was to happen. They had despised the rod (corrective action) but their disobedience would not succeed. Ezekiel was to strike his hands together as he prophesied. Some scholars think this was to show approval of what God was going to do, but I believe clapping of hands was an outward show of inward angst over the message being given. The sword (wielded by Babylon) was going to close in on all sides of the people (and Jerusalem especially as a city of fortitude to which people would try to hide for safety). But the sword will be at all the gates for slaughter. God says he, too, will clap his hands together, but he also says then his wrath will subside.

Verses 18 – 27. Then God tells Ezekiel to show by drawing a map of how Babylon will approach Jerusalem. They will follow a road until they come to a fork and then Nebuchadnezzar will seek an omen from his idols whether he should go to Rabbah of the Ammonites (modern day Amman, Jordan) or to Jerusalem. As we will see in the next section, Nebuchadnezzar will bring the sword against Ammon as well as Israel. Ammon, along with Judah, had rebelled against Babylon in 593 BC. The lot falling into his right hand not only indicates he should go toward Jerusalem (shown on the map at the right) but also shows God controls the outcome of seeking advice from idols. To the people (Judah) who have sworn allegiance to Babylon, the omen would seem to be false, but Nebuchadnezzar will remind them that they broke their



allegiance (thus their guilt) and take them captive. So the wicked prince of Israel (Zedekiah) will have his crown removed and there will not be a successor to rule over Israel. And the turban being removed indicates that no priest will be serving in the Temple. This brings an end to Israel ruling over the land until God brings the One (Messiah) to whom the rule rightfully belongs, and God will give the crown of rule to him. That will happen when Jesus (the Messiah) returns to earth as King of kings and Lord of lords at the end of the Tribulation and takes his rightful place as ruler of not only Israel but the whole earth.

Verses 28 – 32. Now God has Ezekiel prophesy against the Ammonites and their insults that Judah should be punished for their wickedness. They claimed the time of punishment had reached its climax. This was like the pot calling the kettle black and much like the Arab world today claiming the Jews should be punished for war crimes while the whole Arab world commits acts of terrorism not only in Israel but throughout the whole world. But God says when he has punished Israel he will put away the sword of judgment against them. But he goes on to say that he will judge Ammon and pour out his fiery anger against them, handing them over to brutal men who will shed their blood in their land and then they will be remembered no more. Although traces of the Ammonite people trying to oppose the existence of the Jewish people can be found as late as the time of Judas Maccabaeus (165 BC), the last mention of them historically comes from Justin Martyr in the 2nd Century AD.

Chapter 22

Verses 1 – 16. God had recounted the rebellious history of the people since they came out of Egypt in chapter 20. Now he has Ezekiel present his indictment of the present generation and their disobedience. The 10 Commandments (Ex 20:1-17) deal with a person's relationship with God (commandments 1 – 4) and the relationship with other people (commandments 5 – 10). This was what Jesus indicated when he was asked what the greatest commandment was. He said "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ... And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt 22:37 – 40) God's list of the sin of the people and rulers of Israel in Jerusalem throughout the land show that they broke both of these relationships. They had worshipped idols and had mistreated their fellow Israelites and aliens, even to the point of shedding innocent blood. That would be God's same indictment against the people of the United States today. So God says he will clap his hands together against their unjust gain and the blood they have shed and will disperse them among the nations and put an end to their uncleanness. Then, when they have been defiled in the eyes of the nations, they will know that he is the Lord.

Verses 17 – 22. God says that the people of Israel have all become like the impurities that are present in metals like silver. So he will gather them into Jerusalem and melt them there with his fiery anger like men melt metals to refine the dross from them. Then they will know that he is God when he pours out his wrath on them and melts them.

Verses 23 – 31. Now God gives another indictment against the rulers of the land who have led the people to be disobedient and thus brought all of this upon the people and the land. The leaders have conspired to treat people like prey and devoured them, taking treasures and precious things from many widows. The priests have done violence to God's law and profaned the holy things, teaching that there is no difference between the unclean and clean and that the Sabbath doesn't need to be kept. The officials are like wolves tearing people like prey and shedding blood for unjust gain. The "so called" prophets have given false pronouncements that cover over the disobedience that was occurring. Consequently, the people of the land practiced extortion, committed robbery, oppressed the poor, and mistreated aliens so that people were denied justice. God says he looked for someone who would build up the wall and stand before him on behalf of the people so he would not have to destroy the land, but he found no one. So God's anger will be poured out on the people and the land, bringing down upon their heads what they have done.

Chapter 23

Verses 1 – 4. In Chapter 16 God revealed the spiritual adultery of Israel because she refused to have faith in God and only follow his commands. Instead the people spiritually prostituted themselves by following the evil worship practices of the nations that had inhabited the Promised Land before Joshua led the people into it and by following the evil worship practices of the nations that surrounded the Promised Land. Now he uses the image of two adulterous sisters to describe the people. The two daughters of the same mother who became prostitutes in Egypt would be the northern and southern kingdoms which were the sons of Jacob and his two wives and their two handmaidens. While in Egypt they learned about other gods and following them. We know this is the case because right after they were supernaturally led through the Red Sea on dry ground and led to God's mountain (Horeb, Sinai), they made a golden calf to worship while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments in written form. The name used to refer to the northern kingdom that had its capital in Samaria is Oholah which literally means "her tents" may be a reference to all the shrines and places of worship which they established throughout the kingdom. The name used to refer to the southern kingdom that had its capital in Jerusalem is Oholibah which literally means "my tent is in her" is probably a reference to the Temple of God being in Jerusalem.

Verses 5 – 10. The northern kingdom is probably seen as the older of the sisters because she first started seeking alliances with other nations. That's what it means that they lusted after the Assyrians. An archaeological find called the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III which dates from around 840 BC shows that King Jehu bowed to the king of Assyria and paid him tribute. They wanted the power and prestige that could be obtained by being associated with the most powerful nation of that time. Of course, doing that led them into more idolatrous worship than they had begun in Egypt. So, in 722 BC God gave them over to the Assyrians who killed many of the people, stripped the land of most of its wealth and scattered the people throughout the other lands that Assyria controlled. This meant that the kingdom and the people became lost as a racially recognizable group.

Verses 11 – 21. Jerusalem, as representative of the entire southern kingdom, saw what happened to the northern kingdom but still sought an alliance with the Assyrians and in this indulged in idolatrous worship. In 745 BC King Ahaz sought the help of the Assyrians against Aram and sent them tribute from the silver and gold of the Temple. When he visited the Assyrian king, he saw an altar and had it duplicated and put in the Temple courtyard along with the Lord's bronze altar and had the priests offer the morning and evening sacrifices on it rather than the bronze altar. (2 King 16) But Judah went even further than the northern kingdom because they made an alliance in 607 BC with the Chaldeans (Babylonians, who overcame the Assyrians). The Babylonians effectively made Judah a part of the Babylonian kingdom but allowed King Jehoiakim to rule in his own land like a sub-ruler. That brought the worship of even more idols. But after a while Jehoiakim decided to break away. (2 Kings 24:1-7) This made Judah's adultery even more than it was in Egypt and God was disgusted by their open turning from faith in him to put their faith in the power of other worldly kingdoms.

Verses 22 – 35. In verses 9 and 10 God told how he judged Oholah, the northern kingdom, for its adulterous behavior. Now he tells how he is going to judge Oholibah, the southern kingdom. He will bring the Babylonians and other nations they have conquered and even the remaining Assyrians against Jerusalem. Those nations will surround Jerusalem and he will turn the city over to them for punishment according to their standards, killing many and maiming others, and they will strip the city of its wealth (happened in 586 BC). In this way, God will bring an end to the adultery that began in Egypt. God declares that the actions of the people and their trust in other nations instead of God that lead to defiling themselves with the worship of idols is what will cause the punishment. This is a reminder that, just like Adam's and Eve's actions in the Garden of Eden, disobedience brings consequences that are inescapable. God says that just like the northern kingdom, the southern kingdom will drink their cup of judgment and be filled with sorrow. God says that since they have forgotten him and thrust him behind their backs (did not put their faith in him and obey his commands) they must bear the consequences of their lewdness and prostitution.

Verses 36 – 49. Now God has Ezekiel bring his indictment of all of Israel's leaders (both northern and southern). They had committed spiritual adultery by worshipping other gods (Ex 20:3-8; 22:20; 23:13; Deut 4:15-24; 12:24-32), had committed physical adultery by laying with other people's spouses (Ex 20:14, 17; Lev 18:6-20, 22-29), and had shed innocent blood (Ex 20:13; Lev 18:2; 20:1-5). The punishment for these things was to be expelled from fellowship and from the land. That is exactly what God is about to do. Not only had they committed adultery and shed innocent blood, they had sought to be friends with peoples who despised the Lord and worshipped other gods by giving what should have been offerings to God to these other peoples and their gods. So God had let those people use his chosen, but adulterous people, as the prostitutes like which they were acting. Still they didn't return to God, so he will now let peoples acting like a mob terrorize and plunder them, killing their sons and daughters and burning down their houses. In this way God will put an end to their lewdness and idolatry so they will know that he is the Sovereign Lord (YHWH).

Chapter 24

Verses 1 – 2. With two messages, God is going to confirm Ezekiel's messages and bring to a close what he has been predicting would happen in Jerusalem. He tells Ezekiel to record the exact date because it is the day the king of Babylon has begun his siege of Jerusalem. That date is recorded here, in Kings (2 Kings 25:1) and by Jeremiah (Jer 39:1; 52:4) and equates to Jan 15, 588 BC. Later, the Jewish people would establish this day (10 Teveth) as a day of fasting.

Verses 3 – 5. The first message is a parable. Ezekiel may have acted it out as he did other messages but there is no direct indication that he did anything more than tell it to the people. The parable is about a cooking pot with the best meats put in water and brought to a boil.

Verses 6 – 8. This first pronouncement of woe to the city explains why Nebuchadnezzar (the wood fire) is presently bringing siege against the city (the boiling pot of meat). The people had shed blood in it and hadn't even tried to cover it over like blood on a rock rather than blood on ground. As the people had shed innocent blood openly, so God would shed their blood openly. This should be a warning for any people who openly shed the blood of innocent humans. God may wait for a long time, but he will bring judgment upon them.

Verses 9 – 13. This second pronouncement of woe to the city is not about the reasons for the present judgment but the results of the judgment. The pot will be boiled until it is dry and the bones charred. Then it will be further heated until it glows red from the heat and the impurities melted in it and the deposit burned away. This indicates the fierceness of Nebuchadnezzar's attack and then that the city will remain empty as God purified it from all the sin. Jeremiah foretold that the captivity would last 70 years and thereby the land would have the rest that it had not received if the people had observed God's law and observed a Sabbatical year every seven years God had decreed (Jer 29:10; 2 Chron 36:21).

Verse 14. In conclusion, God declares that the time has come for him to act and he will not hold back, have pity, or relent in bringing the judgment.

Verses 15 – 27. This second message is an action message by Ezekiel to show how the exiles should react to what happens. God told Ezekiel he was going to take his wife from him, but he was not to lament or weep or shed any tears. He was only to mourn quietly, keep his sandals on his feet, keep his turban on, and not to cover the lower part of his face or eat the traditional food of mourners. The evening after he gave the cooking pot parable, his wife died and the next morning he proceeded to act as God had said. God told him when the people asked what those things had to do with them, he was to say that God was about to desecrate his sanctuary and the sons and daughters they had left behind will be killed, but they are not to mourn. Ezekiel was to be a sign for them and they were to do just as he did. Since Ezekiel would no longer be silent but able to speak after a messenger comes with the news about Jerusalem, it means he gave these prior messages by action or written word. But this was to be a sign for the people and they would know that God was in control.

Chapter 25

Verses 1 – 7. Now, as if to warn Israel's neighbor nations not to gloat over Babylon's siege of Jerusalem that was just beginning, God begins to tell how those neighbors will also be judged by Babylon overcoming them. The first warning is a prophecy against Ammon. Ammon was the northeast neighbor of Judah (see map at right). The animosity between them began 40 years after Israel's exodus from Egypt when the Ammonites refused to let the Israelites pass through their land on their way to the Promised Land. It continued down through the years as portrayed in Deuteronomy, Judges, 2 Kings, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. God says that because they had gloated over the desecration of his sanctuary and the land being laid to waste, he was going to give them to the people of the east as a possession. Those people would set up camps and pitch their tents in Ammon, eating their fruit and drinking their milk, and Rabbah, the capital, would become a pasture for camels. The people of the east were the nation of Babylon. That indicated how Nebuchadnezzar's taking of the land would totally destroy the lifestyle and culture of Ammon so that it would no longer be a nation. When Nebuchadnezzar came to take Jerusalem, he stopped at the fork in the road that would have taken him to either Rabbah, Ammon, or Jerusalem and sought his gods for which way to go. And God made sure he turned right to go to Jerusalem and lay siege to it first. But still in 165 BC, what remained of the descendants of those Ammonite people tried to assist in keeping Judas Maccabaeus from reviving the nation and resisting the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes who slaughtered a pig on the altar of the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. Even as late as the second century, Justin Martyr recorded that there were numerous Ammonites living in the area.



Verses 8 – 11. The next prophecy is against Moab which as the map above shows was south of Ammon and east of Judah. The Moabites, like the Ammonites, were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. So they were cousins of the Israelites. Because Moab was gloating that Judah had become like all the other nations, God would expose the best part of Moab to Babylon and give it to them along with Ammon.

Verses 12 – 14. The third prophecy is against Edom which the map above shows was south of Moab and southeast of Judah. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, so they were even closer cousins of the Israelites. At the time of King Ahaz (ca. 740 BC) Moab took revenge on Judah (2 Chron 28). So God says he will stretch out his hand against them, killing the men and animals, and laying waste to the land from Teman to Dedan. Teman is thought to be in the area of Petra and Dedan is south of there, but the exact locations are unknown. God says he will take vengeance on Edom by the hand of his people, Israel.



Verses 15 – 17. Now God gives a prophecy against the Philistines who lived to the west of Judah. The Philistines had warred with Israel since God had brought Jacob's descendants into the land (1451 BC) he had promised to Abraham (1921 BC). Ever since the division of Israel into northern and southern kingdoms (975 BC) the Philistines had tried to destroy Judah. So God says he will stretch out his hand against them and destroy those on the sea coast. Then they will know he is God. There is no record of the Philistine nation after 2 BC.

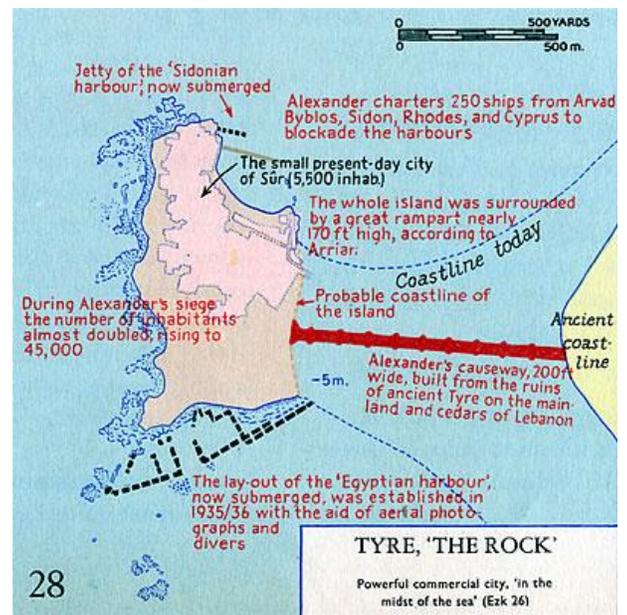
Chapter 26

This chapter begins a prophecy against the city of Tyre, a prominent city of Phoenicia, located to the northwest of Judah, and continues through chapter 28. The first mention of the city is in Joshua 19:29. By the time of Solomon, it had become a prominent sea port. Tyre's king, Hiram, built a fortified city on an island in the water and connected it to a smaller city on the coast with a causeway. Although this gave it military might and protection, the city periodically caved in to the might of the Assyrians and paid tribute to them and then later would assert its independence. When Babylon took control of Assyria (626 BC), it once again asserted its independence. This prophecy was given about 1 ½ years after the previous prophecies that occurred with the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Babylon, and, it would appear, after Jerusalem fell in July 587 BC.

Verses 1 – 6. With the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, Tyre would have an easier time exacting tax from goods transported by land through its territory. So they rejoiced over what happened to Jerusalem and brought God's anger against them. So he will bring many nations against Tyre so that her walls and towers will be pulled down and the town scraped away to barren rock. The place where the town was will become a place to dry fishnets and the city on the coast will be ravaged by the sword.

Verses 7 – 14. God says he will send Nebuchadnezzar against Tyre with horses, chariots, and a great army. He would set up siege ramps and battering rams against them and demolish the walls. Their wealth would be plundered and he would put an end to their songs and music. Eventually they would become a bare rock that will be a place to spread fishnets.

Nebuchadnezzar began a siege of Tyre in 585 BC that lasted for thirteen years (572 BC) when the city finally accepted the rule of Babylon. When Babylon waned in power, they once again tried to assert their independence but were brought into submission (in 525 BC) by the Medo-persian empire that conquered Babylon. When Alexander the Great swept through the area finally conquering Babylon, he tore down the walls of the city, enlarged the causeway so he could get his battering rams out to the city and attacked it by sea at the same time.



Verses 15 – 21. God says other towns will lament the destruction of Tyre because if it can be destroyed they have no hope. God says he will make it a desolate city by bringing waves over it and its people will go to the grave like people from ancient ruins. Then it will no longer be a prominent place.

When Alexander's empire was broken into four parts after his death, the area of Tyre came under the control of the Seleucid empire of Antiochus III. Tyre then became part of the Roman empire and finally the Saracens (Muslims) controlled it in the fourteenth century AD. During all of this the city never regained any prominence and today remains a small fishing village where fishnets are spread to dry.

Chapter 27

Verses 1 – 11. Now God tells Ezekiel to take up a lament concerning Tyre. A lament is a funeral song. Before any cities around Tyre would see the downfall and lament its destruction, God would lament what was going to happen. Even when God has to bring judgment upon people, he does not rejoice over their situation. It causes him grief that they would not accept his right to rule. Tyre had taken great pride in itself and its accomplishments as if it had done it all by itself. But all its beauty and glory had come from all over the world and by people from many nations.

Verses 12 – 24. This shows the extent of the trading of Tyre. They traded with Tarshish (southern coast of Spain), Greece, Tubal and Meshech (descendants of the grandsons of Noah through Japheth living in Turkey and the Black Sea area), Beth Togarmah (area of Assyria around Haran), Rhodes (a Greek island in the Aegean Sea), Aram (area east of Galilee), Dedan (area of Edom now in Saudi Arabia), Sheba (Ethiopia), Kedar, Canneh, Eden, and Arabia (people east of Ammon, Moab, and Edom - Mesopotamia) – all the known world.

Verses 25 – 36. Tyre's merchants had made her great but they would all falter when Nebuchadnezzar came against her. The shoreline would quake and the people from many nations who had joined as mercenaries to be part of their army and navy would abandon her. As Babylon brought Tyre down, merchants and peoples from all over would weep and mourn her falling.

Chapter 28

Verses 1 – 10. God tells Ezekiel to speak about the King of Tyre. At that time, it would have been Ethbaal II who ruled from 590 to 573 BC. The character of a leader of a city or nation often shows the character of its people. The King of Tyre was filled with pride and thought of himself like a god. He had gained wealth and prestige but God was going to use Nebuchadnezzar to bring him down. While the king is only one person in the kingdom, his character becomes the character of the kingdom. In a representative form of government, the elected leader reflects the character of those electing him.

By his wisdom and understanding, the King of Tyre had led his kingdom to become a great and wealthy trading kingdom. But because of that success and his wealth, the king had become proud. God asked if he was wiser than Daniel. Some scholars suggest this is not the prophet Daniel because the spelling is different. But the prophet Daniel had been in Babylon since 605 BC and by this time was well known for interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a large statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with baked clay. Daniel's wisdom came from God and God revealed secrets to him that were hidden from other wise men. So there is no reason to presume that it is not Daniel, whom Ezekiel would have known from living in Babylon.

God says that because the King of Tyre thinks of himself a god, that he will be brought down by foreigners and die a violent death. At that time will the king say that he is a god?

Verses 11 – 19. This lament for the King of Tyre that God has Ezekiel proclaim does not just speak about the earthly king, Ethbaal II, but uses Satan's fall from his lofty position because of pride as the announcement and lament of the king's fall because of pride. This is not just symbolic language but is intended to show by example of Satan's literal fall what was causing the king to fall.

This lament tells us more about Satan and his fall than we are told in Isaiah 14:12-14. Satan was the model of perfection and full of wisdom and beauty. He was on God's holy mountain as the chief of guardian cherubs (angels). He was blameless in his ways until wickedness was found in him. He became filled with violence, so God drove him from the holy mountain. The remaining part of the lament beginning with him being thrown to the earth is a prophecy of the final fall of Satan. Right now he is the prince of the air (atmosphere) of the earth and has a control of what happens but limited by what God will allow him to do. (Daniel 8:25, John 12:31, Eph 6:11-12) He can influence people but not inhabit or control them unless the person gives him that control. Jesus cast demons out of many people and forbade them to afflict individuals as did the early disciples. Eventually, Satan will be reduced to nothing in the sight of people during the end of the Tribulation and then thrown into a pit and confined there for 1000 years. When he is released after that time, he will deceive many and will finally be cast into the lake of fire which has been prepared for him and the angels that followed his rebellion that got him thrown out of the mountain of God. Teaching that this passage refers to Satan began with the early church fathers like Origen in the third and fourth centuries AD.

Verses 20 – 24. Now God gives Ezekiel a prophecy concerning the city of Sidon. Ancient history claims that people from Sidon colonized and began the city of Tyre. They were both traders and there was much competition between them. Each claimed to be the “Mother City” of Phoenicia. Although it might seem that Sidon was being condemned for its relationship with Tyre, just like individuals, cities are responsible for their own actions. Sidon had been a malicious neighbor of Israel so God proclaimed judgment upon it for its actions. He would send a plague upon the city and cause the blood to flow in the streets. People would fall to the sword within the city and then people would know that God is in charge and sovereign in all matters.

Verses 25 – 26. As in many other prophecies of judgment, God proclaimed that he would return the people of Israel to their land from where they have been scattered. Then the descendants of Jacob would live in their land in safety when God inflicts punishment on all their neighbors who maligned them. This had not happened to this day and won’t until Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of Lords to take control of the earth and establish peace until his rule for 1000 years (millennium).

Chapter 29

Beginning in chapter 29 and through chapter 32 God gives Ezekiel seven messages concerning Egypt as a conclusion of his prophecies about Israel’s neighbors. These messages were given to Ezekiel over sixteen years but when they were saved for later reading, they were somehow saved out of chronicle order. So it is helpful to see them among the sequence of other events that were happening to Egypt.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Scripture Reference</u>
Egypt's domination of Israel	609-605	
Babylon's defeat of Egypt at Carchemish	605	
Egypt's offers of assistance to Israel against Babylon	605-588	
Beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd siege of Jerusalem	588 (Jan)	2 Kings 25:1; Ezek 24:1
Pharaoh Hophra's interruption of the siege of Jerusalem	588	Jer 37:5-11
Ezekiel's 1 st introductory prophecy against Egypt	587 (Jan)	Ezek 29:1-16
Ezekiel's 2 nd prophecy describing Pharaoh Hophra's initial defeat and Egypt's ultimate desolation	587 (Apr)	Ezek 30:20-26
Ezekiel's 3 rd prophecy comparing Egypt's fall to Assyria's collapse	587 (Jun)	Ezek 31
The continuing siege of Jerusalem	587 (Jul)	Jer 32:1-5
The fall of Jerusalem and King Zedekiah's capture	586 (Oct)	2 Kings 25:7-8
The exiles' reception of the news of Jerusalem's fall	585 (Jan)	Ezek 33:21
Ezekiel's 4th prophecy in the form of a funeral dirge	585 (Mar)	Ezek 32:1-16
Ezekiel's 5 th prophecy — a summary lament	585 (Apr)	Ezek 32:17-32
Ezekiel's 6 th prophecy describing Egypt as Nebuchadnezzar's spoil for defeating Tyre	570 (Apr)	Ezek 29:17-21
Ezekiel's 7 th prophecy about the destruction of Egypt and her allies	570 (Apr)	Ezek 30:1-19

Verses 1 – 16. This prophecy about Egypt (Jan 587) actually was given to Ezekiel before his first prophecy against Tyre found in chapter 26 (Mar 587). A message against a king is often a message against his whole nation. God is against Egypt because they thought their Pharaoh, not God, made the Nile River to give life to the area through its fish and flooding to nourish the land. Like Tyre, the Egyptian problem was pride. They thought they were responsible for all their accomplishments, wealth, and knowledge. But God says he will pull them into the desert and give them to the birds of the air for food. Hophra was pharaoh at this time (587 BC) but was strangled by Ahmose II, another Egyptian who took his place in 569 BC. So Hophra did not receive a royal burial which was important in their view for a happy afterlife. God says he will bring this destruction upon Egypt because they didn’t support Israel as they had promised.

God also says he will bring war into Egypt that would slay man and beast and leave the nation and surrounding lands desolate for 40 years. Not only defeat and desolation for 40 years but the Egyptians would be scattered into other nations during that 40 years. At the end of the 40 years, God would bring them back into the land but they would never be the great nation that they had been. Egypt suffered defeat by the Babylonians in 568 BC and sometime after Cyrus, leading the Medes and Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC, the Egyptians were allowed, like the Jews and other people the Babylonians had conquered, to return to their homeland. Egypt would never again rule other nations nor be a source of confidence for the people of Israel.

Verses 17 – 21. This prophecy wasn't given until April 570 BC (17 years after the previous) but it completes what God says will happen to Egypt. By this time, Nebuchadnezzar had finished his campaign against the city of Tyre (13 years) and they had surrendered to Babylonian control (573 BC). But Nebuchadnezzar had not really received riches for this campaign so his army hadn't received any booty, probably because Egypt's sailing vessels had helped Tyre get their wealth off the island. So God declared he would give Nebuchadnezzar Egypt to loot and plunder as a reward (payment) for his army for the work they had done for God against Tyre. This defeat of Egypt would be like a "horn" (strength) growing for Israel because Egypt had long been an adversary. The defeat of Egypt would be an encouragement for the captives and would open their ears to hear more messages from God.

Chapter 30

Verses 1 – 19. This word from God is not dated so some scholars think it was given at the same time as the prophecy in chapter 29 verse 1 (587 BC). Other scholars believe it was given at the same time as the prophecy in chapter 29 verse 17 (570 BC) because it contains references to Nebuchadnezzar defeating Egypt and helps to explain the remaining prophecies concerning Egypt. I agree with the latter.

Ezekiel was to wail and bemoan that the day of the Lord is near and destruction for Egypt and her surrounding nations was imminent. The phrase "the day of the Lord" usually refers to an "end times" event associated with the Tribulation and second return of Jesus, but here it clearly refers to the nearness of the destruction of Egypt. When Egypt falls, her wealth will be carried off (payment for Babylon's army as seen previously). Not only would Egypt fall, but also Cush, Put, Lydia, Libya, and Arabia (all allies of Egypt). Verses 10 – 12 describe Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt and that the evil men of his army will lay waste to the land and everything in it. God says the idols will be destroyed, the images in Memphis (Noph) will come to an end, and no longer will there be a prince in Egypt. God says he will lay waste to Pathros (southern area of Egypt at the upper end of the Nile). He will set fire to Zoan. He will inflict punishment on Thebes (on Nile, north of Great Pyramids and west of On). Pelusium will writhe in agony (on coast north east of Migdol). Memphis will be in constant distress. Heliopolis (On) and Bubastis (Pi-beseth) will fall by the sword and their inhabitants go into captivity. It will be a dark time at Tahpanhes. As we see from this list, the great cities of Egypt will be laid waste.



Verses 20 – 26. This prophecy was given in April 587, less than four months after the first prophecy in chapter 29. God had already broken one of Pharaoh's arms probably refers to his defeat at Carchemish in 605 BC, but it could also refer to Hophra's unsuccessful attack against the Babylonians near Judea a few months earlier. (Jer 34:1; 21:23; 37:5, 9) Breaking his good arm and the wounded arm indicates the strength God would give Nebuchadnezzar to defeat and ransack Egypt and surrounding nations. God also says he will cause the Egyptians to be scattered among the nations (some into captivity and some fleeing to foreign lands).

Chapter 31

Verses 1 – 9. This message from God came just three months after the first message against Egypt in chapter 29:1 and two months after the one in chapter 30:20. Ezekiel is supposed to speak openly like he is speaking to Pharaoh Hophra directly, even though he is speaking to the captives outside the city of Babylon. He starts out with a rhetorical question about the greatness of Egypt and a comparison with Assyria which is seen as like a cedar of Lebanon. The cedars in Lebanon were powerful, towering above the other trees, and a place where animals lived in the shade. In fact, God compares them with the trees in his Garden and says they were the most beautiful.

Before its fall to the Babylonians in 612 BC, Assyria was one of, if not the most, powerful nation of its time. Its land, which includes all the area around and between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, has been called the cradle of civilization. It is where Noah and his sons left the ark and began the repopulation of the earth after the flood. It was where the Tower of Babel was built in an attempt to replace the worship of God with the worship of man's achievements and that caused the confusion of languages. Egypt, like Assyria, received much of its strength from the river which flowed through it, nourishing the land and enabling it to grow strong and wealthy. Like Assyria, Egypt had nations around it that flourished because of association with it. These alliances also contributed to their strength. Even though the Assyrians were a ruthless and cruel people, many nations and peoples benefited from their might and the stability it produced. All of the strength and wealth of Egypt and Assyria were possible because God allowed it. But, as with every person or nation which has been blessed by God with strength and wealth, other people and nations were jealous of what they had.

Verses 10 – 14. Because of the nation's pride, claiming that everything it had was from its own hand and power, God said he would turn it over to a powerful nation who would deal with it according to its wickedness. So, the Chaldeans living in the southern part of the Assyrian kingdom, in the region of Babylon, rose up against the leaders in Nineveh. Under the leadership of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar's father, the city of Nineveh was conquered in 612 BC. Then Nebuchadnezzar crushed the rest of the Assyrian army at Haran in 609 BC. This happened to Assyria as a warning to other nations not to exalt themselves because eventually they will die like mortal men.

Verses 15 – 18. When Assyria fell, many nations and peoples mourned because like when a mighty tree falls and crushes other trees it falls upon, Assyria's fall crushed other nations who were trusting in its might. But also, like when a mighty tree falls, some of the trees that couldn't thrive in its shadow can now benefit from the sunlight that they now receive from God. In the same way, some nations benefited from Assyria's fall. Egypt would have been one of those nations. Assyria had been the only nation to successfully invade Egypt, destroying Thebes in 633 BC and eventually making Egypt part of its empire. With the fall of Assyria, Egypt would be free of its burdensome yoke. But, because of Egypt's pride and mistreatment of God's people (the descendants of Jacob), they were now facing the same enemy that captured the Assyrian empire – Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. The Egyptian people practiced circumcision as a requirement for a good afterlife, but they were going to be killed by uncircumcised people (Babylonians) and thus be kept from having a proper burial and good afterlife. This would be abhorrent to them but it was what God decreed because of their pride, and if Assyria couldn't avoid God's judgment neither would Egypt.

Chapter 32

Verses 1 – 16. This message from God came just under two years after the message in chapter 31, and after the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar in Jul 587 BC but before the destruction and burning of the Temple in Aug 585 BC. Ezekiel is told to take up a lament, which is a funeral dirge, concerning Pharaoh. Since the Sphinx has the body of a lion and the head of a pharaoh, it is easy to see that Pharaoh and thus the nation was considered a lion among other nations. But God says they are like a sea monster (probably crocodile) thrashing around and making the waters (Nile) muddy. In their pride the Egyptians were interfering with God using the Babylonians to discipline the Israelite nation by claiming that they would provide Israel support and help fight. But God says he will cast his net over the Egyptian nation, haul it up on the open fields and leave it there so the beasts of the earth can feed upon it. This is a depiction of some Egyptians being taken captive by the Babylonians and others escaping to distant lands. It is interesting to note that in the Babylonian creation account (*Enuma elish*) the Babylonian god, Marduk captured the monster, Tiamat, who was causing the chaos that existed before creation, in a net. The captives would have heard this story so it may have provided them encouragement that God was sovereign over the Babylonians also.

The statement about bringing darkness upon the land of Egypt would be an encouragement to the captives as they remembered God's plagues upon Egypt that led to the Israelite exodus from Egypt in 1491 BC (906 years earlier). Just as God humiliated the Egyptian gods by the plagues, he would humiliate them again. He would bring such destruction upon the people and the land that other nations and people would be appalled and shudder with horror. God declares that he will bring the sword of the king of Babylon against Egypt and cause the Egyptians to be slain and strip the land of everything in it. Then the pride of the Egyptians will be shattered and the people will know that God is sovereign and in control of everything.

Verses 17 – 32. This message about Egypt came just a few weeks after the previous one. This message asks if the Egyptian nation is better than all the other nations that preceded it in judgment. Even though the Egyptian nation had been strong and beautiful, when God judged them from their pride they would go down to the grave along with all the uncircumcised nations that they despised. Then he lists some of the nations: Assyria, Elam, Meshech and Tubal, Edom, all the princes of the north, and the Sidonians. Elam was in the far west and southwest of modern-day Iran and its capital city of Susa was sacked by the Assyrians, led by Ashurbanipal, in 647 BC. Meshech and Tubal are named as sons of Japheth, the son of Noah, (Gen 10) and lived in the area of modern-day Turkey. Edom was the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, and lived in the area to the south and southeast of the Dead Sea. The people of all those nations were uncircumcised and after judgment they and all their people were laying in Sheol, killed by the sword because they spread terror in the land of the living. The final resting place for Pharaoh and all his hordes will be with all those other nations and their uncircumcised peoples.



Chapters 33 – 48

This begins the last of the three sections of Ezekiel's prophetic writing. The first section (Ch 1 – 24) prophesied that Israel would be judged for its sin. The second section (Ch 25 – 32) prophesied that the nations surrounding Israel would be judged for their sin. But Israel will not be under judgment forever because God will eventually fulfill the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. This last section (Ch 33 – 48) prophesies the return of Israel to the blessing God has promised. Chapters 33 to 39 tells of the restoration and gives hope for the future. Chapters 40 to 48 describe the restored community. Some scholars decide at this point in Ezekiel's prophetic writing to see what is written as spiritually applying to the church rather than literally to Israel. This comes from the idea that the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people as is called replacement theology. But we have no right from what Ezekiel has written to change from literal interpretation to figurative or symbolic interpretation.

Chapter 33

Verses 1 – 20. God now tells Ezekiel to warn the exiles about not heeding the messages of coming judgment. He has announced that he is going to bring the sword against countries to judge their disobedience. He says that if the people choose a watchman and he sees the sword coming and warns the people and they don't heed the warning, then their deaths are their own fault. But if the watchman sees the sword coming but doesn't warn the people and they die, then the deaths are the watchman's fault. Then God says that he has made Ezekiel a watchman for the house of Israel to warn them of the coming sword of judgment. When he is to tell them what they are saying about their sin weighing them down, that means God has heard that they acknowledge their sin. But we have to remember that acknowledging our sin is not the same thing as repenting / turning from them. A person can acknowledge their wrong doing (sin) and even be sorry for it because they recognize the consequences they face because of it, but still not change their way of living to avoid the sin in the future. Acknowledging sin is a mental action. Being sorry about the sin is an emotional reaction. Neither changes the way we live. It takes an act of the will to change the way we live so that we try to avoid sin in the future. God says he has heard that they acknowledge their sin and are sorry for it, but he calls them to turn from it. He reminds them that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather wants them to turn from their evil ways. Remember the story of Jonah finally warning Nineveh that judgment would come upon them. They acknowledged their sin, were sorry for it, and changed their way of living. So God did not bring judgment upon them at that time. Later generations returned to their evil ways and so judgment did finally come upon them. God tells Ezekiel to warn the exiles that a person's righteousness won't save them if they sin and a person's previous wickedness won't cause them to fall if they turn from it. Even though the exiles might think God's ways are not just, he declares that he will judge each according to their way. Sin bring the judgment of death, but turning from that sin brings the gift of life.

Verses 21 – 33. This message from God is dated January 585 BC which is about 1 ½ years after the actual fall of Jerusalem, but Ezekiel says it came the evening before a man arrived with the news of the fall. God tells him that the people in the land are saying that Abraham was just one individual and he possessed the land and they are many, so surely the land has been given to them as their possession. But God asks if they should possess the land since they disobey his commands, worship idols, and shed blood. So God says that those left in the ruins will die by the sword, those in the country will die by wild animals, and those hiding in caves will die by plague. Then he tells Ezekiel that the people are talking about him and urging people to come hear what message Ezekiel will give. But even though they hear the message, they won't put it into practice. So he says that Ezekiel is like a man who sings a pretty love song and plays an instrument beautifully but nothing more to them. But when the prophecies he has given them come true the people will know that a true prophet has been among them. The next morning the man with the message of Jerusalem's fall will arrive and the people will know that what Ezekiel has been saying is truly from God.

Chapter 34

Verses 1 – 6. God has said that judgment would come to the people still living in the land and even the exiles because of their disobedience and not turning from their evil ways. Now he lays the responsibility for the people's disobedience on those who were supposed to be leading the people to live in the Lord's way. He says the leaders have only been taking care of themselves and not caring for their flock, the people. In fact, he says they have ruled harshly and brutally over the people and thus allowed them to wander, be scattered, and become food for wild beasts.

Verses 7 – 10. So, since the people have no leader (shepherd), God will come and shepherd them himself. He will hold the worthless shepherds accountable for what has happened to the people of his flock. And he will remove the worthless shepherds from their positions so that the people will no longer be a source of provision for the worthless shepherds.

Verses 11 – 24. God says he will come and search for his sheep, rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered, and bring them into their own land. If the scattering has been literal, and no one would be foolish enough to deny that, then the re-gathering should also be taken as literal. When the people are re-gathered he will tend to them, binding up their wounds and strengthening the weak and give them rich lands upon which to graze and lie down in peace. But he will shepherd the flock with justice and judge between the goats and rams and between the fat and lean sheep. Those who have gotten fat by driving others away, eating all the good grass while trampling the rest, and drinking the clean water while muddying the rest, will be judge for their activities. This re-gathering will occur before, during and at the end of the Tribulation so that the re-gathered people will inhabit the Promised Land during the Millennium.

God says he will place one shepherd, his servant David, over them and he will tend the flock and be their shepherd. God says his servant, David, will be prince among them and God himself will be their God. The exiles would be encouraged and given hope because they would recognize this as a reference to the promised Messiah who would come from David's line and be the final ruler (king) over them. Jeremiah prophesied that "David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor will the priests, who are Levites, ever fail to have a man to stand before me (God) continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices." (Jer 33:17-18) Since Jesus is a descendant of the line of David (Matt 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38) and a priest in the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110; Heb 7:11-22) and Immanuel (God with us, Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23), he is the only fulfillment of this prophecy.

Replacement theology sees the church as inheriting all the promises made to Israel and thus spiritualizes all of this as symbolically applying to the church. Thus the church going out and evangelizing the world would be the re-gathering of God's people. But what of the promise that they would be gathered into the land? This surely applies to an end time, future gathering of people into God's Promised Land. The people being evangelized are not being gathered into the Promised Land, so that must also then be spiritualized in some fashion. The biblical interpretation method of taking everything literal unless something in the passage requires a symbolic, or figurative interpretation seems to always make things fit together better and clearer.

Verses 25 – 31. God promises to make a covenant of peace with the re-gathered people, ridding the land of wild beasts so that the people may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety. He will send showers at the proper time so the trees will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crops. Thus the people will be secure in the land and know that he is God. He will break their yoke of slavery and rescue the people from those enslaving them and they will no longer be plundered by the nations, no longer victims in the land, or bearing the scorn of the nations. God declares "Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel, are my people." This, again, has to be twisted symbolically to fit Replacement Theology.

Chapter 35

Verses 1 – 2. God now tells Ezekiel to set his face against Mount Seir and gives a prophecy against it. Mount Seir is in the nation of Edom, the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. It was most likely the main worship site for Edom like Mount Moriah, where the Temple was built in Jerusalem, was for the nation of Israel. Therefore this is a prophecy against Edom. God says he is against Mount Seir and will make it a desolate waste, turning the towns into ruins.

Verses 3 – 9. God says this will be a result of the ancient hostility of the Edomites against the Israelites and that they delivered the nation of Israel over to the sword at the time of their calamity when their punishment had reached a climax (Babylon's siege and destruction of Jerusalem). Therefore God promises to give them over to bloodshed because they didn't hate bloodshed, and it will pursue them so that the land will become desolate and the mountains, valleys, and ravines filled with the slain. He will make it desolate forever and the towns will not be inhabited. Since the land is still inhabited this must be looking to a time yet in the future.

Verses 10 – 15. God reminds them of their jealousy and desire to possess the land he had given to Israel (northern and southern kingdoms) and where he also was. Because of this he will treat them in accordance with the anger and jealousy they showed Israel and then they will know that God has heard the contemptible things they have said against the mountains of Israel and their boasts against him. He says that while the whole earth rejoices he will make Mount Seir desolate. Then they will know that he is God (YHWH).

Chapter 36

Verses 1 – 7. Now God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the mountains of Israel. He first reminds them of all the trouble they have had because of the nations around them trying to take possession of the land. The surrounding nations had ravaged and hounded the people and maliciously slandered the land and the people. God had judged the land and people for their sin and made the land desolate so it would get its 70 years of rest that the Israelites had not given it. But the surrounding nations, and especially Edom, had ridiculed and tried to plunder the land and make it their own. The land and people became the scorn of the nations. Therefore, God will also make them suffer scorn.

Verses 8 – 12. God says the mountains of Israel will produce fruit for his people Israel that will soon come home. The land will be looked upon with favor by God, plowed and sown, and have many people living upon it. God will settle many people and animals on the land and they will prosper and grow numerous. In fact, the land will be more prosperous than it has been before and the Israelite people will again have their inheritance in the land and never again be deprived of their children. Up to the present the Israelite people have not possessed all of the inheritance God had promised to them and the land is not even as prosperous as in the time of Solomon. So this is a promise that will be fulfilled during the Millennium as the descendants of Jacob return to the land, possess all that was promised, and the land provides in abundance for the people.

Verses 13 – 15. Then God says that because the nations say to the land that it devours men and makes the nation childless, that then the land will no longer hear those taunts, suffer scorn, or cause the nation to fall.

Verses 16 – 21. Now God reminds the people that when they lived in the land they defiled it by their conduct, shedding of blood, and worship of idols. That's why God judged them and scattered them in other lands even though other peoples saw that as God not being able to protect his people in his land. But God says he has concern for his reputation.

Verses 22 – 32. God says he is not going to restore the land and the people to it for their sake but for the sake of his name – so that it will no longer be profaned among the nations. Then the nations will know that he is God when he shows himself holy through his actions. He says he will gather the people from all the lands where they have been scattered and bring them into their own land. He will sprinkle water on them and make them

clean. He will cleanse them from all their impurities and their idols. He will give them a new heart and new spirit, removing their heart of stone and giving them a heart of flesh. He will put his spirit in them and move them to follow his decrees and be careful to keep his laws. This indicates God will soften their hearts (heart of stone to flesh) and change their attitudes (new spirit). They will live in the land he gave to their forefathers and be his people and he will be their God. He will not bring famine upon the land but will increase the fruit of the trees and crops of the field. Then the people will remember their wicked deeds and loathe themselves for the sins and detestable practices. And God once again says that he is not doing this for them but for his own sake so they should be ashamed and disgraced.

Verses 33 – 38. God says he will cleanse the land, resettle the towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The cultivated land will be seen as being like the Garden of Eden. Then the nations that are left around the land will know that it is God who has done all of this. And once again the people will be as numerous as sheep and the cities filled. Then people will know that he is God (YHWH). This restoration of the land and the people to the land all occurs at the same time so the Jewish occupation of part of the land at the present is not a fulfillment of this, especially since they have not been cleansed of their sin.

Chapter 37

Verses 1 – 3. Then the Spirit of God took Ezekiel out to the middle of a valley full of bones and led him back and forth among them. Ezekiel saw that there were a great number of bones and that they were very dry (the bones had been there a long time to be that dry). Then God asks if the bones can live and Ezekiel replies that only the Sovereign Lord knows. This is probably the most well known part of the book because the gospel song “Dem Bones” has made it popular.

Verses 4 – 14. God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the dry bones to hear the word of the Lord. God will make breath enter the dry bones and they will come to life. He will attach tendons to them and they will be covered with flesh and skin. He will put breath in them and they will come to life. Then they will know that he is the Lord (YHWH). So Ezekiel prophesied to the bones and there was a rattling sound as the bones came together and as tendons, flesh and skin covered them. But no breath was in them. Then God tells him to prophesy to the breath that it should come from the four winds and breathe into the slain so that they may live. As Ezekiel prophesied to the breath it happened as God had said and they came to life, stood up on their feet and were numerous like a vast army. Then God tells him that the dry bones are the whole house of Israel who are saying that they are dried up and their hope is gone because they are cut off. So God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to them that he is going to open the graves, bring them up, bring them back into the land, put his Spirit in them so they will live and settle them in their own land. Then they will know that he has spoken and done it. This depicts the exiles scattered in other nations having no hope of ever living in the Promised Land. But God will open the graves that are the lands where they are scattered and bring them into the Promised Land. That his Spirit is in them would indicate they are believers.

Verses 15 – 28. Now God tells Ezekiel to take two sticks and write on one “belonging to Judah and all the Israelites associated with him” and on the other one “belonging to Ephraim and all the house of the Israelites associated with him.” Then he is to join the sticks together as one in his hand. The two sticks represent the northern and southern kingdoms. When the people ask what it means, he is to tell them that the Lord is going to take the two kingdoms and join them back into a single kingdom. He is to tell them that the Lord will take the people out of the lands where they have gone and gather them back into their own land and that he will make them one kingdom again and there will never be two kingdoms again. He is to tell them that they will no longer defile themselves with idols and vile images or with any of their offenses because God will save them from all their sinful backsliding and will cleanse them so that they will be his people and he will be their God. God goes on to say that his servant David will be king over them and they will follow his laws and be careful to keep his decrees. They will live in the land where their fathers lived and their children and their children’s children will live there forever with David as the prince forever. He will put his sanctuary among them forever and his dwelling place will be with them. Then God declares “the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy

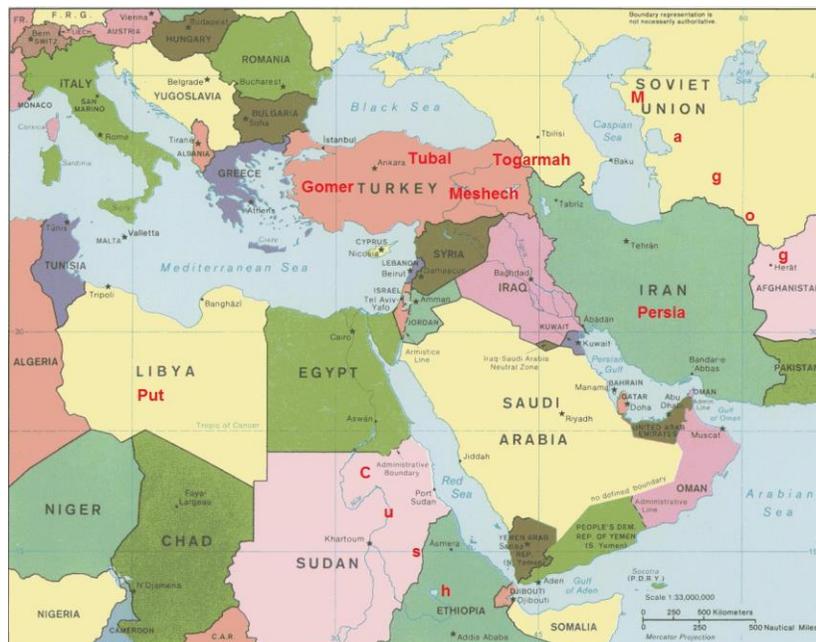
when my sanctuary is among them forever.” Some scholars think this refers to the Messiah ruling over them since he is a descendant of David, but there is no indication of that here. Some scholars try to use 2 Sam 7:12-13 as an indication of their interpretation but that passage clearly refers to Solomon becoming king and building the Temple, but has no reference to the Messiah. So the indication is that during the Millennium a resurrected David will sit on a throne in Jerusalem ruling over the house of Israel. Jesus revealed to John that the resurrected church will reign with Jesus for a thousand years (Rev 20:6). So while Jesus reigns over all, David will reign over Israel, and the Church will reign over the rest of the world.

Chapter 38

Verses 1 – 9. This is the last message Ezekiel received before the refugees from the fall of Jerusalem reached the captives in Babylon with the word of the fall. God tells him to give a prophecy against Gog, of the land of Magog. There has been a lot of debate over the years about the identity of Gog and attempts to identify him as a particular individual or ruler in history. But it is apparent that this prophecy is about a time of future restoration of Israel so Gog doesn't refer to anyone in history past.

The Hebrew literally says, “and-he-came word-of YHWH to-me to-say son-of man set faces-of-you against Gog land-of the-Magog prince-of head-of (*Rosh*) Meshech and-Tubal.” Many translation say Gog is the prince of Rosh Meshech and Tubal. Since Meshech and Tubal are places, many interpreters try to equate Rosh with a place and especially Russia. But since Rosh means head, just as in Rosh Hashanah means head of the year or new year, it would seem prudent to translate it in this passage as chief prince, head ruler, king, or leader. Thus the prophecy is against the head ruler of Meshech and Tubal which is the land of Magog. Meshech is a place called Muschki or Musku in ancient Cilicia and Cappadocia which is now Turkey. Tubal is a place called Tubalu in ancient Cappadocia, again which is now Turkey. Magog is where the ancient Scythians lived which is now the Islamic southern republics of the former Soviet Union, probably including modern Afghanistan.

God says he will bring the people of that area out with their armies along with the people of Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and Beth (house of) Togarmah. Persia is the ancient name of modern Iran. Cush is the ancient land south of Egypt which is modern Ethiopia and Sudan. Put is the ancient land west of Egypt which is modern Libya. Gomer is the ancient land of the Cimmerians in western Anatolia which is modern Turkey. Togarmah is the area of ancient Til-garmmu between Carchemish and Haran which is modern Turkey. The map below shows the locations of those ancient places on a modern map of the Middle East.



God says that in future years they will gather together and invade a land that has recovered from war, whose people were gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had long been desolate. “Desolate” is a reference to the land God promised to the descendants of Jacob not being in their possession. From the time that Jerusalem was captured and Judah taken into captivity in Babylon, the land was considered desolate because it was not under the control of the Israelite people even though some of them were living there. In 1948 the British government gave control of most of the modern day nation of Israel to descendants of the Jewish people. This was the reestablishment of a nation of Israel and their control of the mountains of the ancient Israel. Since 1948, Jews have been returning to the ancient Israel lands from all parts of the world. The people will be living in safety, but the armies of the nations listed will advance against Israel like a storm cloud covering the land.

For this to happen, Israel has to be living in safety. So many interpreters say this won't happen until after the beginning of the Tribulation, during the first 3 ½ years, when Israel will be living under the peace treaty established by the Antichrist as he begins to control the people of the whole world.

Verses 10 – 16. God says thoughts will come into the minds of the people of the listed nations and they will devise an evil plan to attack an unsuspecting nation (Israel) because they are living without protection (without walls gates and bars) so that they can be robbed of their wealth (livestock and goods). Then God says the people of Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish will ask if the nations have gathered their hordes to rob the people of their wealth. Sheba is the area of modern Yemen to the south of Saudi Arabia. Dedan is an area of the west of Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea. Tarshish is thought to be the southern part of Spain.

God says in future years he will bring Gog and the nations listed against his people so that he can show himself holy to them.

Verses 17 – 23. God reminds Gog that he is the one prophets have spoken of that he would bring against his people. In Deut 30:7 God says he will put curses on your (Israel's) enemies who hate and persecute you. Through Joel God says, “I will drive the northern army far from you.” (Joel 2:20) To Isaiah God said, “I will crush the Assyrian in my land; on my mountains I will trample him down.” (Isa 14:25) God told Isaiah to say to Ariel (Jerusalem where David settled), “But your enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant the Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire. Then the hordes of all the nations that fight against Ariel, that attack her and her fortress and besiege her, will be as it is with a dream, with a vision in the night.” (Isa 29:5 – 7)

When Gog attacks the land of Israel, God will cause a great earthquake in the land and all people, animals, and fish of the sea will tremble. God will fight for his people by causing Gog's armies to fight against each other. God will also execute his judgment against Gog and the nations with him through plague, bloodshed, torrents of rain and hailstones and burning sulfur. Through this God will show himself as Lord.

Chapter 39

Verses 1 – 8. God restates that he will bring Gog against Israel and then will fight for his people and cause Gog's armies to fall and become food for all kinds of flesh-eating birds and wild animals. He says he will bring fire on Magog and all those who live in what they think is safety in the coastlands so that people will know he is Lord. God promises that what he has said will surely take place.

Verses 9 – 10. God says that for seven years the people of Israel will not use wood for fuel because they will gather the weapons from the slain armies and burn them. He also says that they will loot the armies who sought to loot them. In the Old Testament, God allowed his people on certain occasions to take anything of value that a defeated army had in their possession.

Verses 11 – 16. The dead bodies of Gog's defeated armies will be buried in a valley to the east of Jerusalem toward the Dead Sea. The valley will be known as Hamon or Hamonah (which means horde) Gog because all Gog's hordes will be buried there. For seven months the Israelites will be burying the dead invaders in order to cleanse the land. And after the seven months they will still be marking individual human bones they happen to find until the regularly employed grave diggers are able to bury them so the land will be cleansed.

Verses 17 – 20. Here, God again says that the birds and wild animals will feast on the dead bodies of the invaders. God says it will be like a sacrifice prepared for them and that they will eat their fill and drink until they are drunk on the blood of the invaders.

Verses 21 – 24. God says that through this he will display his glory among the nations (non-Jewish people) and that the house of Israel will know that he is God. All the nations will know that the people of Israel were exiled because of their unfaithfulness.

Verses 25 – 29. So that this will happen, God says that he will bring Jacob (Israel) back from captivity, have compassion on all the people of Israel, and be zealous for his holy name. When he has gathered them from amongst the nations, he will show himself holy through his dealings with the people. He says that he will no longer hide his face from the Israelite people because he will pour his spirit out upon them. This fits nicely with what will happen at the end of the Tribulation and beginning of the Millennium when God will restore all the tribes of Jacob to the land promised from the river of Egypt (Nile) to the great river, the Euphrates. (Gen 15:18)

There are at least six interpretations of when the invasion will occur and the destruction of the invading armies.

1. Symbolic of the attempts of evil forces to overpower God's people. This would be the view of those Christians expressing replacement theology. Problem: The amount of detail and specific references to places would favor a literal rather than symbolic interpretation.
2. At the end of the Tribulation. Problem: There is not much similarity between the description of this invasion and the battles described at the end of the Tribulation in Revelation 19 and Zechariah 14:1-4.
3. At the beginning of the Millennium. Problem: Who would be present to lead the armies since the beast and the false prophet have been judged and cast into the lake of fire and Satan has been bound in the pit for a thousand years, the Millennium, (Rev 19:20; 10:1-3)? Also, unbelievers will have been judged and their weapons destroyed according to Micah 4:1-4.
4. At the end of the Millennium. Problem: There are numerous discrepancies between Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20. Also, why would they bury the dead when the resurrection of the unsaved takes place at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:11-15)?
5. Just prior to the middle of the Tribulation. Problem: Just after the mid-point of the Tribulation the nation is supernaturally allowed to escape into the wilderness and be protected from Anti-Christ for the remaining half (3½ years) of the Tribulation (Rev 12). The people will not be living in the land to collect up the dead and bury them nor to collect the weapons of war and burn them for fuel.
6. Before the rapture of the Church. Problem: 38:8 depicts the people as living in peace, in a land that has recovered from war, a people having been brought out from the nations and now living in safety. That hardly describes the present-day nation of Israel. And Luke 21:24 indicates Israel would not enjoy peace during the times of the Gentiles (the Church age). Perhaps there is something that resembles peace which will come to the land of Israel before the rapture of the Church and make it seem like the people are living in safety. This could be a semblance of peace brokered by the United States. The nations of the world might allow this to happen for a while and be what leads to the invasion. If this is the case then the latest time for the invasion would have to be seven years before the mid-point of the Tribulation when the people escape from the land in the wilderness.

But that would seem to give us a 3½ year warning that the rapture will be occurring and most scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:3 indicates the rapture will come on an unsuspecting people like a thief in the night so that there will not be even a hint of when it is to occur.

Perhaps the best idea for when the Ezekiel 38 – 39 invasion will occur is after the rapture and when God says for it to begin.

Chapters 40 - 48

This begins the last vision given to Ezekiel. The only other vision recorded in the Bible that is longer than this is Jesus' Revelation to the Apostle John. As we have studied Ezekiel's writing, we have seen it began with a vision of the glory of God (chapter 1). Then in chapters 10 he records God's glory departing from the Temple and the Temple's destruction. Now to end the book, he records another vision of God's glory and its return to a future Temple. In chapters 33 to 39 we read prophecies concerning the descendants of Jacob (Israel) being brought back from all the nations where they had been scattered into the Promised Land and that it would once again flourish, that they would live in peace, and that David would rule over them in Jerusalem. Now God is giving Ezekiel the vision of a new Temple, a restored priesthood, his glory returning to the Temple, worship in the new Temple, and the division of the land among the people.

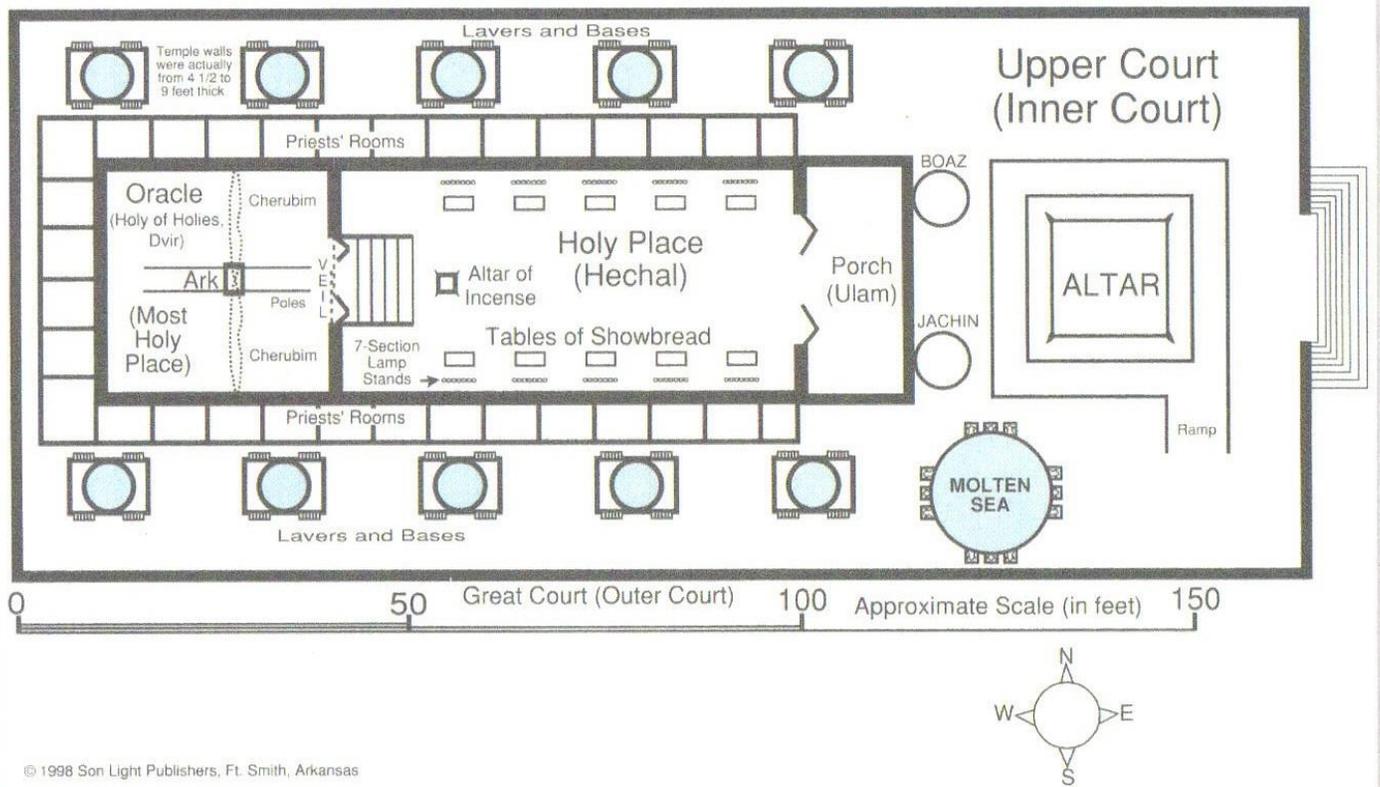
There are four main views about how to interpret this vision. 1. The first view would be what the captives thought in 538 BC when Cyrus gave them permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple and city. They would return and this vision would be fulfilled. But nothing in their return or the rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel's supervision or even the expansion of the Temple by Herod the Great that wasn't finished until 64 AD comes close to what was described in chapters 33 to 39 or from here to the end. 2. The second view is one that would be held by those who want to believe in replacement theology – that the Church replaced Israel, inherited all the promises, and fulfills all the prophecies concerning the future of Israel. 3. The third view is that these last chapters describe a future, end-times kingdom but only symbolically, so that there will not be a literal Temple and worship in it. So the measurements and great detail which could be used to actually build a temple are simply spiritual truth about the coming kingdom and nothing more. 4. The fourth view is that there will be a literal fulfillment of this vision in the future that will reflect some of the symbolic language and spiritual truths that are taught here. This view holds that there will be a literal Temple, worship in it, and physical changes in the land and that the descendants of Jacob will literally take possession of and dwell safely in the Promised Land. This is the view that I believe is most consistent with what Ezekiel has previously written and with what we find in the rest of the Bible.

In Jesus' revelation, John describes some things that would seem to be what is described here, but those things exist in a new heaven and earth that has been created after the old universe has been de-created by fleeing from God's presence or as Isaiah (34:4) described it being "rolling it up like a scroll." So that would indicate that some features of the Millennial Kingdom will continue in the timeless, eternal state of the new universe.

Chapter 40

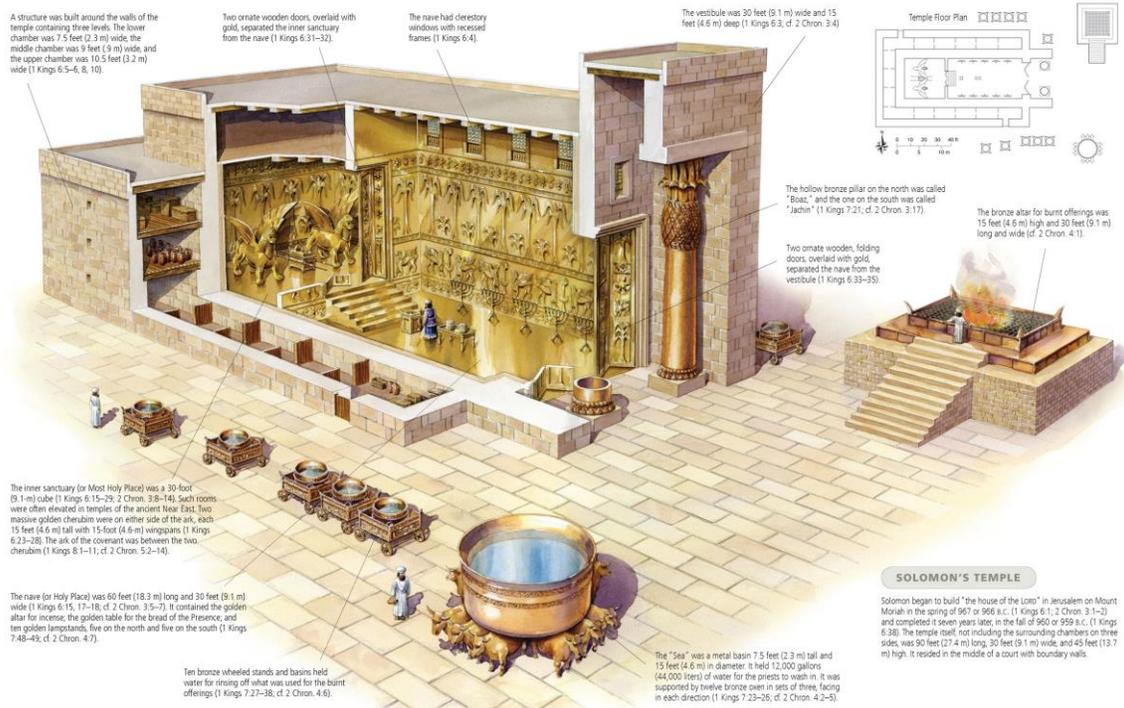
Verses 1 – 4. This vision is dated 25 Mar 572 BC. That is in the 14th year after Ezekiel's last message from the Lord and the captives learning about the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. In his vision, God took Ezekiel to a high mountain in the land of Israel and when he looked south he could see buildings that looked like a city. And as he looked he saw a man whose appearance was like bronze, standing in a gateway with a linen cord (length of flax) and a measuring rod (reed) in his hand. God tells Ezekiel to look, hear, and pay attention to everything that he will show him because he has been brought there to see and hear so he can tell it to the house of Israel. We are not told at this time where the mountain is located but with the subsequent information of the vision it is apparent that it is in the area of Jerusalem and looking down on the old Temple location. Given the old and present lay of the land the mountain would be Mount Scopus which rises slightly above the Dome of the Rock currently sitting on the old Temple area.

Verses 5 – 16. Now Ezekiel identifies what he is looking at as the Temple area and begins describing in detail the Temple that is shown to him. The detail shows us that the Temple being described is not one of the ones that has stood on the site previously. So let's first look at what previous Temples looked like based on their descriptions.

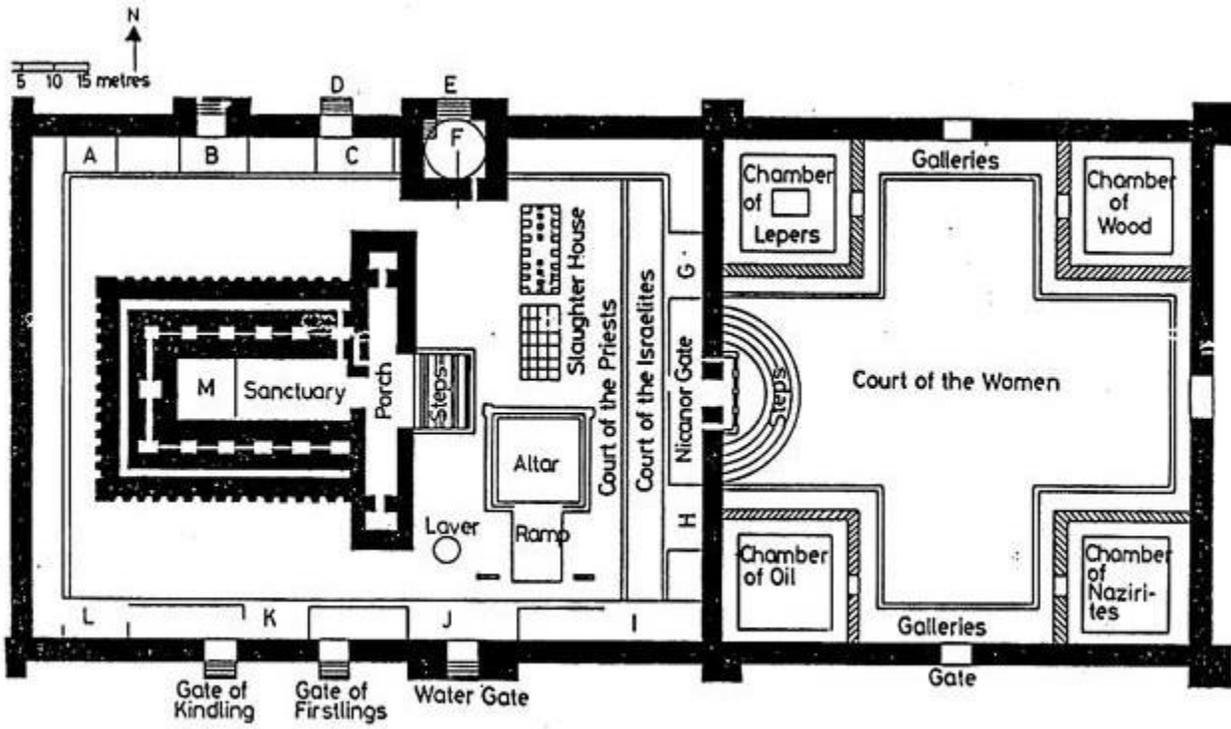


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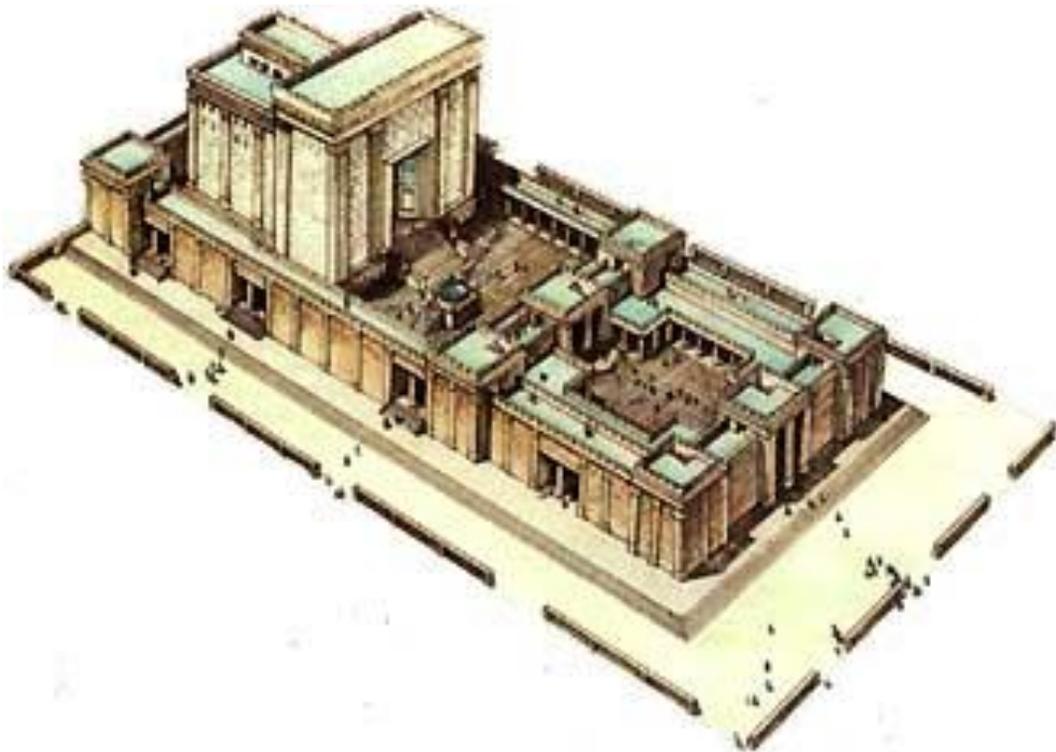
Solomon's Temple 2 Dimensional – Floor Plan



Solomon's Temple 3 Dimensional View

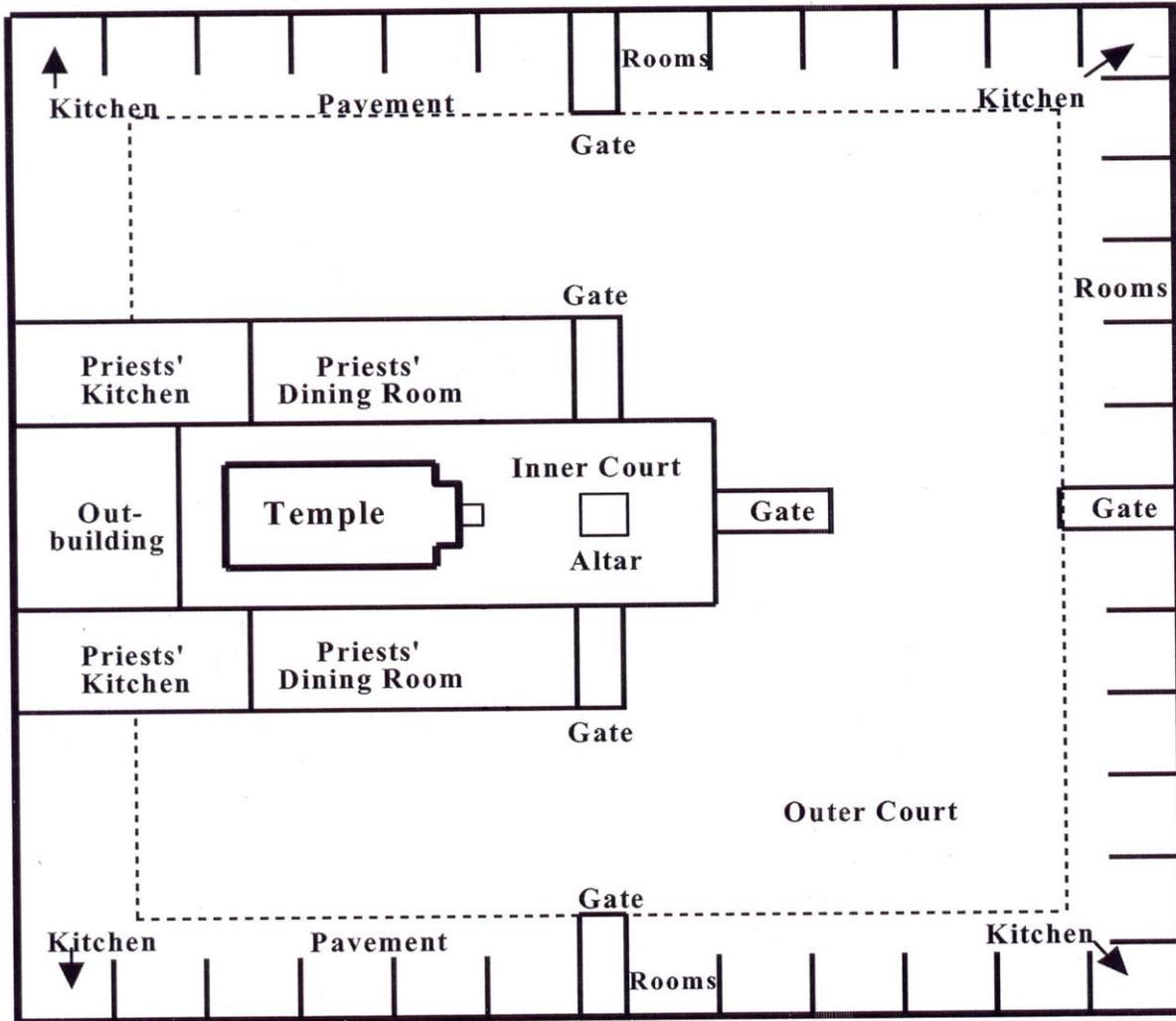


Herod's Temple 2 Dimensional – Floor Plan

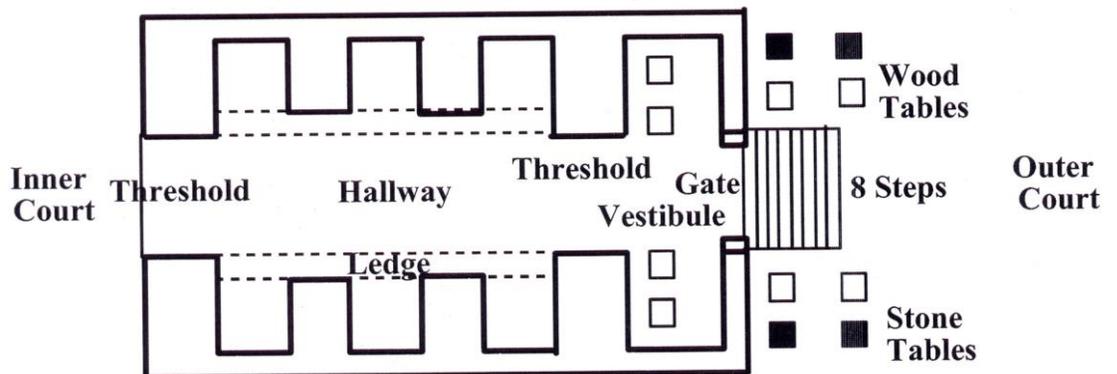


Herod's Temple 3 Dimensional View

Verses 17 – 28. Then he describes the outer court, the north gate, and the south gate. The east gate led into a courtyard that has 30 rooms around it. The function of those rooms is not given. A pavement 50 cubits wide formed a border around the outer edge of the courtyard. The distance between the outer gates and the inner gates to the inner courtyard measured 100 cubits.



Verses 28 – 43. Then he describes the gates from the outer courtyard into the inner courtyard. All three gates were the same basic design and dimensions as the gates leading from outside into the outer court. One difference



was that these gates had eight steps leading up to them from the outer court. Another difference was that each gate had two tables on each side of the vestibule for preparing the sacrifices. The north gate also had four tables on either side of the eight steps, two were wood and two were stone. There were to hold the utensils for and for the slaughtering of sacrifices.

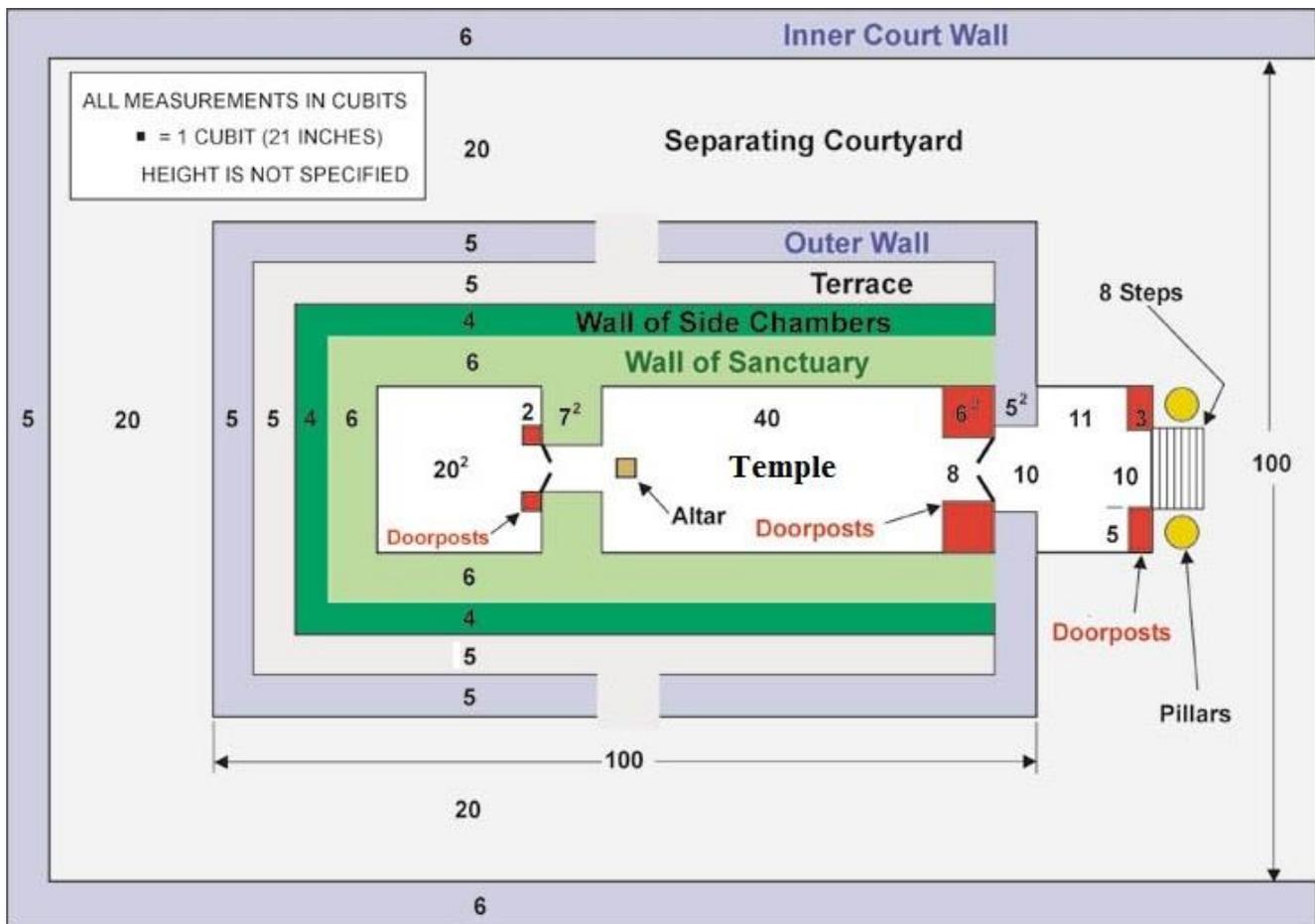
The presence of animal sacrifices in this Temple is what causes some people to think this can't be a temple being used during the Millennium because Jesus' sacrifice was the perfect sacrifice which put an end to the sacrificial system. One explanation of why there would be animal sacrifices is that in the sacrificial system they looked forward to Jesus' sacrifice so these would look back to Jesus' sacrifice like a communion observance looks back that sacrifice.

Verses 44 – 47. Then he describes two rooms within the inner court. One is beside the north gate, facing south, and it is for the priests who have charge of the Temple. The other is beside the south gate, facing north, and it is for the priests who have charge of the altar. These are only to be used by the sons of Zadok and they are the only Levites who may draw near to the Lord to minister before him. Then he gives the measurement of the court. It is a square 100 cubits on a side and the altar is in front of the temple.

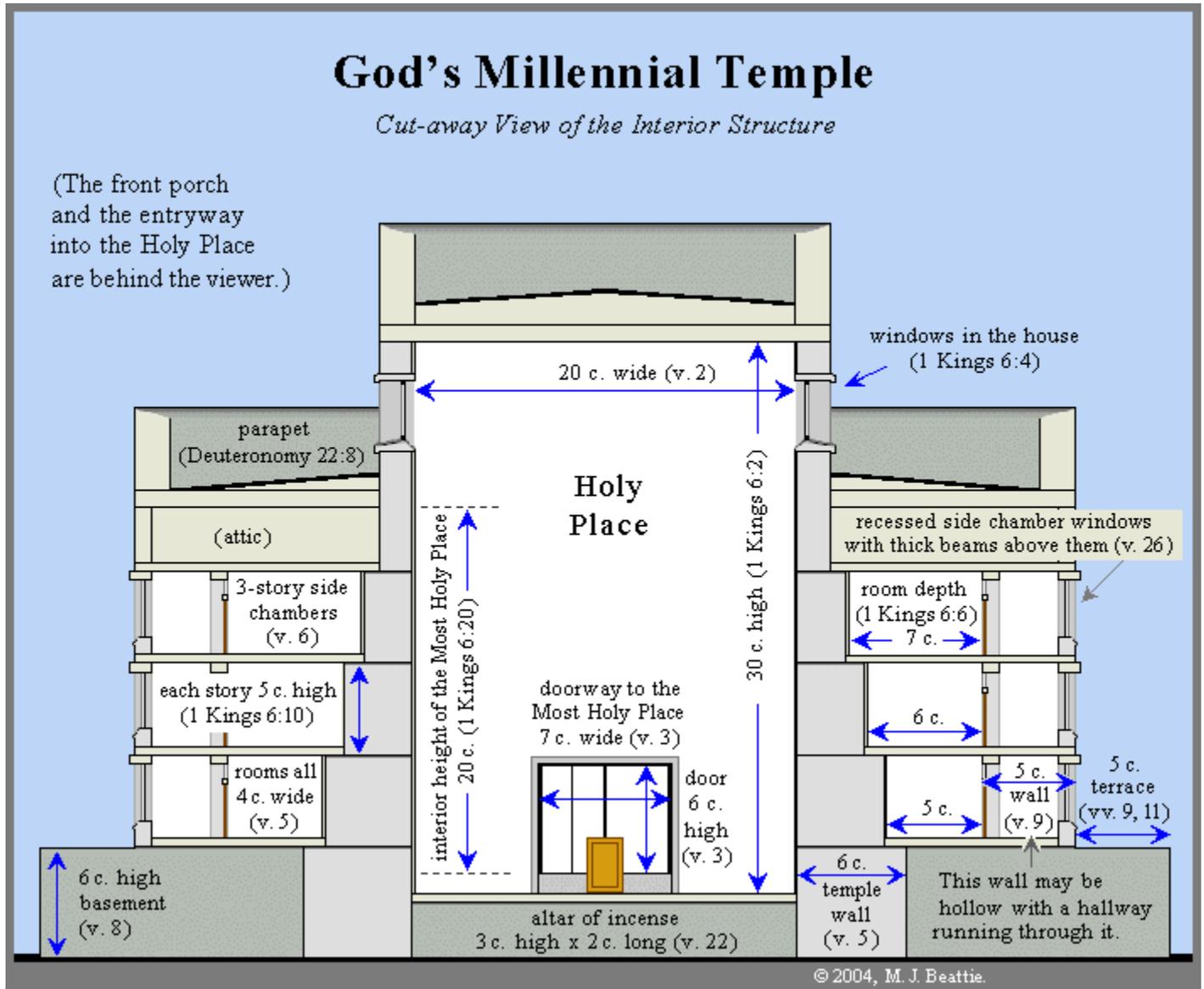
Verses 48 – 49. Then he gives the dimensions of the entrance of the Temple.

Chapter 41

Verses 1 – 4. Then he gives the dimensions of the Temple sanctuary from the entrance to the Most Holy Place. The following diagram shows the layout of the inner court and sanctuary.



Verses 5 – 11. Then the structure surrounding the inner sanctuary and Most Holy Place are described. The following cutaway diagram gives an idea of how it may appear.



Verse 12. Then an outbuilding on the west side of the courtyard is described. There is no indication of the purpose of this outbuilding, which would be directly behind the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary.

Verses 16 – 26. Now the interior furnishings are described. The interior, including side rooms, is paneled with wood carved with alternating palm trees and cherubs. Each cherub has two faces, one a man and one a lion, one looking left at a palm tree and the other looking right at another palm tree. In Genesis 3:22 – 24, we learn that God set Cherubim (the plural of Cherub) to guard the entrance to the Garden of Eden so that man could not get to the tree of life in his fallen condition, eat of the tree, and not have the opportunity to be restored to a right relationship with God that he had promised through a Messiah that would come in the future. In Exodus 25: 18 – 22, we learn that the veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary had the image of Cherubim woven into it. And in Exodus 26:31 – 33, we learn that there were two Cherubs guarding the mercy seat on the top of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place. From this we can see that the Cherubs carved in the wood paneling are there to represent the guarding of God’s holiness because he will reside there.

There is an altar in the Holy Place made completely of wood, two cubits square and three cubits high. We are not told what its function is but it may correspond to the altar of incense or the table of showbread that were in both the Tabernacle and the earlier Temples. The table was a remembrance of the twelve tribes and the incense altar was where the prayers of the people were offered to God. So perhaps this altar serves one or both of those functions in some way.

The entrance doors of the Holy Place and Most Holy Place are double wood doors with two leaves in each door and are also carved with Cherubs and palm trees. The floor of the entrance to and the floor of the sanctuary are also covered with wood. This description of the interior furnishings shows what I would call a beautiful house.

Chapter 42

Verses 1 – 14. Now two rooms are described that were mentioned preciously, one on the north and one on the south sides of the inner court and next to the respective north and south gate. The purpose of the rooms is for the priests who are serving in the sanctuary before the Lord to eat the most holy offerings – the grain, sin, and guilt offerings. Once the priests enter the area of the inner court, they are not to leave before changing their clothes.

Verses 15 – 20. Now the overall dimensions of the Temple are measured. It is a 500 cubit square. Again using the long cubit of 21 inches, that makes it a square that is 875 feet on each side.

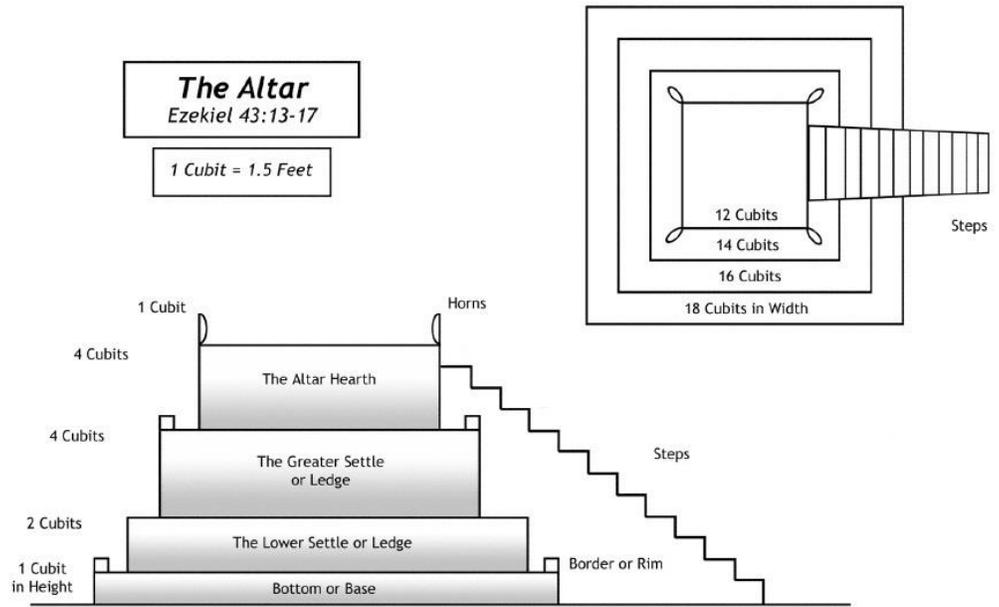
Chapter 43

Verses 1 -5. Then Ezekiel was taken to the gate facing east and he saw the glory of God coming from the east. He tells us that this vision was like the vision of the God he saw by the Kebar River (Ezekiel 1) and when he saw the Lord coming to destroy the city (Ezekiel 10). He watches the glory of God enter the Temple through the east gate just as he had previously seen God’s glory departing from Solomon’s Temple from the east gate. Then Ezekiel is taken into the inner court and he sees the glory of God fill it.

Verses 6 -9. Then Ezekiel hears someone speaking to him from inside the Temple. This is obviously God, because he says, “this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The house of Israel will never again defile my holy name – neither they nor their kings – by their prostitution and the lifeless idols of the kings at their high places.”

Verses 10 – 12. God tells Ezekiel to describe the temple to the people of Israel so that they may be ashamed of their sins. He is to write all of this and the dimensions down for them so they may be faithful to its design and follow all of its regulations. This alone would indicate that the temple will be a real structure and that all of this description cannot be just symbolic and spiritualized. And he gives one overarching law of the temple, that all of the mountaintop where it sits and the surrounding area will be most holy (that means dedicated to the Lord).

Verses 13 – 17. Now Ezekiel gives the measurements of the altar and ends by telling us its steps face east. The diagram at the right depicts the altar with its four levels. Its overall dimensions would be a square 18 cubits (31.5 feet) on a side and 11 cubits (19.25 feet) high. The width and length of the steps isn't given but most steps are 10 to 11 inches in depth and 7 to 8 inches high. Using a little larger step of 12 inches depth and 7 inches high would require 33 steps from bottom to top and they would extend 32 feet out from the top level and 21.5 feet from the base.



Verses 18 – 27. Then God tells Ezekiel the regulations after the altar is built for preparing it for sacrificing burnt offerings and sprinkling blood on it. The priests were to follow these instructions for seven days to make atonement for the altar and cleanse and thus it would be dedicated and ready for daily use.

The instructions in Leviticus 1 – 7 describe five offerings presented on the altar, some of them were burnt entirely and some only partially. A burnt offering represented complete dedication to God and after some of the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the altar, it was completely burned. A burnt offering was to be presented every morning and evening and then other offerings would be presented on top of it as it burned. Burnt offerings didn't begin with the Levitical rules. Noah presented it after leaving the ark. Abraham was to present Isaac as a burnt offering. And there were other occasions. A sin offering and a guilt offering were presented to atone for a person's or the community's unintentional sin. Part, but not all, of the animal was burned after its blood was smeared on the horns or sides of the altar and poured out at the base. The rest was for the priests to eat. A grain offering was presented to God in thankfulness, like the offering of the first fruits. Part of it was burned and the rest was for the priests. A fellowship or peace offering was presented to show peace with God through the shedding of blood. Part of the animal was burned, the blood was sprinkled on the sides of the altar, the priests received part of the animal, and the person offering the animal kept the rest to eat. After being given the Levitical rules, a Hebrew was only permitted to eat the meat of an animal of the herd or flock if it had been first presented as a fellowship offering. "Any Israelite who slaughters a cow, a lamb, or a goat in the camp or outside of it instead of bringing it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord in front of the tabernacle of the Lord, that man shall be considered guilty of bloodshed: he has shed blood and must be cut off from his people." (Lev. 17:3-4)

After the altar is dedicated, the Israelite people of the Millennial Kingdom are to resume presenting burnt offerings on the altar of sacrifice, probably following the same regulations as specified in Leviticus. We see in Ezekiel 46:13 – 16, that a burnt offering of a lamb along with grain and oil is to be presented every morning. The Israelites in particular and perhaps others will bring sin and guilt offerings to atone for the unintentional sins they have committed. Many people will probably bring grain offerings to be presented in thankfulness to God.

Those who don't believe in literal interpretation think that Ezekiel is simply describing future worship in terms that his hearers would understand. That means all of this is simply man's ideas rather than a vision from God.

Since Jesus' sacrifice was the fulfillment of the sacrificial system, most premillennialists think these sacrifices will be a remembrance of what Jesus has done just as communion is a remembrance for the Church for what Jesus has done. According to Dr. Thomas Constable, "some premillennialists argue that since Christ will be personally present on earth during the Millennium, these sacrifices may really purge sins, the sins of believers." That view is not acceptable because it negates the work of Jesus on the cross and the fact that believers have already been to the bema seat of Christ to have their work judged and receive their crowns. At the time of the Millennium, believers already have a restored, perfect relationship with Jesus as his Bride and perfect communication with him so there would be no sinning by believers that need a sacrifice. On the other hand, there will be an ever growing number of people who came into the Millennium through the Tribulation and the children born to them, that still have the potential of sinning and need a blood sacrifice to pay for their sin until Jesus ends the sacrificial system in the de-creation of the present universe and the creation of a new, perfect universe.

Chapter 44

Verses 1 – 3. Now Ezekiel is taken back to the outer gate of the sanctuary that faces east and he notices that the gate is shut. He is told that this gate is to remain shut because the Lord, the god of Israel, has entered through it and that only the prince may enter and exit by way of the portico and eat there in the presence of the Lord. This prince is not Jesus, the Messiah, because in chapter 45 we discover the prince is to present sin, grain, burnt, and fellowship offerings and in chapter 46 he is to enter and exit the temple complex among the people. This prince is not identified but from what his duties are as described in chapters 45 and 46, I would expect him to be David, resurrected to rule the Israelite people.

Verse 4. Now Ezekiel is taken through the north gate to the front of the temple (inner court) and he sees the glory of the Lord filling the temple. That shows God's acceptance of this temple as his residence just it did for the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple that Solomon built. The reconstructed temple built by Zerubbabel and enlarged by Herod was never filled with the glory of God showing that he accepted it and any temple built before the middle of the Tribulation which will be desecrated by Antichrist will also not be accepted by God. When Ezekiel sees the glory of God filling the temple he falls face down in worship. This sets the stage for the regulations concerning the temple that God gives beginning in verse 5.

Verses 5 – 14. Now God gives regulations concerning the temple. He reminds us that the house of Israel had defiled his temple in the past by allowing those who were uncircumcised to enter the temple, even while they were presenting offerings to him. And they even put others in charge of the sanctuary. So God declares that no foreigner uncircumcised in heart and flesh is to enter his sanctuary even if they are living among the Israelites. Then he proceeds to say that the Levites who went astray in Israel's past will serve in the temple but they are not to go near to any of his holy things or the most holy offerings. This is the shame they (meaning their descendants) must bear.

Verses 15 - 31. But the priests who are descendants of Zadok are to minister before the Lord in his sanctuary because Zadok and his family faithfully carried out the duties of the sanctuary when the others went astray. For this faithfulness, his descendants are to have the honor of being the only ones to enter the sanctuary and serve God in all the activities there. When they enter the inner court they are to wear linen garments only, not woolen garments or anything that would make them perspire. When they are going to leave the inner court, they must remove their linen garments and leave them in the sacred rooms (those are the rooms by the north and south gates we learned about earlier) and put on other clothes. They are not to shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but keep it trimmed. They are not to drink any wine when they enter the inner court. They may only marry virgins of Israelite descent or widows of priests. The purpose of all of this for them to teach the people the difference between holy and common things and how to distinguish between clean and unclean things.

Priests are to serve as judges in any dispute and decide according to God's ordinances. They are to keep all the laws and decrees for all the appointed feasts and are to keep God's Sabbaths holy. Priests must not defile

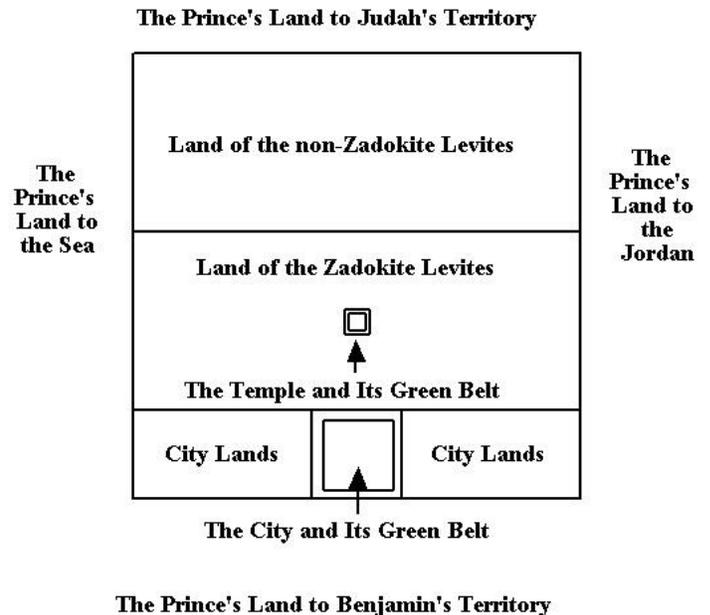
themselves by going near a dead person unless it is a close family member (father, mother, brother, unmarried sister, son or daughter). Then they would be unclean for service for seven days. On the day a priest goes back into the inner court to minister in the sanctuary, he must first offer a sin offering for himself.

God is to be the only inheritance the priests have. They will not have any land as their possession. They will eat the grain, sin, and guilt offerings (just like in the tabernacle and previous temple) and everything devoted to the Lord will belong to them. The best of all the firstfruits and all special gifts will be theirs. The priests must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, whether bird or animal. The priests were to eat only that which had been offered to God. No blemished animal or previously dead animal or bird would be an acceptable offering to God. The priests, whether actively serving in the inner court or not were not to eat anything that was not offered to God.

All of these regulations for the temple are meant to point to the holiness of God and point by example to what is holy or common and what is clean and unclean.

Chapter 45

Verses 1 – 6. Now God gives instructions for how to divide the land that had been promised to Abraham. The first portion that is to be allotted is the sacred district. Using the long cubit, the area is to measure 25,000 cubits (43,750 feet – about 8.3 mi) long and 20,000 cubits (35,000 feet – about 6.6 mi) wide. Within that area is to be the temple complex 500 cubits square (875 feet) and around the temple is to be 50 cubits (87.5 feet) of green space (open land). The temple complex is to be in an area of the sacred district that measures 25,000 cubits long and 10,000 cubits (17,500 feet – about 3.3 mi) wide. This area, outside of the temple complex and green area, will belong to the priests who minister before the Lord (Zadokites) as a place for their homes. Another area of 25,000 by 10,000 cubits is for the homes of the other priests (Levites) who serve in the rest of the temple complex. Also adjoining the sacred area is to be an area 25,000 cubits long and 5,000 cubits (8,750 feet – about 1.6 mi) wide that will be for the city. That area will belong to the whole house of Israel.



Verses 7 – 12. Surrounding the sacred area, the area for the priests, and the area for the city, is to be land for the prince of Israel. In this passage, the word for prince and princes indicates leader. The top leader after Israel asked to be led by a king would be the king. The other leaders would be those whom the king chose to serve him in official capacities. Those leaders could be from any of the tribes. The land specifically for the prince (king) will extend east and west parallel to all the areas given to the different tribes. The size of the strip of land from north to south is not given. The division of the rest of the land is given in chapter 48.

The princes (leaders) are exhorted to give up their violence and oppression and to do what is just and right – stop dispossessing people, and use accurate measurements. He even specifies what those measurements are to be. The ephah (a dry measure) and the bath (a liquid measure) were to be equal and a tenth of a homer which would be the standard of both. A shekel was a weight of about two-fifths of an ounce. One mina is to be equal to 60 shekels. Some scholars say the common mina of Ezekiel's day was only 50 shekels so this would be an increased standard.

Verses 13 – 17. Then God specifies gifts that all the people are to participate in providing for the prince (king). And the prince will be responsible for providing the burnt offerings, grain offerings and drink offerings at the festivals, the New Moons and the Sabbaths – all the appointed feasts. And he will provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to make atonement for the entire house of Israel. Of course the Levitical priests would prepare the offerings and the Zadokite priests would actually put the offerings on the altar before God.

Verses 18 – 25. Now God gives some regulations for the feasts. On the first day of each new year, a bull is to be sacrificed to purify the sanctuary. Some of its blood is to be put on the doorposts of the temple, on the four corners of the upper ledge of the altar and the gateposts of the inner court. Then on the seventh day the same thing is to be done for anyone who sins unintentionally or through ignorance and thus these will make atonement for the temple for another year. Then on the fourteenth day of the first month, the Passover Feast is to be celebrated and for seven days the people are to eat bread made without yeast just like in the original Passover that preceded the exodus from Egypt. On the first day of the Passover Feast, the prince is to provide a bull as a sin offering for himself and all the people. Then for each of the seven days of the Feast, he is to provide seven bulls and seven rams as a burnt offering and a male goat for a sin offering. He is to provide a grain offering and oil offering along with each bull and ram. Then during the seven days of the Feast that begins in the seventh month (the Feast of Tabernacles), the prince is to make the same offerings. Since none of the other feasts of Israel (Firstfruits, Pentecost – harvest weeks, Trumpets, and Day of Atonement) are mentioned means that they will probably not be observed.

Chapter 46

Verses 1 – 8. Now God gives some regulations for worship on each Sabbath and new moon. The east gate of the inner court is to remain closed every day but these days. The gate is to be opened on these days for the prince (king) to enter the gate complex where he will watch in worship as the priests present his burnt and fellowship offerings. After he finishes worshipping and leaves, the gate is to remain open for the rest of the day so the people can stand before the gate and worship in the presence of the Lord. The burnt offering the prince (king) brings each Sabbath is to be six male lambs and a ram. He is to bring a grain offering of one ephah to be presented with the ram and as much grain as he wants with the lambs, but he is to bring a hin (about 4 quarts – 1 gallon) of oil for each ephah. On each new moon the prince (king) is to offer the same as a Sabbath plus a young bull with an ephah of grain and a hin of oil.

Verses 9 – 15. Now God gives instructions for the annual feasts. When people come for the annual feasts, they are to enter the outer court through either the north or south gates. The east gate is to be shut after the Lord enters through it and not opened again. When they leave the outer court, they should leave by the opposite gate from the one they entered. On these annual feasts, the prince (king) should enter with the rest of the people and leave with them. The offerings on these special days is to be the same as on the Sabbaths and new moon celebrations. Whenever the prince (king) comes to the temple to present a freewill offering (burnt or fellowship) the east gate from the outer court into the inner court is to be opened so he can enter the gate complex to present the offering and worship just as he does on the Sabbaths. Then when he is finished the gate is to be closed – unlike on the Sabbath and new moon celebrations. Every morning the priests are to offer a burnt offering of a year old lamb along with a grain offering mixed with oil. The original instructions for the Tabernacle which continued over into Solomon's and Herod's temples was that a burnt offering was to be presented every morning and every evening. (Num 28:3-4) So this is a change from the old instructions.

Verses 16 – 18. God directs that the prince (king) can give a gift from his possessions to his sons and it will become their possession by inheritance and they can then give it to their descendants. But if the prince (king) gives a gift from his possessions to a servant, the servant can keep it only until the year of freedom and then it will again become the prince's (king's) possession. This is like the rules for the year of jubilee (every 50th year) under the Mosaic covenant (Lev 25:10; 27:24). The prince (king) is forbidden from taking anything from the

inheritance of anyone else like had been done during the time of the kings. (2 Sam 24:24; 1 Kings 21:19; Mic 2:1-2) This is meant to maintain the inheritance of each tribe within its descendants.

Verses 19 – 24. Then Ezekiel is taken a room at the west end of the area by the north gate. He is told that this is to be a kitchen where the priests (Zadokites) will cook the guilt and sin offerings and the grain offerings. They must not be taken into the outer court and thus make the people there consecrated (holy – set apart) to the Lord. Then he is taken to each of the four corners of the outer court and shown a room in each where the priests (Levitical) are to cook the sacrifices of the people – those which the people will eat. This is why some scholars think the extra rooms along the north, south, and east sides of the outer court are “restaurants” – places where the people will gather to eat their part of those sacrifices.

Chapter 47

Verses 1 – 12. Now Ezekiel is brought to the entrance of the temple and he sees water coming out from under the threshold of the temple and was flowing east. Then Ezekiel is taken out through the north gate and brought around to the gate on the east where he sees the water flowing out of the temple compound on the south side of the east gate. Ezekiel’s guide measures off a thousand cubits and then leads him across through water that is ankle deep (about 5 inches). Since the beginning of measurements in chapter 40 was using the long cubit (regular cubit of 18 inches plus a handbreadth of 3 inches making the long cubit 21 inches), that would make 1,000 cubits equal to 1,750 feet (about 1/3 mile). In the next 1/3 mile of the water course it was knee deep (about 20 inches) to cross. At the end of a mile, the water was up to the waist (about 3 feet) to cross. And after 1 1/3 miles, the water was too deep to walk across through it (about 6 feet). It was deep enough that he would need to swim. Ezekiel saw a great number of trees along each bank of the river and his guide told him the water flows down into the Arabah (which would be the present Jordan Valley) and then down into the sea (which would be the present Dead Sea). The south end of the Dead Sea is the former location of Sodom and Gomorrah which were destroyed by fire and brimstone. All the water that flows into the Dead Sea stays there until it evaporates, leaving a high concentration of salt behind. That’s why it is called the Dead Sea. No fish can live there because of the high salt concentration. But when this river flowing from the Millennial temple reaches the Dead Sea, the water in the Sea becomes fresh and fish of many kinds will live there, just like in the Great Sea (Mediterranean). Fishermen will stand on the shore and fish from En Gedi (near middle of Dead Sea on west bank) to En Eglaim (location not known but probably near Qumran where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea). Everywhere the river flows everything will live. Fruit trees will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not dry up and wither and their fruit will not fail (fall off the tree). Their fruit will provide food and their leave will provide healing.

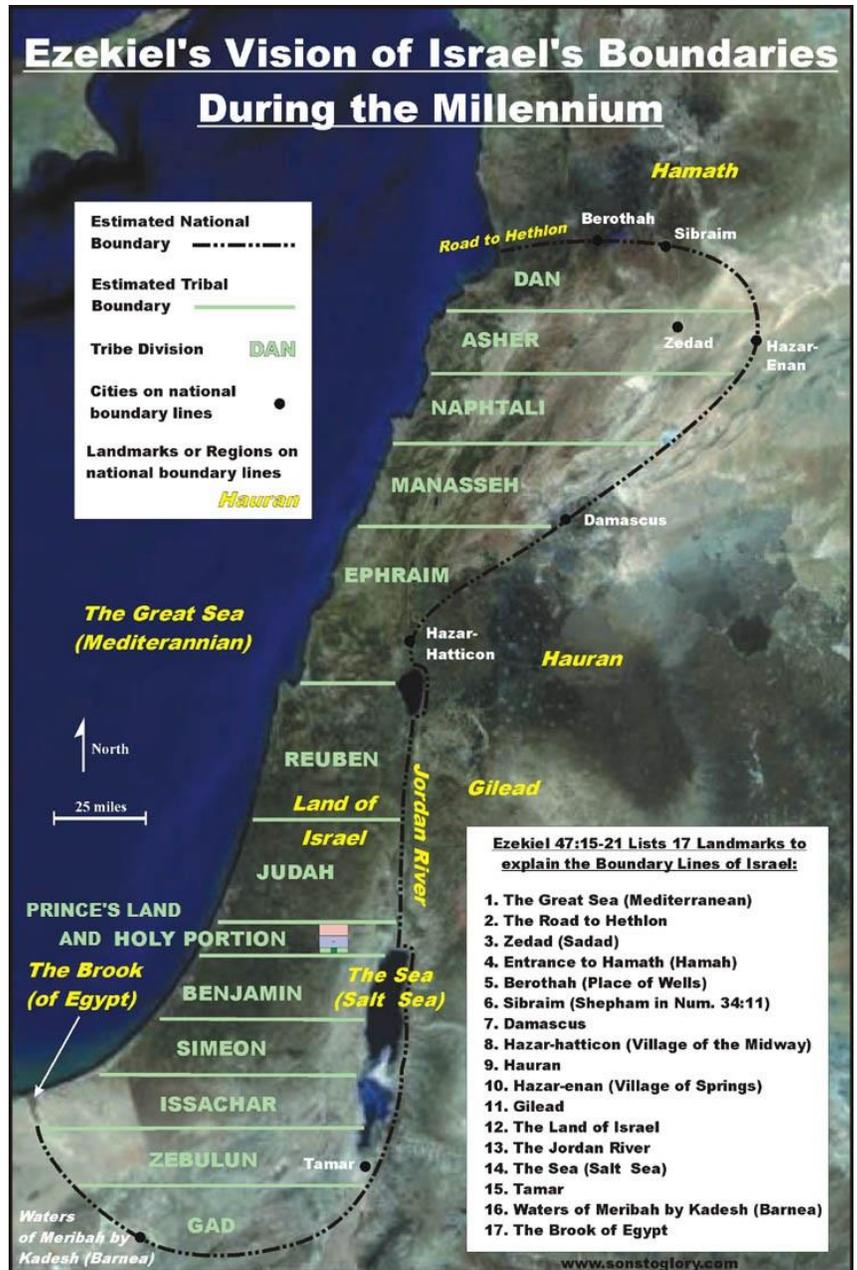
In Zechariah chapter 14, when he describes Jesus’ return to assume command of the earth and rule over it (the Millennium), he describes living water flowing both east and west out of Jerusalem – to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and the western sea (Mediterranean). Here, Ezekiel only sees and describes the eastern branch. Zezchariah also describes the land splitting at the Mount of Olives when Jesus returns from heaven to the place where the disciples watched him ascend (Acts 1). Half of the mountain will move north and the other half south. The whole land from Geba to Rimmon will become like the Arabah (Jordan Valley) but the land around Jerusalem will be raised up (something that would have to happen for the temple compound of 875 feet square to be built there). A 20th Century geologist (Zvi Garfunkle) using gravity anomaly mapping in Israel discovered a fault line several miles deep running from Geba to Rimmon (see map at right). The area east of that fault line appears to be the area Zechariah indicates will move downward making the highlands from the fault line to the cliffs on the west of the Dead Sea low like the Jordan Valley. (Garfunkle, Zvi. “Tectonic Setting of Magmatism in Israel.” *Israel Journal of Earth Science* 38 (1989): 51-74.)



Verses 13 – 23. Now God declares what the boundaries of the land that will be occupied by Israel will be and how it is to be divided. In Genesis 12:1 God told Abram to leave his country and go where God would show him. Abram left as God said and traveled southwest from Haran to Shechem where God told Abram he would give the land to Abram. In Genesis 15:18 – 21, God further specified that the land he would give Abram was from the river of Egypt (Nile) to the great river, the Euphrates. And in Genesis 17:8 God said the land would be given to him and his descendants as a lasting possession. In Numbers 34:1 – 12, God gives the boundaries of the land that the Israelites were to go and possess. Now he specifies the boundaries that will describe the land during the Millennium. He says the land is to be distributed by tribe and given to them as an inheritance for that tribe and any aliens living among them who have children.

Chapter 48

Verses 1 – 29. Now God gives the division of the land, tribe by tribe, starting with Dan on the north and ending with Gad in the south. The satellite image at the right shows the boundaries according to chapter 47 and the division of the land. When we look at the division of the land that Joshua did (figure below) we notice some differences in what land is given to which tribe.



Verses 30 – 35. Now God indicates there will be twelve gates of the city and names them according to the tribes. The city will be 4,500 cubits square (7,875 feet square). The distance around the city (circumference) will be 18,000 cubits (31,500 feet). The name on the city will be “The Lord is There” (Jehovah-Shammach).