

Ezekiel

INTRODUCTION

The author, whose name means "God Strengthens," is identified as "Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi" (1:3). Although this identification has been challenged, there seems to be no valid reason for doubting it. He was probably a member of the Zadokite priestly family that came into prominence during the reforms of Josiah (621 B.C.). He was trained in the priesthood during the reign of Jehoiakim, was deported to Babylon (1:1; 33:21; 40:1) in 597 B.C., and settled in Tel Abib on the Chebar Canal near Nippur (1:1). His ministry briefly overlapped Jeremiah's.

Ezekiel's call came to him in 593 B.C., the fifth year of Jehoiachin's reign. The latest date given for an oracle (29:17) is probably 571 B.C., making his ministry about twenty years long. The death of his wife occurred about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. (24:1, 15-17). Exiled in the second siege of Jerusalem, he wrote to those yet in Jerusalem about its imminent and total destruction, including the departure of God's presence. Parts were also apparently written after Jerusalem's overthrow.

Ezekiel's personality reflects a mystical strain. The immediacy of his contact with the Spirit, his visions, and the frequency with which the word of the Lord came to him provide a connection between the older ecstatic prophets and the classical writing prophets. His spiritual experiences also anticipated the activity of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. To him rightly belongs the title "charismatic."

Ezekiel's message was addressed to a demoralized remnant of Judah exiled in Babylon. The moral responsibility of the individual is a primary theme in his message. Corporate responsibility no longer shields the individual. Each individual must accept personal responsibility for the national calamity. Each individual is responsible for his or her individual sin (18:2-4). It is the weight of the cumulative sin of each individual that contributed to the breaking of God's covenant with Israel, and each bears a share of the blame for the judgment that resulted in the exile to Babylon.

The book is easily divided into three sections, Judah's judgment (chs. 4-24), the heathen nations' judgment (chs. 25-32), and future blessings for God's covenant people (chs. 33-48).

Two theological themes act as a counterpoise in the prophet's thought. In Ezekiel's doctrine of man, he placed the emphasis on personal responsibility (18:4, "the soul who sins shall die"). On the other hand, he emphasized the divine grace in the rebirth of the nation. The repentance of the faithful remnant among the exiles would result in the re-creation of Israel from the dry bones (37:11-14). The divine Spirit would quicken them to a new life. By this emphasis on the Holy Spirit in regeneration Ezekiel anticipated the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit, especially in the Gospel of John.

In Ezekiel, Christology and the Person and work of the Holy Spirit are inextricably bound together. Although a messianic figure is not clearly discernible in Ezekiel's final vision, several messianic titles and functions in the book indicate that a Messiah is part of his eschatological vision.

The title "Son of Man" occurs some ninety times in Ezekiel. While the title is applied to Ezekiel himself, it was appropriated by Jesus as His favorite self-designation. Therefore, Ezekiel may be regarded as a type of Christ. As such, Ezekiel was empowered as a prophetic voice of the messianic age when "the Spirit of the LORD fell" upon him (11:5). The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at Jordan empowered Him to articulate the advent of the messianic kingdom (Luke 4:18, 19).

Another messianic title is reflected in the vision of the Lord God as the divine Shepherd who gathers again His scattered flock (34:11-16). The figure evokes images of Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-16).

Ezekiel further develops the fundamental idea of Israel as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," which was rooted in the covenant of Sinai (Ex. 19:6). A restored sanctuary in the midst of a regathered people whose head is the King-priest, the Davidic Messiah (37:22-28), foreshadows the restored tabernacle of David, the church (Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16).

A final messianic prophecy of Christ employs the figure of a sprig of cedar planted by the Lord Himself on a lofty mountain, which becomes a lofty cedar providing fruit and nests for birds. This nature metaphor, like "the Root of Jesse" (Is. 11:1, 10; Rom. 15:12), serves to represent the future Messiah. Birds and trees represent Gentile nations to show Christ's universal reign.

Whether the prophetic revelation is presented symbolically in visions, signs, parabolic actions, or in human speech, Ezekiel claims for them the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. In addition, there are numerous references to the Spirit of God in the book. One might almost characterize the Book of Ezekiel as the "Acts of the Holy Spirit" in the Old Testament. Several of these references merit special notice.

In 11:5, the prophet asserts autobiographically that "the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said to me." The oracle that follows is thus God's Word in Ezekiel's words, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The same chapter (11:24) presents the Spirit as active in a vision: "Then the Spirit took me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to those in captivity."

Perhaps the best-known instance of the Spirit's activity is in chapter 37, the vision of the valley of dry bones: "The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones" (v. 1). The subsequent vision relates the spiritual rebirth of the remnant then in exile.

A final aspect of the Spirit's action in the life of the prophet is found in 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you." It is not solely an external act of the Spirit "falling upon" someone, but the prophesied subjective

experience of the Spirit's presence within, such as Ezekiel uniquely experienced when "the Spirit entered" him (2:2). Ezekiel anticipated the new covenant's "new birth" experience, which would be by the Spirit.

Three very important personal, relevant lessons can be learned in Ezekiel. First is the importance of individual moral responsibility. Although it is true that God still blesses and corrects entire local churches (Rev. 2; 3), His primary dealings are with individuals. As such, one cannot appeal to the righteousness of others as his righteousness nor need he fear personal correction for the sins of another (18:20).

Second, Ezekiel teaches that though God is reluctant to discipline His people severely, He must. He is a righteous and jealous God as much as He is merciful and forgiving (12:1-16).

Third, Ezekiel assures us that God will ultimately triumph in history. His enemies may be winning battles now, but future judgment will totally destroy them (35:1-15).

(Ezekiel Introduction-Spirit Filled Life Bible, Howard M. Ervin & Roy E. Hayden)

Ezekiel 1:1-28

The book of Ezekiel contains in it a wonderful picture of abandonment to the Spirit of God. Apart from its prophetic bearing, we may trace in it the work of God in a soul, and then through that soul as a pliable and obedient instrument in His hands.

The first chapter commences with opened heavens given to a soul prepared of God. Ezekiel was a priest, already separated to minister unto the Lord, but by circumstances detached from his ordinary duties. At the time the opened heavens came we find him among the captives by the river of Chebar. He was the only one who saw these visions, because he was waiting on God in spirit, and it is only to souls thus still before the Lord that God reveals Himself.

"There," *in the midst of others*, the "hand of the Lord" was upon him, and the "word of the Lord" came expressly to His waiting servant, speaking to him not only in words, but, as it were, in picture-lessons, as a mother would teach her child.

First there was given to Ezekiel

THE VISION OF THE LIVING CREATURES

"I looked... behold a fire infolding itself, and... out of the midst of the fire... came the likeness of four living creatures" (Ezek. 1:4, 5).

Scofield in his Bible notes says this passage of Scripture is highly figurative. The actual meaning of the "living creatures" cannot be definitely settled by any expositor. Spiritually, however, we may use the Cherubim shown to Ezekiel as a Spirit-given picture of the new creation in Christ Jesus, born not only out of His death on the Cross, but out of the midst of the fire—the *fire of the Holy Spirit*. In the "new creation" pictured by these living beings, we can trace the image of Christ as the "Firstborn among many brethren". In the "Eagle face" (v. 10) is suggested the Godward aspect of mounting up on the wings of faith and love in communion with God; in the "Ox face" the patient life of obedience to the will of God; in the "Lion face" the fearless boldness and the divine courage of the "Faithful Witness" (Revelation 3:14); and in the "Man face" the perfect humanity of the Man Christ Jesus.

Even so, when conformed to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29) we see that those who are new creations in Christ, born out of the fire of the Holy Ghost, have power to commune with God; they live in the will of God and have fellowship with the Man Christ Jesus in His sufferings.

These "new creations" are also "joined one to another" (Ezek. 1:11). "That they all may be one" (John 17:21) can only thus be fulfilled. Then "they went everyone straight forward" (Ezek. 1:12), "they turned not when they went". How this reminds us of Paul as he cried, "I press toward the mark," "this one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13, 14). They "follow on to know the Lord".

In verses 15 to 21 we come upon the "wheels" as a marvellous picture of the life of the new creation in Christ, lived in full obedience to the Holy Spirit of God.

"Wherever the Spirit was to go, they went; was their spirit to go... for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels" (Ezek. 1:20).

The Spirit of God in the wheels of circumstances, and the Spirit of God abiding and moving in the new creation, had no friction between them, for "the Spirit was ... in the wheels", and the *Spirit of life was in the living creatures*, therefore they moved together in perfect harmony. (This is blessedly true. A soul fully in harmony with God, having no desire outside the will of God, is always quickly *responsive* to the will of God in His providence. Moving with God inwardly, there is no difficulty in adjusting to God externally. This does not mean that the soul thus in harmony with God's will accepts all circumstantial "happenings" as His will in *passive* acquiescence. The Spirit of God works in a redeemed soul for the purpose of the *entire renewal of the whole personality*, bringing every part of the man, in spirit, soul and body, first into fellowship with Christ's death, and then under the energizing of His risen life, so that he may become a "fellow-worker with God" (2 Corinthians 6:1), and not purely an automaton passively acquiescent to His workings. The *renewed* man then has perception by the Spirit of what is truly of God in *circumstantial* matters. He instantly moves with God in what is clearly the "Providence" of God, but he resists at once what the Spirit of God in him plainly reveals as of the Evil One. (Cf. Romans 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:18))

This is a picture of life in the will of God. God wanted to teach Ezekiel what it meant to move in and with God, and God to move in him. Trustful obedience to the Spirit of God in him meant harmony with the Spirit of God in the wheels of circumstances working out "the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

Furthermore these new creations lived and moved in the "terrible crystal" of God's presence (Ezek. 1:22); they dwelt "in the light, as He is in the light" (1 John 1:7), with nothing between. The atmosphere was clear between them and God.

What do we know of this? When we live in God's "terrible, crystal" there are no shady corners, or "twistical" ways; no policy, or tactics; no plannings or schemings; no deceptions, or prevarications; no saying one thing and meaning another; no "end justifying the means" because it would answer our purpose. There is nothing that the world would use to reproach our God on our account, and which would not bear the searchlight of God.

When God had thus given Ezekiel the picture of the new creation abiding and moving in Himself, He lifted his eyes higher still—far above visions of what can be, visions of blessed possibilities—to Himself.

"Above ... was the likeness of a throne ... and ... a Man above it" (Ezek. 1:26).

We shall never get to our right place—to the dust at His feet—till we get a sight of the Man upon the Throne (see Job 42:5, 6). Paul saw the "glory of that light", and from that moment said he counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". Oh, may God lift up our eyes, that we may behold the Man upon the Throne!

(Fruitful Living, Jessie Penn Lewis)

What are the spiritual meanings of the four living creatures that are suggested by Jessie Penn Lewis?

How is the divine majesty of God revealed to Ezekiel in this vision?

Luke 4:18-19 John 10:11-16

What do the wheels represent and how far do they go?

Ezek. 1:20-21 Zech. 4:1-10

What does the "crystal" represent over the heads of the four living creatures (Ezek. 1:22)?

Ezek. 10:1 Rev. 4:6

Ezekiel 2:1-3:27

When Ezekiel saw Him, he fell upon his face. Then God spoke to him, and bade him stand upon his feet (Ezekiel 2:1). Apparently he could not do even this, until the Spirit of God entered into him and set him upon his feet—enabled him to get up and stand. With God's commands there is always included the power to obey.

This vision to Ezekiel shows us God's way of dealing with us. First comes the revelation of the new creation living and moving in the light and will of God, then He reveals the Man upon the throne—the Glorified Christ Himself. Next we find Ezekiel at His feet as one dead, like John at Patmos, and the Spirit of life from God entering into him in deeper power to work out in him the vision he had seen. This is God's way.

HOW GOD PREPARES HIS INSTRUMENT

"He said ... Son of Man, I send thee ... and thou shalt say ... Thus saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 2:3, 4).

Now we come to Ezekiel's commission, and how he was prepared by the Holy Spirit for being used by Him, primarily as a messenger of God, next as a "sign", and then as a seer telling of things to come.

The very first condition was the interview with God, and the receiving of the commission "I send thee" (Ezek. 2:3). The second was "eating" (Ezek. 3:1) or receiving of the "roll" into his very being, before God could say "Go speak".

This lesson is one for all who would carry the Lord's message. The question is so often asked, "How shall I prepare for this class, or meeting?" Here is the answer, "Eat—go—speak." "Receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears, and go." When the words are not "eaten" by the messenger, they fall powerless on the ears of the hearers. They must become part of the inner life, wrought into heart and character by the Holy Spirit, if we are to be true messengers of God.

Then again comes the Glory (Ezek. 3:12, 14), and the Spirit of God laying hold of Ezekiel—lifting him up and taking him away. He goes in bitterness and in the "heat of his spirit" we read, but in spite of this, "the hand of the Lord was strong upon me," he said. The next thing we see is that he is dumb, and again among the captives. He sat where they sat, and remained among them seven days (Ezek. 3:15), "astonished" at all he had seen and heard.

What a strange preparation for an obedient soul for special service. We would have thought that all that had occurred previously would have been sufficient equipment. What was God doing with His servant? At least we can see He was making him *pliable* in obedience, and ready for all He purposed to do with him as His messenger to Israel. First He says "Go", and when he obeyed and went where he was sent, then he sat dumb among his brethren, with nothing to say, till God gave him the message. This is the way God trains His messengers. What difficulty He has in making us pliable in His hands! Oh that our hearts were open to the Spirit of God as a leaf of a tree is sensitive to the breath of the wind (Isaiah 7:2)!

In Ezekiel's story we see how God prepares His children so that they may be pliable and obedient to the Spirit of God. When the Holy Spirit bade him go to the plain, he went to the plain (Ezek. 3:22, 23), finding there the "glory of the Lord" so that he again fell on his face, and again the Spirit entered into him, i.e., there was a renewed influx of the Spirit, enabling him to rise to his feet, ready to fulfill any further commands from God. Now he is bidden, "Go, shut thyself within thine house" (Ezek. 3:24), and then told of suffering which he would have to endure at the hands of others, without a word of approval, until once more God would give him the message which, when it came, had no reference to the indignities the messenger had endured (Ezek. 3:25-27). This is true self-abnegation and absolute obedience to the will of God.

It is important to point out in connection with this implicit obedience of Ezekiel to the commands of God that there are passages in the book of Ezekiel showing that he did not fulfill these directions of the Holy Spirit as a *passive automaton*

(robot) (e.g., Ezek. 4:14; 11:13). It is clear all through that Ezekiel had all his mental faculties in operation, enabling him to *know the will of God for him* in the matters referred to, and obey intelligently and deliberately. It is necessary to remember this, lest we conceive of Ezekiel's obedience as a subject obeys the mesmerist. Since this little book was first published in 1897, the Church of Christ has painfully discovered that there are counterfeits of true abandonment to the Spirit. We must take heed lest in fear of these counterfeits we lose the true. No soul can be fully used of God unless he becomes *intelligently* and volitionally obedient to the will of God. Note that Ezekiel had to *act* of himself in the sense that when the Spirit of God bade him "Go to the plain", he had to exercise his personal volition and go. It is necessary to remember this aspect of Ezekiel's obedience, lest we imagine he had no intelligent part in voluntary co-operation with God in acting as he was bidden.

And this is not all the testing God led Ezekiel into, so as to prove him in his surrender to the will of God, even as he proved Abraham. By sore experience Ezekiel had to prove that he was utterly yielded, even in family relationships, for when at the time of his wife's death (Ezek. 24:16) he is told not to weep, "he did as he was commanded". *Thus he did show also that he had learnt self-control* in the most difficult realm of all—the realm of the affections. Oh, what it means to be obedient to God!

Again, in the giving of the message of God, Ezekiel had to be willing for the consequences according to the purposes of God, not the judgment of man. Once when he was speaking, a man died (11:13), and the heart-broken messenger fell "upon his face, and cried with a loud voice, Ah, Lord God, wilt Thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" How painful to be a messenger of judgment. He felt as if he could speak no more, but the Lord sent him forth again.

It may be that we who speak of "full surrender to God" are too little prepared for giving up ourselves in reality to God to be under the hand of the Holy Spirit. We are too rigid, whereas He must have us pliable. We are so fettered by our "machinery", and say, "I cannot do my work unless I do it in this way!" and so He has to deal with us to get us out of our ruts. There is no freedom for the Spirit of God in cast-iron machinery. Let us not try to make others do exactly as we do, but help them to be what God can make of them individually. We should not like to see all our pots cast in the same mold, or a garden of flowers all of one hue. God gives every tree freedom to grow. May God keep us from hindering the work of the Holy Ghost in any of His children who are serving Him. (Some "happenings" in the Church of Christ since this was written make it necessary to say again here that this does not mean our being "dumb" when we see the Counterfeiter misleading others under the guise of the Spirit of God. A soul as fully surrendered to God as Ezekiel was, understands how to obey 1 John 4:1-4.)

Are we willing to yield ourselves to the Holy Ghost? Do we realize that we are not ready for service till we have met with God so really that we know we have received our commission from Him?

There is, alas, a vast amount of "Christian work" today that is not God's work—that is, work carried on by God Himself through human vessels. "*They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept*" (Song of Solomon 1:6). Take care that God sends you, and then, whatever the apparent results are, it will be all right.

Let us look again at Ezek. 3:22-24. Ezekiel said, "The hand of the Lord was there upon me; and He said unto me, Arise... I arose, and went forth... and behold, the glory of the Lord stood there ... I fell upon my face. Then the Spirit entered into me ... and said..."

God was able to work in Ezekiel so mightily because he was pliable and instantly obedient to the Holy Spirit of God. See all through the story, from this chapter onwards, not the smallest resistance to the revealed will of God, or hesitation in obedience. God could count upon him to fulfill His will. What a blessed picture of a surrendered life!

How few of us are willing for this utter surrender, this absolute abandonment. But the apostles knew it at Pentecost (see Acts 2:44-47), and if we are to know the real power of Pentecost it can only be upon these conditions—all *private interests* and personal considerations utterly merged in the interests of God and of His Kingdom.

If God has turned His hand upon us in circumstances we do not understand to test our surrender and obedience, may we obey and trust implicitly our faithful God.

(Fruitful Living, Jessie Penn Lewis)

What must happen to Ezekiel before he can go forward with God's message? Must this also happen to us?

Ezek. 2:1-10 Dan. 8:17 John 1:30-34 Acts 2:1 2 Cor. 12:7

What is Ezekiel's responsibility?

Ezek. 3:27 Eph. 6:19

Explain what Jessie Penn Lewis meant when she said, Ezekiel was not a "passive automaton".

Ezekiel 4:1-17

HOW GOD USED EZEKIEL

1. As a "Sign" (Ezek. 4:3). We have seen how the three first chapters of the book of Ezekiel are taken up with the revelation of God to Ezekiel, and then His preparation of him for service. The Spirit of God entered into him, to work within him in accordance with the purposes of God. We read that the Holy Spirit "took him up", taking him first to this place and then to the other, all to test and teach him how to be obedient to the Spirit of God. All that Ezekiel did was to trust and obey the Spirit of God without questioning, or hesitating. From chapter 4, on to the end, we have the story of God's work through Ezekiel.

Let us look at him now as a "sign". See how implicitly he obeyed God. A "sign" is always "speaking" even unknowingly to itself. Are we "signs and wonders"? Pentecost is always followed by "signs and wonders". See Zechariah 3:8, "They are men of wonder," and again Isaiah 8:18. "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given Me are for signs and for wonders."

Ezekiel was a "sign" to Israel as he showed his willingness to suffer for his Lord. He was a "sign" in showing that his household goods belonged to God. He was a "sign", and is a "sign" to us, in the way he ate his food. How many of God's children are in bondage here? Surely we become a "sign" of grace when there is no grumble over these matters in daily life, because the body is manifestly under control.

God dealt with Ezekiel on every point; loosing him from his religious prejudices (Ezek. 4:8-17), and from bondage regarding food (Ezek. 4:9-11). His body was evidently not his master, or it would have been hard to eat "by measure". He was loosed from pride of appearance (Ezek. 5:1); his property was at God's disposal; when God told him to prepare his belongings for removing, he did not say, "I like this place best." We say, "such a nice church and Christian fellowship!" or "I cannot move at an hour's notice!" How comfortable we make our nests, and think, like Job, that we shall die in them!

Again we look at him in Ezekiel 21, as a melted soul! The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel saying, "Sigh therefore... with the breaking of thy loins (i.e., a broken heart) and with bitterness shalt thou sigh before their eyes" (Ezek. 21:6). "Cry and howl, son of man... smite therefore upon thy thigh" (Ezek. 21:12). How ashamed people are of a tear! How reserved and unapproachable many of God's children are. Transparency comes after contact with God. If a past experience will help to remove another's difficulties, when utterly yielded to God we shall not mind being laid bare at the keenest point of our heart-life to give that help. The devil hates testimony; he will keep our mouths closed if he can, and hearts will remain untouched around us. The Lord must break us. He must pour us out if souls are to be blessed. Jesus wept. His tears flowed forth for Jerusalem and for the sins of His people Israel. He wept with the sorrowing ones at Bethany. We need melted hearts, hearts that will sigh and cry over the burdens and sins of others.

Ezekiel was a "sign" when God took away the "desire of his eyes" at a stroke. God knew the sorrow, yet He bade him neither weep nor mourn. This teaches us that only when we take things which are painful to the natural man in a way contrary to the world, by the power of the resurrection life, shall we become a "sign". Death of the body is not *death* to the child of God, who has learnt the death fellowship with Christ in His Cross and His grave. Paul says it is simply "sleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

2. As a *Prophet* (Ezek. 6:1, 2). Look now at Ezekiel as a prophet—that is, one who makes known the will of God to the people. See him sent out with his messages of judgment to the "blind leaders" and to the "princes" of Israel. See how God bore witness to the Word with "signs following" (Ezek. 11:13). God seems to have used him alternately as a "sign" and then as a messenger, while Ezekiel was obedient to His will, obedient, whether told to be dumb or to speak, to be used just as the Lord desired, in judgment or blessing. May all the Lord's children learn what it means to be wholly given up to God for His will, for *this is the normal life in God set before us in the New Testament*. Ezekiel's path was abnormal even in the days in which he lived, but described in the language of the Epistles of Paul, and set before us in the life of our Lord when He walked on earth, we see that Ezekiel's obedience to God contains in germ the principles of the life every redeemed soul is called to live. For absolute obedience to the known will of God is a fundamental necessity if we are to be used by Him. For this we are bidden (Romans 12:1, 2) to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, and not to be "conformed to this world". "Transformed" by the renewing of the mind, it is possible for us, as well as Ezekiel, to provide what is that "good and acceptable and perfect will of God" for each of our lives individually. The outworking of this obedience we can trace in the disciples in the early Church. They were not bidden to become "signs" in the same manner as Ezekiel, but they were "signs" to the people of Jerusalem that the Christ they had crucified still lived. So with us today. We too may be "signs" of the reality of Christ in a way which God desires for this unbelieving generation. We, too, must be content to be used by God as *silent* witnesses (e.g. 1 Peter 3:1), or as messengers, "holding forth the word of life"; in either case "unto God a sweet savour of Christ", both "in them that are saved, or in them that perish" (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16).

(Fruitful Living, Jessie Penn Lewis)

How would you describe a person that was a "sign" for God today? As you continue reading through Ezekiel keep in mind Ezekiel's obedience to God in order to be a "sign" for God and His purpose.

What separates a people from their God?

Deut. 28:46-48 Isa. 59:2 Ezek. 5:7-8 Ezra 4:4-5

What significance was there for Ezekiel to be lying on his left and right side (Ezek. 4:4-8)? To cook his food over a fire of cow dung (Ezek. 4:15)?

Ezekiel 5:1-17

The shaving off of Ezekiel's hair in symbolical action intimated prophetically that God, by means of the enemy as His cutting razor, purposed to cut off the reprobates, both priests and people.

Yet nothing was to be done at random. The balances (v. 1) implied that the persons to be punished, as well as also the kind of punishment about to be inflicted, were all accurately determined beforehand. The hairs represented the Jews. A third portion was to be burnt in the midst of the city—that is, was to perish by pestilence and famine; a third was to be smitten with the sword; and of the remaining third the majority was to be scattered in the wind—that is, was to be dispersed among all nations, and a sword to be drawn out after them. Only a small part of the third and remaining portion was to be bound in Ezekiel's skirts, to signify the preservation of an elect remnant amidst the consuming judgments on the great mass of the nation; and even of this elect few some were to be cast into the fiery ordeal again.

Hence we learn how great is God's wrath against sin, when even the nation of His choice was so sorely chastised for transgression. Let the sinner go where he will, God draws a sword after him (vv. 2, 12). We also see that there is no chance in the seeming confusion of this world's affairs. They are all, in the very minutest particular, ordered and overruled by sovereign wisdom and justice. The divine goodness, too, is strikingly manifested in His preservation of the elect, so that not a hair of their head can be injured (Dan. 3:27; Matt. 10:30).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What happens to those chosen people whom God has become angry with and set aside (bound in Ezekiel's skirts) (Ezek. 5:3)?

Ezek. 5:13-17

After the Lord's anger has been spent on Israel, how will the nations that put her in subjection be effected?

Ezek. 5:13-17

Ezekiel 6:1-14

It is awful when men cannot be taught to "know the Lord" as the God of grace and love, and require to be taught, by His pouring His righteous fury upon them (v. 12), smiting them with His hand and treading them under His feet (v. 11), to know that He is the Almighty Jehovah, who will by no means clear the guilty (v. 14). But such cases are recorded for our warning, that we may flee the sin of the Jewish nation, and so escape their punishment. Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord. Remembering our obligations to Him, and how sadly we fall short of them, let us loathe ourselves because of our sinfulness, and rejoice at the same time in the true salvation provided for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then let our feeling towards those still on the broad way be like the compassionate feeling of Ezekiel, sighing for his nation's sin and consequent doom. "Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence" (v. 11). Let us warn all to flee from sin and condemnation to the only Savior, since we know that "he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:20).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Mountains have no ears so why was Ezekiel told to "set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them." (Ezek. 6:2)

Ps. 98:7-9 Isa. 1:2 Ezek. 6:13

Ezekiel 7:1-27

Ezekiel indicates, by the abruptness of his prophetic exclamations, and by his frequent repetitions, how deeply his soul was moved at the incurable sin of his people, and the inevitable ruin which was imminent. The long-suffering of God towards sinners, great as it is, must at last come to "an end" (v. 2). How soon "the end" may be, which of us can say? It cannot be far distant now, for upwards of eighteen hundred years ago Peter declared, "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Pet. 4:7). It is nearer us now by eighteen centuries (now twenty centuries). When the end actually comes, God will judge sinners according to their ways, and He who has shown such long-continued and wonderful pity will no longer pity nor spare the reprobates (v. 4). Then shall unmixed "evil," without a parallel (v. 5), overtake them—"an evil, an only evil."

Justice, "waking" as it were from the slumber of ages wherein sinners were spared, shall cause never-ceasing vengeance to fall upon the impenitent.

Seeing, then, that the time is short to us, as it was to the Jews on the eve of their overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar, how loosely we should sit to earthly things! Of what profit at the judgment will earthly purchases, bought at a bargain, be to "the buyer who has not bought the pearl of great price"? (v. 12) And what cause for mourning shall the seller of earthly possessions have then, if only he has not, like profane Esau, sold his heavenly birthright for the pleasures of sense? Let us not therefore be overtaken unawares by the day of the Lord, through the same earthly-mindedness as characterized the men of Sodom, who "did eat and drink, bought and sold," as if these were the chief end of man's being, until "it rained fire and brimstone from, heaven, and destroyed them all" (Luke 17:28, 29). Rather, as Paul teaches us (1 Cor. 7:30, 31), when we "rejoice," let us be "as though we rejoiced not," when we "buy, as though we possessed not," "using this world, and not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away."

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

The ungodly believe their works of darkness will never be brought to light. **What are they putting their trust in?**

Ezek. 7:19-20 Ezek. 8:11-18 Rom. 13:11-14

Ezekiel 8:1-18

In this chapter Ezekiel is shown in a vision the abominations on account of which God is about to forsake His own temple, and to give it and the city of Jerusalem to destruction (vv. 17, 18). The prophet is permitted to see, with his own eyes, "the image" which provoked God's holy "jealousy," at the door of the inner temple gate (v. 3); then also "the chambers of imagery" covered with portraits of abominable idols (v. 10), and before them the seventy elders of Israel offering incense in the dark, as though the Lord saw them not, and had forsaken the earth (v. 12); next, the very women weeping for the imaginary sorrows of the impure god Tammuz (v. 14); and a greater abomination still being perpetrated "between the porch and the altar of Jehovah, where the ministers of the Lord ought to have been weeping for their own and the nation's sins (Joel 2: 17), and deprecating His wrath, the high priest and the four and twenty leaders of the courses of priests, with their backs turned on the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east, as they were worshipping the rising sun (v. 16).

One could hardly believe that such abominations were possible among the people of God's covenant; and, after having seen them, one's only wonder is, that God should have spared them so long, and that, when He did take vengeance, He did not utterly destroy the whole race, root and branch, so as to leave no surviving remnant. But is there nothing analogous among ourselves? If God were to give any of us a comprehensive view of all the abominations perpetrated in one nation, or even one city, at one time, would our so-called Christian peoples have much cause for glorying as superior to Israel and Jerusalem when God was about to take vengeance on His covenant-people for their sins? How grievously must our national and individual covetousness, which is idolatry (Col. 3:5), "provoke God to jealousy" (v. 3). Again, if "in the wall" of most men's outward profession of Christianity "a hole" or window were opened, whereby the inner heart could be seen (v. 7), and "a door" dug whereat one could "Go in, and behold the wicked abominations" there, what awful pictures "portrayed in the chambers of every man's imagery" (v. 12) would be discovered!

How many, even in higher positions of life, such as were "the ancients of the house of Israel," would be found "doing in the dark" the deeds of darkness (John 3:20), "burning incense" to the idols of the heart, lust, and self and virtually saying, "The Lord seeth us not, The Lord hath forsaken the earth!" (v. 12)

Again, as many women wept for the idol Tammuz (v. 14) who "grieved not for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6:6), so how many professing Christian women waste in sickly and carnal sentimentality the tender and susceptible natures which God has given them wherewith to weep with them that weep, to heal the bruises of the suffering members of the Church, and to minister to those who need temporal or spiritual help! Again, how many in offices of ministerial responsibility, as the high priest and the twenty-four subordinate priests were (v. 16), who ought to be with their faces towards the Lord, and in His house interceding for their guilty country (v. 16), would be detected with their backs turned on the Lord, paying homage to those in princely stations, with their faces toward them as the rising sun in *the east*, and forgetting that "promotion cometh neither from the *east*, nor from the west, nor from the south: but God is the Judge; He putteth down one and setteth up another!" (Ps. 75:6, 7)

The more we search into the secret springs of human nature and of our own hearts, the more abominations shall we detect. And the more we thereby see the forbearance of God towards us, the more incentive have we to provoke no more so long-suffering a God. Our spiritual privileges are greater than those of the most highly favored of the Old Testament people of God. "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven (that is, the Gospel dispensation) is greater than" their greatest (Matt. 11:11). Let us, then, seek, by the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, to "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Let Christian women, instead of weeping over fictitious tales of morbid love and carnal sorrows, like the women who wept for the beautiful and licentious Tammuz (v. 14), consecrate their fine sensibilities to the active promotion of the glory of Him who is altogether lovely, and whose bitter sufferings for us should call forth our tears of gratitude and

glowing love. Let them, instead of resembling the women weeping for Tammuz, try to resemble the devotion of Mary, who, when all others were gone, stood at the sepulcher of her crucified Lord weeping, and so had her tears dried up by the risen Savior Himself (John 20:11-16). Let ministers seek to be pure in their aims and motives, having a single eye to the glory of God. And let all guard against an unbridled imagination, and against every bosom-(close, intimate) idol which would provoke our holy and loving God to jealousy.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What is meant by the expression in Ezekiel 8:3; “where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy.”

Is man’s thought today similar to what was said in Ezekiel 8:12, “The Lord does not see us”?

Ezek. 9:9

Ezekiel 9:1-11

The glory of the God of Israel (v. 3) withdrew at the same time that the angelic watchers over the city drew nigh to it with their slaughter weapons in hand. When God departs from a people, or from individuals, their glory and their safety depart.

One stood among the six angels as their acknowledged lord, being distinct from them and above them (v. 2), He was "man," but free from man's sin, as His robe of spotless white "linen" implies. He was "one;" for while others are sons of men, He is the only one who is "*the* Son of man." It was "because He is the Son of man" that "the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment" (John 5:27). This judgment He executes through the instrumentality of His attendant angels.

At the same time that He is the judge of the guilty, He bears also the inkhorn by His side, to set His mark upon the foreheads of His elect, that so they may be saved while the rest are destroyed (vv. 4, 6). He writes their names in His book of life (Rev. 13:8). As He is "one," the peerless One, "the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song 5:10), He terms His Church also "one:" "My undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her" (Song 6:9). How comforting to believers it is to know that God will do nothing in the way of judgment until He has first sealed and secured their safety! Those who have remained uncontaminated in the midst of abounding sin, God will keep safe amidst abounding calamity. Whatever floods of wrath are about to deluge this ungodly earth, the elect, in the secret of God's presence, shall be kept as the apple of the eye, and hidden under the shadow of His wings (Ps. 17:8).

Two characteristics of the sealed remnant about to be saved are presented before us: first, faithfulness to God; they are indignant at the dishonor done to His holy name by the abominations perpetrated in Jerusalem: secondly, tenderness of spirit towards man; "they sigh and cry for all the abominations" (v. 4). Uncompromising zeal for the glory of God is consistent with the greatest charity, pity, and tenderness in relation to our fellow-men. They who denounce the divine judgments against ungodly men, should do so with judgment. True humility will remind us what sinners we were, and are, by nature; and that whatever difference there may be between us and those whom we condemn, however justly, is due solely to the grace of God; as Bradford, in seeing a criminal go by to his execution, said, "There goes by John Bradford, but for the grace of God." Compassion for our fellow-men, who are rushing on to their own ruin, not repulsive harshness, becomes us, who are such debtors to the divine compassion. At the same time we must beware of the false charity which would call by gentle names, and gloss over, the ungodliness and unbelief of those around us. One chief redeeming quality is recorded of Lot, though otherwise an unsatisfactory character—he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; and vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds" (2 Pet. 2:7, 8). Let us imitate him in this; let us grieve and "sigh" in our spirit inwardly, and "cry," giving outward expression to our sense of the wrong done to the God who is so dear to us: as Adelaide Newton said, "It is like going under a wheel full of spikes to hear unholy things spoken of one so dear as the Lord Jesus."

The destroying angel "began at the ancient men" of the "sanctuary" (v. 6). God, in His judgments, commences with those who in respect to privileges stand nearest to Him. So far is the possession of means of grace from saving men from wrath, that He abhors sin most in those from whom, by reason of their spiritual opportunities, most good was to have been expected.

The denial of the special providence of God, on the part of those who said, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not," is the one feature of guilt in particular specified by God as the source of the iniquity of the doomed, and the great cause for bringing down His terrible judgments. Those who take heed to the signs of the times can hardly but observe the tendency of our age to ignore the God of special providence, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet 3:4). This is the revealed mark of the last age, the times of apostasy of the Gentile Church, to be followed by judgments, beginning at the Lord's sanctuary, the professors of Christianity, more fearful than those which succeeded the apostasy of the Jewish Church when they rejected and crucified their Lord. Let us see that we be found among the few faithful among the faithless.

"The Man clothed with linen, who had the inkhorn by His side (v. 11), reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me." The Lord Jesus is perfectly faithful to the trust committed to Him by the Father: "Of all which the Father hath given the Son He loses nothing" (John 6:39). Alike in executing judgment on the reprobates, and in saving the sealed elect, He shall at last say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). Let us adore the grace which has saved us, if we be believers, out of the mass of those who perish by their own perversity. Let us, in all we do, for the glory of Christ's name, follow his example, and "report" every "matter" to our God in prayer and supplication.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Are there two types of marks given to the people in this chapter? Who is it that marks the people? What is the destiny of the two groups? Compare the marks given here with other places in scripture where people receive a mark and what is the significance of each mark?

Ezek. 8:11, 12, 16 Ezek. 9:4-6 Rev. 7:3 Rev. 9:4 Rev. 13:16-17

Ezekiel 10:1-22

The throne of Jehovah, elevated in the firmament over the doomed city and temple, intimates to us that, whatever be the intermediate instrumentalities employed, God is the Great First Cause of all the judgments which descend upon the guilty of the earth. All may seem a flood of confusion to the eye of sense, but faith recognizes the truth, that "the Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King forever" (Ps. 29:10).

The Son of Man, in the anticipated form of His incarnation, is the actual executor of the Father's judgment, scattering the "coals of fire" kindled by His holy wrath (v. 2; Ps. 18:8, 12, 13) over the guilty. These coals of fire, taken not from the altar whereon a propitiation was offered to God, "but from between the cherubim, which represents His providence, teach us that when sinners reject the propitiation of Christ and the purifying fire of His Holy Spirit they bring on themselves the consuming fire of His judgments, directed by His providence. The same Son of Man who could have saved them, had they believed and obeyed the Gospel, will destroy them because they perversely reject it. Well may they tremble when they ask themselves that solemn question, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33:14.)

The gradual and successive steps by which God departed from His once-favored temple, and from Jerusalem, teach us how slow to anger God is. He withdraws His gracious presence reluctantly, as though He were unwilling to go. He lingers in long-suffering, if haply (by chance) even yet the sinner will be moved by fear, and touched by the forbearance of God, to repent and pray to Him (vv. 4, 18).

When God is leaving a people in wrath, premonitory (giving precious warning) intimation is given by many signs, in the way of God's providence, answering to the "sound of the cherubim's wings" (v. 5), which accompanied the departure of the glory of the Lord from the mercyseat (v. 4). Thus the Lord Jesus saith to His disciples, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh;" and, again, "Behold the fig tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21:20, 29-31). Let us discern the signs of our days, and be like the children of Issachar, men that have understanding of the times, to know what the spiritual Israel, the Church, ought to do (1 Chr. 12:32). "The voice of the Almighty God" 'speaks' (v. 5) to us in His Word and in His providential dealings in the world. Let us compare both together, with prayer for the Spirit's illuminating power, and let us act accordingly.

The wheels within wheels (v. 10), however seemingly complicated, moved in harmonious unison. So God's doings, amidst their manifold variety, have a perfect unity of plan and end. The "whirling wheels" (v. 13) express the winged speed (v. 8) with which the agencies of God's providence move, where to man's dull perception there might seem to be delay. The "hands" express the aptness and efficacy with which God's ministering powers execute the work intrusted to them. While the "eyes" (v. 12), everywhere looking forth from the whole body—the backs, the hands, the wings, and the wheels of the cherubim—express how infinite is God's knowledge,—nothing escapes His searching glance; His eyes in providence are everywhere beholding the evil and the good (Prov. 15:3). Let this thought give us at once warning and comfort—warning, if we are walking in virtual disbelief, as though He had forsaken the earth and seeth us not (ch. 9:9)—comfort, if we are living to His glory, while we are distressed with trials and temptations in the world.

Woe be to the people or the individual from whom God departs (v. 18; Hos. 9:12). Whereas the Lord will give grace and glory to His people (Ps. 84:11), all grace and glory leave those whom God leaves. Let us jealously watch against all that would provoke God to withdraw His Holy Spirit from us. Let us imitate the cherubim, and take care that we go "every one straight forward" (v. 22); not like Lot's wife, looking back, and then turning back; but, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high, calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, 14).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Prove or disprove the man in fine linen in Ezekiel 10:2 is the pre-incarnate Christ.

Ezek. 9:1, 3, 18, 19

After the coals were scattered over the city what was the condition in the temple with respect to God's glory?

Ezek. 10:18

Ezekiel 11:1-25

It is a common thing for men to put away from them, as Jaazaniah and Pelatiah did (vv. 1-3), serious thoughts of the judgment to come, by persuading themselves that "it is not near." There is no need, they think, of our making immediate preparation for eternity, or of our seeking the "house not made with hands, the *building* of God, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). It is too remote a contingency for us to trouble ourselves about *now*. Thus Satan cheats men out of all their time, by cheating them out of the present time, and robs them of salvation by inducing them to put off seeking it.

God knows accurately everyone of the self-deceits 'that come into men's minds' (v. 5). He knew the scornful jests which the ungodly in Ezekiel's day uttered against His prophets and their prophecies. They had sneered at Jeremiah's comparison of Jerusalem to a caldron (large kettle or boiler), saying, If it be so, it will secure us within its walls, even as the caldron preserves the flesh in it from being burnt by the fire outside. But sinners deceive themselves, not God, by such calculations. No defenses, no hiding-place can shield sinners from being brought forth by God to judgment (v. 7).

Sin in the midst of a people is sure to bring upon them foes from without (vv. 6, 7). The hostile sword, through fear of which they have compromised religious principle, shall fall upon them as it did upon the Jews, just because of that compromise (vv. 8, 10, 12). Since men will not recognize God in His dealings of mercy, they shall be forced to "know God by the judgments which He executeth" (v. 10; Ps. 9:16). God sometimes singles out individual sinners for judgment as a warning to others. The sudden death of Pelatiah, the ringleader of the scornful, is a sample of the awful end of all who "sit in the seat of the scornful." Such cases are calculated to strike terror into sinners; yet, though we read of the prophet being so deeply affected that he fell down upon his face (v. 13), we do not read of a similar effect being wrought upon Pelatiah's companions in guilt. How sad it is that the godly should be concerned for the coming doom of transgressors, and yet the transgressors themselves remain unmoved! Let believers imitate Ezekiel, and when judgments descend on some, "lift up their prayer for the remnant that is left" (Isa. 37:4).

The full and final restoration of Israel out of all the countries of their long-continued dispersion is to be accompanied by their spiritual restoration to the favor of God through a true repentance and living faith. These graces are not men's work in themselves, but God's free *gift* to them—"I will *give* them one heart" (v. 19)—a heart no longer halting between *two* opinions—a heart wholly delivered from its past craving after "abominations and detestable things" (v. 18)—the hearts of all as the heart of one man devoted singly to the Lord. Instead of the "heart of stone," God by His Holy Spirit puts within His people a "heart of flesh" and a "new spirit," so that "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). The outward fruit corresponds to this inward new principle of life: *Walking* in God's statutes, and *keeping* and *doing* His ordinances, they show that they are indeed "His people," and that "He is their God" (v. 20). Mere outward change of position and circumstances would be no real blessing without the inward change unto holiness, which is the spring of all happiness.

As there is a future of hope to the elect remnant, so there is a future of punishment to the impenitent. Assimilated in heart to the detestable objects to which they give their hearts (v. 21), they have appointed to them, as their just sentence from God, "I will recompense their way upon their own heads" (v. 21). The visible symbol of the glory of the Lord departed from Jerusalem to the mount of Olives, and it is on the same mount the Lord's glory will be manifested in His return to Jerusalem (Zech. 14:4). Let us pray for His speedy visible return, and let us meanwhile see that we do not, by a careless and inconsistent walk, provoke Him to withdraw His invisible and spiritual presence from us!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Once again we see those set apart ones, those that were bound into Ezekiel's garments (Ezek. 5:3), and tried (Ezek. 5:5-8) returning to the land of Israel. (Ezek. 11:16-17) **What will be their spiritual state upon their return?**

Ezek. 11:18-20

Is any part of the prophecies spoken here being fulfilled today?

Ezek. 11:16-20

Ezekiel 12:1-28

It is truly said, none are so blind as those who will not see (v. 2). Natural men are blind and deaf to spiritual truth, not from want of eyes and ears, but from disinclination to use them right. It needs no less a power than that of the Spirit of God to create in man a new heart, and work in men to will and to do aright.

When the simple announcement of the coming doom of Jerusalem, its king, and its people, failed to awaken the Jews, Ezekiel is directed to present before their eyes a vivid picture, in symbolical action, of their approaching overthrow, if by chance even yet the rebellious people will "consider" and repent (vv. 3-8). When one mode of appeal fails to arrest the serious attention of hearers, the minister must adopt another; and the more vivid and life-like his style is, so that the truth is as it were set before the very eyes of the people, the more likely are they to be impressed. This was the object of the symbolical actions of the prophets; and so Paul describes his own preaching to the Galatians—"O . . . Galatians . . . *before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you*" (Gal. 3:1).

Instead of drawing from the significant act of the prophet the spiritual lesson that was designed, the Jews caviled at his action, affecting not to understand what he meant by doing so; as in, a subsequent chapter (ch. 24:19) they are represented as asking, "Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?" The king also, unwilling to believe what he did not wish to be true, persuaded himself that there was a discrepancy in the statements of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, that God would "bring him to Babylon," and that yet he should "not see" it (v. 13). None are so keen in finding difficulties in Scripture as those who have no desire that it should be found true. There is left in the Bible a sufficiency of stumbling blocks whereon, in righteous retribution, all such as lack child-like docility and humility are allowed to stumble. To all those who sincerely and humbly desire to do God's will, seeming discrepancies prove no stumbling block. For many such, they have already found, on deeper search, prove to be hidden *harmonies*, as is the case in what seemed to Zedekiah a discrepancy; and as to those difficulties which they cannot solve, they believe that if they had more light they would find the difficulties disappear, so that they are content to trust God, and to wait His time for making all that is now dark clear.

What a humiliation to the Jews to hear that their king, Zedekiah, in whom they so trusted, should not only not be able to help them, but should, with muffled face, and with his equipments on his own shoulders, stealthily flee away by night! Inextricably entangled in the meshes of God's net "spread upon him" (v. 13), he was doomed to be deprived of sight, and so to be carried to Babylon, and yet not see it, though he should die there. His "bands (troops)," and all from whom he could look for "help," should be scattered (v. 14), and a sword drawn after them. How vain it is to "put trust in princes, or in the son of man, in whom there is no help!" (Ps. 146:9.) Let us see that we have the God of Ezekiel for our help, and our hope shall not be disappointed.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Show how the prophecy in Ezek. 12:13 and Jeremiah 32:1-5 concerning Zedekiah was fulfilled?

2 Kings 25:7 Jer. 39:5-7 Jer. 52:6-11

Why was Ezekiel told to eat his bread and drink his water with "trembling and anxiety" (Ezek. 12:18)

Ezek. 12:19-20

Ezekiel 13:1-23

The leading characteristic of the false prophets, who are denounced in this chapter, is, they prophesied "out of their own hearts," and "followed their own spirit" (vv. 2, 3). The communications which they affected to give as if from God were what they and the people *wished*, not what the Spirit of God suggested. The minister who frames his preaching merely to please men is not a true minister of God; as Paul said in Galatians 1:10, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The faithful servant of God speaks only as the Spirit and the Word of God direct him. Let us beware of the error of many in our day, who, boasting themselves of their rationalistic wisdom, while in the sight of God they are "fools" (v. 3; Rom. 1:22), set up their own inward light above the outward light of God's Word, and receive as true only so much of objective Revelation as they subjectively choose and approve.

Self-seeking is at the root of much of the false teaching that is in the world. The teachers of error in Israel are compared to "foxes in the deserts" (v. 4) where, from the want of food, the voracity and the cunning of that wily animal are stimulated in a more than ordinary degree. So where there is a moral desert, the Vineyard of the Lord, the Church, having been spoiled (Song Of Solomon 2:15) alike by foes without and traitors within, self-seeking preceptors are sure to abound, whose aim is, not the glory of God and the good of His Church, but to win for themselves either gain or fame.

The true defense of a people is righteousness: and every national breach of the law of God is a breach in the wall wherewith God protects His people from their enemies outside (cf. Zech. 2:5; Isa. 26:1). The righteous vengeance of God breaks in upon a people through "the gaps" (v. 5), which their transgression makes in their heavenly defenses. Those are the truest defenders of their country who would lead their countrymen to repentance, and by faithful reproof check those who, in doctrine or practice, or in both, set the Word of God at nothing.

Prayer and intercession is another way whereby the believing minister or layman can "make up the hedge for" his church and his country "to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord" (v. 5). God has a controversy with the Church and with the nation, for their sins: as, then, "Moses stood before God in the breach to turn away His wrath" (Ps. 106:22, 30), so our duty as praying Christians, if we are indeed so, is to plead with God for our country and our church, in the all-prevailing name of Him who, as our great Intercessor, hath made up the hedge, and stood in the gap before God for ourselves (cf. 22:30).

What word of warning does Jeremiah give to the people regarding false prophets?

Jer. 29:8 Ezek. 13:1-23

How does God fight against (frustrate) these deceivers?

Ezek. 13:19-23

What is the untempered (not fluid, not soft) mortar spoken of in Ezekiel 13:10, 11, 14 & 15?

Ezekiel 14:1-23

God will not answer the enquiries of those who come before His presence in hypocrisy. So long as any idol is secretly set up in the heart, as well as when it is outwardly put before the face (vv. 3, 4), the Lord will not regard the prayer of such a hollow professor. The kind of answer which God gives to the hypocrite accords with the dissimulation with which he tries to avail his idolatries (v. 4). The hypocrite's sin is in righteous retribution made his punishment. God in wrath gives up the hollow self-deceiver to a strong delusion, so that he should believe his own lie.

Yet even in the case of such self-deceivers and hypocrites God wishes not their destruction; but urges them most lovingly, "Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols." But then He requires a *complete* change of heart: "Turn away your faces from *all* your abominations" (v. 6). If there be lurking idolatry in the heart, which is sure to find for itself some outward mode of manifestation, so as to "set the stumbling block of iniquity before the face," God will answer the hypocritical enquirer by direct judgments on him, making him a signal warning to others of the fatal end of insincerity in one's approaches to the Lord (vv. 7, 8).

It is the most awful of all the judgments which God inflicts on a nation or on individuals, when God makes the ministers of Satan subserve his righteous judgments by deluding the willfully blind (v. 9). As they have tried to deceive God, so shall they, in God's judicial displeasure, be given over to be deceived by the lying prophets whom they consult. These blind leaders of the blind reflect back to their enquirers the self-deceits of the latter (v. 10). The very presence of such divining liars among a people is of itself a penal scourge from God: and the end of both deceivers and deceived alike shall be, "They shall bear the punishment of their iniquity" (v. 10).

The ultimate issue to Israel of all the judgments of God shall be, "They shall go no more astray from the Lord, but shall be His people, and He shall be their God" (v. 11). How wonderful is the love of God to His people, which "many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it"! (Song 8:7.)

Meanwhile judgment must take its course. So utterly guilty are the Jews, Ezekiel declares, according to the word of the Lord, that not even if there were among them men so eminently righteous as Noah, Daniel, and Job (vv. 14, 20) were, could their presence avail for the warding off of judgment from the people. Had ten righteous men been found in Sodom it would have been spared; but ten such men in *Judea* should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only their own souls by their righteousness (vv. 14-16, 18, 20).

When those less highly privileged in spiritual things transgress, they bring down on themselves one or more of God's judgments; but when those most highly favored of all by God transgress, and that with, a presumptuous and high hand, what else can they expect but that *all* God's "sores" judgments shall descend on them? (v. 21) Having filled the full measure of their guilt, they must drink the full cup of God's wrath; nor can the few intercessors or righteous men among them avert it. When they escape one judgment another shall be waiting for them, so that they cannot escape (v. 20).

Even the remnant that was to escape from Jerusalem was so guilty that the exiles at the Chebar would be constrained to acknowledge that God's heavy judgments on Jerusalem were "not without cause" (v. 23). This is the preparatory stage to mercy. Not until God's ways with the guilty are vindicated and recognized as just, can there be scope for the exhibition of His everlasting love. Let us adore at once His justice and goodness, and, as monuments of His mercy, show forth His praises forever.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Does God give up the hollow self deceiver to a strong delusion, so that he should believe his own lie?

Ezek. 14:3 Rom. 1:25-26

Can judgment be avoided in this case against these Jews?

Ezek. 14:7-8, 14-16, 18, 20

"And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet" (Ezek. 14:9a). **Can this same deception happen to a believer? If so why? Does Satan do the deception or does the Lord deceive or is it by some other means?**

Will a remnant, those whose heart are truly toward God, come out from these wicked people?

Ezek. 14:22-23

Ezekiel 15:1-8

God's people are like the vine, one of the most valuable of all trees if fruitful, the most useless if barren and fruitless. The distinctive excellence of believers is, that they show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. It is not that they are superior to others in intellect, learning, accomplishments, success in the fine arts, military prowess, and political discernment. In these many of the worldly are far their superiors. But as the Jews, though inferior in all these respects to the great nations of antiquity—Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and Rome—yet stood raised immeasurably above them in this one grand preeminence,—they were called to be the "peculiar treasure" of the Lord, the depository of His revelation of Himself, "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:5),—so believers are now called to the high prerogative above all others, however superior the latter may be in worldly respects, to be "kings and priests unto God" through Christ (Rev. 1:6).

When they fulfill this their sublime function, O how truly great, excellent, and elevated they are! Already in spirit seated with Christ in heavenly places, and taking rank with the highest of the heavenly peerage, and reckoned as of the blood royal of the King of kings; while here on earth they are witnesses for God in the ungodly world, even as the Jews were His witnesses among the heathen kingdoms: they are the salt of the earth, seasoning its tainted mass, which would otherwise utterly putrefy in its own corruption: they are the light of the world, which but for them would be in utter darkness: they are the vine of the Lord, yielding the fruit and wine which alone can fill with joy and peace the aching hearts of sinful men.

But if they fail in this the grand and sole end of their calling, they are worse than worthless; for they not only do not do good to the world, but they do it the greatest harm, by presenting before it the show of a religion which is not religion. Thus the sacred cause of God and His holy name are brought into the most grievous dishonor before the unbelieving and ungodly.

God must therefore vindicate His own honor by casting all such hypocritical and carnal professors into the fire, as good for nothing—no more, injurious cumberers of the ground. Lord keep us faithful to our high calling, useful in our day and generation, abiding in Christ, and thereby bringing forth much fruit to His glory, and to the good of the Church and of the world!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

The legitimacy of a person will be tested by God. **So who or what will be thrown into the fires of hell?**

Ezek. 15:2-7 1 Cor. 3:13-14

How does Ezekiel 15:6 relate to Romans 11:1-35?

Ps. 80:8-18 Isa. 5:1-7 Jer. 2:21 Hos.10:1

Ezekiel 16:1-63

God illustrates in the form of a parable His gracious dealings with the Jews, and their abominable perversity—His judgments on them for apostasy—His final restoration of them to His favor because of His respect to His own everlasting covenant—and then their repentance flowing from His unlooked for grace. Israel, in the beginning of her national existence, was as an infant taken up by the gratuitous grace of God; even as Moses, her first human leader, and the molder of her national character, was taken up when an infant on the verge of destruction, and placed among princes through the overruling providence of God (vv. 1-7). So the call of the believer is due to sovereign grace alone. Born in sin, and by nature a child of wrath, by a miracle of grace he is adopted by God, who, seeing him "lie in the blood" of his guiltiness, speaks the word of omnipotent love and grace, "Live," and immediately the spirit of heavenly life from the Holy Ghost creates new life in him. He therefore needs often to look to the hole of the pit from where he was digged (v. 3), in order to learn humility by the contrast that there is between his own natural wretchedness and the riches of God's grace.

The next phase in Israel's history was her union with Jehovah in spiritual marriage when she had attained her national maturity (vv. 8-14). It was not *she* that made the first advance to God, but *God* to her. There was no moral beauty in her to attract the regard of the holy God, yet God, of His own free favor, took her into an everlasting covenant with Him, betrothing her unto Him forever. He openly ratified that covenant at Sinai, whereby she became a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people. He then set up His tabernacle, which was as it were the nuptial tent of God and Israel. So her renown went forth among the heathen, and distant monarchs heard of, and were constrained to admire, the comeliness which God had put 'upon her' (vv. 8-14). So the Church of Christ is espoused to Him, as "a chaste virgin espoused to one husband" (2 Cor. 11:2). It is not we who first loved Him, but He who first loved us, and gave Himself for us. He enters into an everlasting covenant with His people, washes their souls in His blood from all sin, and provides them with the "fine

linen, clean and white," which is "the righteousness of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). This righteousness is not a righteousness of their own making, but Christ's righteousness imputed to them for their justification, and imparted by His Spirit for their sanctification. He also dwells among them and in them as His chosen earthly tabernacle (2 Cor. 5: 16). He feeds them in the green pastures of His Word, and with the spiritual manna from heaven. He puts His own comeliness upon them, so that even the men of the world are constrained to take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13); for, like Moses after he had descended from the mount, they reflect some of the heavenly grace and beauty which shone so brightly in their Divine Master when on earth.

But Israel, alas! repaid the love of God with neglect, and the grace of God with foul ingratitude and apostasy (vv. 15-34). Instead of ascribing the glory of her high gifts to God, the gracious giver, she boasted of them as if they were of her own making, and completely at her own disposal, and with strange and impudent perversity dedicated them to her idols. Finding the pure worship of God a continual check on her lusts, she sought abominable idols, whose worship was not only not inconsistent with, but gave a positive sanction to, her carnal gratifications. As though an adulteress were to clothe her paramour (illicit lover) with the rich dresses which she had received from the generosity of her husband, so Israel gave God's gold and silver, garments and meat, not merely this but even the lives of her own sons and daughters, as offerings to Moloch and other filthy and false gods (vv. 16-21). The source of all her sin, and its worst feature, was, she did not remember God's marvelous grace to her in her youth, when she was naked and helpless; but she was utterly shameless in her spiritual harlotries, bringing down upon herself the double "woe" of God (vv. 22-26). The very heathen became disgusted with her abandoned passion for idolatry and lust. *They* were faithful to their nation's false gods, *Israel* was not faithful to her Jehovah, who is the only true God, but changed Him for profitless idols. God therefore used the Philistines, who hated her (v. 27), as His instruments for punishing her. But not even chastisements availed to produce repentance in her. Instead of returning to Jehovah, she only the more keenly sought alliances with distant idolatrous nations, Assyria and Chaldea, and hired them as her spiritual paramours, importing their superstitions and vices, yielding all that was sacred in her high calling of God to them, and gaining nothing in return. So the professing Church of Christ has sadly fallen from her high calling of God. Designed to be the salt, seasoning the corrupt mass around, too often she herself has been tainted with the surrounding corruption. Not remembering the grace of God in Christ, which has called her out of darkness into His marvelous light, she has trusted in her mere privileges, and even in her worldly possessions, and instead of dedicating these to God the giver, has used them as instruments to minister to pride and vanity. When the Church thus lowers her testimony for her Lord, to adapt herself to the low standard of the world, she has all to lose by the compromise, and nothing really to gain. For if she induces the world thereby to recognize herself, and to pay an outward deference to Christianity, it is mere formalism that results, not vital religion; and formalism, so far from, being a gain, is a positive loss to the truth, for it is mistaken for the reality. It is therefore righteously ordered that the world, with which she spiritually intrigues, shall be the instrument of her chastisement.

God in just retribution gathered all Israel's lovers against her, as well as those who had always hated her (v. 37), and whom she had hated. The Chaldeans, for whose alliance she had forsaken her God, as well as her enemies of old, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines, all poured down upon her; and as she had shamefully exposed herself before them in a spiritual point of view, so in a political aspect she was exposed to shame by them, being stripped of all that she had gloried in, her temple, her palaces, her houses, the rich produce of her pleasant land, and her sons and daughters. As when she had the power she never ceased to play the harlot spiritually, God put this out of her power by His judgments (v. 43). The Jews had so fretted His Spirit by their doings, and their utter forgetfulness of His grace (v. 43), that nothing short of the severest judgments on them could make His fury to rest (v. 42). They had not only shown themselves no better than the previous possessors of the land, the Canaanites, who had been dispossessed of it for their sin, but had even exceeded them in guilt (v. 47). Sodom and Samaria, whom Judah was so ready to condemn as having received only the punishment which they deserved, seemed innocent in comparison with Judah, because of her superior privileges which she so shamefully abused (vv. 50, 51). So God will deal with professing Christians more severely than with the world, which makes no profession of religion, when so ever they despise and abuse their high privileges. When, ashamed of Christ, they abandon Him for the world, He will justly put them to shame before the world. The nearer was their relation to Him, the more heavily will He punish them. So far from being regarded by Him as superior to the ungodly world, which they superciliously look down upon, they are estimated as an abomination in His sight. As in the case of Sodom, so in that of many, —the first sources of their fall have been "pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness" (v. 49). Hence arises their selfish want of sympathy with their needy brethren. The world only condemns Sodom's grosser sins; but God singles out for special reprobation those evil principles which the world hardly censures at all, or even commends, but which are at the root of the worst abominations which provoke God utterly to remove the sinner out of His sight (vv. 49, 50). How awful that those once lifted up to heaven in privileges should be brought down to the level of Sodom, so that the latter in hell shall feel a kind of melancholy comfort in seeing them as miserable and as guilty as herself! (v. 54.)

Yet after all there follows to Israel a promise of grace and restoration in the end (vv. 60-63). O the riches of the goodness of God! How wonderful His favor to His elect, flowing from His everlasting covenant! Though His people often do not remember Him (vv. 22, 43), He never ceases to "remember" them. Though Israel has despised the oath by breaking the covenant (v. 59), God, for the sake of the elect remnant, remembers His covenant with her in the days of her youth, and establishes unto her an everlasting covenant. His covenant is one of grace and promise in Christ, the Fulfiller

of the law for us; not a covenant of works, wherein Jew and Gentile alike have failed (v. 61). This unlooked for grace on the part of God is the first thing that shall awaken her to remember, as well her own guilt as also His marvelous and gratuitous love. Shame because of her past abominations towards so loving a God will then cause her tears of unfeigned repentance to flow: she will not open her mouth any more in self-vindication; but, accepting the past punishment of her iniquity, will justify God in His dealings, and marvel, in humble and adoring gratitude, that where her sin so abounded, grace did so much more abound. Then shall all the nations of the earth attach themselves to her as believers in Messiah her manifested King; and the original purpose of God's grace in the call of Israel as the kingdom of priests and mediators of blessing to the whole earth (Exod. 19:6) shall be realized. So also the spiritual Israel, the elect Church, shall throughout eternity remember with adoring love the divine grace which pitied her in her original low and lost estate, and which has with such long-suffering borne and restored her from her backslidings, and shall serve the Lord in His presence continually, and be the ministers under Him of blessing to His creatures, reigning with their Savior forever as kings and priests to God and the Father.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Although Israel broke her covenant with God, God is committed and bound by His covenant to them. **What was the covenant He made with Israel?**

Gen. 12:2 Ex. 2:24 Lev. 26:42 Deut. 30:3 Ezek. 16:60-63

Ezekiel 17:1-24

In the form of an allegory the prophet describes the perversity, treachery, and perjury of Zedekiah, and the consequent judgment of God on him and his people. It was by the express appointment of God that Nebuchadnezzar was exalted to a universal empire. God had plainly announced that He had delegated to him and his son and his son's son authority over all nations (Jer. 27:6, 7). Yet Zedekiah, though raised to the throne of Judea by the special favor of the Babylonian king, and though aware of God's will concerning the duty of all nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, in ungrateful and treacherous violation of his own solemn oath of allegiance to him, which he had sworn before God, revolted (2 Chr. 36:13), and looked to Egypt for help against the power of Babylon.

What aggravated the heinousness of the act was, the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar had been up to this time of the mildest kind. Judah, under the Babylonian supremacy, though politically lower than formerly, when she was like a lofty "cedar tree," enjoyed a very considerable amount of prosperity and security, so that she might be compared to a spreading vine of low stature (v. 6) planted in a good soil by great waters (v. 8). Thus it was not oppression and want, but the restless spirit of discontent, disregard of God's revealed will, wanton treachery, ambition, ingratitude, and pride, which prompted Zedekiah to revolt, in violation of his own path. How often men are tempted, through impatience under comparatively light trials, to take unwarranted steps, whereby, instead of bettering themselves, as they hoped, they only plunge themselves in the greatest difficulties. It is generally 'better to bear with ills we have, than flee to those we know not of.' This especially holds good where God plainly marks it as our duty to remain as we are. But 'vaulting ambition leaps over itself, and falls on the other side.' The path of duty is the only path of safety. 'Keep innocency, and take heed to the thing which is right, for that will bring a man peace at the last.'

The prophet asks, Shall such perjured ambition prosper? Impossible. Not all the might of Egypt, with her horses and chariots, could save the perjurer from his justly-merited doom (vv. 15-18). When God decrees the punishment of the sinner, it needs no "great power" nor "many people" (v. 9) to effect His will. The very weakest are sufficient as His instruments against the most mighty rebel. For "who hath hardened himself against Him, and prospered?" (Job 9:4) The subjection which Zedekiah wished to deliver himself from by his treacherous perjury, he thereby brought on himself in its worst form. His wickedness recoiled upon his own head (v. 19). When he might have lived prosperously at Jerusalem, his own city, he, on account of his contempt of the oath, was forced to lead a dishonored and miserable life of exile in Babylon (v. 16). Let sinners remember, however successful sin may seem for a time, sooner or later it will bring with it its bitter fruit, either in this world or in the world to come, or in both.

Nothing brings more reproach on the cause of God than when professors of religion act treacherously and dishonorably towards those who make no such profession. Their profession makes their sin ten-fold worse, and will bring down upon them a proportionally heavy punishment.

But the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect. When the Jews shall have fully proved that vain is the help of man, the Lord Himself shall stand forward as their Redeemer. The high expectations which they reposed in Zedekiah, and in all the other descendants of the root of David (Lam. 4:20), shall be more than realized in the God-man, whose name is the BRANCH, the root and offspring of David. God Himself set Christ *spiritually* as His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Ps. 2:6) at His first coming. The full *manifestation* of His grace and glory is reserved for His-second coming. Then shall He reign, "the highest of the high," "upon the high mountain and eminent" (v. 22). Zion shall be raised by Him, as her King, to a moral elevation exceeding all earthly eminence. The kingdom over all nations shall be His, as the rightful Son and heir of David, to whose seed God has promised the kingdom by an everlasting covenant. All nations shall be brought into willing and happy obedience to Him, rejoicing to abide under His shadow (v. 23). While Antichrist

and the God-opposed world powers, once so high, shall be forever brought low, the Lord alone shall be exalted, and with Him His once despised but then glorified people (v. 24). Even so, Lord Jesu, Thy kingdom come!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

If the “great eagle” spoken of in Ezekiel 17:3 is Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Ez. 17:12) who is the other eagle of Ezekiel 17:7-8?

Ez. 17:15

What or who is the cedar and the vine?

What was the outcome of Zedekiah making a covenant with the second eagle?

Ez. 17:9-10 Ez. 17:16-21

What is meant in Ezekiel 17:22 when it says, “I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out, I will crop off.....and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain.”

Dan. 2:44-45 Zech. 14:3-9 Zech. 14:16-17

Ezekiel 18:1-32

How common it is for men to lay the blame of their sin on others rather than on themselves; and when the penal consequences of their guilt overtake them, to consider themselves hardly dealt with, as though they were unfortunate rather than guilty. So the favorite proverb with the Jews in Ezekiel's time was, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"—that is, We undeservingly pay the penalty, not of our own, but of our fathers' sins. No doubt God does often "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." But this cannot be the result of caprice (fanciful notion) or injustice, for the Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. As 'all souls are His,' He can have no reason to make any difference between one and another, save in accordance with His own unchangeable justice. We cannot with our finite minds always see the reasons of His dealings, but we do see that the curse descending from the father to the son assumes guilt in the son, which he shares in with the father. There is obvious to all a natural tendency in the child to follow the parent's sin, and hence his sharing in the parent's punishment is just. It is only in so far as the children of the third and fourth generation "hate" God, as their fathers did before them, that God in the second commandment threatened (Exod. 20:5) to "visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of *them that hate*" Him.

The sinner who penitently turns from his sin to God shall have none of his past transgressions imputed to him, but in his righteousness shall live before God (vv. 21, 22). Not that he shall be accepted *for* his righteousness, but *in* it, as the fruit of faith and the effect of real conversion. So far is God from laying on the children the penalty of their fathers' sins, that He will not even impute to them their own sins if they will but turn from them to righteousness. What encouragement this assurance gives to the repenting sinner to have an assured hope of pardon, peace, and life! Why should any be lost with such a promise held out to all? The only barrier in the way of any man's salvation is that mentioned by the Lord Jesus (John 5:40. "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". The once righteous man who turneth from his righteousness to iniquity shall die in his sin, nor will his former righteousness avail him (vv. 24, 26). Not that the elect shall ever apostatize utterly for Christ's word is pledged for *their* salvation (John 10:28, 29): but Scripture here speaks of men according to their outward appearance and acts before their fellow-men. One who, as far as man could judge, was righteous, may nevertheless prove in the end never to have had the root of righteousness in him, though having done many acts of righteousness. It is only by enduring to the end that a man can be known by his fellow-men to have been one of the elect saints. Even an inspired apostle could only predicate the spiritual churchmanship and final salvation of himself and his readers, "if," saith he, "we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6). The lesson to be learned hence is distrust of ourselves, watchfulness against sin, and undoubting trust in the faithfulness of God to His promises to His people. True believers watch and pray, and so persevere to the end, and are saved. Self-deceivers presume on their own safety, walk carelessly, fall finally, and are lost.

The commencement and progress of repentance is traced in v. 28. The sinner, who had been heretofore living without regard to the will of God, or to the interests of the immortal soul, now for the first time stops to *consider* his self-destroying ways: then he turns from, not merely some, but *all* his transgressions, even his bosom-sins. As he cannot do this without an entire renewal of heart, he "makes him a new heart and a new spirit" by obtaining from God, through prayer, the new heart and spirit which God requires, and which God alone can impart. God's command that we should make us a new heart teaches us, in the painful sense of our own inability, to seek the Holy Spirit, which he has promised freely to give to them that ask Him (v. 31). While we know not God's decrees, we do know His willingness and power to save to the uttermost all who come to God in His appointed way. Let us so come, and we shall never find His ways unequal (v. 29), or that He will send empty away any who hunger and thirst after His righteousness (Matt. 5:6).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What is meant in Ezekiel 18:2 when it says: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children's teeth are set on edge."

Ex. 20:5 Ex.34:6-7 Deut. 5:9 Ezek. 16:15-29

Ezekiel 19:1-14

The prophet utters an elegy over the fallen princes of David's royal line. Jerusalem, once "the lion of God," being valiant for the truth, was now become a mere beast of prey, feeding on the corrupt carcasses of the heathen idolatries around her, and as a savage lioness accustoms her cubs to her own ways, she reared the princes of the blood-royal in her own abominable practices. A people and their rulers generally act and react one upon the other, so that it might be said, "like prince like people" (cf. Hos. 4:9).

The result of the violence of the Jewish princes was, they were made, in righteous retribution, to feel themselves the violence which they used against others. Those who terrify and enslave others are justly punished by being given over to terror and captivity themselves (vv. 4, 8). Jehoiakim, not taking warning from the fatal effects to Jehoahaz of reckless violence, practiced every oppression and tyranny in gratification of his own insatiable cupidity (Jer. 22:13-17), and so fell into the same pit, being taken captive to Babylon, as Jehoahaz was taken captive to Egypt. As he had made desolate the palaces of others (v. 7), so was his own palace desolated by Nebuchadnezzar, so far as his tenancy of it was concerned. All who make might their right shall rightly be made to feel the superior might of the Almighty Ruler and Judge of the earth.

Jerusalem was once the flourishing vine of the Lord, and her princes its fruitful branches. She once bare descendants, such as David and Solomon, who wielded the scepters of far-reaching dominion (v. 11). But unfaithfulness to her God marred all her prosperity and glory. She was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground, her fruit dried up, her rods broken and consumed by the fire (v. 12). Behold the terrible consequences of sin! Iniquity makes the sinners to become as tinder, ready for destruction, when the fury of the Lord applies the flame.

Jerusalem still has a root left, but it is as a root in a dry ground. She now is as a wild vine in a dry and thirsty wilderness (v. 13), bearing no fruit unto God, and having "no strong rod to be a scepter to rule" (v. 14). The time is, however, ere long coming when "Jehovah shall send the rod of His strength out of Zion" (Ps. 110:2). Messiah shall come again as "the Deliverer," who "shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. 11:26). He is not only a strong rod for the scepter, but is Himself the true and living Vine. Let us by faith sit under His shadow with great delight, so we shall find His fruit sweet to the taste (Song 2:3): and at His second coming we shall by sight enjoy His presence, and partake of the new and better fruit of the vine, which He will drink with His people in the Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

If the kings were the princes of Israel referred to as lions in Ezekiel 19:1 who is the Lioness, the mother who had produced these lions and who are the young lions described in Ezekiel 19:3-5?

2 Kings 23:31-34 2 Kings 24:17

A. R. Fausset wrote at the end of the eighteen hundreds that "Jerusalem still has a root left, but it is a root in a dry ground". **Has their been any progress since that time in seeing the root once again taking hold to show the blessing of Jehovah on them.**

Ezekiel 20:1-49

Settled at length in Canaan, "yet" even still the people virtually blasphemed and insulted God (v. 27). Their very offerings were a "provocation" (v. 28), because they were offered on high places, and in a manner utterly at variance with God's express command that in the temple at Jerusalem alone should sacrifices be presented to Him (vv. 29, 30). Will-worship, and a religion of men's own devising, is the ruin of millions.

The generation of Ezekiel's times filled up the full measure of guilt by burning to death their sons in honor of the idol Moloch (v. 31). Their thought and design in these heathen usages was, they wished to avoid the reproach of singularity, and not to be taunted by their heathen neighbors as worshipping an invisible God (v. 32). How many there are who compromise their religion for the sake of conciliating the favor of the world, who would be decided in the denial of worldly lusts, were it not that they fear to be thought singular, loving the praise of men more than the praise of God!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

After denouncing the practices of the people of Israel there appears to be a people that "shall serve Me" (Ezek. 20:40) and God will accept them as a sweet aroma (Ezek. 20:41). **What period in the history of Israel do you think they are talking about when they say; "Then you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 20:42a)?**

Ezekiel 21:1-32

This chapter gives an explanation of the parable in the latter part of last chapter. The forest to be consumed by fire (ch. 20:47, 48) is the guilty people of Judah about to be destroyed by the righteous vengeance of God (v. 2). As the flaming name in the parable devoured every green tree and every dry tree, so "the righteous and the wicked" (v. 3) alike are to suffer in the general calamity. Not that God would break His promise of saving the righteous as individuals; but in the *outward* aspect, the visitation of wrath would be upon the nation universally and indiscriminately. Still, outward calamities are to the godly covert blessings. The Providence of God secretly interposes in their behalf, overruling seeming evil to real good; whereas, to the impenitent transgressors, punishment is nothing but unmitigated evil, while "all flesh" is made to "know" the righteousness of God in punishing the guilty (v. 5).

Ezekiel is directed to "sigh with bitterness before the eyes" of the doomed people (v. 6). So they who denounce the coming and everlasting wrath of God against sinners should do so feelingly, not as if they *wished* the destruction of their fellow-sinners, but with heartfelt sorrow for the self-destroyers, and with deep humility at the remembrance of the grace of God which snatched themselves as brands from the burning. The example of Christ weeping over the city, which was just about to crown its guilt by murdering Him, teaches us to mourn over those whose ruin we declare.

When the sword of God's judgments is unsheathed for vengeance it is no time for "mirth" (v. 10). Let us beware of losing the lesson designed by chastisements. At such times what becomes us is a humbled and chastened spirit. We should search and try our ways, in order to learn why it is that the Lord contends with us, and that we may turn again to the Lord. How many there are who try to drown serious thoughts in feasting and amusement! But let such remember "the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Prov. 14:13): "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool" (Eccl. 7:6); whereas the end of godly sorrow is, "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better" (Ecc. 7:3).

The kingdom and scepter of Judah were doomed to be "no more" (v. 13) for ages. The tribal scepter of Judah and the Jewish state, indeed, were in some degree restored at the return from Babylon; but even these passed away at the time when "Shiloh," "the Prince of Peace," came, as foretold by the patriarch Jacob (Gen. 49:10). Then Judea became a Roman province, and in a few years afterwards the nation was dispersed in all lands, as they still are in our day (1800's). When the sword of God descended with its lightning-flash "it contemned (despised)" even the scepter 'rod' of Judah, "God's son" (vv. 10, 13). It overtook the guilty people, not only in the open battlefield, but even in "their privy chambers" (v. 14), where they fled to hide themselves. Let us hence learn that no past favors or privileges conferred on us by God secure us from His righteous judgment, if we be unfaithful to His covenant. Nothing but unfeigned repentance and living faith shall stand in the day of His wrath.

God's never-failing providence ordereth all things that are in heaven and earth. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33). Thus Nebuchadnezzar, in his advance with an invading army, knew no other guiding principle but his own will, and superstitious divination by means of arrows: but an unseen and Almighty hand "appointed" his way (vv. 19-22). Credulous as the Jews were of idolatrous divinations ordinarily, now that the augury (divination from omens) was against them, it seemed to them as false. So just was the retribution in kind, that the idolatrous superstition, which was their sin, should be made the instrument of their punishment.

How amazing is the blind infatuation of doomed transgressors! Forgetting their flagrant violation of their oaths of allegiance to Babylon, the Jews still flattered themselves with vain hopes of security. But though *they* forgot their sin, *God* did not forget it. "Calling to remembrance" (vv. 23, 24) their perjury, as a sample of the sin that "appeared in all their doings," He now gives them up to "the hand" of the avenger.

King Zedekiah, as being foremost in guilt, was to be foremost in punishment (v. 25). Having "profaned" the holy name of God, by whom he had sworn fealty (faithfully) to Nebuchadnezzar, he had now attained the last stage of iniquity; therefore his "day" was now come that his "crown and diadem" (v. 26) should be "taken off" from him, and that, as he and the Jews had upturned the whole moral relation of things, so the whole existing social and political state of persons and things should be reversed, "the low being exalted and the high abased."

The manifold "overturning" (v. 27) of the Jewish state is, according to the sure word of prophecy, to continue until "He shall come whose is the right" to the suspended kingly dominion of the throne of Judah and Israel. All shall be unsettled, and nowhere shall there be permanence and rest, until He shall come as the Restorer of all things (Acts 3:21), and the rightful heir of the throne of David, which fell with Zedekiah (v. 27). Then shall the name of the once lowly Jesus of Nazareth be exalted (v. 26) above every name, and His once despised people shall share His triumph and kingdom. As Ammon was punished, and put out of remembrance forever (v. 32), for proudly reproaching the people of the Lord God (v. 28), so in that day shall Christ appear, to the joy of His people and to the shame of His foes (Isa. 66:5), and "the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth" (Isa. 25:8). Let us see that we have our portion with the people of God and His Christ!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

"And thou, profane wicked Prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is

high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him". (Ezekiel 21:25-27)

So far as we are aware, all pre-millennial students regard this passage as a description of the Antichrist. It pictures him as Satan's parody of the Son of Man seated upon "the throne of His glory". It sets him forth as the priest-king. Just as in the Millennium the Lord Jesus will "be a *Priest upon His throne*" (Zech. 6:13), so will the Antichrist *combine* in his person the headships of both the civil and religious realms. He will be what the popes have long aspired to be—head of the World-State, and head of the World-Church.

"And thou, O deadly wounded Wicked One, the Prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end; thus saith the Lord: remove the mitre, and take off the crown" (Ezek. 21:25-26 R. V.). This is clearly Israel's last king, ere the King of kings and Lord of lords returns to the earth. He is here termed "the Prince of Israel" as the true Christ is denominated "Messiah the Prince" in Dan. 9:25. The description "O *deadly wounded Wicked One*" looks forward to Rev. 13:12, where we read, "The first Beast whose *deadly wound* was healed!" "Remove the *mitre* and take off the *crown*" (Ezek. 21:26) point to his assumption of both priestly and kingly honors. The Hebrew word for "mitre" here is in every other passage used of the head-dress of Israel's high priest! Finally, the statement that his "day is come in the time of the iniquity of the end" establishes, beyond a doubt, the identity of this person. (The Antichrist, A. W. Pink) **Comment on this explanation of Ezekiel 21:25-27 and explain the meaning of Ezekiel 21:27:**

"Overthrown, overthrown,

I will make it overthrown!

It shall be no longer,

Until He comes whose right it is,

And I will give it to Him."

Gen. 49:10 Rev. 19:11-16 Rev. 20:4

Ezekiel 22:1-31

The prophet is directed to judge 'the city of blood' for her abominations. She had promised profit to herself by her acts of violence; but she only brought the sooner upon herself "her time" of punishment; and in sinning against God she sinned "against herself," to her own awful ruin (v. 3), and "caused her days to draw near" when God made her "a reproach and mocking to all countries" (v. 4). They who think to gain by sin will find that they only lose by it the favor of God, and their own peace and happiness.

A long and black catalogue of Jerusalem's iniquities is given. Her princes, whose power ought to have been exercised in maintaining justice, were foremost in making the "arm" of might their only law (v. 6). A leading sin in her was also that there were many who "set light by father and mother" (v. 7). Disrespect to parents saps the foundations of society and of religion by creating a self-willed spirit, impatient of all human authority, and therefore reckless of the law of God. It is to be a characteristic also of the last days, before Christ's coming to destroy Antichrist (2 Tim. 3:2), that men shall be "lovers of their own selves, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents." Oppression of the friendless and unprotected, as the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (v. 7), is peculiarly displeasing to the God who "preserveth the strangers" (Ps. 146:9), and is the "Father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows" (Ps. 68:5). By this sin—and by contempt of holy things, profanation of the Sabbaths of the Lord (v. 8), talebearing to the hurt of others (v. 9), lewdness (vv. 10, 11), greed of gain and extortion—Judah provoked the wrath of God; and having given herself up to the dominion of lust, was rightly given up to be punished by that lust. The root of all her sins was, she had "forgotten" her God (v. 12). Let us when tempted by sin, remember God, and then temptation will lose its power over us, and like Joseph we shall say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9)

Judah, when cast off by God, learned in her exile what an awful difference there is between having the Lord for her inheritance and "taking her inheritance in herself" (v. 16). No greater punishment can be inflicted on the guilty than that they should be given up to themselves and their own sin.

Judgments often bring sinners to "know the Lord" (v. 16), when mercies fail to do so; even as the dispersion of the Jews among the Gentiles (v. 15) is the appointed means for consuming her filthiness out of her.

Once the Israelite nation had been as gold and silver among the nations, but now it was become "dross," combined with the baser metals, "brass, tin, iron, and lead" (v. 18; Isa. 1:22). Backsliders from the truth, which they have once known are as refuse, fit for nothing, in God's eyes. It is much harder to bring to a right mind those who have degenerated from original good than those who have never known the way of God.

The Jewish nation accordingly was to be thrown into the furnace, that the mass of dross might be destroyed, and the small remnant of the good be purified and separated from the transgressors. However painful the furnace of trial be to the godly, let them comfort themselves by the reflection that God designs it for their sanctification. But let sinners tremble, and flee at once from the wrath to come, for the coming fire which purifies the righteous will consume the ungodly.

The land that is full of sin uncleansed, and that lacks the reviving influences of the Holy Spirit, is a moral wilderness, such as a land would be from which God in His "indignation" withheld the fertilizing rains (v. 24). Such was Judea: her prophets conspired together to "devour souls" for "prey" (v. 25), instead of being banded together for *good*; her priests,

the interpreters of the law (Mat 22:7), "violated the law," and "made no difference between the holy and the profane" (v. 26); and her princes, the administrators of justice, "got dishonest gain" (v. 27). Then, when judgments were about to descend on account of these crying national sins, the prophets, with lying divinations, assured the people there would be peace; just as if one were to daub the tottering wall of a house (Ps. 62:3) with untempered (not fluid or soft) mortar, and persuade its tenants that there was no danger (v. 28): while the people were equally tainted with the universal corruption, which spread downwards from the upper classes and pervaded the whole community (v. 29). Let us all in our several positions exercise what influence we have on the side of good, not evil; for the mass of society is made up of individuals, and on the aggregate of influences for good which pervade it must depend the social and religious well-being of the whole.

Such is the grace of God, that even still He would have gladly blessed the efforts of any godly man arising up among the doomed mass to lead the people to repentance, thereby "making up the hedge;" or any intercessor morally capable of praying for the people, thereby "standing in the gap before God for the land, that he should not destroy it" (v. 30): but none such was to be found. Nothing, therefore, remained but that He should "pour out His indignation upon them, and recompense their own way upon them" (v. 31). It is the worst sign of all for a nation or an individual when prayer ceases to be offered. So long as there is prayer there is spiritual life: where there is no prayer there is spiritual death. When people are so lost in sin that no godly man any longer intercedes for them, nothing but wrath is before them. Blessed be God, though we deserve wrath, we need never be without an effectual Advocate to stand in the gap before God for us; for though our sin has made a breach between God and us men, the God-man Christ Jesus has stood in the gap, and turned away all God's wrath, so that God is now the reconciled Father of all who come unto Him by the Savior.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What was the root cause of Jerusalem's sin?

Ezek. 22:12

Ezekiel 23:1-49

The prophet represents Israel and Judah under the image of two women, called respectively Oholah and Oholibah (v. 4). The former set up a tabernacle of *her own* devising, as her name implies; the latter had the privilege of *God's* true tabernacle being *in her*. But though they differed in this important respect, yet in regard to spiritual adultery both alike were guilty from the days of their youth in Egypt (v. 3). Oholah, or Israel, though she belonged not to herself or to the world, but to God, who was spiritually her husband and Lord, gave her heart to Assyria, and formed alliances with the Assyrian kings. Therefore in just retribution God made the objects of their sinful trust, the Assyrians, the instruments of their punishment (vv. 9, 10). When the professors of religion depart in heart from God to the world they are sure to be punished by the world.

Notwithstanding the awful warning given in the punishment of Israel, Judah, instead of shunning her sister's sin, only corrupted her way the more (v. 11); and being dazzled by the attractive appearance and dress of the Babylonians (vv. 12, 14, 15), she did not wait for them to pay their court to her, but "sent messengers unto them into Chaldea" (v. 16); and as one step downwards precipitates men into another and deeper plunge, from political confederacy she passed on to the adoption of their showy idolatrous worship. Political expediency is frequently the excuse alleged for sacrifice of religious principle; and alliances with the ungodly in secular interest mostly lead the professing worshippers of God to a sinful conformity to the world's corrupt and God-dishonoring usages. How much, too, of sin enters the heart through the avenue of the eyes! "As soon as Judah *saw with her eyes*" the gorgeously attired Babylonians of Chaldea "she doted upon them" (v. 16). The gaud and glitter of the world's tinsel fascinates the unwary. In a moment the spark of passion passing through the sight into the imagination kindles the flame of lust in the inmost soul; and "when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Our resolution, therefore, should be that of Job, "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job 31:1); and our prayer that of David (Ps. 119:37). "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity!"

Unlawful love, sooner or later, ends in hatred and estrangement. They who are unfaithful to their God are little likely to be faithful to their friends, allies, and lovers. With characteristic fickleness, Judah forsook her pledged alliance with Babylon to ally herself with Egypt, the rival of Babylon in those days. After she had "polluted" herself with them, "her mind was alienated from them" (v. 17); and "calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had (spiritually) played the harlot in Egypt" (v. 19), she transferred her vile love to the filthy idolaters and idolatries of that land. After we have once entered the service of God, we should beware of letting the memory dwell on the unlawful pleasures which we indulged in formerly, lest the treacherous heart should be tempted to regret the loss of them, and to desire a return to them.

As Judah's mind was "alienated from" the Babylonian king to whom she had sworn allegiance (v. 17), so God's mind, in righteous retribution, was "alienated from her" (v. 18); and as the Babylonians had been the objects of her unlawful love, so now they were made the instruments of her richly-merited punishment. They had been the means of alienating her from God; they now were appointed by God to be the means of alienating her from the possession of all that had

previously been her ornament and glory (v. 26). Their very vigor, dignity and wealth, which had so attracted her in the first instance, only enabled them the more effectually to inflict God's judgments on her (vv. 22, 24). The guilty adulteress is to be deprived by the holy and jealous God, who is her Husband, of her bejewelled nose and ears (v. 25), the very features of her personal beauty whereby she tried to attract the notice of admiring paramours. Instead of having sought the hearing ear, and the spiritually seeing eye, and "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4), she had imitated the meretricious adorning of the world, priding herself on her gold, jewels, and vain pomps. Let us beware of her sin, remembering that "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever!"

Sore and lengthened judgments have had the effect on the Jews which God designed—namely, so far as to "make her (idolatrous) lewdness to cease from her." For much more than two thousand years past, ever since the return from Babylon, the Jews have sternly abhorred idolatry (v. 27). Having dealt hatefully herself, Judah has been dealt hatefully with by the executioners of God's wrath (v. 29). She has had to drink to the dregs the "deep and large cup" which her sister Israel before her has had to drink (v. 32). She has been filled with the stupefaction of sorrow and desolation, like one drunken (v. 33); and all this because she forgot God, and cast Him behind her back (v. 35). When once we suffer ourselves to forget and lose sight of God, we cannot say to what lengths in sin we may be tempted.

What especially provoked God in both Israel and Judah (v. 36) was, that immediately after their idolatry, adultery, and bloodshedding, on the very same day, in flagrant violation of the sanctuary of God and profanation of the Sabbath (v. 38), they hypocritically presented themselves before God in His house, as if they were His true worshippers (v. 39). Hypocrisy is of all sins the most loathsome to God and ruinous to the soul of the sinner himself; for it is an effort to deceive alike the heart-searching God, our fellow-men, and our own selves.

Like an "old" and worn-out adulteress, Israel and Judah passed from the more refined idolatries of Assyria and Babylon to the grosser corruptions of more degraded and coarser peoples "of the common sort" (vv. 42, 43). Sin debases the understanding, and from the more refined and intellectual objects of taste, wherewith it originally has stolen away the heart from God, it soon leads the sinner downwards and downwards still, until it has brought him to grovel and wallow, like the swine, in the mire of sensuality and bestiality.

God therefore raised a company of executioners to fulfill His righteous vengeance on the apostate people (vv. 45, 47), in order that all men might take warning by her fate to shun her sins (v. 48); and that she herself might be made to know, to her cost, that Jehovah alone is God (v. 49). This is the lesson that we especially have to learn from this history; for it applies more to the professing worshippers of God than to those who know not God, and who are denied the religious privileges which we now enjoy, as the Jews did formerly. The humbling picture of our common nature in Israel's apostasy should fill us with holy fear of offending the God and Savior whose name we bear, and with jealous distrust of ourselves, and renunciation of all self-righteousness, and, above all, with prayerful dependence on the grace of God in Christ alone, whilst we look for the working of His Holy Spirit as our only security against sin and judgment.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Whom does Oholah and Oholibah represent, with whom do they commit adultery and what was their punishment?

Ezekiel 24:1-27

The self-confident proverb of the Jews, "This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh," which was aimed in derision at Jeremiah's vision of "the seething pot toward the north" (Jer. 1:13), was now turned into an awful reality, very different from the sense in which they had intended it (v. 3). The city now besieged was indeed a caldron for keeping them in, so that none could escape: but it could afford no defense, such as they had expected, against their exasperated enemies. Alike the leaders and the common people perished in the indiscriminate slaughter, with the difference that the poorest, being the first to suffer, were the sooner put out of pain, while the sufferings of the upper classes were more protracted (v. 4). Mocking is an open defiance of God, and is sure to recoil with fearful ruin upon the head of those who thus dare to insult His majesty.

The wickedness of the Jewish people is compared to a filthy and poisonous scum fermenting, through the heat, in the boiling contents of a pot, and rising to the surface. Instead of taking this filthy scum from the top, they kept continually adding to it (vv. 6, 12). Therefore God was constrained by His justice to destroy them "piece by piece," in a series of successive judgments; and this without distinction of persons (v. 6). How sad it is that sinners will not be warned by lighter strokes of the rod, but will still retain their filthiness, and even add to it, until God is at last provoked utterly to destroy them!

So hardened and reckless were the Jews in sin that they perpetrated it in the worst form, and in the most public and conspicuous places, without fear or shame (v. 7). They openly shed blood: therefore their own blood was openly to be shed. The publicity of their sin brought on them, in just retribution, a like publicity of punishment (v. 8). God is sure, sooner or later, to punish transgression in kind. Crying sins bring down openly-executed judgments.

The greater was Jerusalem's filthiness and scum of abominations, the greater was to be the force and fury of the enemy brought against her; just as the larger the mass of flesh and bones is that needs to be boiled, the more fire and fuel are heaped around the caldron (vv. 9, 10). Not only so, but the city itself, also, answering to the caldron infected by the poisonous scum, was to be destroyed, as well as its inhabitants, who answer to the contents. Sin brings ruin alike upon the sinner himself and upon all that belongs to him and is connected with him.

God would have purged Jerusalem from her filthiness by milder measures—means of grace and warning providences—but she refused to be purged. She chose to keep her poisoned scum in her, rather than cast it "forth out of her" (v. 12). Instead of accepting God's happy service and refreshing ordinances, she "weaned herself with lies," and deliberately practiced lewdness and determined wickedness (v. 13). Therefore God would now no longer vouchsafe the interpositions of His grace, which had been designed for her purification, but was about to cause His fury to rest upon her. To sinners who have long resisted God's pleadings with them in mercy, the times of judgment will at last come, when God will no longer spare them, but will judge them according to their ways and doings (v. 14).

The crowning visitation of God's wrath upon Jerusalem was when He took from them by a stroke the temple, which had heretofore been "the excellency of their strength, the joy of their glory, and the desire of their eyes" (vv. 16, 21, 25). Yet so universal should be the calamity that they would not exhibit the usual badges of mourning, but would "pine away for their iniquities, and (privately) mourn one toward another" (v. 23). It was but just, that as they had profaned the sanctuary of God with idolatries, God should "profane" it with the sword of the enemy (v. 21).

At length, by reason of Ezekiel's extraordinary calmness and absence of demonstration of grief under the heavy affliction of losing his wife, "the desire of his eyes" (v. 16), the Jews were stirred up to ask, "Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?" (v. 19) The teacher who would raise the people above the absorbing power of earthly and seen things, must himself show in his own person a living example of how the feelings of the flesh are subordinated to the higher claims of heavenly and unseen realities. At the same time, under *ordinary* circumstances, we should avoid singularity, and we are not required to stifle, but to sanctify natural feelings.

The Jews had said (Jer. 17:15), "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now," as if the word of prophecy would never come to pass. But in God's own time it did come; and, too late, the guilty knew by bitter experience the power and faithfulness of God to His threats (v. 24). Meantime Ezekiel was a living "sign" to them of what waited them (v. 24): no longer were they, during this interval, favored with revelations from God. They had had amply sufficient testimony already to convince them of the need of repentance (v. 27). Let us be warned by their case to take heed to the sure word of prophecy, now while the day and season of grace lasts. Let us not doubt for a moment, but heartily realize, look forward to, and prepare for, the foretold coming again of the Son of Man as the King of kings and Judge of all men!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Was there an exact day appointed by God for the judgment of Jerusalem and will there be an exact day appointed for the judgment of this world?

2 Kings 25:1 Jer. 35:1 Jer. 52:4 Ezek. 24:1-2 2 Pet. 3:1-13

Show how Ezekiel was a living "sign" of what was happening and what awaited them?

Ezek. 24:24

Ezekiel 25:1-17

The triumphing of the wicked over the people of God is but short. If God spared not the elect nation Israel, He was sure not to suffer the Ammonites to escape with impunity, for they were in many respects no less guilty than Israel, and they added to their guilt by the grievous sin of insolently exulting, not merely over the land of Israel and the house of Judah in their distress, but also over the downfall of the Lord's own sanctuary, as if this were tantamount to the triumph of heathenism over the worship of Jehovah. Let not the carnal and worldly exult prematurely when God chastises His people for sin; for if these suffer for a time, the day is coming to those also, when not merely for a time, but for ever, they shall suffer for their hatred against the people, the house, and the cause of the Lord.

Pride and the spirit of revenge are characteristics of the unrenewed man, and are especially hateful to God, and provoke His wrath (v. 6). The retribution on Ammon was to correspond to the offence. As she had clapped her hands with joy at the downfall of Jerusalem, so God would stretch out His hand to cause her own downfall. As she had taken the land and houses of God in possession (Ps. 83:4-12), so she was herself to be made a possession to the marauding "men of the east" (v. 4), and "a spoil to the heathen" (v. 7). Jehovah is especially indignant at any injury done to His people, and vindicates their cause as His own.

The taunt of Moab and Seir against Judah was, "Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen" (v. 8); that is to say, The Jews—who boasted of the advantage, which their worship of Jehovah gave them over the Gentiles around—after all fare no better than they. What use, then, is there in serving Jehovah, whom they falsely asserted to be the only true God? This taunt it was which, in particular, provoked the jealousy of God for His own honor. Moab was therefore, by the judgment of God, given up for a possession to her enemies, who entered in through her opened-out frontier (vv. 9,

10). She has long ceased to be "remembered among the nations" (v. 10), while Israel is still preserved, awaiting the day of her glorious restoration, when her name shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and all the nations shall know that her God is the Lord (v. 11).

Edom also greatly offended by taking vengeance against the house of Judah; therefore the vengeance of God was doomed to fall on herself, and that, too, "by the hand of the Lord's people Israel," under the Maccabees, in order that it might be plainly discerned that the judgment on her was not fortuitous, but was the act of the Lord's judicial vengeance (v. 14). They who take vengeance out of God's hands into their own must expect that the vengeance of the Lord shall fall on themselves. By treasuring up "old hatred," and cherishing spite in the heart, and watching for opportunities, as did the Philistines against Israel, men only treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath. Let us rather overcome evil with good, as becomes the followers of Him who so loved His enemies that He died in order that they might live. Let us, when wronged, leave our cause in the hands of God the righteous Judge; and, meanwhile, let us love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us (Matt. 5:44).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What can be said about the nature of the Ammonites after they gloated and said "Aha" after Judea was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar instead of them?

Gal. 6:1

Ezekiel 26:1-21

The sin of commercial nations, such as Tyre was anciently and England is in our days, is not merely the frauds practiced by some, or even many, but mainly the spirit of selfishness and worldliness, which is almost universal in such communities. Thus, in the instance of Tyre, while she had maintained friendly relations with Judah and Jerusalem, as suited her interest, in the time of their prosperity, yet when their calamity came she rejoiced over their fall, as that of a rival in respect to the commerce of the East. Jerusalem had intercepted some of the inland traffic which she wished to monopolize wholly to herself, and therefore, with the intense selfishness which characterizes the worldly mind, she heartlessly exulted over Jerusalem's misery as her own gain. Though men may, like Tyre, do their fellow-men no direct injury, yet if they are secretly glad at the downfall of others, and especially of the people of God, they incur grievous guilt. To cherish a feeling of pleasure at the misfortunes or death of a rival, or of anyone by whose fall we think to rise or be gainers, is not an uncommon feeling, and is but little censured in the world. But in the eyes of God it is a very serious provocation of His displeasure; because it is of the essence of the pride, selfishness, and love of the world as our portion, which the love of God is utterly incompatible with. Therefore Tyre is made an awful example of, as being the embodiment of the self-seeking ambition and covetousness of the world which God abhors.

The Lord hath said, "He that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished" (Prov. 17:5). Impregnable as New Tyre seemed to herself, being surrounded by the sea and founded on a rock, she nevertheless fell before the "many nations" which the Lord "caused to come up against her" as the waves; that washed her ramparts (v. 3). Since God was "against her" (v. 3), what defense could avail *for her*? She had thought to scrape *all* the wealth of the East together through the fall of Jerusalem; but God was about to dismantle her of everything, yea, even to scrape her very dust from her, and leave the rock on which she was built in its primitive nakedness (v. 4). Many of the maxims and ways of the trading world are against the laws of God; therefore God is also against them. Let us beware of the love of gain and a selfish regard to our worldly interest, which harden the heart and blind the conscience and moral perceptions, and at last destroy the soul forever.

When Ezekiel uttered his prophecy, nothing seemed more improbable than that Tyre should fall; for she had some time before withstood Shalmaneser and the powerful armies of Assyria, and there was every human reason to think she would similarly withstand Nebuchadnezzar and the forces of Babylon. But God had revealed to the prophet His decree, which delegated the universal world-empire under God to the Babylonian king as "a king of kings" (v. 7). No defense of Tyre, therefore, should avail against Nebuchadnezzar. Her "riches," in which she trusted, should be the very cause of her fall, by tempting his cupidity. Her "merchandise," the pursuit of which had led her to exult over the fall of Jerusalem as that of a rival, should be "a spoil" and "a prey." Her pleasant houses should be laid, "stones, timber, and dust, in the midst of the water" (v. 12). Her music and mirth should cease; and the site of her palaces should become "a place to spread nets upon" (v. 14). By a series of successive overthrows in different ages all this has exactly come to pass. Let us learn hence that no word of the Lord shall ever fail, however unlikely the event may seem to man. Every fresh fulfillment of Scripture prophecy should confirm our faith. Let us avoid the sins of Tyre, that we may escape her punishment.

The fall of Tyre spread consternation among her dependencies far and near, which had been connected with the mother-country by the ties of commerce and a common idolatry, as Tartessus, Utica, and Carthage. All earthly greatness is passing away; and all whose sole or chief portion is the world shall ere long, like Tyre's "princes of the sea," come down from their eminence to the ground, and instead of robes of state "shall clothe themselves with trembling" (v. 16). The ties,

which combine earthly potentates, nations, and families shall soon be snapped asunder. Let us see that we are united with the family of God by the tie of faith and love, which shall never be dissolved.

Tyre, once so strong that she "caused her terror to be on all that haunt the sea" (v. 17), was made to become "a terror" herself, to warn all of the evil consequences of her sins (v. 21). Brought down to the pit of destruction (v. 20), she teaches us how little cause we have for glorying in gain and riches, which cost anxiety in the getting and the keeping, and which excite the envy and cupidity of others, and often are the sources of sin and sorrow to the possessor.

In contrast to Tyre's transitory glory, and her very existence brought to a perpetual *death*, stands Jehovah's promise, "I shall set glory in the land of the *living*" (v. 20). Judah, restored hereafter to political and religious *life* in her own land, shall have Jehovah as "a wall of fire round about, and *the glory* in the midst of her" (Zech. 2:5). That this blessed consummation may soon come to pass, should be our constant prayer, while we for ourselves are careful that, by a living faith in Him who is the brightness of the Father's glory, we may be numbered among the saints in glory everlasting!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Was Tyre's sin similar to the sin of the Ammonites?

Ezek. 25:2-3 Ezek. 26:3-4

Ezekiel 27:1-36

The mercantile greatness and the beauty of Tyre as to situation (v. 3) only make her disastrous and utter downfall in the end the more awful by contrast. Sooner or later there is a termination to all the riches, honor, and beauty of the world; like a ship which has been built of the most costly materials, manned with the best mariners, and decked with snow-white sails and flaunting and brightly colored pennants, but which, encountering agitated seas, is broken in pieces by the waves, and tempests (vv. 4-9, 26). Such was maritime Tyre; and such, shall every people be at last whose greatness rests not on the strength of Jehovah.

It was not owing to any lack of troops and arms (vv. 9, 10) that Tyre fell; nor yet was it because her commercial stability rested on an unreal basis, in a worldly point of view. Tyre had all these sources of material wealth, permanence, and security, apparently as much as any nation ever had them (vv. 12-25). It might have seemed that it would be against the interest of any nation to go to war with her, inasmuch as she was wholly occupied with the peaceable pursuits of merchandise, and acted as a common center of commerce to all, without the inclination to make a hostile assault on any. But "except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Ps. 127:1).

The men of the world shall mourn at last when all that they esteemed great, glorious, and permanent, shall, contrary to their expectations, have come to a complete end; just as the various persons connected with Tyre mourned over her downfall (vv. 29-32). How vain a confidence is theirs who put their trust in any power of man! There is no solid and lasting help in any son of man, seeing that "his breath goeth forth" and "he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4). He alone is "happy that hath the God of Jacob for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God." Resting by faith on the Rock of Ages, the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall not be, like Tyre, founded on an earthly rock (ch. 26:4), but shall be secure for ever from the waves of destruction.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What comparisons can be made between the nations today and Tyre?

Ps. 77:1 Ps. 127:1 Zech. 2:8

Ezekiel 28:1-26

Hence we see that if it were possible for man to be placed under the most favorable circumstances that can be imagined—as, for instance, in Eden, the garden of God, or even in heaven itself—he could not enjoy its blessedness, or long remain there, without a holy, heavenly, and Christ-like mind. As Satan fell from heaven, and Adam from Paradise, because each stood in his own strength, so we cannot but fall, however great our privileges, and however favored we be in position, unless we be made conformable to the mind and will of God by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Zidon, too, the parent city of guilty Tyre, the headquarters of the idolatry of Ashtoreth and Tammuz, and the seducer of Israel to heathenism, was to be made an example of by the judgments inflicted on her before all nations, that they might know God as the Holy One who will not suffer His glory to be given to another with impunity.

Thus the way shall be prepared for mercy to Israel at last. The pricking briars and grieving thorns, which the heathen nations around proved to be in relation to Israel, by their idolatries and through her sinful weakness, are hereafter to exist no more (v. 24). Israel shall then be "gathered from the people among whom they are scattered" (v. 25), and "shall dwell safely, and with confidence" in her own land (v. 26): above all, not only through her long discipline of chastisements, but also through "the judgments executed upon all those that have despised her," she shall be brought to "know the Lord as her God." The promise belongs also to the spiritual Israel, the Church of the redeemed elect. Ere long the thorns of

temptation and the briars of ungodliness within and without the visible Church, which so harass the saints, shall be utterly removed, and forever: sorrow and sighing, sin and death, shall cease, and the saints shall dwell in everlasting joy and security in the heavenly Canaan, "knowing God as their God," not merely "in part," but "face to face," and perfectly, "even as also they are known" (1 Cor. 13:12).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

In the opening verses of Ezek. 28 we have a striking view of the Man of Sin under the title of "the Prince of Tyre", just as what is said of "the King of Tyre" in the second half of the chapter is an esoteric allusion to Satan. First, we are told his "heart is lifted up" (v. 2), which is precisely what is said to his father, the Devil, in v. 17. Second, he makes the boast "I am God" and "I sit in the seat of God" (v. 2), which is parallel with 2 Thess. 2:4. Third, it is here said of him, "Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee" (v. 3), which intimates he will be endowed with superhuman wisdom by that one of whom this same chapter declares, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom" (v. 12 kjv). Fourth, it is said of him, "By thy wisdom and by thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures" (v. 4). Thus will he be able to dazzle the worshippers of Mammon by his Croesus-like wealth, and out-do Solomon in the glory of his kingdom. Finally, his death by the sword is here noted, see vv. 7, 8. (The Antichrist, A. W. Pink) **What was the sin of Tyre's king? Show how God is here using Tyre's king to be an allusion to Satan.**

Isa. 14:12-15 Ezek. 28:2

Ezekiel 29:1-21

Egypt was of old the enemy of Israel, and more recently the seducer of the elect nation into idolatry and estrangement from God. Therefore God declares by Ezekiel to the Egyptian king, "Behold I am against thee" (v. 3). God is against all who injure His people, whether by oppression or by seduction, and sooner or later will severely punish them: for it is written as to the people of God, "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech. 2:8).

Overweening self-sufficiency was the characteristic sin of the then-reigning King of Egypt. Proud of his successes for five and twenty years, Pharaoh-hophra had in blasphemous presumption said that not even a god could deprive him of his kingdom. Resting in haughty security on the abundant resources, which Egypt derived from the fertilizing powers of the Nile, Pharaoh said within himself, as though he were the Deity, "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (vv. 3, 9). Thus carnal minds in prosperity attribute the glory of their possessions to themselves, and forget that all which we have we owe to God, and to God we ought to consecrate all that we possess and all that we are.

God taught Pharaoh by destroying judgments to unlearn his presumptuous confidence in his own inviolable security. The retribution inflicted on him was one in kind. As of old a former Pharaoh had pursued after Israel, saying, "The wilderness hath shut them in" (Exod. 14:3), so Egypt was herself to be brought into a wilderness-state of forty years, like the similar period of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness (vv. 11, 12), and her sons' carcasses were to be for meat to all beasts and fowls (v. 5). The Egyptians themselves thus should know to their cost the power and justice of the God of Israel (v. 6). All who hurt or tempt the people of God shall suffer for it in the end.

Israel, too, was taught to perceive the folly and sin of her past dependence on Egypt, which had proved to her out a staff of reed. At the time of the Jews' greatest need, when they were besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, from whom they had revolted, in reliance on the promises of Egypt, the expectation of deliverance from that quarter proved an utter disappointment: the reed which they leant upon with their whole weight snapped asunder, and rent their shoulder fatally (v. 7). Thus they who make flesh their arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord, always find their hope disappointed in the hour of their sorest need. God at once, in justice, as also in wisdom and mercy to His people, breaks every creature-confidence on which His people in sinful folly lean, in order that henceforth they may rest wholly on the Lord.

Yet even for Egypt God had mercy in store after judgment (v. 14). "He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever" (Ps. 105:9). But Egypt was henceforth to be but "a base kingdom" (vv. 14, 15). She was no more to have that power and eminence whereby Israel was tempted to look to her for protection, and so to conform to her corrupt ways (v. 16). We may truly bless God when He destroys all our cherished idols, and thereby draws us into closer communion with Himself.

God will never suffer Himself to remain in debt to any man. Even a heathen Nebuchadnezzar, when he had executed God's will, and performed the "service" which God required against Tyre, was not allowed to go unrequited, inasmuch as he "wrought for the Lord" (vv. 18-20).

Israel was to rise on the fall of Egypt, because of the everlasting covenant which God made with His elect people (v. 21). God "caused the horn of Israel to bud forth" after the seventy years of depression and captivity. Herein God fulfilled in part His promise in Psalm 132:17, "I will make the horn of David to bud." The fuller accomplishment of this word took place when He "raised up a horn of salvation for His people in the house of His servant David" (Luke 1:69), in the first coming of Messiah the Savior. The fullest accomplishment shall be when Messiah shall come again in glory as the universally recognized King of the Jews, and when His ancient people, as well as all His saints, shall hail Him, saying,

"Hosanna! blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mark 11:9,10.)

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Is Egypt's stability dependent on the relationship it has with Israel today?

Zech. 2:8

Ezekiel 30:1-26

The prophecy against Egypt is very full, because Egypt was the oldest enemy of Israel, and her perpetual seducer to idolatry and creature-confidences. The judgment on Egypt is an earnest of the world-wide judgment which shall fall ultimately on all the heathen enemies of God (v. 3), when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled (Luke 19:24). That day of the Lord shall be the day of His visitation in wrath upon those Gentiles who shall have resisted all the offers of His mercy in this His day of visitation in love. Let us be wise in time, that so that day may be to us not a day of terror, but a day of joy in the prospect of immediate redemption.

Not only Egypt herself, but also all 'who uphold her,' should fall (v. 6); and among these Johanan and the Jews who "leagued" themselves with her (v. 5), in direct violation of God's prohibition. They who take part with God's enemies shall share with them in their awful punishment.

As sinners perversely refuse to know God as a God of love, they shall know Him as a God that hates sin, and takes vengeance on the sinner for all unatoned guilt (v. 8). Severe as were the temporal judgments on Pharaoh and his people, what are they when compared with the eternal judgments which shall descend on the lost? Let us flee, while yet there is time, to Him who is our only Savior from the wrath to come, and from the "fire" (v.8) which shall never be quenched.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

At this time do you think Egypt and those other nations surrounding Israel will make peace or do you think they are past the point of no return and the end time prophecies are about to be fulfilled?

Ezekiel 31:1-18

The greatness of Egypt no more secured it against a grievous downfall than the greatness of Assyria had secured it against its utter overthrow. Assyria had once been as a stately cedar, with fair branches above, and supplied with waters to nourish its roots beneath (vv. 3-6). Whithersoever the Assyrian king extended his arms, prosperity had attended him: and many nations and peoples took shelter under his protection, just as the fowls and beasts avail themselves or the covert of a lofty and overshadowing tree (v. 6). No other king could eclipse his eminence (v. 8); so that he resembled a cedar which revived in itself all the glories of Paradise, so that no other tree was comparable to it. How great are the privileges, and now great also are the responsibilities of those who are thus placed in high positions, and distinguished by many excellent gifts!

But the Assyrian king forgot that all his excellence and eminence were the gifts of God's grace, not due to any merit in himself. "I have made him fair," saith God (v. 9). This truth was lost sight of, and the Assyrian's "heart was lifted up in his height" (v. 10). Therefore, in just retribution, instead of being in favor with God and with man, as he might have been by honoring God in all his ways, and by respecting the rights of his fellow-men, he became an object of "envy" to the peoples (v. 9), by haughtiness in his proud elevation (v. 10), and by oppression of those under him; then followed the day of his punishment. "Delivered up" by the hand of the righteous Judge "into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen," the representative and instrument of God's vengeance (v. 11), he was dealt with according to his sin, and, like a second Adam, "driven out for his wickedness." Then all the nations and peoples who had once sheltered under "his shadow left him" (v. 12); nay, as birds and beasts tread under foot the fallen trunk of the tree beneath which they had once taken shelter, so the very subjects of Nineveh insulted over its "ruin"(v. 13).

How different the security afforded by the Gospel-tree! The Gospel-kingdom gathers all under its saving covert, for their present and eternal good and for the glory of God, and not for self-aggrandizement and to the hurt of men, as is the way of the kingdoms of this world (v. 6). Therefore it shall never fall, nor shall those who trust in its shadow (ch. 17:23; Matt. 13:32) ever be confounded; for it is a kingdom that is established on the everlasting principles of the divine truth, righteousness, and love.

The effect of God's judgments on the haughty ones of the earth is to abase the pride of man, "to the end that none of all ... exalt themselves for their height" (v. 14). The higher has been the past elevation of the proud, the deeper shall be their fall. The pit of hell beneath (vv. 14, 16) is the appointed place of all who set themselves on high against God and His people. Their helpers, who were their "ruin," in deeds of violence, and all who have been confederate with them in sin, shall share their doom (v. 17). Others, too, who preceded them in sin,—the great ones of the earth, who had been once, as it were, "choice trees of Eden," but who were cast down to hell through apostasy, shall feel a melancholy "comfort" in

having so great a king as the Assyrian brought down to the same level with themselves, and a companion in misery (v. 16). Oh how terrible must be the torments of the lost, when the only consolation afforded them is the miserable one of having others to share their wretchedness!

The Egyptian king resembled the Assyrian in his overweening and blasphemous pride: so therefore must he resemble him in his terrible fall; while all peoples shall point to him as an awful example of God's vengeance on proud transgressors,—This is Pharaoh and all his multitude! How blessed it is to be among the meek followers of the Lamb, who, when God shall destroy the guilty, shall be eternally safe; yea, they shall adore the holy justice of God, when "they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against God; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh"! (Isa. 66:24.)

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Compare the judgment that is said here about nations with what is said in Psalms 49:10-20?

Ezekiel 32:1-32

The princes and conquerors of this earth, who, like Pharaoh, gain a great name by aggression and violence, are no better in God's eyes than beasts which live by making the weaker their prey, or monsters of the deep which "trouble the waters and foul the rivers" in pursuit of their victims (v. 2). He will therefore repay them in their own coin. "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52). As they had spread their net over weaker peoples, with a company of many people, so God will spread out His net over them with a company of stronger people, the Chaldeans, who should bring them up as fishes caught in His net (v. 3; Hab. 1:14-17). As a fish out of its element, so would Pharaoh be when deprived of all his power and resources. The river Nile and the canals from it, on which Egypt had prided herself as the sources of her fertility, should now be filled with the blood and carcasses of the Egyptians slain (v. 6). Thus darkness, answering to the literal plague of darkness formerly sent upon Egypt, should again come "upon the land" (vv. 7, 8). When God has a controversy with any people, or with individuals, because of their sin, no power can withstand His judgments. The very resources, which seem to be for them are all turned against them, and their light is extinguished in the blackness of darkness.

All they who had admired the grandeur and power of Egypt, when the tidings of her destruction should be brought, would be "amazed and horribly afraid" (v. 10). The kings, whosoever were conscious of similar sins to those of Pharaoh, would "tremble every man for his own life, when the Lord should brandish His sword before them." Those who admire the pomp of worldly greatness shall necessarily be astounded at its downfall, and shall tremble for themselves, as involved in the same condemnation as the world which they love. But the fall of earthly things will not take by surprise, nor alarm the children of God, whose portion is not in this world, and who know its real emptiness.

All who love "troubled" waters, and try therewith to overwhelm others, as did Pharaoh, shall be troubled themselves, and their power of troubling the peaceable shall be taken from them, as it was taken from Pharaoh. They shall be forced to be still and quiet, by being deprived of the means of aggression (vv. 13, 14), as Egypt was made by God "destitute of that whereof it was full" (v. 15).

How soon God can empty of worldly goods those who have the greatest abundance of them! and the more a man has made them his chief joy, the more of "lamentation" will he be caused by their loss (v. 16).

What a sad picture of the end of all earthly power, greatness, and wealth is given here by the prophet in the representation of Egypt, Assyria, Elam, Edom, and other once "famous" nations, as they shall be seen at last, when they shall have been brought down to the pit! (vv. 18-31.) However beautiful in aspect any nation now may seem (v. 19), others no less beautiful have nevertheless passed into oblivion. Let all who make "beauty" their idol remember that soon it must go down to the grave, which mars all beauty. "The strong" fare no better than the beautiful: they who once by their strength "caused terror in the land of the living," in the nether world are a terror to themselves (vv. 23, 24). In just retribution the proud oppressors shall there bear their own shame. Those who grasped at earthly honors, reckless of the laws of God and the rights of man, shall lie dishonored with "their iniquities upon their bones" (v. 27). They who have not had the true circumcision of the heart "shall lie with the uncircumcised" (v. 29). They who boasted of their might on earth shall in hell be "ashamed of their might" (v. 30).

The only consolation left them shall be the wretched one of having multitudes of others as companions of their misery. As on earth violent men put their terror on their fellow-men, so God will put His terror on them.

The theatre of its display shall be not only in hell, but also "in the land of the living," where God will gloriously vindicate the cause of His people against their foes (v. 32). Surely men disquiet themselves about a vain thing in so keenly pursuing pleasure, gain, fame, and power, at the cost of their immortal souls. What will all these objects of worldly men's pursuit do for them when they are laid in the grave? Lord, do thou teach us the blessedness of having thee as our portion forever!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

How does this oracle against Egypt take the form of a funeral lament?

Ezekiel 33:1-33

The duty of the spiritual watchman is to warn faithfully the impenitent of their imminent danger, and of the willingness of God to receive them graciously and save them freely, if they will repent. Whosoever hears the watchman's warning, and yet takes no heed to it, shall perish, and his blood shall be upon his own head (*vv.* 2-5, 9). But the minister who knows the danger that is before sinners, and yet neglects to sound the faithful note of warning, shall not only be in part the cause of their ruin, but shall also bring on his own head an awful condemnation. *They* no doubt justly perish on account of their neglect to watch and pray continually; but *he* incurs at once the guilt of his own and that of their disobedience to God (*v.* 8). What a heavy account they shall have to render who make excuses for sin, flatter sinners, and promise them pardon and peace without penitence and faith!

Lest, however, the sternness of God's threats against the disobedient should drive to despair those who, like the Jews, are conscious of transgressions and sins (*v.* 10) which deserve the wrath of God, Ezekiel assures us that God has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," but that what gives our loving God pleasure is, "that the wicked should turn from his way and live" (*v.* 11). Not merely this but more, the great God of heaven, so far from desiring that sinners should "pine away" in their iniquities, as the Jews thought (*v.* 10), actually deigns to plead with the guilty worms of the dust not to destroy themselves, as though He were imploring for some favor for Himself, "Turn ye, turn ye ... for why will ye die?" Oh what infinite compassion, tenderness, and love! Who can harden himself against such an appeal? And how much it will add to the bitterness of the misery of the lost, to remember that they slighted such an invitation!

It is He alone who endureth to the end that shall be saved. Fast acts of seeming righteousness will not avail anything to him who backslides into sin, and dies in it (*v.* 12). Many who made a fair profession, and who seemed to themselves and others saved men, have "trusted in their own righteousness," and presumed upon their own sufficiency, and so have fallen into iniquity, which has proved their ruin.

On the other hand, the sinner who has taken heed to the warning of God, and turned from sin to righteousness, and given real evidences of faith and repentance by "walking in the statutes of life" (*v.* 15), shall surely live, and not die. It was thus that Zaccheus, once guilty of the usual bad practices of tax collectors, when converted by the grace of Christ, at once gave evidence of a real change of heart by restoring four-fold whatever he had unjustly gained, and so received the immediate assurance of salvation (Luke 19:8-10). Not one of the past sins of believers shall be mentioned against them (*v.* 16). God "will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:19). Let us therefore never forget, if we be in Christ, that we were "purged from our old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9).

When men find fault with the ways of God as "not equal," it is because their own ways are not equal (*v.* 17). On the other hand, God saith, "Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?" (Mic. 2:7) God "meeteth him that worketh righteousness; those that remember God in His ways" (Isa. 64:5). The cause of sceptical cavils (those that raise trivial objections) at the ways of Divine providence and grace lies in the unbeliever's faulty state of heart, which corrupts the understanding.

At length the fatal stroke so long threatened, but suspended through the long-suffering of God, fell on Jerusalem, and the sad tidings reached the captives at the river Chebar (*v.* 21). Such was the infatuation of the escaped remnant in the now-wasted lands of Judea (*v.* 24) that they were even still full of self-sufficient confidence. Had this confidence been resting on the restoration of God's favor, through their repentance, it would have been a reasonable confidence; but it rested on utterly false reasonings as to the relation in which they stood to Abraham. Abraham, they reasoned, obtained from God the inheritance of Canaan (*v.* 24), and we are his children, and therefore are entitled to succeed to his inheritance: Abraham was but "*one*" when he obtained the grant of the land, much more shall we retain it as our own who are "*many*." But they utterly shut their eyes to the fact that Abraham pleased God in all his ways, and was therefore called "the friend of God:" they; on the contrary, displeased God in all their ways by "working abominations," and "standing upon their sword" as if might made right. Therefore, in just retribution "they should fall by the sword" (*v.* 27), and those who escaped it, and got into "caves" to hide from the foe, should "die of pestilence" there (*v.* 27): and "the pomp of their strength should cease," and their land be "most desolate" (*vv.* 27, 28).

The captive Jews at the Chebar, though not so openly, yet betrayed substantially the same spirit as their unbelieving brethren in Judea. While professing great admiration for Ezekiel's earnestness and eloquence, they talked against him both in their places of public resort and in their private houses (*v.* 30). It is true they agreed together to "come and hear what was the word from the Lord;" but God looks to the inward motives, and these were far from being such as God approves. Curiosity and the idle wish to hear some new thing influenced some, as in the case of the Athenians in ages long subsequent (Acts 17:19-21). How many there are in our days who go to places where the Word of God is faithfully preached, from no better motive! "May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?" Others again go to criticize, as the Jews at the Chebar criticized Ezekiel's manner and enigmatical style in an unfriendly and self-sufficient spirit. They discuss religion as a mere matter of taste, not as a matter of life or death eternal to themselves. Thus they make some trifling defect in the mode of the preacher their means of parrying off the home-thrust, which the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, aims at their conscience. They come, indeed, to the minister of God as if they were the people of

God; they sit before him as obedient disciples: but while they hear, they will not do the will of God; for pastime and gratification of the ear, not spiritual profit and renewal of the heart, are what they seek. With all their loud mouth-professions of love to God and His ordinances, the love which reigns in their heart is love of self and love of fame, pleasure, and gain (v. 31). "Covetousness" is a grand rival to the love of God; so that where the love of mammon is, there the love of God is not. An eloquent and holy preacher like Ezekiel may please the fancy of carnal hearers, but their hearts are not reached, because they listen not as if the subject-matter was one in which they are personally and everlastingly interested, but as if they were listening to a piece of vocal and instrumental music (v. 32), in which the melody is the chief thing, and the truth contained in the words a matter of very secondary importance. But whether men take heed to and obey the Word, or do not, the event will prove the truth of God: and they who will not now know the preciousness of their privileges, by using them aright, shall be made to know it hereafter in their eternal deprivation of them (v. 33). Lord, do give us the spiritually hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the understanding heart! (Prov. 8:5; 20:12)

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Was Ezekiel a watchman? Is it each Christian's responsibility to be a watchman and what work is attached with that responsibility?

Ezek. 3:16-20 Ezek. 33:2-9

Ezekiel 34:1-31

The removal of the false rulers who have ruled for their own selfish aggrandizement, not for the glory of God, or the real good of their subjects, is to precede the setting up of the coming king, who is to rule in love and righteousness, Messiah the good Shepherd (vv. 2, 23). The Lord Jesus provides for the eternal well-being of His own flock, both the elect remnant of the literal Israel, and also the spiritual Israel the Church, infinitely better than the best of earthly shepherds ever cared for his sheep. But the false shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel's days cared only for themselves, and for their own grovelling aims, selfish gain, and worldly pre-eminence, like Diotrefes in ages long subsequent (3 John 9), and not for the best interests of the flock (v. 3). Spiritual pastors should "feed the flock of God, not for filthy lucre, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2, 3).

Moreover, it is not enough that pastors should do no harm to those committed to their charge, but God will hold them accountable if they do not "strengthen the spiritually diseased, heal the sick, bind up the broken (in heart), bring again those driven away, and seek the lost" (v. 4). The rulers of Israel failed in all these respects towards those under them, and added positive "force and cruelty" to their omissions of duty. The result was, the people of God "were scattered, because there was no (true) shepherd" to tend them aright, none to "search or seek after them." A timely spiritual reformation of the state by its rulers would have averted the judgments of God altogether; and even in Ezekiel's time, when wrath from God had already descended, faithful conduct on their part would have been followed by a mitigation of this punishment, and a restoration of the "scattered" exiles (v. 6).

The consequences to the unfaithful shepherds of their negligence, God declares (v. 10), "Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore." Those who abuse any solemn trust must answer for it to God, and shall be deprived of the power of selfish misrule forever. It will be among the most bitter of the self-reproaches of many among the lost, to think that once they were in high places of trust, by faithfulness in which they might have inherited an eminent crown of glory; but by unfaithfulness and self-seeking they have precipitated themselves into the lowest and most terrible of the depths of hell.

When the wicked shepherds are destroyed, the Lord Himself comes forward as the good Shepherd, Himself to interpose in behalf of His: "Behold, I, even I," the all-powerful, the all-wise, the all-loving God of my people, "will both search my sheep, and seek them out" (v. 11). That office which the unfaithful shepherds failed to perform, I myself will effectually fulfill in behalf of my flock. The Lord Jesus at His second coming shall stand "in the midst" of His people as their glory and their defence. He will "seek out and deliver the Israelites out of all places where, in the cloudy and dark day, they have been scattered (v. 12)... and will bring them to their own land," where he shall "feed them, and cause them to lie down" in perfect ease and security (v. 15). In beautiful contrast to the culpable negligence and selfish cruelty and rapacity of the unfaithful shepherds, the Lord promises to "seek the lost, bring again those driven away, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick;" but those fattened and puffed up with pride through prosperity, who abuse their strength to oppress the weak "with force and with cruelty" (v. 4), God "will destroy," while He rules His people in justice and mercy.

However God may seem now to make no difference between the oppressors and the oppressed, the wicked and the righteous, the time is fast coming when the Lord shall come as Judge of all men, to make a momentous and everlasting distinction between the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left (v. 17; Matt. 25:32, 33). Then shall he call to strictest account the haughty great men who, not content with appropriating the goods of others, actually spoiled through gratuitous wantonness what they did not use, so as to render them useless to the rightful owners (vv. 18, 19). No wrong shall then remain unredressed. The Lord will vindicate His own righteousness in avenging the cause of His despised people on their proud oppressors (vv. 20-22).

The great instrument and willing "servant" in the hands of God for effecting this His sure purpose is the "One Shepherd," peerless and matchless in excellence and dignity, the Divine Messiah, "raised up to David" (vv. 23, 29), that He should once for all die for His people's sins, and forever reign, at His second coming, as their glorified Prince in the midst of them (v. 24). Then shall His people dwell in undisturbed peace and safety throughout their land, unmolested by man or beast (v. 25), and "showers of blessing" from above shall come down upon them and their land, so that they shall be a source of blessing to the nations around (v. 26). Internal righteousness and external prosperity shall go hand in hand (vv. 27, 28). The bondage (v. 27) and "shame" which they were forced by the heathen to submit to formerly (v. 29) shall then come to a perpetual end. Exemption from hunger and reproach shall be their happy portion henceforth.

All these blessings flow from Jesus, Immanuel, "the Lord their God with them" (v. 30). For the Israelites are but "men," weak in themselves (v. 31), and most unlikely objects of such wonderful blessings. But God hath promised these blessings, as being their covenant-God; and because of that His unchangeable promise, Messiah, the "plant of renown" (v. 29), shall be "raised up for them," as their deliverer in the last days (Rom. 11:26).

All these promises belong also to us, if we be true believers in Christ. Then we can say, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." When we were 'wandering' on the mountains of error (v. 6), Jesus sought us, and brought us safely into the fold (v. 11). He feeds us in the green pastures of His ordinances now. "He leads us in the paths of righteousness," and makes us to lie down at rest, reposing on His love (v. 15); and will at last bring us to the heavenly land of promise, where we shall hunger no more, and thirst no more (v. 29), and our shame shall be turned into everlasting glory. Therefore, throughout eternity we shall praise the divine grace of God in Christ, which pitied us in our lost estate, and so marvelously led us the right way until we reached the heavenly city of habitation (Ps. 117:7).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What were the shortcomings of Israel's shepherds and what was their judgement?

Ezek. 34:2-10

What part of the trinity is speaking in Ezekiel 34?

Ezekiel 35:1-15

Edom is often in Scripture made the type of the most bitter and inveterate enemies of God's people in all ages. The hatred of brothers, when they are at variance, is proverbially rancorous. Such was Esau's hatred of Jacob, though the latter averted it by soft words and conciliatory acts; and such was the inherited bitterness of Esau's descendants towards Israel. Therefore God declares, "Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee . . . and thou shalt be desolate" (vv. 3, 4). Those who cherish "a perpetual hatred" (v. 5) against their fellow-man, betray the carnal mind, which is "enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7); therefore God is against them, and will give them, in righteous retribution, to "perpetual desolations" (v.9).

As Edom exulted over the calamity of Israel, which was the penalty of their fully-consummated "iniquity" (v. 5), therefore calamity was to be her own portion, and this not temporary, as in Israel's case, but forever: there was to be no "return" to prosperity for Edom (v. 9). Since she delighted in blood shedding, blood shedding should pursue herself (v. 6). Since she "cut off" all of Israel who tried to escape through her territory (Obad. 14), so all who pass from her land or return to it should be "cut off" (v. 7). Thus should she be compelled by awful judgments to "know the Lord" as her punisher, since she would not know Him as her Savior (v. 9).

The overthrow and exile of the Israelites from their land ought to have moved Edom to self-examination, lest there should be in herself sins found which might provoke God to inflict similar judgments. Instead of this, she regarded Israel's calamity as her opportunity: "These two countries shall be mine," said she, "and we will possess it." She forgot, in her wicked presumption, that the land of Israel was peculiarly the Lord's possession, and the Lord's earthly dwelling-place (v. 10); therefore so far was Edom from being about to gain possession of Israel's inheritance, that she was about to be deprived of her own, and that forever. Herein we have an awful example of God's retributive justice, whereby He makes 'anger, envy, and hatred' recoil upon the head of those who cherish such passions (v. 11). "I will even do, saith the Lord God, according to thine anger, and according to thine envy, which thou hast used out of thy hatred."

Worldly men think lightly of speaking vindictive and calumnious words against the people of God, and of forming projects for taking selfish advantage of their times of extremity (v. 12); but God regards such words against His people as spoken against Himself. There is not a word that goeth out of our lips, which God does not hear. How careful and guarded, then, we should be in our words, especially in times when our carnal passions and tempers are excited! (v. 13) "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking; But he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19).

What an entire reversal of the present order of things there will be at the second coming of Christ! The enemies of God, who so often seem now to triumph, shall then be cast down in desolation and everlasting sorrow (v. 14). The people of God, Israel and the elect Church, who so often now mourn, shall then "rejoice" with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Edom, that rejoiced over fallen Israel, shall then mourn over her own irretrievable fall; while "Jerusalem shall be a

rejoicing, and her people a joy." Let us see that we take our portion now with the people of God in their season of trial, that so we may have our everlasting portion with them in their coming blessedness.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Is their anything that has been passed down from Edom to some nations surrounding Israel today?

Ezek. 25:1-17 Ezek. 35:10-11 Obad. 10-14

Ezekiel 36:1-38

The grand distinction between the people of God, as Israel, and the people of the world, as Edom, is, whereas the latter are finally given over to destruction, the former are only chastened for a time, and shall be finally and completely delivered. The people of the world may now seem exalted to a great height; but their elevation is of a carnal and material kind, and is therefore transitory. The elevation of the Israel of God is spiritual, and therefore permanent. Her hills are "the everlasting hills" (Gen. 49:26). The mount Zion, as the seat of God's earthly throne, "cannot be removed, but abideth forever" (Ps. 125:1). Therefore Edom's shout of triumph over the fallen Israel shall be turned into wailing for her own fall. She had greedily thought to take possession of the "ancient high places" of the people of God (v. 2). Not merely this but also more, she had turned into derision the promise of perpetuity, which God had given to His people, as though that promise was now proved to be abortive, and had sneered at Israel's connection with Jehovah, as though He were unable to save them. This it was which especially provoked God to "speak in the fire of His jealousy" against the godless enemy (v. 5), and in behalf of His people. As Israel "had borne the shame of the heathen" (v. 6), so should the heathen henceforth and forever "bear their own shame" (v. 7). When the believer is cast down in spirit, and hears himself and the cause of the Lord "taken up in the lips of talkers" (v. 3), who taunt him in his adversity, saying continually, "Where is thy God?" let him wait in patient confidence, and ere long he shall have ample cause to praise the God "who is the health of his countenance, and his God" (Ps. 42:3, 11).

The Lord declares to the people of Israel; "Behold, I am for you" (v. 9). Since God is ultimately to be for them, no power can avail anything that is against them: God will "turn to" His people in mercy, and they shall at the same time turn to Him in repentance. The restoration to their own land is to be literal; and all things and all persons in the restored state of Israel are to share in the coming blessedness—"the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, the houses, the cities, man and beast" (vv. 4, 8, 10). Thus the Lord is about to "bless the latter end" of Israel, as that of Job 42:12, "more than her beginning" (v. 11). So in the case of the spiritual Israel, the true Church; she is now a little and despised flock, but she shall at last be "a multitude which no man can number" (Rev. 7:9); whereas the antichristian faction, and all the carnal, worldly, and unbelieving, who shall for a time seem to triumph over the Church of Christ (Rev. 11:7-11), shall perish awfully and everlastingly.

Palestine has been from the earliest ages as it were the grave of its occupants: it was so to the ancient Canaanites, through intense wars, and then by the sword of Israel; it was so to Israel because of the judgments of God on account of their apostasy; it has been for eighteen centuries a down-trodden country (vv. 12, 13). It is hereafter to be so "no more" (vv. 14, 15). Let us not doubt that, as the Word of God has so far been accurately fulfilled, what remains shall also come to pass. Let us observe the signs of the times, and so discern what we ought to do accordingly.

The reason for Israel's having been removed by God was because of her uncleanness, just as a woman's legal uncleanness caused her to be separated from the congregation (v. 17). God's holiness constrained Him to judge His people, who were guilty of idolatry and blood shedding, "according to their way, and according to their doings" (vv. 18, 19). Then, in their dispersion among the heathen, they brought dishonor on the holy name of God (v. 20), not only by their oppressions, usuries, and adulteries, but also through their miserable condition, which was the judicial consequence of those sins. See, said the godless heathen, these wretched beings are the people of Jehovah, and "are gone forth out of His land!" (v. 20) Such are the specimens to show what kind of a God this so-called holy, covenant-keeping, and omnipotent Jehovah is! Who would worship such a God? Let the children of God remember that they are the representatives of the honor of God before the world. Let them therefore be scrupulously watchful over their whole conduct, demeanor, and temper, so as to give no handle to the enemies of God to blaspheme.

The dishonor put on the name of God, in the person of His exiled people Israel, by the heathen, was the primary moving cause, which led Him to restore the Jews from Babylon (vv. 21, 22). So shall the same regard for the honor of His own holy name again lead him to gather the Jews out of all the Gentile countries wherein they are now dispersed, and to restore them to their own land (vv. 23, 24). It is not for any merit which God sees in His people that He has pity on them; for if God weighed their merits, there could be nothing in them to recommend, them to His favor (v. 22); but it is in consideration of His own holy name and character, as the God of covenanted grace (v. 21), that so He may vindicate its sanctity before the nations from the reproach brought on it through the sins and the terrible punishment of the covenant-people (v. 23). Let us hence learn that the honor of His own holy name is the first grand end of all God's dealings of wrath and of mercy. Let us fall in with the purpose of God, and make the honor of His name our chief plea in our prayers for mercy, and our influencing motive in all our acts.

The external restoration of Israel to their own land is to be accompanied or followed by an internal and spiritual restoration through repentance and conversion. Mere change of men's position avails little, without change also of disposition. The heart must be renewed, in order that there may be a real and lasting change for the better. God Himself engages to effect this change. If He commands Israel, "*Make you a new heart and a new spirit*" (ch. 18:31), He also promises to give the power to do that which Israel could not do of herself: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also *will I give you*, and a new spirit *will I put within you*; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," (v. 25-26). Thus the Gentiles, understanding from the regenerated lives of God's people how holy God is, will perceive Israel's past troubles to have been only the necessary vindication of His righteousness; and thereby the name of God shall be sanctified among the nations. The same effect is produced on the world by the consistent walk of truly regenerated Christians: even the unbelieving are constrained to say, "God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. 14:25). The blood of Christ must sprinkle the heart from an evil conscience, in order that any of us may be clean before God (v. 25; Heb. 10:22). It is the office of the Holy Spirit, which is often compared to pure waters, to apply, the blood of the Savior to the cleansing of the sinner. Then the stony, unimpressible heart gives place to a humble, tender, and teachable heart (v. 26). Covetousness, ambition, and love of "all" earthly "idols," with all other "filthiness" are thus "cleansed" from us; and we henceforth "delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22), to do its statutes (v. 27). Renewing grace effects as great a change in the soul as if a dead stone were turned into living flesh (v. 26). They who were not the Lord's people become the people of God (v. 28). They are "saved from all their uncleannesses" first, and then outward mercies follow. God, who formerly called a famine upon the land of Israel (Ps. 105:16), shall "call for the corn" (v. 29), which comes at His command, as a servant would come at a master's call.

The result of the Lord's marvelous grace to Israel at last, so little to be looked for, considering their provocations, shall be, they shall remember their own evil ways and doings with loathing (v. 31), and shall perceive, with, shame and self-condemnation, that it is not for their merits, but for His own name's sake, that God shows such gratuitous mercy (v. 32). Nothing so melts the sinner into repentance as the love and grace of God, where He could only have looked for wrath because of his sins. Let us, if we desire true repentance, receive it as the gift of God at the foot of the cross of Christ, where we see our sin forgiven at the cost of such an awful sacrifice, flowing from the gratuitous love of God. The terrors of the law can frighten, but the grace of God in Christ alone can melt the heart.

The Gentiles who have made the desolation of Israel a reproach against Jehovah Himself (v. 20), shall acknowledge the more than restored blessedness of Israel to be the work of God, and shall thereby be brought to know Him who hath changed the desolate land of Palestine into the garden of Eden (vv. 34-36). And all these glorious results shall follow upon the prayers of His people, which He will previously stir them up to offer. When God purposes to bestow the richest blessings, He first of all stirs up His people to pray for them, and to plead His own promises as the ground of their petitions. He even now says to the spiritual Israel, "I will yet for this be enquired of by my people, to do it for them" (v. 37). May He pour the Spirit of grace and supplications on His universal Church, and so prepare her for receiving floods of blessing from on high!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

These past nineteen centuries Israel has been a wanderer on the face of the earth—"scattered and peeled," tossed about among the nations, "even as corn is tossed about in a sieve." At times it seemed as if they would be altogether rooted out of existence, there being only one million of them left at the beginning of the sixteenth century, after the most terrible fiery ordeal of persecution and suffering, through which they passed in the dark Middle Ages. Was there any human likelihood that they would ever again be restored as a nation in their own land? They themselves were ready to renounce all hope of a national restoration, and said: "*Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off*" (Ezek. 36:11); while the whole world laughed at the very possibility of a Jewish nation being re-established in Palestine.

But God "remembers His covenant *forever*—the word which He had spoken to *a thousand generations*," and therefore it has come to pass, in God's wonderful overruling providence, that, as one result of a great world catastrophe, the Jews are once more acknowledged as a nation, and the governments of the greatest of the Gentile nations are publicly pledged to facilitate the re-establishment of their "national home" in Palestine. Truly our God is faithful, and His word can never fail!

But while writing thus, it is, perhaps, not unnecessary to utter a word of warning lest it should be thought that we regard the return of a large number of Jews to Palestine in a condition of unbelief, which is taking place under our very eyes, as the final and exhaustive fulfillment of the great promises in reference to Israel's future. The return in unbelief is, we believe, *the necessary precursor to the resumption of God's dealings with them as a nation*; but of this we are certain, on the ground of prophetic Scripture, that the Jews will never possess the land *in blessing* until God's long-standing controversy with them is ended. And this will not be until Israel's national repentance and conversion, when they shall broken-heartedly confess their great national sin, and look upon Him Whom they have pierced, and mourn.

The promises of God, which are of a national character, remain forever true *to the nation*, which God takes care to preserve—but generations of Jews may exclude themselves from the enjoyment of the blessings promised them through unbelief and disobedience. It was so with the whole generation nearly, of those who came out of Egypt, concerning whom "God sware in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest"; and it has been so with the generations of Jews these

past nineteen centuries, who, as a nation could not "enter into His rest," or into the enjoyment of God's promises of either temporal or spiritual blessing because of unbelief (Heb. 3:16-19). No, the Jewish nation will yet learn, after bitter experience, the truth of the words of Joseph Rabinowitch, one of the noblest Jewish patriots and pioneers, that "the key to Palestine (as well as into the Kingdom of God) lies in the hands of Jesus our Brother."

(Israel In The Plan Of God, David Baron)

How is the Lord's character brought out in Ezek. 36:2-7, 22, 33, 37?

Show how the external return of Israel will be followed by an internal, spiritual restoration?

Ezek. 18:31 Ezek. 36:25-27 Rom. 7:21-22 Heb. 10:19-23

Is what is talked about in Ezekiel 36 happening during the millennial reign of Christ? More detail of this period of time is given in Ezekiel 40-47.

Rev. 20:4-6

Ezekiel 37:1-28

This vision is designed primarily to cheer up the desponding Jews in their captivity. They compared themselves, in respect to national vitality, to dry bones scattered at the grave's mouth (Ps. 141:7). There seemed to them no hope of restoration to their former political and religious life as a people (v. 11); like bones in a valley, bleached by *long* exposure to the atmosphere, they sojourned in the Mesopotamian plain, helpless and hopeless, so far as human power is concerned. But faith leaves the question of possibilities with God, believing that nothing is impossible which He declares shall be done, however impossible it may seem to the eye of sense and human reason (v. 3). In this chapter God gives His promise of the resurrection of Israel, and faith accepts it accordingly (vv. 5, 6). The first step in their restoration is, the prophet is directed, "Prophecy upon these dry bones." As yet they were utterly senseless; therefore the prophet was to prophesy *over* them, not *unto* them. But they were to be called on to "hear" the quickening word of the Lord. Ezekiel was so to prophesy that the word of the Lord should fall "upon" them. The result immediately followed: "There was a noise, and a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone" (v. 7). Then "the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above" (v. 8). As yet there was no breath in them. But this also was presently added, the Lord God by His prophet summoning the breath of life from the four quarters where they were scattered, and causing the vivifying spirit to "breathe upon the slain." So they came to life, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army (v. 10). Such is the life, national and spiritual, which is before Israel when she shall be restored to her own land (vv. 12-14). God hath said it, and He will perform it (v. 14). Let us therefore not be faithless, but believing. Let the Jew occupy in our mind, and in our efforts, the prominent place which he does in the purposes of God.

The vision secondarily also sets forth the spiritual resurrection of the people of God now through the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost; and then, hereafter, their literal resurrection also, through the same Spirit of Jesus (Rom. 8:11), which raised Him from the dead, "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil 3:21). It needs the same Almighty power to raise a sinner from his natural state of spiritual death as it does to raise a corpse to life. To man both alike are impossible. But faith believes in the power and will of God to quicken the dead, where to sense the case would seem hopeless (v. 3). It is in the hearing of the word of God (v. 4) that the Spirit moves: for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The spiritual resurrection, however, is not instantaneously complete, but is progressive. At first there is the outward and inward preparation for the reception of the spirit of life; and then at last the breath of life enters the man, and he becomes truly born again of the Spirit. Let us never be satisfied with the outward semblances of spiritual life—the bones, sinews, flesh, and skin—which give the *form* of beauty and life, but which are not the *life* itself. None but living believers shall stand before the living God. Prayer is the means whereby to obtain, the breath of spiritual life both for ourselves and for others. Let us, then, often pray, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south: blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof (the spiritual graces of the Church) may flow out" (Song 4:16). "Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (v. 9). No case is too desperate for the grace of God. So long as life lasts, "hope" need never be "lost" (v. 11): for though we men be "cut off for *our* parts," God is not cut short in power for *His* part. Then as to the literal resurrection of the body hereafter, we have the sure warrant of the word of Jesus, however 'incredible' it seem to reason (Acts 26:8), that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

God's covenant-relation to Israel as *His* people (v. 12) is the ground of assurance that He will not allow death permanently to reign over them. Such, too, is the principle on which rests the future deliverance by Christ of all His elect people from the bondage of corruption at the general resurrection (Luke 20:37, 38).

As the separation of Judah and Ephraim (that is, the kingdom of the ten tribes) was the punishment of apostasy, and led to still further evils, religious and political, so hereafter, when both are one with God, through the spirit of life uniting them to the one covenant-Head, Messiah-David, they shall be united to one another, as no longer two, but one people

(vv. 15-19, 22). In respect to the spiritual Israel, the Church, nothing has more impeded the progress of the Gospel than the mutual divisions of professing Christians. Let us pray for the blessed time when all Christians shall be one inwardly and outwardly, as the Lord Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). Meanwhile, if in non-essentials we differ for a time, let us endeavor at least to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

God makes with all His elect, as with Israel, "a covenant of peace," and this "an everlasting covenant." He dwells in them now, as His earthly sanctuary, by His Spirit (v. 26); He will hereafter dwell among them visibly, with the full manifestation of His glory, when "the tabernacle of God shall be with men" (Rev. 21:3): and "God Himself shall be with them, and shall be their God" (v. 27). Let us, therefore, as the redeemed of the Lord, live conformably to our high calling, and to such glorious hopes!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

'Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. (Ezek. 37:5) **What is the meaning of the "bones" and the "breath" that will make them "live". What period of time is spoken of here?**

Ezekiel 38:1-39:29

The prophetic perspective concerning Gog, includes the final revolt of the nations at the close of the mediatorial Messianic Kingdom (Rev. 20:6-9).

(Unger's Bible Dictionary, Merril F. Unger)

The reasons to believe that this event with Gog and Magog occurs at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (1000 year reign of Christ upon the earth after the great tribulation) and not during a previous age, present age or the tribulation period (seven years prior to Christ's return) are as follows:

1. "So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not *let them* profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I *am* the Lord, the Holy One in Israel." (Ezekiel 39:7) This period of time spoken of in Ezekiel will be a time when Israel will "know" the Lord God and all nations will "know" that God has no longer hidden His face from them. During the Millennial period when Christ will be on the throne, all people will "know" the Lord.
2. "Then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD." (Ezekiel 39:28-29) Although the 144,000 spoken of in Revelation seven will be sealed before the end of the tribulation and go about witnessing throughout the earth it does not appear to describe what Ezekiel speaks of as the nation as a whole. The pouring out of the Spirit on the whole of Israel would more likely occur at the beginning of the millennial period.
3. "You will say (Gog), I will go against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars or gates." (Ezekiel 38:11) Israel being brought back to the land living in safety was only partially fulfilled under the reigns of David and Solomon and is certainly not the case today. In fact, Israel is currently (2008) in the process of building a wall to protect them from the surrounding nations. Of course the wall could be taken down and they could be living in peace before the tribulation but it would only be a false peace set up by the false prophet (Matt. 24:21-28, Rev. 13) and not what is talked about in Ezekiel 38:11. The period of time talked about in Ezekiel 38:11 is when the Lord rules over Israel and the "wolf will dwell with the lamb" (Isa.11:6) and "Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them (Israel) lie down safely" (Hos. 2:18).
4. We now have high tech metal weapons and can annihilate each other in great numbers. In Ezekiel 39:9 the weaponry seems primitive, for bows and spears are used for war. The weapons taken after the battle will be burned and the burning continues for seven years. Metal melts when heated to a high temperature but does not burn so it is unlikely that modern warfare is spoken of here. The battle in Ezekiel appears to have gone back to a more primitive type of lifestyle and although primitive in terms of weaponry it will not be a backward society spiritually, for Christ is on the throne.
5. The enemy spoken of in Ezekiel will be defeated by the forces of nature (Ezek. 38:22) which does not sound like the final battle at the end of the tribulation period, Armageddon. Armageddon is described in Revelation 19:11-20:3: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes *were* like a flame of fire; and on His head *were* many crowns. *He* had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called *The* Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of

His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS
AND LORD OF LORDS.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."

Being released for a little while at the end of the Millennium is what causes Gog to attack Jerusalem. When man's heart is not in the right place Satan can influence it even with Christ being on His throne on earth. A description of this can be seen by the reading below of Revelation 20:6-10 from the nkjv.

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, *Gog* and *Magog*, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

After this final rebellion and the destruction of Gog and his armies comes "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first earth had passed away." (Rev. 21:1) There is a "New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2) So the 1000 year period of time when Christ had ruled on earth in His temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 40-47) is finished and in the new heaven and new earth "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." (Rev.21:22) "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and be their God." (Rev.21:3) Amen, the period from Adam's rebellion to when man finally again has complete peace with God has ended. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21:4)

Agree or disagree to what has been said above and give support to your argument.

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, *Gog* and *Magog*, to gather them together to battle, whose number is the sand of the sea." (Rev. 20:7-8) **How has God used Satan as an instrument to carry out His will?**

What does God use to fight against Gog and his armies?

Ezek. 38:18-23

Ezekiel 40:1-49

The vision, beginning here and continued to the end of this book, is one impossible as yet to understand fully, and for the clear explanation of which we must wait until the event makes the whole plain. There are difficulties about a *literal* interpretation; but these may all vanish when the fulfillment takes place: and there is the great difficulty about explaining the whole *figuratively*, that thus the minute and accurate details seem meaningless and needless; whereas faith assures

us that all the most minute parts of God's Word have their purpose and aim. We are sure of this much, that the ideal temple here described sets forth in all its parts and its services the worship of Messiah, as the Israelites in their own land shall celebrate it, when He shall reign at Jerusalem, on His return in glory, over not only Israel but all the earth (Jer. 3:16-18).

Doubtless, the return to literal sacrifices would seem to be a return to the beggarly elements of legal types after we have got the Antitype (Who it was that was foreshadowed). "By one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). And God hath said of all believers in Jesus, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb. 10:17, 18). The virtual ignoring of this truth in our present dispensation is one of the greatest heresies of Rome; for, by her oft-repeated sacrifice of the mass, she implies that Christ's one sacrifice is not a full and everlasting atonement, but needs her daily sacrifices to be added to it. We are sure, therefore, that the temple-sacrifices in restored Jerusalem (v. 39; ch. 43:19-27), of whatever nature they may be, will not set aside this fixed principle, though we do not yet see how the two Scripture statements are to be harmonized. Two considerations may, in the meantime, help to lessen the difficulty: (1.) The Jews, as a *nation*, stand to God in a peculiar relation, distinct from that of us Christians of the present *elect Church, gathered out of Jews and Gentiles* indiscriminately. The same principle, therefore, of the non-existence of sacrifice in any form may not hold good in that dispensation, to be ushered in by the advent of Messiah and his reign over the restored Israelite nation, as holds good in our present Gentile times. That shall be the period of public liturgy, or perfect outward worship of the great congregation on earth, as the present time is one of gathering out spiritual worshippers one by one. Besides Israel's relation to Christ as her spiritual *Savior*, she will then also perform a perfect outward service of sacrifice, prayer, and praise, as a *nation*, to her manifested Divine *King* reigning in the midst of her: and all nations of the earth shall take a part in that service, as recognizing His Divine Kingship over themselves also. (2.) The Israelites shall probably also set forth, in all its harmonious parts, the outward beauty and inward sanctity of the temple service, which, in their days of old, they had never exhibited in its full perfection. Thus Christ's word shall be fulfilled, that "till heaven and earth pass, *one jot or one tittle* shall in no wise pass from the law till *all* be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18). The full excellence and antitypical perfection of all the parts of the ancient temple service, which, from ignorance of its hidden meaning, seemed a cumbersome yoke, and unintelligible to the worshippers, shall then be fully understood, and therefore shall become a delightful service of love, instead of as formerly a burdensome task. To set forth this, and not to invalidate the principle of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that after Christ's perfect sacrifice no further *propitiation* is needed, is probably one object of the temple liturgy which shall be. Israel's province will be to exhibit, in the minutest details of sacrifice, the essential unity of the Law and Gospel, which now seem opposed. The ideal of the theocratic temple and its service shall then first be realized.

When things hard to be understood come in our way in studying Scripture, let us pray, and wait patiently God's own time for revealing the meaning. It would not be a revelation if there were not some things therein which are beyond our comprehension now, and which form tests of faith whether we will bow our reason before the Word of God, and humbly confess our ignorance, and adore God's infinite wisdom in the mighty scheme of redemption. Blessed be His holy name, if there be deep waters in which an elephant may swim, there are the healing waters of salvation in which the lamb may wade. Our salvation does not depend on clearing up the abstruse parts of the Bible: all that is necessary for salvation is so plain that "the wayfaring men," however simple, "shall not err therein" (Isa. 35:8).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Contrast the spiritual mood of this new temple with the temple spoken of in Ezekiel chapters 8-11.

Ezekiel 41:1-26

The temple here described in detail, corresponds to the former temple as antitype corresponds to type. The dimensions are almost all on a larger scale, to accommodate a more numerous people. Then, too, there is to be no space within the precincts or suburbs of the temple which is not consecrated to the Lord; whereas in the old temple there was a greater latitude as to the suburbs (v. 9; 2 Kings 23:11). Lastly, there is to be no ark of the covenant; for the Lord Jehovah Himself, in the full display of the divine glory, shall dwell in His temple as the revealed "messenger of the covenant," the antitype to the former "ark of the covenant" (Mal. 3:1; Jer. 3:16, 17).

The spiritual lesson to be learned by us from the description here is, that the Church of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost, as it shall hereafter be manifested on earth, shall be on a scale of grandeur such as has never yet been witnessed, and its worship shall be on a corresponding scale of glory, beauty, and blessedness. Not till then shall the Lord be worshipped visibly "in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2) by the whole congregation of the earth, led on by Israel as the leader of the mighty choir; and the grand center of worship shall be the glorious sanctuary of Jerusalem.

None of the defects, which attend our present liturgical worship, shall alloy the perfection of the public services of God, which shall then be rendered to Him through Christ. We now have continually to beseech God to pardon the sin of our holy things; but then no room shall be left for things that offend and mar our best devotions. There shall be no divisions. Now the catholicity (universality) of the Church is but partially seen, though it is a blessed reality; and its unity is hardly to be recognized at all, split up as it is into a hundred denominations, with varying confessions of faith and different

forms of worship: then all shall be one in outward worship, as well as in inward unity of the spirit, and the world will in consequence be attracted to believe the divine mission of Messiah (John 17:21).

There was no ark of the covenant in the second temple, reared after the return from Babylon. Instead of it the Lord Jesus, the living antitypical ark of the covenant, embodying in Himself the fulfillment of the law, as the "Messenger of the covenant" visited the temple, and thereby caused the unseen spiritual "glory of the latter house to be greater than that of the former" (Hag. 2:9). But still there remains yet to be manifested the *full* and *visible* glory of the Messenger of the covenant, *recognized as such* in His own house by Israel and all nations, which He was not recognized as being at His first advent. Then shall the prophecy of Haggai have its full realization. His glory filling the temple at Jerusalem shall cause the glory of the former house—which seemed to the elders among the returning exiles to be so superior that they shed tears at the sad contrast which the latter house presented (Ezra 3:12)—to pale into comparative dimness by reason of the excelling glory. And the ark of the covenant shall be no longer missed or regretted when men shall have Christ Himself in all His antitypical excellence (Jer. 3:16, 17). And the divine "messenger of the covenant suddenly coming to His temple" shall ravish His people with surprised "delight" when they shall behold the King in His beauty (Mal. 3:1; Isa. 33:17).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What is the "ark of the covenant" and why is it not in this temple?

Ezekiel 42:1-20

This chapter describes the chambers of the priests, and the dimensions of the holy mount whereon the temple is to stand. How far the details of the vast dimensions are literal (vv. 16-20), and how far ideal, is as yet uncertain. Perhaps language is used in the description, the full significance of which is not to be exhausted even in the millennial *temple*, but shall find its full realization in the post-millennial *city* (Rev. 21:10-12), which shall descend from God out of heaven on the regenerated earth, the new Jerusalem, which shall be all temple, and therefore shall have "no" part specially set apart as "temple" (Rev. 21:22). In that consummated and final scene of glory there shall be a real city, of glorious proportions, but one of that heavenly nature which shall correspond to the heavenly earth, and the heavenly bodies of saints that shall tenant it. In the same way the language of Ezekiel concerning Gog and Magog receives only a partial fulfillment in the pre-millennial Antichrist, but receives its exhaustive realization in the post-millennial Gog, the last instrument of Satan which shall ever vex the saints (Rev. 20:7-10).

Meanwhile, on the millennial earth, this vast temple symbolizes the mighty enlargement of the kingdoms of God when Christ shall reign, and the kingdoms of the earth shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). "The mountain of the Lord's house," in that blessed day soon coming, shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. 2:2). There shall still be the "separation between the sanctuary and the profane place;" for even in the millennium there shall be things secular, as distinguished from things consecrated. Not until the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1; Rev. 22) shall all things and persons alike be holy, and so no longer shall the distinction of sacred and profane exist.

The chambers, though private, are to be near the temple (v. 13), which teaches us that our communion with God in our secret chambers is to prepare us for public devotions in the sanctuary, and to enable us to derive all the benefits from them which God has designed. There can be no real worship in public if there be not also worship in private. In the temple of the Holy Ghost, the Church, there are multitudes dwelling by faith, and yet "there is room" (Luke 14:22) for more. Let us see that our hearts can say, by blessed experience (Ps. 84:1), "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" So shall we reach, and forever dwell in the heavenly house of our Father, wherein are many mansions (John 14:2).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Briefly describe what will be occurring during the pre-millennium, millennium and post-millennium periods of time? What period of time does this temple exist in?

Ezekiel 43:1-27

The visible glory of God, which had manifested itself in the first temple, had withdrawn from Jerusalem just before the destruction of that city by Nebuchadnezzar, and has never since returned. But in this chapter it is explicitly foretold that it shall, in God's good time, return "from the way of the East" (vv. 2, 4), and fill the house of God again. As Christ withdrew His visible presence from the people of Jerusalem shortly before the destruction of both the city and the temple, and ascended from the mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12), so shall He come in like manner as He went, by the way of the mount of Olives (ch. 11:23; Zech. 14:4).

He has declared to the Jews. "Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Luke 13:35). When, therefore, He does come, it shall be as the universally recognized King of Israel: every Jew shall hail Him, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38), as His typical entry as a King into Jerusalem on the Palm Sunday before His crucifixion implies. Then first shall be fully realized the grand idea of the theocracy, which was only in part represented under the old commonwealth of the people, before they set it aside by asking for an earthly king, instead of retaining God as the Head of their nation. Jehovah-Jesus shall set up His throne, and shall dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever (v. 7), and they shall no more defile His holy name with abominations. He shall reign in righteousness over a people all righteous, as their manifested King, at once perfectly human and perfectly divine. Such a blessed reign has never yet been seen in this disordered world, whose politics have heretofore been disgraced by the virtual ignoring of God's supremacy, by self-seeking ambition, pride, and covetousness, and by frequent disregard of the rights of man in respect to justice and mercy.

Ezekiel is directed to show to the house of Israel the house of God, that so they may be ashamed of their iniquities (v. 10). Nothing so effectually makes men ashamed of their sins as the revelation of them, by the Holy Ghost, of Christ crucified and Christ glorified, in the hearing of the Word. The height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the love of Christ to His spiritual temple, the elect Church, causes the believer to loathe his past course of life, and henceforth desire to live wholly to Christ, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. Thus believers are prepared for further discoveries of the blessed laws of God's spiritual house (v. 11). Its all-pervading feature and prominent law is universal sanctity. Nothing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, direct or implied, can have place in God's spiritual house. Let the thought of this, its holy and glorious character, constrain us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1).

Whatever may be the nature of the future "burnt offerings," "sin offerings," and "blood sprinklings" (vv. 18, 19, 21), we have no doubt, as concerns ourselves *now*, that we need no other burnt offering than that one whereby Christ bore for us all the fiery indignation of the righteous God against our sin: His one sin offering whereby God "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), causes every believer to become the righteousness of God in Him; so that, as we have remission of all sins through Him, there is no more offering for sin (Heb. 10:18) needed. We have boldness to enter the holiest by a new and living way (Heb. 10:19, 20), and not by dead sacrifices; and so can draw near, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22). We have the altar (Heb. 13:10) of the cross, whereat we can present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God (v. 27; Rom. 12:1), through Jesus Christ.

As to the future sacrificial service of Israel, we can well afford to wait till God by the event shall clear up every difficulty: and throughout eternity we shall adoringly wonder at the beautiful variety, and, at the same time, perfect unity of the several parts of the mighty scheme of redemption through the incarnate Son of God.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Will Christ be physically dwelling in this temple? If so, what is His message?

Ezek. 43:7

Ezekiel 44:1-31

The gate of the outward sanctuary towards the east is to be shut, and no man is to enter in by it, because it is the gate by which the Lord God of Israel shall enter on His return to His temple. An exception is made in favor of "the prince," who, if not Christ, must stand in a peculiar relation to the Lord as the civil ruler, and as representing Him in political concerns, as the priests do in religious concerns. It is not likely that Messiah would give or offer a burnt offering, as the prince is to do (ch. 45:17; 46:4), though doubtless Messiah shall be not only a King but a "Priest upon His throne" (Zech. 6:13). The spiritual truth to be learned by us herein is, that our Messiah entered heaven, the true sanctuary, by a way that none other could—viz., on the ground of His own perfect "holiness" (Rom. 1:4); all we the rest must enter as sinners saved by the grace of God, justified through faith in His blood, and sanctified by His Spirit. Through Him alone (v. 3) believers "eat bread before the Lord" in the communion of the holy supper, and shall hereafter experimentally realize that Scripture (Luke 14:15), "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God."

In order to derive their full spiritual profit from the words of God, we must "mark well with our eyes and ears" (v. 5) all that is communicated to us from God respecting the ordinances and laws of the heavenly sanctuary. The "heart" must be "circumcised" (v. 7) "with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11).

The house of Israel is reprov'd (v. 8) for having neglected the charge of God's holy things, and for having delegated that duty to others, without regard to the fitness of the persons so appointed to the sacred office (v. 8). Let us beware, in the discharge of all such sacred obligations, if ever they devolve (transfer) on us, lest we look to our own convenience or carnal interests, and choose "for ourselves" rather than for the glory of God.

The Levites who "went astray from God after their idols" (v. 10) are to "bear" the punishment of "their iniquity." And yet, such is the marvelous grace of God, that even they, after their sin has been purged away, "shall be ministers in the Lord's sanctuary, having charge at the *gates* of the house," but not allowed to "come *near* to God" (vv. 11-13). So one may be a believer, and therefore eternally safe, and yet be excluded from some special honor in the Lord's spiritual house, the Church, because of past gross offences. Still it is better to be even a *doorkeeper* in the house of our God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness (Ps. 84:10). For though one has to *stand* as a doorkeeper, it is in an *everlasting* house, and that the house of the believer's God; whereas the *dwelling* of the ungodly is at best but in a shifting *tent*, soon and forever to be taken down. But let us beware of losing precious opportunities wherein we may have the honor of doing great things for God, such as John Mark lost in leaving Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia, and in not going forward to the glorious work, through love of ease or fear of man; and such as the disciples lost in not affording Jesus, at His request, the sympathy of their prayers and tears, through drowsiness, in Gethsemane.

The priests, the sons of Zadok, are to succeed to the privilege forfeited by the sons of Ithamar, and shall come near to minister and stand before the Lord (vv. 15, 16). They shall wear linen garments, the emblem of purity (vv. 17, 18). They shall avoid wine when ministering in the immediate presence of the Lord (v. 21); and they shall teach the people of God the difference between the holy and the profane, and how to discern between the unclean and the clean (v. 23). Those who minister in holy things ought to avoid the very appearance of evil, as well as the reality of evil. They are to derive their earnestness in devotion and spiritual ministrations, not from artificial stimulants, but from the power which the Spirit of God imparts. They are not to confound, but clearly to teach the people of God, by precept as well as example, the eternal distinction there is between things sacred and things secular.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Who is the "prince" spoken of in Ezek. 44:3 and what will be his role?

Ezek. 34:24 Ezek. 37:24-25

Who is the "Us" spoken of in Ezek. 44:6?

Ezekiel 45:1-25

In the blessed time, which is coming to Israel, ample provision will be made for the sanctuary, the holy city, and the prince. They shall each have allotted to them their respective portions. Thus no room will be left for the oppressions of past days, all having ample provision made for their wants and comforts (v. 8). All will mutually cooperate for the good of one another, and for the common welfare.

The thought of that happy and righteous age to come ought to lead all, in their several spheres, even now to put far from them violence and injustice, and to have just balances (v. 10) in all their dealings with their fellow-men. The time past should "suffice" us (v. 9) to have neglected our obligations towards our fellow-man and towards our God. Henceforth let us do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Mic. 6:8). How happy would nations be if their princes ruled in justice, not for self-aggrandizement, but for the glory of God, and as holding their authority under Christ: and how happy the people so governed would be, living in tranquility, prosperity, and, above all, true godliness!

Hereafter there shall be a new Passover (v. 21) and a new Feast of Tabernacles (v. 25; Zech. 14:16-19) observed in Israel, with ceremonies vastly exceeding in glory those of the same feasts under the Old Testament. The antitypical, perfect, and eternal realities of Christ's manifested kingdom shall be set forth with observances which, though literal, are not to be slavishly bound down to the letter of the old law, but which shall bring out all the heretofore hidden glories and excellencies of that law, viewed in its essential spirit. Meanwhile Christ is spiritually our Passover, sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). Let us, as sojourners in tabernacles of clay, look forward to the blissful time when, dwelling in our house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, we shall celebrate with joy our feast of tabernacles, commemorating our having ended our wilderness journey, and entered the everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Using Ezekiel 45:22-23 show how this "prince" is or is not the "Christ"?

Ezek. 45:8-9

Ezekiel 46:1-24

The distinction between things common and secular, and things sacred and divine, shall in that coming time be accurately observed, at once in their spirit and in their letter. In the Old Testament these distinctions were observed in the mere letter, their spirit not being understood. In our catholic (universal, general) Judeo-Gentile times their spirit is

enjoined, but not the letter. In the coming New Testament times of restored Israel the letter and the spirit shall be combined in perfection, the letter being so observed as not to sacrifice the spirit, and the spirit at the same time not superseding the letter. The Christian rule is, and in all ages shall be, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:3).

In David's time, the tabernacle, which he pitched for the *ark* of the covenant, after he had brought it from Obed-Edom's house (2 Sam. 6:17), was in Zion (2 Chr. 1:4), and was called "the tabernacle of David" (Amos 9: 11,12). It remained there all his reign, for thirty years, till the building of the temple of Solomon; whereas the tabernacle of the congregation remained all the thirty years at Gibeon (2 Chr. 1:3), where the priests ministered (1 Chr. 16:39). *Sacred song* and *thanksgivings* were the service performed by David's servants, Asaph and others, before the ark in Zion: but *sacrifices* were the service in the tabernacle of the congregation. The two, previously separate, were brought together in the temple made by Solomon. So it shall be in the antitypical temple which shall be in Jerusalem restored during the millennium; whereas now, in our Judeo-Gentile catholic dispensation (time), the *priestly* office and intercession are exercised for us in heaven by our Great High Priest there, our service of *prayer and praise* is carried on in another place—namely, here on earth; just as David's service was before the ark in Zion, apart from the priestly tabernacle of the congregation in Gibeon. In the glorious millennial temple that is to be, the two will be combined in their perfection. The priesthood of Christ, which is now exercised unseen by us, and afar off, shall then be exercised among men in manifested glory; and combined with it shall be the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which are now our sole worship on earth. That shall be the time of perfect liturgy and perfect praise. Let us try to have a foretaste of that blessed period even already, in our hearty realization by faith of the priestly office of Christ, as though it were seen and near us, and in rendering "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). Finally, in the new and heavenly Jerusalem, on the regenerated earth which shall follow the Millennium, when the mediatorial kingdom of Christ shall be "delivered up to the Father" (1 Cor. 15:24, 28), His sacrificial and sacerdotal intercession shall cease. God shall be all in all, and there shall be no temple; the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shall be the temple of it (Rev. 21:22). There is thus a beautiful progression in the scheme of redemption, the crowning work of God, even as there is in all His other works.

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Differentiate between the different dispensations (times) spoken of here.

Ezekiel 47:1-23

The "waters" that, in Ezekiel's vision, "issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward," represent the waters of life which the Lord Jesus gives His people, and which are in them as a "well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). They flow from Jesus, who is at once the true "temple" (John 2:19, 21), and "the door" (John 10:9). "The place of His throne" (ch. 43:7) is to be hereafter in the temple at Jerusalem; and from Him as the fountain, and from the temple as the earthly locality of the fountain, the living waters shall not only spring up, but flow out, and flow forth, no longer restricted to Palestine, but diffusing life, health, and beauty throughout the whole earth. A pledge of that period of universally diffused vital Christianity is already given us in the almost universal "preaching of the Gospel in all the world, for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14), and in the gathering out of the elect from all lands which is going on now, and will go on until the full number of the elect is accomplished.

The Gospel of "the glory of God came from the way of the east" (ch. 43: 2), from Jerusalem, and so hereafter "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:4). As it was not by the influx of side streams, but by its own secret supply from the fountain-head in the temple, that the waters progressively increased, so it is the gracious influence of the Holy Ghost, resembling living waters (John 7:37-39), which, accompanying the preached Gospel, has made it in all past times, and shall make it in all times to come, the mighty power of God to the salvation, peace, and joy of countless millions.

From being a small stream, the waters rapidly gained increase of volume as they advanced onward, until they swelled into a deep, unfathomable, and mighty river (vv. 3-5). Such is the progress of the Gospel. We are not able to define what are the successive periods of time symbolized by the first thousand cubits measured, when the water reached the ankles, the second thousand cubits, when the water reached to the knees, and the third thousand, when the water reached to the loins, and the fourth thousand, when the water became a "river that could not be passed over." But we know that the coming thousand years of the Millennium, foretold in Rev. 20., are the times when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas" (Isa. 11:9). "A thousand" represents the world pervaded with the divine influence, as ten is the world number raised to the third power, and *three* is the number of God. There shall have been a series of such periods marked by successive stages of increase in the diffusion of the Gospel before the full consummation is attained, and the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

Holy Scripture and its revelations also resemble these sacred waters, in that whosoever searches into them will find some parts—namely, those setting forth the way of salvation—intelligible to all who sincerely desire to know it. Other

parts require a deeper investigation; others, a deeper still; and others are beyond our depth; and in respect to these we can only adore the infinitude of God's unsearchable wisdom, and humbly wait for His own time of revealing their now hidden meaning.

The growth of grace in the individual soul similarly is a progressive work, beginning with but a small stream from the fountain-head, but sure to go on increasing until it is expanded into the boundless and unfathomable river of heavenly pleasures (Ps. 36:8) which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," but "which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

The "very many trees" of life "at the bank of the river, on the one side and on the other" (v. 7), symbolize the immortal sustenance, invigoration, and enjoyment which those who drink of the waters of life shall be supplied with from the Lord in the coming state of blessedness. Believers themselves shall then be "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isa. 56:3), and as being "planted by the waters," they shall "bring forth" the due fruit "in its season" (Ps. 1:3). Moreover, alike the fruit and the leaf shall never cease. Fruit ever new and varied shall be produced each month as it comes. And as the fruit shall be for meat, so the very leaf shall be for medicine (v. 12). So the believer's inward graces, derived from the divine fountain-head, which are the "leaves," and his words and works, which are the "fruits," shall everlastingly bloom, and shall be the means to him of ever-renewed immortality and heavenly vigor.

The living waters flowing eastward to the Dead Sea, and then southward along the plain south of the Dead Sea, shall dispel death and diffuse life whithersoever they go (vv. 8, 9). As Elisha healed the waters for the men of the city (2 Ki. 2:21), saying, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land;" so death is everywhere to give place to life in the regenerated world. It is probable that, as the physical and moral worlds correspond, great physical changes in respect to the Dead Sea and the waters of the Holy Land shall accompany the great spiritual and national restoration of the ancient people of God, so that exuberant fertility, loveliness, and salubrity (health) shall prevail throughout the land. Here again, from the tendency of all prophecy to hasten to the consummation, the prophet seems to use language which, in its fullest sense, applies to the perfect state beyond the Millennium—namely, the state when not only the world of nations, but the world of nature also, the earth and its atmosphere, shall be finally regenerated. For the language as to the waters of life and the tree of life is that which is employed in Revelation (ch. 22:1, 2), of the final and perfect state.

The apostles, whose business as literal fishermen was laid aside for that of spiritual fishers, were the instruments of drawing into the Gospel net "a very great multitude of fish according to their kinds" (vv. 9, 10), the learned and unlearned, the rich and poor, the vile and the respectable members of society. As the bad are cast away when the net is drawn to shore (Matt. 13:47, 48), so it is said here that the miry places and the marshes shall not be healed (v. 11). Those whom the Gospel waters of life do not reach, through their own indolence (laziness) and carnality, shall be given over to everlasting barrenness; nor can anymore awful punishment be imagined than that the sinner should be given up to the unrestricted and everlasting workings of his own sin, bitterness, and filthiness.

But the godly shall have their allotted portions severally in the heavenly land of promise (vv. 13-21). Israel, though having her own proper and peculiar portion, shall not have it to the exclusion of the Gentile sojourner (vv. 22, 23). We Christians of the nations shall be "fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

Can anything else be added about this "river".

Joel 3:17-18 Zech. 14:8-11 Rev. 21:6-7 Rev.22:1-3

Ezekiel 48:1-35

In this chapter is set forth the allotment of the land to the several tribes. It is to be noticed that the places of more or less honor assigned to each tribe are regulated by the degree of faithfulness to the Lord and His ordinances by which the tribes severally were characterized. Thus Judah and Benjamin, the tribes which adhered longest to the ordinances of the temple and to the house of David, when the rest apostatized, shall hold the most honorable positions—Judah the place next the center on the north, Benjamin the corresponding place of honor next the center on the south. Dan, on the contrary, is to have the least honorable place at the extreme north, as having been so early as the time of the Judges in a great degree demoralized and heathenized. So in respect to the degrees of glory which await all the saints in the coming kingdom of God, the measure of honor will be regulated by the measure of faithfulness. He who lays out his one pound now so as to gain ten pounds for the Master's glory, shall then receive the government of ten cities: he who with his one pound gains five pounds shall have rule over five cities (Luke 19:15-19). Herein believers have the strongest incentive, not merely to work for the Lord, but to *abound* in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

The names of the twelve tribes are to be severally connected with the twelve gates of the city, for all alike shall have an interest in it in their respective places and stations. So the very humblest believer has his due place appointed to him in the heavenly city that is to come. That shall be a blessed change from the present scene of disorder and confusion, to

a world wherein all beneath God, from the highest to the lowest, know and keep their place in the most perfect harmony, love, and blessedness.

The name of the city from that day, in which this beautiful and holy order shall have been established, is to be "Jehovah-shammah," THE LORD IS THERE (*v.* 35). The glory and joy of heaven shall not be so much the absence of all present woes, and the presence of all the other good things which God shall bestow, as it shall consist in this, the Lord Himself shall be there, as the everlasting portion, joy, and light of His people. "God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). May he who writes this commentary, and his readers, so know the Lord now by faith that hereafter he and they may have the full fruition of the presence of His glorious Godhead!

(Bible Commentary, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown)

What is the reality of the descriptive title "THE LORD IS THERE" (Ezek. 48:35).

Jer 3:17 Jer. 33:16 Zech. 2:10 Rev. 21:3 Rev. 22:3