

## The Prophets, Book 4

### Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah; he was younger than Jeremiah, and was probably his student in Jerusalem in the early part of his ministry.

Ezekiel was the son of a priest named Buzi, and was himself a priest; he was carried to Babylon with King Jehoiachin, 11 years before the destruction and burning of Jerusalem. His ministry as a prophet began six years before the destruction of Jerusalem, and continued for 16 years thereafter, for a total of 22 years, **all in Babylon**<sup>1</sup>. He was highly respected by the exiled people of Judah, and their elders consulted him on matters of importance. He had a home and a wife on the River Chebar, a great canal which connected the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

He died in Babylon. Although there are some interesting traditions concerning the death of Ezekiel, the fact is that how and when he died are not known.

An Area Rich in History. This area in which Ezekiel lived and prophesied was extremely rich in ancient history and tradition. Nearby was Calneh, one of the cities built by Nimrod, Noah's great-grandson<sup>2</sup>. About 40 miles away was Fara, the traditional home of Noah. Ur of the Chaldees, home of Abram (Abraham), was about 100 miles to the south, and Eridu, traditional site of the Garden of Eden, a few miles south of there.

Ezekiel's living in this area ("the Plain of Shinar") may have something to do with his mentioning of Noah and the Garden of Eden in his writings. Of the prophets, only he and Isaiah mention Noah; he mentions the Garden of Eden seven times, and in the writings of all the other prophets, it is referred to only a total of three times (Isaiah twice and Joel once).

Ezekiel and Daniel. When Ezekiel arrived in Babylon, Daniel had already been there for nine years, and had achieved great fame, power, and special favor with Nebuchadnezzar. While Daniel ministered in the palace, Ezekiel ministered in the countryside; it is reasonable to assume that they met often for fellowship. Both men wrote of events to come in the End Times, and both of their books shed light on the Book of Revelation, which would not be written for another 700 years<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure is based upon his dating of his last recorded prophecy.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 10:10.

<sup>3</sup> The books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation may be thought of as the "holy trinity" of eschatology, the study of end-times prophecy. End-times prophecy cannot be understood without the study of these three books. The events of Revelation help us to understand some passages in Ezekiel and Daniel.

Ezekiel and Revelation. The writings of Ezekiel have significant parallels with the writings of John the apostle in his Book of Revelation. Both write of: cherubim (Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4); "eating the book" (Ezekiel 3 and Revelation 10); Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38, 39 and Revelation 20); a New Jerusalem (Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 21); and the River of Life (Ezek 47 and Revelation 22).

Visions and Symbolic Actions. Ezekiel's ministry was characterized by visions that stagger the imagination, and by having to demonstrate, or pantomime, his prophecies. Some of his symbolic actions in prophesying were personally painful: he had to remain silent for long periods; he had to lie on his left side in one position for over a year, and on his right side for 40 days; he had to eat disgusting food; his beloved wife was taken in death, and he was not allowed to grieve. These things were always done in public, to illustrate God's message for the backslidden people of Judah.

Indescribable Visions, but Simple Messages. The Book of Ezekiel contains revelations and visions of God and his unspeakable glory that defy complete understanding or interpretation; yet the messages they brought to Ezekiel, and which he passed on to the people, were as simple as the parables with which Jesus would later teach. This combination, of indescribable revelations and simple messages, is expressed in a fascinating way by the great 17<sup>th</sup> Century scholar and Bible commentator Matthew Henry: "Though the visions here be intricate [deep], such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are mostly plain, such as a lamb may wade in."

"Son of Man." A distinctive feature of this book is that God continuously addresses Ezekiel as "son of man." The LORD thus addresses Ezekiel 93 times, but always **without** the definite article (never as "the" son of man). In the New Testament, Jesus applies this title to Himself 86 times, but always **with** the definite article ("the son of man"), and in Revelation John uses it of Him twice; thus, with the definite article, it is clearly a title reserved for Christ. Perhaps this repeated reminder that Ezekiel is "son of man," a mere mortal, is to protect him from thoughts of pride over his many visions and revelations. Interestingly, God calls Daniel "son of man" only once (compared with Ezekiel's 93 times).

"And They Shall Know That I Am the LORD." This statement is made throughout the book, and could be thought of as a recurring theme. The never-ending problem with the Israelites was that they consistently forgot Him and served pagan gods; from this forgetting of the One who was their source, flowed all their wickedness and eventual destruction.

Use of the YHWH Name. It is interesting to note that, throughout the book, the LORD identifies Himself with the distinctive name, YHWH, usually as LORD. When either "Lord" or "God" appears, it is always combined with YHWH (e.g. "Lord GOD"). Perhaps this reflects the need to clarify the foundational fact that He was their unique LORD, and they were His people, for "lord" (adonai) and "god" (elohim) may also be used to speak of pagan gods. YHWH, however, is the distinctive name of the one true God. For an explanation of these names and their significance, see "Notes on the Names of God" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries).

Chronology. Unlike the Book of Jeremiah, Ezekiel is essentially in chronological order. A noteworthy feature of Ezekiel's prophecies is his **precise dating of them**, even to recording the day of the month.

The Divisions of the Book. His prophecies may be thought of as being in three parts:

1. God's Judgment on Judah (Chapts 1-24). For the first six years, Ezekiel preached in Babylon the same message that Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem: the certainty of Judah's punishment for her continued sin of idolatry.
2. God's Judgment of the Pagan Nations around Judah (Chapts 25-32). After word reached him of the final destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel prophesied the coming judgment of the pagan nations around Judah that had contributed to Judah's sin and destruction.
3. Prophecies of Israel's Final Restoration (Chapts 33-48). The 3rd part of Ezekiel contains prophecies of the future, glorious, reestablishment of Israel in the Promised Land, and its central role in the millennial reign of Christ.

**A. Author.** The human author of Ezekiel is the prophet himself, as is made clear in the text, and by unbroken rabbinical tradition.

**B. Place and Date.** The Book of Ezekiel was compiled in Babylon, and was completed about 585 BC.

**C. Theme.** The recurring theme of Ezekiel's book is that the backsliding people would learn, as the result of their punishment and captivity, to acknowledge the supremacy of God. **"They shall know that I am GOD" (or the combined names, such as "LORD God")** is repeated 62 times in the book, occurring in 27 of its 48 chapters. Until the Captivity, the children of Israel, after repeatedly being rescued and forgiven by the grace of God, consistently backslid into idolatry (Jeremiah's theme message). This dismal cycle was repeated over and over, until the last of them were carried off by Nabuchadnezzar. For this sin, other nations had been obliterated by God; but for Israel, the punishment was redemptive; as Ezekiel told them repeatedly, the purpose of their punishment was that "they shall

know that I am God." This was the lesson of their captivity, and they finally learned it. After the captivity, the Israelites continued to sin, including the great sin of rejecting Jesus the Messiah; however, they have never again, as a group, backslid into the sin of idolatry.

**D. Highlights.** Ezekiel is actually a dazzling continuum of highlights, not always easy to separate; however, ever attempting to keep it simple, they include the following:

1. Ezekiel Is Called to the Prophetic Ministry. (1:1-3)

Ezekiel, born into the priesthood, is called also to the prophetic ministry "in the 30th year." This probably refers to his age, for Levites and priests began their ministries at age 30, as would later be the case with John the Baptist and Jesus. Some believe, however, that it refers to the 30th year since the establishment of the Babylonian Empire by Nebuchadnezzar's father. Only God knows which is the correct meaning.

At any rate, he makes it clear that this was in the 5th year since he had been brought captive to Babylon with King Jehoiachin, thus six years before the final destruction of Jerusalem. His calling must have been a mind-boggling event, for the heavens were opened, he saw visions of God, and the hand of the LORD was mightily placed upon him<sup>4</sup>.

2. The Indescribable Glory of the Presence of God. (1:4-25)

When Ezekiel is called to the ministry of a prophet, as he stands on the bank of the River Chebar, there is revealed to him a vision of the glory and majesty of the presence of the LORD. The vision comes as a whirlwind from the north, and out of the whirlwind comes great fire, folding and rolling upon itself, with bolts of lightning erupting from it. Out of the midst of the fire there appear what seem to be four cherubim, terrifying, indescribable, creatures which attend the presence of God<sup>5</sup>. These creatures have legs and feet like a calf, four faces and four wings each, and four arms under their wings. Each has the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Like the glory of the cloud of fire from which they appear, the four creatures challenge Ezekiel's human ability to describe them. They appear to glow like coals of fire, and fire moves about among them, with lightning erupting from the fire. They move about with great speed, like flashes of lightning, and "they turned not when they went," suggesting that they have no mass as we understand natural things, and are unaffected by inertia, or other natural forces. Of course,

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<sup>4</sup> It must have been extremely difficult for Ezekiel to put this experience into words; it is interesting that, in v 3, he speaks of himself in the 3rd person.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth repeating that in the Bible a "cherub" is not a sweet, fat little baby; rather it is a terrifying, huge, supernatural creature, which serves in the presence of God and does His bidding. In Hebrew, the "im" at the end of a noun makes it plural; thus, "cherubim" refers to two or more cherubs.

this is to be expected of heavenly things, but it is definitely an intellectual overload for Ezekiel to attempt to describe it all. Then, as if his mind were not already overwhelmed, there appear wheels by each creature, terrible in appearance, as if made of precious stones, and full of eyes. In some way, each wheel is "a wheel in the middle of a wheel" (a giant gyroscope?). Wherever the creatures go, the wheels go, and Ezekiel is made aware that the spirits of the creatures are in the wheels. The sound of the creatures' moving wings is like the sound of many waters--perhaps a waterfall or a great stretch of rapids in a river--and like the voice of God.

3. And, Above It All, the Throne of God. (1:26-28)

Above the fiery vision of the glory that attends the GOD of the Universe, with its lightning, clouds of boiling fire, cherubim and terrifying wheels within wheels, Ezekiel sees what appears to be a throne of sapphire, heavenly blue. Again, apparently defying Ezekiel's ability to describe the indescribable, it seems that a fire of amber surrounds and suffuses the throne. Upon the throne he sees the likeness of a man, glowing within and without, as with fire. The brightness around the throne is as a rainbow, with all pure colors. In apparent redundancy, Ezekiel declares that, "This is the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD." He is not seeing the LORD Himself, for no man can look upon Him and live; but he is seeing something so magnificent as to suggest "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD" upon His throne, and this is the culmination of the entire, mind-staggering, vision. However he (or we) may understand it, Ezekiel is now going to have a direct confrontation with the Spirit of GOD. As Matthew Henry put it, "All the other parts of this vision were but a preface and introduction to this." Ezekiel, overcome and overwhelmed, falls on his face and hears a voice.

4. Ezekiel Receives His Call and Commission. (2:1-3:15)

Ezekiel is prostrated by the power of God's presence, and cannot move; he is in the same state that John the apostle was in, on the Island of Patmos, when the risen Christ appeared to him and he "fell at his feet as [one] dead." The LORD speaks to Ezekiel and tells him to stand, but Ezekiel can't; then the Spirit of God enters into him and stands him on his feet. The LORD tells Ezekiel that he is being sent to prophesy to the children of Israel, and that they are rebellious, impudent and stiff-hearted. A hand appears--apparently just a hand, not attached to a body--holding a scroll of prophecies ("lamentations, and mourning, and woe"), and Ezekiel is told to eat the scroll<sup>6</sup>. He eats the scroll, symbolically taking into his

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<sup>6</sup> This reminds us of the "handwriting on the wall" incident in Daniel 5, where only part of a hand appeared supernaturally to write the message of doom on Belshazzar's wall.

spirit the prophecies of God, and it is "in [his] mouth as honey for sweetness<sup>7</sup>." God tells Ezekiel that he is sent to prophesy to the house of Israel, but warns him that the people "will not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken unto Me..." Ezekiel is lifted up by the Spirit, again sees and hears manifestations of the majesty of GOD, finds himself back on the bank of the river Chebar, and sits there, astonished, overwhelmed, and apparently speechless, for seven days.

*NOTE: This passage, and at least five others (I Kings 8:11 (repeated in II Chron 5:14); Ezek 3:23-24; Dan 10:7-11; Jn 18:4-6; and Rev 2:11-18), represent what is known today as being "slain in the spirit." It simply means being overwhelmed by being exposed to the presence of the Holy Spirit so mightily that one cannot stand. Today much of what is represented as being struck down by the power of the presence of God, seems only to be an emotional response; yet, it is a valid concept in the Bible and it can, and does, occur today. When it occurs today and is valid, it seems always to occur for a life-changing purpose.*

#### 5. A Watchman's Responsibility. (3:16-27)

After Ezekiel sits, astonished, on the river bank for seven days, the LORD again speaks to him and commissions him to be "a watchman unto the house of Israel." Ezekiel is to hear what the LORD says, and then pass the warning to the rebellious people. In this, the LORD expresses a principle for such utterances: the prophet must warn the people to repent of their sin, as a watchman on a city wall is to warn the inhabitants of an approaching enemy. If the people will not heed his warning, the prophet is not responsible for their perishing. If, however, the prophet fails to warn the people, then their blood will be upon his hands<sup>8</sup>.

The LORD then sends Ezekiel out into the plain, with the promise that He will again speak with him there. In the plain Ezekiel is again visited by the glory of the presence of God, and again he is struck down, falling on his face. Again, the Spirit enters into him, stands him up on his feet, and we may be certain that the LORD now has Ezekiel's undivided attention. He tells Ezekiel to go home and wait for a message. He warns him that he will be persecuted, but that he is to speak when told to speak, to be silent otherwise, and the people's response to his messages will be their responsibility--not Ezekiel's.

#### 6. Illustrating the Siege of Jerusalem. (Chapter 4)

Ezekiel is told to take a tile (a flat clay tablet) and draw upon it a diagram of Jerusalem<sup>9</sup>. He is then to make siege mounds, weapons, and an object of iron

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<sup>7</sup> This eating of the scroll is very similar to the account of John's eating of the book of prophecies in Revelation 10.

<sup>8</sup> This, it seems to me, is a valid principle for preachers today, who warn, or fail to warn, their people to abandon their sin.

<sup>9</sup> This was the way that many records were kept. Words or illustrations were cut into wet clay, which was then baked until hard. Such documents, protected from the weather, have lasted for thousands of years. Documents

around it to portray the actual siege of Jerusalem, like a diorama of a battle in a museum. He is then to lie on his left side, bound in that position supernaturally, for 390 days; the number of days apparently represents the 390 years that the Northern Kingdom existed, all of them in rebellious sin.

He is then to lie in the same way on his right side for 40 days, apparently representing the last 40 years in the history of the kingdom of Judah. He is also to make bread out of very strange ingredients, and bake it over a fire of dried human dung; when he objects about the ceremonial pollution of the bread that would result, the Lord allows him to use cow dung. Ezekiel is to eat the strange bread and drink water in limited, exact, amounts, demonstrating the famine and rationing of food to come during the siege of Jerusalem.

*NOTE: The meaning of the 40-year period is less clear. If it represents the final 40 years of the Kingdom of Judah, the period would begin with the last 18 years of the reign of Josiah. The final 40 years began in blessed righteousness under Josiah, but descended into idolatry at his death, and continued for 22 years of unbroken wickedness which finally brought about final judgment and destruction.*

*Thus, if this is the meaning, the people would be reminded of the godly prosperity they enjoyed under righteous Josiah, compared with the 22 years of unbroken sin and violent darkness that followed, leading to judgment without remedy and self-destruction.*

#### 7. Shaving the Head and Beard. (Chapter 5)

Ezekiel is commanded to shave his head and beard, and to weigh the hair in a balance in the midst of the city. Shaving the head and beard was a symbol of shame, reminding the people of the absolute humiliation coming to what was left of the Kingdom of Judah; but this is only the beginning, for the LORD has other messages to be delivered with the hair.

Ezekiel is then to divide the hair into three equal parts, carefully weighing them with a balance, and build a fire; what he does with the portions of the hair will illustrate the grim future for the people in Jerusalem. He burns one third of the hair in the fire; this represents those who will be consumed by pestilence, famine and flame. He then smites one third of it with a knife; this represents those who will fall by the sword. Then he scatters most of the remaining third into the wind; this represents those who will be driven away into captivity or scattered among the nations, and even these will be pursued by the sword and many will die. The remaining few hairs, he is to "bind in [his] skirts"; these few, preserved from the coming disaster, seem to represent that small remnant which Nebuchadnezzar will

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written on papyrus deteriorated in time. This tile (or tablet) would be undamaged during the 430 days of the illustration, even if it is rained upon.

leave in the land under Gedeliah. Then Ezekiel takes those last few hairs from his protecting skirts and casts them into the fire, for even they will not ultimately survive the judgment to come. As we have already seen in the Book of Jeremiah, a rebellion will occur, the remnant will flee to Egypt, and die there.

*NOTE: As we have already seen, there are interesting similarities between Ezekiel and Daniel. The scroll of prophecies at Ezekiel's ordination was delivered by a disembodied hand; and in Daniel, at Belshazzar's final banquet, the message of his doom was written on the wall by part of a disembodied hand. The message for Belshazzar was that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting; and Ezekiel's hair was carefully weighed in a balance.*

#### 8. Ezekiel's Trip to Jerusalem. (Chapter 8)

As Ezekiel sits in his house before the captive elders of Judah, the Spirit ("the hand of the Lord GOD") comes upon him, and his spiritual eyes are opened to the vision. He sees again the fiery image of the likeness of the Heavenly Visitor (perhaps the pre-incarnation Christ), who stretches forth a hand and lifts Ezekiel by his hair into the space between Heaven and Earth<sup>10</sup>. He is transported supernaturally to Jerusalem and taken to the Temple; the same glorious creatures (cherubim) and the glory of God are above the Temple.

Here Ezekiel is shown how the Temple has been converted to paganism by Judah's surviving spiritual leaders. At the entrance to the Holy Place there is a statue of Tammuz, a phallic idol<sup>11</sup>! Inside, he sees images of abominable, creeping, animals (probably serpents) painted on the walls; and he sees the 70 elders of the house of Israel, each with incense, eagerly offering cloudy sacrifices to the evil images. In the midst of the apostate elders is Jaazaniah, the wicked son of Shaphan, the godly priest/scribe who had led the revival of Josiah, and whose two brothers are Jeremiah's close friends and defenders (Jer 26:24; 36:10,25). But it gets worse; he is taken to the entrance of the Holy Place where Temple prostitutes are weeping for Tammuz. Then it gets still worse; he is taken into the inner court (Holy Place) of the Temple, where he sees 25 men (apparently priests), deliberately dishonoring the LORD, with their backs to the Holy of Holies, worshipping the Sun in the east.

The last offense the LORD mentions is that the idolatrous apostates "put the branch to their nose." The meaning of this expression is unknown, but it is obviously a part of their paganism, and an insult of effrontery to the LORD.

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<sup>10</sup> Apparently enough time has passed for some of Ezekiel's hair to grow back.

<sup>11</sup> Tammuz was the Phoenician name for the god the Greeks called Adonis, and the Egyptians called Osiris. He was the consort of Ishtar (Astarte), whom the Greeks called Venus and the Egyptians called Isis. The worship of these pagan gods was always sexual, and, at times, orgiastic.

Because of all these abominable practices, they will be destroyed, and He will not hear their cries for mercy.

9. Separating the Sheep from the Goats. (Chapter 9)

At the LORD's command, six warrior angels come forth from the vicinity of the north gate, each with a "slaughter weapon" in his hand<sup>12</sup>. Among the warrior angels there is a seventh man, clothed in white linen; instead of being armed with a slaughter weapon, he has an inkhorn at his side. This man is told to go through the city and place a mark (*tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet) on the forehead of each person who is still faithful, and who is grieved over the prevailing paganism. These will be preserved from the general slaughter to be conducted by the Babylonians<sup>13</sup>. Ezekiel is grieved at the thought of such a slaughter, but the LORD tells him that the wicked will simply be experiencing the destruction, which they have insisted on bringing upon themselves (see Ps 34:21; Gal 6:7-8).

10. The Man in White Linen Gathers Hot Coals. (10:1-7)

Ezekiel looks up into the glory of God above Jerusalem, and sees the man clothed in white linen, standing among the cherubim. This man, who seems to symbolize Christ, is commanded to take in his hands burning coals from between the wheels of the cherubim. He goes in among the cherubim, and one of them (perhaps all, for "one" in v 7 is in italics) helps him, placing burning coals in his hands. He is commanded to scatter the coals over the city, apparently symbolizing the burning of the city soon to be done by Nebuchadnezzar (God's human instrument of judgment). We are also reminded that in the Bible fire symbolizes purification, that "our God is a consuming fire" (Deut 4:24), and that when Jesus came to redeem us, He was identified by John the Baptist as the one who would baptize believers with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Matt 3:11; Lk 3:16). Thus, purifying fire seems to have been the only remedy for that wicked city and its defiled Temple.

11. The Promise of a New Heart and a New Relationship. (11:17-20)

Amid grim prophecies of ultimate judgment soon to come, there appears a blessed promise for future restoration. But this promise is better than just restoration of the way things were, for it is made clear that the future relationship will be a **new** one--better than the one rejected by the rebellious Israelites. In the

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<sup>12</sup> Numbers are always significant in the Bible, especially in prophetic revelations; the number six is the number of man. Perhaps the best interpretation of the number in this case is that it, and the six death angels, represent the six subordinate leaders under Nebuchadnezzar, who will take possession of Jerusalem and oversee the slaughter of its people (Jer 39:3), and that men--not angels--would be God's instruments in bringing judgment on the city.

<sup>13</sup> Seven is the number of perfection or completion. This seventh man, clothed as a priest, almost certainly represents Christ, our great High Priest, who protects the redeemed in time of final judgment (Matt 25:31-46). The mark to be placed on each forehead is *tau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, written in the form of a cross. In Revelation, marks on the forehead will be used to identify the redeemed in the final judgment (Rev 7:3-9; 22:1-4).

promise there is a glimpse of the coming New Covenant. In that day, says the LORD, His people will have new hearts, tender ones to replace their stony hearts, and His Spirit will reside within them. Thus, from the change in the inner man there will flow new attitudes, and God's people will be able to walk in blessed faithfulness. The restored relationship will be better still than what they had under the Old Covenant: they shall truly be His (faithful) people, and He will be their (loving and protective) God. This promise is repeated (and expanded upon) in Chapter 36.

12. Acting Out a Remarkable Prophecy. (11:24-25; 12:1-16)

The Spirit returns Ezekiel to Babylon, and he tells the captive people there all the things that he has seen in his spiritual trip to Jerusalem. Then he is told to act out Zedekiah's coming attempt to flee Jerusalem. The captives think that, because Zedekiah is still on the throne in Jerusalem, there is hope that he will arrange for their release; thus, they are not inclined to believe the total end of Jerusalem and the Kingdom soon to come.

Following the Lord's instructions, Ezekiel packs up his belongings, digs through a wall of his home and, at twilight, takes his belongings outside, upon his shoulders as if preparing for flight. In the morning he tells the people that he represents Zedekiah and his court, sneaking out of Jerusalem with his face covered, that the LORD will spread a net for Zedekiah and he will be brought captive to Babylon, "yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there."

*NOTE: As we have already seen in Jeremiah's record, five years later Zedekiah and his entourage fled Jerusalem just as prophesied in Ezekiel's pantomime, and were captured between Jerusalem and Jericho, apparently headed for refuge in Egypt. Zedekiah's sons were executed before him, and then he was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon, thus fulfilling the prophecies that he would go there and die there, but would not see it.*

13. God's Patience Has Limits. (14:1-5, 12-21)

Certain of the elders in Babylon come to sit before Ezekiel to enquire of the Lord; but there is a problem: they secretly love their idols and, spiritually, are trying to lead a double life. The LORD tells this to Ezekiel, and then enters into a rather frightening discourse to the effect that His patience has a limit, and that the Israelites have pushed Him to it with their abiding love of paganism. He states that He will deal personally with leaders of Israel who secretly worship idols and yet pretend to be faithful to Him; and, He adds, that even if Noah, Daniel and Job were present (and, presumably, interceding for the sinful people), they would save

only themselves; judgment will be complete<sup>14</sup>. He makes this statement four times.

14. Reassurance Will Come from Jerusalem. (14:22-23)

The LORD has decided on final and complete judgment because the final and complete plunge into the deepest and darkest paganism of the unrepentant Israelites, led in their paganism by the priests, has pushed Him to that decision. In spite of all that Ezekiel has seen in his visionary trip to Jerusalem, it still hurts him to think of the final and complete destruction of Jerusalem and the utter and ignominious, end of the throne of David. The LORD tells him that when the final group of captives comes from Jerusalem, he will see their wickedness, and will know that the LORD has not acted without cause.

***NOTE:** Chapter 16 is a long, eloquent discourse on Israel's spiritual adultery. This analogy is used repeatedly by the Lord in the post-Exodus history of Israel (because this was Israel's consistent pattern); yet this chapter is exceptional. It speaks of an honorable, rich man (Himself) who saw a worthless, polluted woman with **absolutely nothing** to recommend her; yet he chooses her, cleans her up, makes her His wife, and gives her everything one could want: exalted position, wealth, ease--and His love. Yet, in spite of this, she insists on polluting herself again and again with endless, arrogant adulteries, returning to the pollution from which He had rescued her.*

*This goes on for 59 dismal verses; but in the last four verses there is the bright and shining promise of a future happy ending, under an everlasting New Covenant. And, in those four closing verses of Chapt 16, He again makes that recurring, thematic, statement that, in doing these things, a result will be that his people will know that "I am the LORD."*

15. "The Soul That Sinneth, It Shall Die." (18:1-24)

Chapter 18 is one of the most important chapters in the entire Bible, for in it two fundamental principles are made clear<sup>15</sup>.

The first of these is that each of us is responsible for his own spiritual destiny; God will have many children in Heaven--but no grandchildren. In declaring that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," God makes it clear that we will not be condemned for our ancestors' sins, nor can we be redeemed by their righteousness. In the justice system of God, each individual is responsible for his own life and his own spiritual destiny. An indication of the importance of this principle is the elaborate expression of it here, complete with examples.

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<sup>14</sup> The Lord made a similar statement to Jeremiah in Jerusalem, but the men with special favor before the LORD in that case were Moses and Samuel (Jer 15:1).

<sup>15</sup> These principles are repeated, less fully, in Chapter 33.

16. "Why Will Ye Die?" (18:25-32)

The second fundamental principle made clear in Chapter 18 is that God is not willing that any should perish<sup>16</sup>. In fact, I think it is valid to say that when the lost die in their sins and unredeemed it breaks the heart of God.

When I read the last eight verses of the chapter it is as if I can hear the anguished voice of our Heavenly Father crying out in frustrated grief, asking, "Why will ye die, oh house of Israel--why won't you repent and live? Why do you insist on dying, eternally separated from me, when you could live with me, in blissful righteousness, forever, if you would only repent and turn to me?"

Even a casual reading of Chapter 18, it seems to me, clearly reveals both of these fundamental and cosmic facts of life: the absolute, incorruptible, justice in the jurisprudence of God; and his limitless, unchangeable, love for us.

17. Ezekiel's Wife Dies, but He Can't Mourn. Ezekiel is given another (and final) message for the people of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. He (like other Old Testament prophets) was often required to act out, or illustrate his messages in unusual ways; but in this case the illustration, and what is required of him, are so extreme as to seem cruel, and difficult to believe.

Apparently the people still cling to the vain hope that, somehow, Jerusalem will be spared and they will be allowed to return. Calling the city, with its Temple, "The desire of thine eyes," the people are told that it will be taken from them (irreversibly), and that they shall not weep nor mourn in the traditional, public way; instead, they will wear normal clothing and eat normal food. Instead of the traditional, elaborate, demonstrative, public mourning, they shall "pine away," quietly grieving within themselves.

Ezekiel speaks the message to the people in the morning, and in the evening comes the most extreme of illustrations: his wife dies, and he is not allowed to weep or mourn in the traditional way<sup>17</sup>. The next morning he tells the people that they will do as he is doing--that when the final, irreversible destruction of that which they dream of seeing again comes, they will be too crushed to enter into the traditional, public customs of mourning. Instead, they shall pine away in deep, internal, despair. As Matthew Henry expressed it, the calamities coming upon Jerusalem will be "so great that they [will] sink under them, into a silent despair." Again, Ezekiel is told that a survivor (or survivors) of the final destruction shall arrive in Babylon to confirm the fulfilling of the prophecies. (24:15-27)

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<sup>16</sup> See also in this regard I Timothy 2:1-4 and II Peter 3:9.

<sup>17</sup> This is not as extreme as at first glance it seems. Ezekiel was forbidden the elaborate, demonstrative, public mourning that was traditional for the Israelites; it doesn't mean that he was denied internalized grief and private mourning.

**NOTE:** *In this relatively brief passage the LORD repeats his recurring statement that, as a result of these things, it will be made clear “that I am the LORD God”; and He repeats it, not just once, but twice.*

18. Final Judgment on Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia. (Chapter 25)

With the prophecies of final judgment on Judah and Jerusalem finished, Ezekiel turns his attention to the pagan nations around Judah. From the time of the Exodus, these nations have been enemies of the Israelites, either attacking them, or rejoicing when some stronger enemy attacked them. He pronounces upon Ammon, Moab, Edom and Philistia the same final judgment that he has been pronouncing upon Judah and Jerusalem.

There is, however, a difference in these prophecies from those pronounced upon Judah. For the Israelites, the prophecies included a promise of future restoration; but for the pagan nations around them, the future promise is for permanent extinction. When the Babylonians complete the destruction of Judah, they will then turn to the pagan nations around them and put a final end to them; and, for them, there will be no future restoration. And, at the same time, the very same message is being prophesied in Jerusalem by Jeremiah<sup>18</sup>.

**NOTE:** *Chapters 26-28 are prophecies of the doom of Tyre and Sidon, powerful and prosperous Phoenician city-states on the Mediterranean seacoast, north of Israel, at the foot of the mountains of Lebanon. King David had been a friend of the King Hiram of Tyre, who provided David with timber from the cedars of Lebanon for building the First Temple. For 600 years Tyre, with its ships, had controlled commerce in the known World, and had colonies on the coasts of Africa, Spain and Britain. Tyre was also famous as a source of purple dye, made from a sea snail (Murex) which grew along its rocky shores.*

*Tyre was a double city, with one part on the coast, and one part on a rocky island, 1/2 mile off the coast; the island portion was heavily fortified and considered to be impregnable. Nebuchadnezzar would besiege and conquer the port city of Tyre, and its neighbor city Sidon; but he could not conquer the island fortress of Tyre. It would remain for Alexander the Great, 250 years later, to demolish the port city, use the materials of that city to build a causeway to the island city, conquer it, and remove all structures. This literally fulfilled the prophecies of Ezekiel (especially 26:2-14), and to this day the former port city is only bare rock, where fishermen spread their nets to dry.*

19. The Mystery of Chapter 28. (28:1-15)

Near the end of the prophecies about the future destruction of Tyre and Sidon, there is a fascinating passage in Chapter 28 that even had the great commentator,

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<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 27:1-7.

Matthew Henry too bewildered to take a position on it (28:11-19). It seems to speak of the King of Tyre, yet it can't be about him--or about any mortal; in fact, it seems to be speaking of the past glory, corrupting pride, and doomed future of Satan. As we saw in the introduction to the Old Testament prophets, the prophecies can be "mixed," i.e., in the same message, different parts can refer to different subjects, persons, and periods of time, without any subheading or explanation to make this clear. Here is an extreme (perhaps the most extreme) example of this. Toward the end of the three-chapter prophecy about the coming destruction of Tyre and Sidon, there is this direct message that can only refer to a created, angelic being. In this way, the passage is very similar to passages in Isaiah and Daniel<sup>19</sup>.

What is spoken here is true of Lucifer ("light bearer"), a beautiful, created angelic being, one who was lifted up with pride, rebelled, and became Satan ("adversary"). It may also, however, refer simultaneously and symbolically to the fact that the earthly King of Tyre who, inspired by Satan, was lifted up with pride, thinking that his wealth and power would never be lost, and that his city-state could never be conquered, thus bringing on his own destruction. Here, then, we see Satan, the spiritual prince of Tyre, who has corrupted the human King of Tyre, inspiring him to embrace the same self-destructive pride that had led to Lucifer's downfall. If true, this is an example of what Finis Dake, author of the Dake Annotated Reference Bible, called "double reference."

***NOTE:** Chapters 29-32 are prophecies of the coming destruction of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. Sixteen years after the fall of Jerusalem, he invaded Egypt, conquered and plundered it. Egypt, formerly the known world's center of wealth, power and learning, has never since that time been a significant power in world affairs.*

#### 20. Indictment of the Sheep. (33:30-33)

After the prophecies of judgment to come on Egypt, there come prophecies indicting both the Israelite people for their apostasy, and their leaders for leading the people into that apostasy. Written more than 2,500 years ago about the Israelites, they could have been written today about many of our churches. First, the Lord tells Ezekiel that the people are coming to listen to him as a form of entertainment, but not for guidance. Ezekiel is to them as one who sings beautifully, or plays beautiful music with instruments. They come as if they are seekers after truth, wishing to know the will of God; they sit and listen politely, and say appropriate things, but their behavior doesn't change.

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<sup>19</sup> See in this regard Isaiah 14:12f, and Dan 10:13. See also the study guide to Isaiah, footnote to Highlight 10.

This could be a description of many churches today, especially of the "seeker friendly" churches which put heavy emphasis on entertaining the people. It could also be a description of dead traditional churches today where, week after week, the people go through the liturgical motions, and as they go out the door they say to the pastor, "I enjoyed your sermon," but their lives aren't changed.

*NOTE: There is a modern era proverb, timeworn but true, which summarizes this fundamental of the faith: "Preachers should comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable." Today, the latter is never done in many churches, especially the "feel-good" mega-churches, where the emphasis is on self-esteem and lovely thoughts, and sin is never mentioned.*

#### 21. Indictment of the Shepherds (and the Sheep). (Chapt 34)

Chapter 34 is an indictment of the shepherds (kings, priests and other leaders) of Israel. Had the leaders not been corrupt and self-serving, the people whom they led would not have been in their apostate condition, destroyed, and carried away. The truth of this may clearly be seen in the history of Israel: when the king was faithful and righteous, the people followed his example; and by the same token, when the king was wicked, the people soon followed his example and turned to wickedness, especially paganism. God holds the leaders responsible for their leadership, and in this chapter He makes this frighteningly clear. He also reminds the people that He will separate the sheep from the goats among them--a sobering reminder that they also will be judged<sup>20</sup>.

Yet in this chapter He also promises that, someday, He will perform, Himself, the job at which the leaders had failed. Speaking of David as a type of the Messiah to come, He promises that the scattered, neglected and injured sheep will be gathered again, and prosper in safety; even the land will be restored and healed, He will seek out the scattered sheep, restoring the remnant, and will set up one shepherd to lead and protect them, the Messiah; and, under His reign, "there shall be showers of blessing."

#### 22. The Valley of Dry Bones: A Promise of Future Restoration. (37:1-14)

In the Spirit Ezekiel is carried by the LORD into a vast valley covered with dry human bones. The Lord sets the stage by asking Ezekiel if the dry bones ("very dry") can live again<sup>21</sup>. Ezekiel pleads ignorance, and the LORD tells him to prophesy to the bones that they **shall** live again. While Ezekiel is speaking to them, the bones begin to move and come together, reassembling themselves into complete, individual skeletons (it must have been a noisy scene). Then muscle, connective tissue, nerves, blood vessels, and skin progressively appear on the

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<sup>20</sup> See also in this regard Jer 23 and Matt 25:34-46.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus often taught by asking a question, the answer to which was the teaching point.

skeletal foundations, until the valley is full of complete bodies; yet they are not alive. Ezekiel is then told to command the breath to come into the bodies, "from the four winds." The breath of life enters the dead bodies and they stand upon their feet, "an exceeding great army."

The LORD then tells Ezekiel to say to the people of Israel (the captives of Judah and the descendants of the captives of the Northern Kingdom of Israel) that the dry bones represent "the whole house of Israel" (the 10 northern tribes also--not just Judah and Benjamin), and that, although they are now (spiritually) just as dead and hopeless (unredeemed) as the dry bones were, in a future time the Israelites shall be re-assembled and made to live again, with the Spirit of God breathed into them<sup>22</sup>.

**NOTES:**

*a. Throughout the Bible, breath is symbolic of the spirit. Remember that God breathed into Adam and he became a living soul (Gen 2:7). Here, the breath (of God) gives life to the restored multitude. And in the New Testament Greek, "spirit" is "pneuma" ("breath"); thus, the Holy Spirit, giver of life, may be thought of as the Holy Breath. The resurrected Jesus "breathed on" his disciples and said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (Jn 20:22).*

*b. Verse 13 is yet another example of the recurring hall mark statement of the LORD in the Book of Ezekiel, "and ye [they] shall know that I am the LORD."*

**23. A Promise of a Reunited House of Israel. (37:15-28)**

Then the LORD tells Ezekiel to take two sticks and write on one the Kingdom of Judah and on the other the Kingdom of Israel. He is then to join the two sticks together as one stick and show this to the people, prophesying that, in the future, the LORD will gather the scattered people of both kingdoms together and unite them as one everlasting, holy, kingdom. God will cleanse and sanctify the people, and dwell among them. They will have "David my servant" as king over them forever. This beautiful promise speaks of David as a symbol of Christ the Messiah, in the future, perfected, Kingdom of God, and is a repetition of the promises of Chapter 34.

**24. Prophecies Concerning Gog and Magog. (38:1-39:16)**

The names "Gog" and "Magog" figure prominently in studies and speculation concerning eschatology (the study of end-times prophecy). The exact identification of these people or nations is unknown; but it is generally believed that Gog refers to the future ruler of a land called Magog, which will include the

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<sup>22</sup> In v 11 the LORD speaks of the "whole house of Israel," not just the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. There are no "ten lost tribes of Israel." For the significance of this see The Ten "Lost" Tribes and the British-Israel Theory in Part IV (Selected Topical Studies).

descendants of Magog, Meschek, and Tubal. The names Magog, Gomer, Tubal and Meschech appear in Genesis 10:2 as sons of Japheth; they are likewise mentioned as sons of Japheth in the genealogy of I Chronicles 1; and they are prophesied against here in Ezekiel 38 and 39<sup>23</sup>.

In Revelation, Gog and Magog appear only once, as a heathen army of staggering proportions (presumably with Gog as its king) that will come against the people of God in the climactic battle at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ, and will be destroyed by fire from Heaven<sup>24</sup>.

Magog, one of the sons of Japheth, is believed to be the ancestor of the fierce, barbaric races north of the Caucasus Mountains, known in the ancient world as the Scythians; today this would represent roughly the area of Russia and Mongolia. Thus, Ezekiel prophesies of Magog as a barbarous nation, invading Israel in the last days "out of the north parts," along with the people of Meshech, Tubal and Gomer (and other nations from all over the World). So, to try to keep this as simple as possible, "Gog" seems to refer to the last-days king of "Magog," a land consisting of the nations of the north (Russia, Siberia, Mongolia), descended from the sons of Japheth.

This huge confederation of heathen nations will make war on the re-gathered people of God, who dwell in peace and prosperity, in the land centered on Jerusalem ("the mountains of Israel"). Their armies will be destroyed supernaturally with rain, hail and fire from Heaven. The enemy dead shall be so numerous that it will require seven months to bury them, and their machines of war will burn for seven years.

A related word (or phrase), "Hamon-gog," means "people or multitude of Gog"; it appears only in Ezekiel (39:11 and 15), referring to the valley where the vast number of the dead of the armies of Gog will be buried.

**NOTES:**

*a. There are numerous speculations as to when the battle of Ezekiel 38:1-39:16 took place (or will take place in the future); but we simply don't know.*

*It is possible that these prophecies were fulfilled during the Intertestamental Period (the years between the Old and New Testaments), perhaps in the victorious war of liberation against the Syrians of Antiochus Epiphanes. By far the more likely interpretation, however, is that they will be fulfilled in the end times, after the Millennial reign of Christ, and before the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:7-10), as summarized above.*

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<sup>23</sup> Some commentators have tried to identify some of these names with contemporary locations, e.g. Meschech as Moscow or Muscovy, and Tubal as Tobolsk, a city in Siberia; but this is only speculation.

<sup>24</sup>See in this regard Rev 20:7-10.

*b. A classic example of the earthy realism of the Bible is found in 39:11, where we are told that the sickening odor of burnt human flesh will be noticed (“stop the noses”) by passengers of ships at sea. This also gives us a better concept of the numbers of dead in that smoldering valley of sudden death, and the enormous expanse of the air filled with these hot, expanding, nauseating gases.*

*c. We must wonder why, if these are future, end-times, battles there will be horses, mules, spears, bows, arrows and other items from earlier ages. It may be that in previous end-times battles the modern weapons will have been destroyed or rendered unusable by nuclear radiation, and oil reserves will have become so depleted, as to force the huge evil armies to arm themselves in this way, and to ride to the battle on horses, mules, camels, asses, etc. There are many learned and good men and women with many differing opinions and theories; but we can only wonder, wait and trust.*

*Concerning the seven-year period of burning the implements of war, it doesn't necessarily mean that there were so many it took (or will take) seven years for them to burn. It is more likely (especially considering the context) that, with the scarcity of firewood in that barren region, the wooden implements of war were (or will be) used as firewood, and will last for seven years.*

#### 25. The Problem of Chapters 40-48.

Except for the first 12 verses of Chapter 47, the rest of the book (Chapters 40-48) presents us with a problem passage--and it is a very great problem passage. It describes Ezekiel's prophetic vision of a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, with its specifications in great detail. The design follows, in general, that of the First Temple (that of David and Solomon), but with a great many variations. The prophecy was not fulfilled in the return from captivity, the building of the Second Temple and the inter-testamental period; yet it seems to apply to some period between the Restoration, the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the New Testament period.

Some interpret it literally, and some interpret it figuratively; and there seems to be no sure way to know which is correct, although the meticulous detail (even to the locations of palm trees) suggests a literal interpretation.

Those who interpret the passage figuratively see it as a metaphor for the entire Christian era. But, I must wonder, what is the need for such elaborate detail if the vision is a metaphor, and not a literal description?

Those who interpret it literally, generally see it as applying to the thousand-year period of the Millennium, described in Revelation 20:1-10, and extending into the period of the New Heaven and New Earth. They call this Temple the “Millennial

Temple," and believe that it will be the palace of "the prince" (Christ). There are, however, serious problems with this interpretation:

(1) Why Temple worship? Jesus apparently pronounced the end of Temple worship in John 4:21-24, as did Malachi, with great force in Malachi 1:6-14, and is made clear in many other passages such as Hebrews 9 and 10.

(2) Why animal sacrifices? The sacrifice of Jesus brought an end to animal sacrifices<sup>25</sup>.

(3) God is to inhabit the Temple "forever." And yet, we are clearly told that in the New Jerusalem there will be no Temple<sup>26</sup>.

(4) In the end times, all earthly things (which would include this Temple) will cease to exist, consumed in a cosmic conflagration<sup>27</sup>.

(5) Although 40:1-2 are suggestive of Revelation 21:10, it cannot refer to the New Jerusalem, for in the New Jerusalem there will be no temple.

(6) If these visions are to be fulfilled during the Millennium, why do they repeatedly require sacrifices for sin<sup>28</sup>? The sacrificial offering to pay the sin debt, for all of mankind, was made by Jesus, once and for all time, on the cross.

(7) No foreigners (Gentiles), "not even the foreigners who live among the Israelites," are to be allowed in the sanctuary. If this prophecy applies to the Millennium, then it contradicts the multitude of passages, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, which make it clear that the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus was for "whosoever believeth in Him," both Jew and Gentile. This would represent an entirely different covenant, and one otherwise unknown!

(8) The Millennial interpretation assumes "the prince" in these prophecies to be the Messiah, the risen Christ of God; and yet this prince is a sinner, who must make sin offerings for himself<sup>29</sup>! If this "prince" is Christ, the sinless Lamb of God, then this interpretation denies the entire New Covenant and the divinity of Christ, and is hideous blasphemy!

(9) This "prince" worships and makes peace offerings and burnt offerings to the LORD, again denying his divinity<sup>30</sup>

(10) This "prince" has sons<sup>31</sup>! And there is no suggestion that they are anything but natural sons, begotten in procreation. Who is his wife? The blasphemy in

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<sup>25</sup> Malachi 1:1-14; Hebr 9 and 10; Gal 5:1-3, et al.

<sup>26</sup> Ezekiel 43:7; Rev 21:22.

<sup>27</sup> II Peter 3:10-12.

<sup>28</sup> Ezekiel 43:19, 22, 27; 45:17, 19-20, 23, 25; 46:10.

<sup>29</sup> Notice that the AV (KJV) translators **never** capitalized the "p" in "prince."

<sup>30</sup> Ezekiel 46:2,12.

<sup>31</sup> Ezekiel 46:16, 18.

this Millennial interpretation continues to get worse! The entire concept is unspeakably obscene!

(11) There is not just one “prince” (a concept necessary to the Millennial interpretation); rather, there are multiple princes, and they have been **oppressors** of God’s people<sup>32</sup>! The wrongness of this idea is astonishing!

(12) Finally, there is nothing in the rest of Ezekiel’s book, nor in all of the Old Testament before it, nor in the writings of the 13 prophets who followed him, nor in any part of the New Testament, to support the Millennial interpretation.

### **What, Then, Do We Make of These Problem Chapters?**

And so, what do we make of these chapters? They present us with a mystery--one which I will not presume to explain. Some Rabbis have forbidden the reading of these chapters before age 30, and said that when Elijah comes, he will explain them. The great commentator, Matthew Henry, advised that we get out of this passage as much as we can, "and bless God that our salvation does not depend upon [understanding] it."

Although Chapter 47 appears to be a continuation of Chapter 46, its first 12 verses seem clearly to be an example of mixed intent in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. We must remember that Ezekiel’s book was not written in chapters and verses; it was one continuous scroll. We shall deal with these 12 verses separately in Highlight 27.

The visions clearly refer to a time after the return from Babylonian captivity and the Restoration, and before the coming of Christ. However, there is no record--or even a hint--of their fulfillment in the apocryphal books of I and II Maccabees, Josephus, or any other extra-biblical source.

Metaphorically speaking, I am not worthy to unloose the sandals of one such as the great commentator, Matthew Henry; nevertheless, I will suggest one possible interpretation: it is that these visions describe what might have been, under the Old Covenant, had the people of Israel been righteous and obedient to the LORD. In other words, perhaps these problem chapters represent “a time and Temple that never was, nor ever will be<sup>33</sup>.”

#### **26. A Great Gathering of Vultures. (39:17-29)**

The remaining verses of Chapter 39 present a slight problem: for what great battle are these birds being gathered? The vultures will feed on the remains of “the princes of the Earth,” as well as soldiers and animals. Reference is made to

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<sup>32</sup> Ezekiel 45:8.

<sup>33</sup> I owe much of the insight and incisive thinking in this discussion of possible interpretations to my son, Jefferson C. McKenney, MD, FACS.

horses, chariots and men of war, and the purpose, Ezekiel says, is to show the children of Israel that YHWH is the LORD their God from that day forward, and that the heathen will know that the children of Israel went into captivity because of their sins.

Because of the gathering of vultures and other flesh-eating animals to clean up a vast battlefield, verses 17-22 seem to refer back to the great battle of Revelation 19.

The last five verses are a promise that their captivity will end, and they will be restored to their home land; and verse 29 is suggestive of the New Covenant and the establishment of the Church.

27. The Life-Giving Stream. (47:1-12)

In the first 12 verses of Chapter 47 there is the beautiful word picture of the life-giving stream of water, flowing from the Temple and spreading, freely giving life to all that it touches. This vision is in perfect harmony with other references in the Bible to the life-giving stream<sup>34</sup>. The description by Ezekiel, however, is by far the richest and most expansive. No matter how we may interpret this image, when taken within the context of the entire Bible, it seems clearly to speak of the life-giving, life-sustaining, blessing of the gift of the Messiah and the good news of the gift of righteousness, beginning in Jerusalem and spreading to bring life to all men, in all places, who are thirsty for God and will drink of it. There seems to be a hint of it in Psalm 1:3; the prophets Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah wrote plainly of it; Jesus spoke of it with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, and shouted about it in Jerusalem on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Its final description, and its ultimate revelation, it seems to me, are to be seen in Revelation 22:1-3.

***NOTE:** Ezekiel 47:1-12 may also be thought of, I think, as a metaphor, describing the Church Universal, the Body of Christ, and its gospel message of forgiveness, life, and freedom. It had its origins in Jerusalem in the ministry, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus the Christ; it had its blossoming on the Day of Pentecost; and then it spread its endless supply of Living Water over the entire Earth, bringing life, freedom, and healing to all who thirst for it, believe, and receive its message of Good News.*

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<sup>34</sup> Psalm 1:1-3, 46:4-5; Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8-9; Jn 4:1-15, 7:37-38; Rev 22:1-3.