

Exegetical, Theological, and Devotional Notes
On Ezekiel: The Prophet of the Spirit

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Author's Preface

The following work is a brief exegetical, theological, and devotional examination of the Old Testament book of Ezekiel that was produced as supplemental notes for my church Bible study group where we worked through the text of Ezekiel from January through September of 2010. These notes include many questions for reflection and follow the text carefully passage-by-passage suggesting points of particular note (historical, theological, exegetical, philosophical, devotional, pragmatic), related passages both in the OT and NT and points to ponder in relation to the text. There is an all too brief bibliography of works cited where one can find some helpful commentaries and other resources pertinent to the study of Ezekiel.

The English text that was used for particular quotations in order to have some sense of continuity and a unified text in congregational reading was the *New International Version* (1977). However, I have tried everywhere to work with the original Hebrew text using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* as the base text with due consideration of the *LXX* recensions, Syriac, Vulgate, and Targumim. While the notes do not contain much information with regard to these linguistic features, nor to the history of the text, yet this is simply due to the nature of the notes as such. This is not to suggest that this was not a significant part of the work that lay behind this project, but only that it was not pertinent to providing such information for a congregational setting that needed some form of devotional supplemental materials.

These notes were developed to enhance the Wednesday night studies and are not in any way constitutive of the full content actually covered in those sessions. They offer material that it was felt might provide opportunity for further reflection outside of the church setting and it has already been demonstrated in our congregation's life that this has proven to be effective as a supplement.

It is hoped that this brief booklet will be a resource for others in furthering their own personal study of this marvelous prophet of the Spirit and will offer some further insights to spur on reflection and passion for the word of God and the life of the Spirit...that we may all know Yahweh!

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Ezekiel 1 – The Calling and Vision

“Yahweh is by definition a God who acts.... Indeed, this collection of prophecies leaves the impression that when Yahweh acts in judgment against his people it is not primarily to punish them but that they and the world might know him” (Block *NICOT* I:49).

1:1 – Ezekiel recorded his prophecies which were given after being taken into exile to the Babylonian region of the “Chebar river (or canal)” near Nippur in 599 BC (cf. Ps.137:1-8). He was the son of Buzi the priest and was from Jerusalem (1:3). The date of his calling by the LORD into the prophetic ministry was July 31, 593 BC. One particularly peculiar thing about the book of Ezekiel is its autobiographical style that is not found in the other prophets on such a wide scale. Perhaps this is related to the obscure mention of the “thirtieth year” which some (beginning with Origen) take to refer to his age when he was taken into exile (Block *NICOT* I:82). Age thirty was age for entering the priesthood according to Numbers 4:30.

1:2 – Ezekiel dates his prophecies (1:2; 33:21; 40:1) according to the exile (in relation to Jehoiachin’s exile) rather than according to Zedekiah the last king of Judah. Why the precise dating of each prophecy? (see 3:16; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1; 29:17; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1; 33:21; 40:1) It allows for verification of the prophetic message and provides historical notation for context. Why is Jehoiachin’s reign and exile the basis for counting the years, months and days considering he only reigned for three months and ten days (2 Kings 24:8; 2 Chron.36:9)? He was the last acknowledged Davidic king of Judah (see 2 Kings 25:27-30) and he also went into exile in the year Ezekiel went into exile along with many others of Jerusalem.

1:3 – Ezekiel means “May God strengthen or toughen” or “God strengthens or toughens” (Block *NICOT* I:9). Does his name carry significance for the ministry which he would be called to carry out? What are we to make of the “hand of the LORD” being on him? Was this an easy thing or difficult? Was Ezekiel willing or reticent?

1:4 – Ezekiel saw a great windstorm of flashing lightning and brilliant light coming from the “north” or “Zaphon” – which is the name of the mountain of Baal who was the god of storms – what is the significance? If there is any it is not suggested in the text itself other than to signify that the LORD comes and goes wherever He pleases.

1:5-14 – Who or what are the “four living creatures”? (these creatures are explained further in Ezekiel 10) They have four faces: human (Gen.1:28), lion (Gen.49:9), ox (Psalm 106:19-20), and eagle (Deut.28:49); four wings: two touching each of the other living creatures (Exo.25:18-22) and two covering their bodies; feet like calves but also like burnished bronze; human hands under the wings; human bodies; and they move without turning in any way and without use of either their legs or wings. Their movement is strictly powered by the Spirit (Eze.1:12) where they have free movement in any direction. What are we to make of these strange creatures? Daniel Block (*NICOT* I:96) explains the four distinctive faces: “the four-headed cherubim declare that Yahweh has the strength and majesty of the lion, the swiftness and mobility of the eagle, the procreative power of the bull and the wisdom and reason of humankind.”

1:15-18 – What is the “wheel within a wheel”? These wheels are brilliant and sparkling and covered in “eyes”. What are we to make of the wheels within wheels? This implies utterly free movement in any direction. The wheels are associated directly to the living creatures. How should we picture these wheels? The “eyes” may either refer to the all-seeing eyes of God or simply to what appears as eyes but are really just the brilliance of some form of gems in the wheels.

1:19 – The power of movement in the creatures and wheels is the same...the “Spirit of life”. What is the significance for us and for the rest of the prophecies to Ezekiel?

1:24 – The sound of the cherubim’s wings were like “many waters,” the “voice of Shaddai,” and an “army camp” (see Psalm 18:7-15). Why these metaphors and the nature of the divine chariot from heaven?

1:25 – Whose “voice is heard by Ezekiel?” Does it matter?

1:16-28 – On the throne of *lapis lazuli* sits one “like a man”, but glowing, brilliant and full of fire and compared to a rainbow. He has the appearance of the glory of Yahweh. Who is this one “like a man”? (see Rev.1:12-18) What is Ezekiel’s response?

We should not get lost in the details, but always keep the big picture before us. Daniel Block (*NICOT* I:106-109) helps by offering seven points to this first (difficult) passage: 1-the transcendent glory of God; 2-the transcendent holiness of Yahweh; 3-the sovereignty of Yahweh; 4-the proclamation of Yahweh’s interest in His people; 5-the proclamation of Yahweh’s presence among the exiles; 6-hints of the impending judgment of Yahweh; and 7-that whoever follows God’s calling must know God and have a clear vision of Him. Iain Duguid (*NIVAC* 59) sees this opening vision (and those that follow) as reminiscent of Genesis and the theme of “creation-uncreation-recreation”.

Ezekiel 2-3 – The Calling of the Son of Man

2:1 – Why should Ezekiel have to stand in order to listen to the LORD? It would seem to be because his calling is to action. Why is he called “son of man” (*ben ‘adam*)? It is to emphasize his humanity in the presence of the glory of the LORD. Also, it must be noted that Ezekiel in this instance is enabled to do what he does (stand, speak, not speak, go, etc.) only by the Spirit, which places him in relation to the “living creatures” of chapter one. What relation does this have in regard to the relationship between the Spirit and the person filled with the Spirit? Are we to regard those with the Spirit as automatons or is there any sense of participation/rebellion against the Spirit?

2:3 – Why is Israel called “a rebellious nation” (MT – *goyim*; Syriac – *goy*; LXX – lacking) and “a rebellious house”? Duguid (*NIVAC* 68) notes the strikingly reversed contrast between Israel as *goyim* “nations” and the Gentiles as *‘am* “a people”. And who are they in fact rebellious against? The Hebrew term for the LORD’s “sending” of Ezekiel is comparable to the word for Christ’s “sending” the twelve and the seventy. Who has sent Ezekiel? (2:4)

2:5 – The “rebellious” acts of Israel are comparable to the rebellious child of Deut.21:18-21. Why should it matter that a real “prophet” was among them and what does this mean?

2:6 – “Don’t be afraid” – Why should Ezekiel be afraid and why not? The “briars, thorns and scorpions” may actually not refer to Israel, but to divine protection from Israel (see Jer.15:19-21; Block *NICOT* I:121-122).

2:8-10 – “Open your mouth and eat what I give you”? (see Acts 10) He is given a scroll with writing on both sides? What is the significance of both the eating of the scroll and the writing on both sides as well as what is written? Iain Duguid (*NIVAC* 69-70, 79) has compared and contrasted Adam with the “son of *adam*” – Ezekiel (set in further contrast to the rebellious “sons of Israel”). He included such things as: the “breath of life” (Gen.2:7) versus the “spirit” (Eze.2:2; 3:12, 14, 24); the test of obedience (Gen.2:17; Eze.2:8); the contrast of what is eaten between the fruit that is considered “good for food, pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom” but leads to judgment (Gen.2:17; 3:6) versus what a scroll covered on both sides with writings of lament, mourning and woe but which may lead to life (Eze.2:10); and finally in both cases disobedience to the command of the LORD concerning eating will result in certain death (Gen.2:17; Eze.3:18).

3:1-3 – Ezekiel eats the scroll. What is the significance of it being sweet? (Psalm 19:10; 119:103; Rev.10:9-10) Also, why should Ezekiel make sure to fill his belly with the scroll?

3:5-6 – It is a shocking thing to note that foreigners (i.e., Gentiles) would have listened to the word of the LORD through Ezekiel as opposed to Israel (see Matt.11:20-24).

3:8-9 – Why would (or should) the LORD “harden” Ezekiel? (note the word-play with his name which means “God hardens”) “The message of God’s spokespersons derives not from

private reasoning or logic, or from mystical reflection, but from revelation” (Block *NICOT* I:131).

3:14-15 – What is the prophet’s attitude? Compare his response to Jeremiah 15:17.

3:16-21 – This pronouncement to Ezekiel has the elements of a legal pronouncement, however this message is specifically only for Ezekiel to be reminded of the seriousness of his call to prophecy to Israel no matter what their response will be (see Eze.33; Block *NICOT* I:142-143). Who is the ‘enemy’ Ezekiel as the “watchman” must warn Israel about? Concerning the prophetic “watchman” cf. Hos.9:8; Jer.6:17; Heb.10:31.

3:18-21 – What constitutes someone being referred to as either “evil” or “righteous” in this context? The basis of judgment is the issue of faithfulness to the covenant (Deut.24:13 – where Torah obedience means “righteousness”).

3:20 – What kind of “stumbling block” did the LORD put in front of the “righteous” who did “evil”? (see Eze.7:19; 14:3-4; 18:30; 44:12; cf. Psalm 119:65) Why would the LORD do this? (Isa.8:14; Jer.6:21)

3:23 – What is Ezekiel’s reaction to another appearance of the glory of the LORD? Has he grown accustomed to this presence? (cf. Rev.4:1-11)

3:26 – Why would the LORD not allow Ezekiel to speak after giving him a message? The NIV reads “to rebuke” where the Hebrew (*’ish mokiah*) reads literally “an arbitrating man” (Block *NICOT* I:159; Duguid *NIVAC* 80); thus implying there can be no intercession for Israel (which is one of the roles of a prophet – see Gen.20:7 concerning Abraham – and priest). What does this say of judgment and mercy in regard to Israel?

Ezekiel 4-5 – Playing God Against Jerusalem

4:1-3 – Why the illustrated sermon? Or is it far more than an illustrated sermon? Does this prophetic play act (“sign-acts” Block *NICOT* I:164-167) effect what is dramatized? Why does Ezekiel make a model of Jerusalem and then lay siege to it?

4:3 – What is the reason for the sign (Heb. 'ot)? (Eze.12:6, 11; 24:24; cf. Exo.7:5; 9:13-17; Deut.4:32-39) 'That they may know that I am Yahweh' (LORD).

4:3-4 – To whom does “House of Israel” refer? To the northern ten tribes or to the whole united kingdom of Israel? It seems most likely it refers (in this section's context) to refer to the whole with Jerusalem as the only rightful center of the nation (see Eze.4:13; 5:4).

4:4-5 – What does the 390 (LXX “190”) days per year refer to? Likely to the time since Solomon built the Temple of the LORD, the Glory filled it, and shortly thereafter he led the nation into idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-8, 33; 14:21-24; Eze.20:27-29). This would place the beginning at about 976 BC. Did Ezekiel really lay on his side for 390 days or was it only portions of each day? Also, what does it mean that he was to “bear the sins” of Israel and Judah? (cf. Exo.28:38; Num.18:1) What then does the 40 days refer to? Likely it refers to an exilic generation.

4:6 – For each day being in the place of a year see Num.14:33-35.

4:7 – Why does Ezekiel “bare his arm” against Jerusalem? It was “a military gesture of a warrior preparing for battle” (Block *NICOT* I:180; see a similar statement where the LORD bares His arm in Isa.52:10).

4:8 – Again, what does it mean that the LORD tells Ezekiel to do all these things and yet also tells he will bind him with ropes so he cannot get up? Is Ezekiel responsible or the LORD?

4:9 – What do we make of the strange mixture (grains and legumes) for the bread Ezekiel was supposed to eat for 390 days? “The strange mixture symbolizes a situation where the scarcity was such that no one kind of grain was plentiful enough on its own to make a whole loaf” (Duguid *NIVAC* 89).

4:10-11 – What is our measurement of how much Ezekiel was allowed to eat and drink each day and what did it signify?

4:12 – Why was the cake “like a barley cake”? It seems this was because the bread of the poor was barley.

4:13-15 - “Use human excrement for fuel”? For the meaning of this (see Eze.4:14; cf. Deut.23:11-13); for Ezekiel's plea for purity in himself (see Lev.7:18; 19:7; Deut.26:13-15). How should we understand Ezekiel's plea (intercession?) and the LORD's relenting? Is he

representative of the few among the remnant that would yet remain pure? Why did he not ask for a relenting of the other commands?

4:16-17 – Scarcity is the judgment of the LORD against Israel for unfaithfulness to the covenant (Lev.26).

5:1 – Using a sword as a barber's razor? For priestly laws concerning shaving (see Num.6:5; 8:7); for examples of shaving in certain circumstances being wrong and a sign of judgment (see Lev.21:5; Deut.14:1; Isa.7:20; Eze.44:20). Why was Ezekiel to use a scale to weigh the hair? This would seem to be because the LORD was going to be very exacting and deliberate in His judgments of Israel.

5:2-4 – What happened to each portion of hair and what is the significance? (5:12) Who will pursue Israel in judgment? Why were “a few strands of hair” to be kept in the fold of Ezekiel's garments? Note that 5:4 speaks of removing even some of these kept hairs and also burning them? (Lev.26:36-39)

5:5-7 – Is the LORD's election of Israel unqualified? (Eze.5:6; cf Luke 12:48; Heb.6:4-12; 10:26-31). According to 5:7, what is the LORD's charge against Israel?

5:8-10 – What a fearful thing to hear the LORD say, “I myself am against you” (contrast this with “I am with you” in Gen.28:15; 26:3, 24, ; 31:3). What does 5:9 teach us about the LORD's judgment? In 5:10 we are horrified by a judgment of family cannibalism, but this is the consequence of covenantal disobedience (see Lev.26:29; Deut.28:53-57; 2 Ki.6:24-31; Isa.9:19-21; 49:26; Jer.19:9; Zech.11:9; Lam.4:10).

5:11-13 – Is the LORD's judgment “fair”? How should we understand the LORD swearing by his own life and what does it mean when He says, “I will not look on you with pity”? (cf. Deut.7:16; 13:8; 19:13, 21; 25:12; but also see the hope of Lev.26:44-45)

5:14-15 – Note the response of the nations around Israel and the judgments comparison to the promised judgments of the Song of Moses (Deut.32:23-25).

Ezekiel 6-7 – Too Late to Repent

6:1 – Can Ezekiel speak apart from the word of the LORD coming to Him? (cf. 7:1; and see 3:27)

6:2 – “set your face against the mountains of Israel”? Perhaps this has reference to the “high places” (6:3, 13) though the “high places” could also be in the valleys. More likely it is a judgment against the land (as the king, people, and temple are also judged).

6:3 – “hear the word of the Sovereign LORD” as a prophetic introduction see Josh.3:9; 1 Sam.15:1; 2 Kings 7:1; 20:5; Amos 7:16; Isa.1:10; 28:14, 16.

6:4-7 – What is the reason the LORD gives for why He will do what He pronounces: You will know that I am Yahweh. He will show the idols and sacred places to be worthless and those who worship such to be as what they worship (cf. Ps.135:15-18). The word for “idols” (Heb. *gillulim*) is not the normal term, but one of derision for the worthlessness of the idols basically identifying them with excrement (Block *NICOT* I:226). “Scatter the bones around your altars” implies that they will surround the altars they have already surrounded but instead of dancing and worship it will be as the dead and judged (Duguid *NIVAC* 108).

6:8-10 – Those who are scattered exiles will be those sanctified by the LORD and not those who remain in the land. God’s judgment means ultimate redemption. Dan Block (*NICOT* I:231-233) notes three things the remnant exiles will do: 1) remember the LORD; 2) loathe themselves; and 3) “know that I am Yahweh” (6:13-14; 7:4, 9, 27). This last phrase is key to the whole of the prophecy (cf. Exo.14:4, 18).

6:11 – “Strike your hands together” (or “clap your hands”)? This is as a sign of God’s anger with Israel (see Num.24:10; Eze.21:14, 17; 22:13). He is also told “stomp your feet” which is a sign of condemnation and rejection. “Alas!” does not convey the more direct translational value of “Ah!” (the sound of a disgusted sigh).

6:12 – Is there any escaping from the LORD? (see Ps.139)

6:13-14 – The irony is that “rather than offering life to the devotees, the pagan sanctuaries have become symbols of death” (Block *NICOT* I:237). “From the desert to Diblah” (should read “Riblah” – the ‘d’ and ‘r’ look almost identical in Hebrew) means from the south to the very far north the LORD will desolate everywhere.

7:2-6 – “The end...”? What does this mean? Also, is the LORD’s judgment just? In what manner will He judge? Is the end “coming” or has it “come” already? Why will God not have pity?

7:10, 12, 17, 19 – The “day” of the LORD is the “moment of his intervention in human history, with the outcomes of such interventions being determined by him alone” (Block *NICOT* I:244).

7:10-13 – Note the agricultural and commercial irony. What relation do “blossoming”, “budding” and the “staff” have to Aaron’s staff in Num.17:8?

7:14 – What is this verse referring to? Nebuchadnezzar’s approach and Jerusalem’s fall. Why is *everyone* judged? Was all of Israel wicked? Why do the righteous suffer with the wicked?

7:15-18 – Where is escape? It is of interest that those who escape do so to the mountains (cf. Matt.24:16; Mk.13:15; Lk.21:21). Are those who survive going to rejoice? Why not? What are the expressions in vs.17 meant to express? Apparently an utter lack of composure (the LXX and most modern commentators understand this to suggest they will wet themselves).

7:19 – What good is gold and silver in the day of the LORD’s wrath?

7:20-22 – The “beautiful jewelry” may suggest (following Rabbis Rashi and Kimchi) the treasures of the temple (7:22-23) which would make the acts of Israel that much worse. How might the treasury be “defiled” and “desecrated”? “The wicked of the earth” are used as God’s hand of judgment. John Calvin in his commentary on Ezekiel wrote concerning this, “They are borne along by a depraved disposition, but God has a wonderful plan, incomprehensible to us, according to which he impels the wicked here and there—without becoming involved in their guilt (cited in Duguid *NIVAC* 122).

7:23-24 – Who is the LORD telling to “prepare chains”? What is the reason? (cf. Gen.6:11) Note that the LORD says, “I will...” concerning the judgment (see who “strikes the blow” in 7:9).

7:25-27 – “They will seek peace but...” there will be no help for anyone. “Then they will know...”? (cf. 2 Pet.3:3-4)

Ezekiel 8-9 – The Mark of the LORD

8:1 – The date of this revelation is September 18, 592 BC (Ezekiel’s first vision was on July 31, 593 BC). How should we understand this in light of his laying his sides for 430 days? He was sitting at home with the elders of Judah around him (to inquire of the LORD through him? cf. Eze.14:1-3; 20:1). Note that the hand of the LORD did not simply “come” upon him, but “fell” upon him. What is the significance of this?

8:2 – “A figure like a man”? (Eze.1:26-28) How should we understand his appearance?

8:3-5 – “Taken by the hair” and “lifted by the Spirit”? (cf. Bel and the Dragon 36) The term translated “idol” here (Heb. *semel*) is only referenced two other times (Deut.4:16; 2 Chron.33:7, 15; for explanation see Block *NICOT* I:281) and here it is labeled “that provokes to jealousy” (cf. Deut.4:15-24). This idol is visible from one of the doorways to the Temple (as if to guard?). He sees the glory of the God of Israel (the Living God) which is contrasted with the idol that does nothing.

8:6 – “Do you see”? (8:12, 15, 17; note the wheel within a wheel covered in “eyes” in 1:18; Duguid *NIVAC* 132fn10). If the prophet is shown these things then surely the LORD has seen far more than He has shown. Why is this asked repeatedly? It serves a rhetorical effect for the prophet (and the readers) to take notice and not turn a blind eye to the surrounding sins. How could the LORD be driven from His sanctuary?

8:7-9 – Why is there a hole in the wall of the inner court of the temple that leads to a secret chamber for Ezekiel to dig through? It may demonstrate that though the secret remains (i.e., Ezekiel goes in through the hole and not the door), yet the LORD sees all.

8:10-12 – What kinds of things are being worshipped and how? Who is represented by the seventy worshippers? (cf. 8:1; contrast with Ex.24:1, 9; Num.11:24-25) He focuses on Jaazaniah son of Shaphan. Who is this fellow? Shaphan, his father, was a scribe in the days of King Josiah’s reforms (2 Kings 22:3-14; 2 Chron.34:8-20) and his brothers were Ahikam who assisted Jeremiah (Jer.26:24), Elasah who delivered Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles (Jer.29:3), and Gemariah who tried to stop Jeremiah’s scroll from being burned by King Jehoiakin (Jer.36:10, 25). He was apparently not deported with Ezekiel and became defiled in idolatry (despite or even ironically in relation to his name’s meaning “the LORD hears”). Note that each elder representative worshipped a separate image of a creature. The seventy seems to refer to the totality. “The LORD does not see us”? What might this mean? Possibly (1) that the LORD has abandoned them or (2) that the LORD is ignorant of their idolatry (cf. Ps.10:1-11; 94:1-7). Does He in fact see? (Gen.16:13-14; Deut.4:28; Ps.115:4-8) Has He utterly “forsaken the land”?

8:13 – “More detestable” things will be shown (and 8:15)? What could be more detestable?

8:14 – Ezekiel was shown women “mourning for Tammuz” (lit. “weeping *the* Tammuz”) Tammuz was the name given to an ancient Sumerian king who was divinized after dying and returning (not necessarily resurrected). The Mesopotamians annually worshipped Tammuz

through a (particularly) women's mourning ritual. Why was this being practiced in the Temple and what was its significance?

8:16-18 – Idolatry in the inner court. Why are the worshipper's backs to the Temple and their faces to the east? It demonstrates a rejection of the LORD and worship of the sun (cf. 2 Kings 21:5; 23:11-12; condemned in Deut.4:19; 17:2-5). "The essence of idolatry is not so much denying the reality of God but the relevance of God" (Duguid *NIVAC* 140). Worse yet they are oppressive, violent and cruel to one another. What does "the branch to their nose" (or "my nose") mean? Somehow it is insulting, though how is unclear.

9:1-2 – The statements about no pity (8:18) are immediately followed by the call for the executioners of the city of Jerusalem. Six executioners (much like the Levite temple guards in Eze.44:11) and one scribe arrive to carry out the judgment. Who is the scribe or who does the scribe represent? Suggestions have included Gabriel and the Christ.

9:3 – "The glory of the God of Israel went up"? "Above the cherubim" refers to the holy of holies and the ark of the covenant (Exo.25:18-22). Who commissions the scribe?

9:4-7 – "A mark on the foreheads"? What was the mark and who was marked? (cf. Rev.7:3; 13:16) The 'taw' is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and at that time looked like an X (represented in English still in the 'T'). This was perhaps like a signature (see Block *NICOT* I:307). Who was to be judged by execution? Is there any gender or age discrimination? Why not? The list in 9:6 is of "the defenseless, the frail, and the innocent" (Block *NICOT* I:308). The holy was profaned by idolatry and so was no longer holy and therefore the wicked could be slaughtered there. Iain Duguid (*NIVAC* 134-135) has noted the parallels to Passover in Exodus 12, but here it is Israel that is judged.

9:8-11 – "Left by myself"? Will the LORD destroy everyone? Note the reasons for the LORD's judgment. Does he spare the righteous? (cf. Gen.18:23) Robert Chandlish (cited in Duguid *NIVAC* 137) astutely wrote, "The Lord waits long to be gracious, as if he knew not how to smite. He smites at last as if he knew not how to pity."

Ezekiel 10-11 – The Glory of the LORD Departs

10:1 – How does this vision compare and contrast with the vision of chapter one?

10:2-8 – The “man dressed in linen” previously marked the righteous of Jerusalem and at this point was told to gather coals of fire from under the divine chariot and scatter them over Jerusalem (for “fire” in Jerusalem see 2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chron.36:19; for an angel who will use the “fire” from the altar in final judgment see Rev.8:3-5; and God as a “consuming fire” see Deut. 4:24). Why does a cloud fill the inner court as the coals of fire are taken? Why are the glory of the LORD and the wings of the cherubim moving? What does it mean for a sound to be “like the voice of God Almighty (Heb. *El Shadday*)”? (Exo.6:3; cf. Ps.29:3; Eze.1:24; Heb.12:18-19; Rev.10:3-4)

10:9-17 – What do we make of the further description of the wheels and cherubim? Why are the cherubim suddenly described as covered with “eyes”? Why is the order and description of the cherubim’s faces (10:14) different than in 1:10? Daniel Block thinks because of the different direction Ezekiel is facing in relation to the cherubim affects the different ordering and he also proposes that the bull and cherubim faces are just two ways of describing the same face (*NICOT* I:324-5).

10:18-19 – Why does the glory of the LORD and the chariot rise? Notice that there is a pause while leaving Jerusalem. What is the possible significance of this? Why should it be emphasized that the cherubim (and the wheels) go straight ahead? Also, why repeatedly remind the reader that these are the very same creatures as in chapter one’s vision (10:15, 20, 22)?

11:1-6 – Why does Ezekiel mention Jaazaniah (who is different than the man with the same name in 9:11) son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah among the 25 leaders noticed? Likely because he knew them and the people he was prophesying to knew them and he was specifically exposing their sins (which were plotting evil and giving wicked advice – cf. Micah 2:1). What is the meaning of the “cooking pot”? Why do they think it will soon be time to build houses? “Prophesy against them, prophesy” places particular emphasis upon the demands of the LORD to Ezekiel. What does the Spirit of the LORD say? He knows their hearts and their violence against the people of Jerusalem (see Eze.22:27).

11:7-12 – The leaders of Jerusalem are “not the meat” in the pot? How is this bad? What does it mean that they are the refuse outside the pot? (refer to the entire prophesy of Eze.8-11) Note again the reason given repetitively, “You will know that I am the LORD” (11:10, 12) and therefore the covenant responsibilities this places upon them (11:12). How has the pot motif changed in this vision? It was no longer a safe place, but now the place where they have been consuming the people of Jerusalem (cf. Micah 3:1-3). They are the refuse from the pot and as such are going from the frying pan and into the fire. Why is the judgment of them said to occur “at the borders of Israel”? Who should Israel have been conformed to? (11:12)

11:13 – While Ezekiel was prophesying Pelatiah (“the LORD has delivered”) son of Benaiah (“the LORD has built up”) died. According to Daniel Block (*NICOT* I:338), he “symbolized the hope of Jerusalem” and so his death would signal the end of Jerusalem’s hope

that they would be delivered. Ezekiel's exclamation following Pelatiah's death seems to be the answer to his parallel statement in 9:8.

11:14-15 – “Your brothers, your brothers”? Why is this doubled? It is emphatic about who will be redeemed. “Your blood relatives” is literally “men of your redemption” which is a reference to the next of kin responsible for redeeming you if needed (see the “kinsman-redeemer” of Ruth; Lev.24:47-55; 25:23-34; Num.35:19-28).

11:16 – What does it mean that the LORD has become “a sanctuary” (Heb. *miqdash*; cf. 8:6; 9:6 – where it refers to the Temple) for “a little while” (or less likely “of a lesser degree”) for the exiles who have been removed from Jerusalem? (see also John 2:19-22; 3:21-23)

11:17-21 – When was the promise of the exiles returning fulfilled? Who is the promise addressed to – the people of Jerusalem or the exiles? Who will bring Israel back and who exiled them to begin with? What does this say about the LORD's involvement in the affairs of people? Who was responsible for cleansing the land? Who will give them a new heart and new spirit (but compare Eze.18:31)? Contrast the new hearts of 11:19 with the hearts of 14:3 and 20:16. What was the heart change expected to accomplish? The key statement here is “They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Exo.6:7; Lev.26:12; Jer.7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:33; Eze.14:11; 36:28; 37:27; Hos.2:23; Zech.13:9; 2 Cor.6:16; Heb.8:10; Rev.21:3).

11:22-25 – Why does the glory of the LORD stop over the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem? Apparently the glory departs for twenty years until Ezekiel 43 speaks of the glory of the LORD returning. Suddenly Ezekiel is returned from the vision to the exiles whom he immediately informs about what he just saw (chapters 8-11). How did they respond? We aren't told what their immediate response was. Iain Duguid describes the connection between the “glory” of Ezekiel 10-11 and Jesus as mentioned in Matthew 23:37-24:3: “There Jesus laments Jerusalem's history of hard-heartedness towards the prophets and her refusal to come to him (23:37). As a result, her house will be left desolate (23:38), and Jerusalem will not see Jesus again until they are willing to welcome his coming (23:39). He then prophesies the forthcoming destruction of the temple (24:1) and removes himself to the mount of Olives, leaving behind a magnificent but doomed structure” (*NIVAC* 153).

Ezekiel 12-13 – Blind and Deaf Leaders

12:1-2 – The key to the following prophecies in Ezekiel is found in these two verses. “They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people” (see Isa.6:9; 43:8; Jer.5:12; and the same thing stated concerning idols in Ps.115:57). According to this passage, why can’t Israel see or hear?

12:3-7 – A living sermon “as they watch” – pack an exile bag in the daylight, dig a hole in the wall in the evening, and carry out the belongings with covered face at dawn. What does it all mean? Did they understand what Ezekiel was doing? What might an exile’s bag contain? How is Ezekiel a “sign to the house of Israel”? How does this relate to verse 2? Note that Ezekiel did exactly as he was commanded.

12:8-14 – In the morning Ezekiel is to explain the living sermon of the previous day. Who is the “prince in Jerusalem”? Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:18-25:7; 2 Chron.36:11-14; Jer.52:1-11) is the “prince” as a semi-derogatory title (rather than “king”). He was the last king of Judah and was rebellious against the LORD and Nebuchadnezzar. He fled Jerusalem when it fell to the Babylonians, but was captured and given a trial where he was punished by slaughtering his sons in front of him and then gouging out his eyes. There is a possible slight allusion to the blinding of Zedekiah by the references to not seeing the land again. The “prince” (as ruler of the people) is also indicative of the people of Judah left in Jerusalem. Who carried out the judgment of the “prince”?

12:15-16 – “They will know that I am the LORD” once the LORD scattered and dispersed Israel among the nations and preserved the remnant for Himself.

12:17-20 – Why did Ezekiel have to eat with trembling and drink with shuddering? What does this signify? Why would Israel eat and drink in fear? Note that violence against others leads to a final violent judgment of the perpetrators.

12:21-28 – Three issues concerning prophecy: 1) All prophecy should not be rejected, 2) it must not be falsely given, and 3) it must be done with the certainty that it is the word of the LORD. The way of removing false prophecy from Israel was to remove the false prophets themselves from Israel. “Flattering (or slippery) divinations” were manipulative and not simply an attempt to discern the will of the LORD (see Block *NICOT* I:390 and I:390fn31-32). Is the LORD slow in keeping his promises? (cf. 2 Pet.3:3-10)

13:1-9 – What does it mean for the LORD to say there were some who “prophecy out of their own imagination”? Does this still go on today? How is this contrasted with the word of the LORD? In what ways are false prophets “like jackals among ruins” (cf. Neh.4:3; Lam.5:18)? They don’t repair the breaks in the walls or defend against the enemy, but instead they live only for themselves and prey on the weak and use the breaks for their own advantage. Is “divination” always wrong? What would be the difference between divining the will of God and lying divination? Is there a difference? Does using the LORD’s name give absolute assurance that what we say or pray will be done? What does it mean to not belong to the council of God’s people or not be “listed in the records of the house of Israel”? “The records of the house of

Israel” seems to refer to the official records of those who would survive to return to Israel (Ezra 2:62; Neh.7:64; see also the books which the LORD keeps in Exo.32:32-33; Ps.69:28; Isa.4:3; Dan.12:1; Lk.10:20; Rev.3:5; 20:12; 21:27). Ezekiel was sent to Israel so they would “know that a prophet had been among them” (Eze.2:5). Where the LORD declares that His “hand will be against them” there is an allusion to inspiration in order to subtly express that “those who never felt the reality of the divine hand in inspiration will now feel it in judgment” (Duguid *NIVAC* 173fn11).

13:10-16 – What does it mean to be white-washed flimsy walls? The flimsy wall will be exposed and destroyed and the white-wash shown to have been worse than worthless since it was used to simply cover up what should have been repaired as if everything was alright. How is this related to those who were prophesying “peace”? (cf. 1 Thess.5:3)

13:17-23 – Who are “the daughters of your people”? They were false prophetesses who used magic to control and manipulate. Magic charms were worn on their wrists and (magic?) veils on their heads (or around their necks). These seem to refer to something like a phylactery that functioned as a talisman or charm. Why did they practice their magic? What does the LORD accuse them of doing? They “disheartened the righteous” and “encouraged the wicked”. The false prophet/esses had ensnared the LORD’s people, but the LORD would deliver “his people” and ensure and destroy the false prophet/esses.

Ezekiel 14 – When Righteousness Saves

14:1-5 – “Some of the elders”. This group represents the rest of the elders who seek the LORD outwardly but are inwardly idolaters. What does it mean when the LORD says He will answer such persons Himself? In what way is this not what the seekers desire? (see 14:8) “Answer Himself” refers to the fact that He will not answer their inquiry, but will instead answer their idolatry (see Block *NICOT* I:427). Note that the LORD is not about having a people unless He also has their hearts.

14:6 – What does repentance entail in this context? Turning and renouncing.

14:7-8 – Who is included as outwardly belonging to the LORD and therefore needing to hold only to Him in adoration and worship? How might persons be separated from the LORD? Compare Paul’s teaching in Romans 8:38-39 and consider how these two teachings might belong together. What is the LORD’s judgment of the inward idolater who only outwardly seeks Him?

14:9-11 – What does it mean for a prophet to be “enticed to utter a prophecy”? (cf. Num.22-25; 31:16; Deut.23:4-5; 1 Kings 22:19-23; Jer.20:7, 10) Who actually entices the prophets to lie? What is the result? Who bears the guilt? (cf. 2 Thess.2:9-12) Why would the LORD do such a thing? He does this so that His people will truly be *His* people: a people *without* sin and *with* God.

14:12-20 – What does it mean for another country to be “unfaithful” to the LORD? Why are Noah, Daniel and Job named as paragons of virtue? They are mentioned because they stood faithfully in the midst of much ridicule, rejection and wickedness (Gen.6:9; Job 1:8; Dan.1:8). Ezekiel is using them as ideal examples of those whose righteousness would not be sufficient to save anyone but themselves in the Day of Judgment. Dan Block (*NICOT* I:449fn49) believes the “children” refers not to their children, but to children in general who would be thought worthy of being spared. The name “Danel” (which is noted as being the original spelling in Ezekiel – see also 28:3) is sometimes thought to refer to a Near Eastern legend of one Danel who was faithful to carry out justice despite his suffering (see *Aqhat*), but this seems unlikely. While Noah and Job were ancient examples, Daniel would be a contemporary one (and the Danel of the *Aqhat* legend was not considered faithful to the LORD, but to various other deities of the Ugaritic pantheon). It is more probable that this is simply a variant spelling of Daniel who was a contemporary of Ezekiel (Block *NICOT* I:447-9; contra Duguid *NIVAC* 193-4). Daniel had been taken into exile in about 604BC and would have been in Babylon for over 15 years by this point and risen to some considerable level of notoriety among the exiles.

14:21-23 – Note the “four dreadful judgments” – sword (Lev.26:25), famine (Lev.26:26), wild beasts (Lev. 26:22) and plague (Lev.26:25). (cf. Jer.15:2-3; Rev.6:8) Why do the animals suffer punishment as well? (cf. Jonah 4:11; and Yael Shemesh’s “‘And Many Beasts’ (Jonah 4:11): The Function and Status of Animals in the Book of Jonah,” *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, Vol.10 Art.6, 2010). In the midst of judgment there is hope in “some survivors” not because they were more resilient or more righteous than the rest, but because the LORD wanted to show the exiles (who were perceived to have been the wicked and thus exiled already) that those left in

Jerusalem and Judah were idolatrous and wicked. This was to demonstrate both the justice and mercy of the LORD.

Ezekiel 15-16 – R-Rated Jerusalem: Useless and Unfaithful

15:1-8 – What use are the clippings of vines? How is Jerusalem like a clipping of a vine? (cf. Ps.80:8-19) What do the references to fire have to do with Jerusalem? (cf. Eze.5:2, 4; Rev.17:16) What does the LORD promise Jerusalem? What does it mean for the LORD to set his “face against” something or someone? Again, what was the stated point of the judgment? (Eze.15:7) What charge did the LORD make against Jerusalem? The charge of unfaithfulness (and thereby uselessness)! (cf. John 15:1-2, 6)

16:1-5 – The LORD will “confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices”. Take note of the “detestable practices” mentioned throughout the chapter. What does it mean to be from the Canaanites and to have it said that “your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite”? (see Deut.7:1-5) How was Jerusalem treated by her parents once born? How did the LORD treat her? The significance of this is noted as an adoptive function whereby the LORD makes claims upon Jerusalem. How should have the LORD’s treatment impacted her in light of abandonment by her parents?

16:6-7 – What was the LORD’s response to Jerusalem? Why does He say “Live!” and what happens once He does? What are the possible dangers of Jerusalem’s infantile and then matured (“your breasts were formed and your (pubic) hair grew”) nakedness?

16:8 – Why does the text say the LORD waited until Jerusalem was “old enough for love”? What does it mean for the LORD to “spread the corner of his garment over her”? (cf. Ruth 3:9; Num.15:37-41; Deut.22:12; and possibly Matt.9:20-22) What type of covenant is referred to here? What does it mean for the nature of their relationship?

16:9-14 – What does the LORD claim to have done for Jerusalem? Verse nine possibly refers not to the acts of cleansing just after birth (16:4), but to some form of wedding bath (though otherwise unattested) following virginal bleeding (cf. Deut.22:13-21). Note that the materials—for adornment and food—were those used for the tabernacle. What does all of this mean? What were the immediate results? (16:13-14)

16:15-19 – Using beauty and fame to whore? What was Jerusalem accused of doing? Also, what might be the connection between the many fine things given by the LORD and their use in prostitution? Who is Jerusalem engaged in prostitution with?

16:22-22 – Whose children were sacrificed to idols? What role should remembering beginnings play? “In her intoxication with her newfound beauty and her insatiable lusts, she suffered from a severe case of amnesia. Instead of remembering her desperate beginnings or celebrating the goodness of Yahweh in rescuing her, she trampled underfoot the grace of God” (Block *NICOT* I:491).

16:23-29 – The “mound” and “lofty shrine”? How did Jerusalem degrade her “beauty”? She literally “spread her legs (Heb. *pasaq raglayim*) to every passerby” and engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians with the “enlarged flesh” (Heb. *gidle basar*; and see Block *NICOT* I:466-7 for greater detail). Who all did she whore herself to and what was the result?

16:30-34 – What might this passage teach us about any notion of the freedom of the will? In what way was Jerusalem unlike a prostitute?

16:35-42 – What was the punishment and who would carry it out? What would satisfy the anger of the LORD? How does this account fit into one of God as faithfully merciful? (compare Hos.2:2-3)

16:43-48 – What were the “other detestable practices” to which lewdness was added? In what way is the proverb true that is cited here? Who did the LORD declare to be the family of Jerusalem and why? (cf. John 8:39-47) Samaria as “older” (Heb. *gedola*) sister and Sodom as “younger” (Heb. *qetanna*) sister refers to size and not age (Duguid *NIVAC* 213; Block *NICOT* I:507fn256). Jerusalem was “more depraved” than Sodom?

16:49-52 – What were the sins of Sodom according to Ezekiel? (cf. Gen.18:16-19:30; esp. 18:20 and 19:30) What kinds of things did Samaria do (which aren’t listed until chapter 23) and how did this compare to Jerusalem? How wicked would one have to be to make Sodom and Samaria “appear righteous”?

16:53-58 – Was there any hope for redemption? Whose “fortunes” would be restored and what does it mean? Why must the punishment be public?

16:59-63 – Did Jerusalem deserve punishment? What role does the covenant play in judgment and mercy? (cf. Jer.31:31-34) Who will atone for Jerusalem? What does it mean for the LORD to “remember” His covenant and to what “eternal covenant” does this refer? Once again, what is the stated purpose of all of judgment?

Ezekiel 17-18 – Taking Responsibility

17:1-2 – What do “allegory” (Heb. *hida* “riddle”) and “parable” (Heb. *mashal* “proverb”) suggest for reading what follows?

17:3-4 – What effect should the description of the great eagle have on us? Lebanon is (and was) known for its cedars (Judges 9:15; 1 Kings 5:20; 7:2). The top of the cedar is carried off to “a land of merchants” and “a city of traders”...where is that?

17:5-6 – The first eagle becomes a gardener who plants and meticulously cares for the seedling and suddenly the seedling is a vine that flourishes because of its care.

17:7-8 – A second (lesser) eagle appears who remains inactive throughout the account (see Block *NICOT* I:531 for a comparison of details). The vine, rather than flourishing in its cared for environment, seeks the nourishment of the second eagle.

17:9-10 – What answers are expected by the LORD’s many questions? On the withering east wind see Jonah 4:8.

17:11-18 – Whereas the parable was originally addressed to the “house of Israel” the interpretation makes clear that they are the “rebellious house”. The interpretation is that the first eagle was King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon; Lebanon was Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 7:2-12 the “house of cedars of Lebanon”); the “land” and “city” were Babylon. The first exiles with King Jehoiakin of Judah (597 BC) were the top of the cedar. The remaining portion of Israel was the vine which had every opportunity to flourish as a vassal state of Babylon. The second eagle was Egypt. King Zedekiah of Judah rebelled against Babylon and sought the aid of Egypt after Jehoiachin had been carried off to Babylon. Why does the LORD promise judgment? Zedekiah broke the covenant made with Nebuchadnezzar (see 2 Chron.36:13), but more importantly he (and the people) broke covenant with the LORD. If the King of Babylon would not tolerate a broken covenant how much less would the LORD, maker of heaven and earth, not tolerate it?

17:19-21 – Who would carry out the judgment? What assurance does the LORD give that this will be done? (17:21, 24)

17:22-24 – A return to the treetop for another sprig. What will the LORD do in light of these verses? Who will know this is the work of the LORD and who will benefit from it? Who or what does this refer to?

18:1-2 – Another proverb (cf. Jer.31:29-30), but this one is quoted by the people. What does it mean? It appears to refer to an impersonal natural retribution (i.e., fatalism) rather than to the personal judgment of the LORD.

18:3-4 – How is the response of the LORD to this proverb related to what He has declared in Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 24:16 and Jeremiah 31:29-34?

18:5-18 – The righteous grandfather, sinful father, and righteous son (this might refer to Kings Josiah, Jehoiachim and Jehoiachin). What distinguishes each? What are the actions that are named as to be done and to be avoided? What relation does verses 9 and 17 have to what precedes and follows in these similar lists? Is there any sense of “fate” in what the LORD will do? What sorts of things constitute doing what is “just and right” and “sins”? (Lev.19:15; 20:10, 18; 25:14; Deut.4:1, 19; 15:7; 23:19; 24:12-17) In what ways are the actions related specifically to the LORD and to the community? In what way is the notion of “faith” to be described in this passage?

18:19-24 – Who dies for their sins? How does this relate to the death of Christ for the world? According to this passage, does the LORD maintain records of the previous life when one turns from righteousness or wickedness? How does the LORD feel about the punishment of the wicked?

18:25-32 – Is the LORD unjust? What is the judgment for righteousness and wickedness? Does this passage make righteousness possible? What is necessary for righteousness here? In what way can Israel (or we) “get a new heart and a new spirit” for themselves according to this passage? How is this related to what the LORD had already said in Ezekiel 11:19?

Ezekiel 19:1-20:44 – An Inevitable End?

19:1-9 – Singing the prophetic lament (or dirge). The Lion Lament. “What a lioness was your mother” should read, “What is your mother? A lioness!” (see Block *NICOT* I:595; Duguid *NIVAC* 247). What does it mean? Who are the two lions, what are their characteristics and what is their end? The first lion seems to refer to Jehoahaz who was exiled to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco in 609BC (2 Kings 23:33-34), but the second lion possibly could be either Jehoiakin or Zedekiah. “He broke down their strongholds” (LXX and Targums) is read as “he knew his widows” (MT). Note the reference to the lion in Gen.49:8-9 concerning the tribe of Judah.

19:10-14 – The Vine Lament (cf. Gen.49:10-11). Who is the vine, where is it planted and how is it described? Note the reference to the “ruler’s scepter”. What is its demise (note the “east wind” which destroys it and see 17:10) and where is it finally planted? Why emphasis the “lament” aspect of this prophecy?

20:1-3 – The specific time reference marks off what follows as a distinct unit in Ezekiel and makes the date of the prophecy August 14, 591BC. The elders of Israel again go to “seek” (Heb. *darash*) the LORD (see Deut. 4:29; Block *NICOT* I:619). However, the LORD will not allow their inquiry, but why? Compare and contrast what follows in this larger passage with Psalm 106 (Block *NICOT* I:615-6).

20:4-9 – Israel leaving Egypt. Note the comparison/contrast of “the detestable practices of their fathers” with “of the nations” (Deut.18:9-12; 1 Kings 14:23-24). The LORD swore by Himself to be bound to Israel and to give them a blessed land when He chose them. In what way did his choice of Israel require holiness and singular devotion? What is the significance of the refrain: “I am the LORD your God”? Was Israel free of idolatry during their deliverance from Egypt? What kept the LORD from completely destroying Israel in Egypt and what part of does His self-revelation play in all of this?

20:10-17 – First Generation Israel in the Desert. What did the LORD give to Israel in the desert and why? In what way is the continuing reference to “Sabbaths” a “sign” for Israel? Note that the plural “Sabbaths” (cf. Exo.31:16-17) may refer to more than just the weekly Sabbath (Exo.20:8-11; Deut.5:12-15; Isa.56:2-6; Jer.17:19-27; Block *NICOT* I:632). How is the Sabbath defiled? (cf. Num.15:32-36) What stopped the LORD from completely destroying Israel in the desert?

20:18-26 – Second Generation Israel in the Desert. What did the LORD command this generation to do and to not do? In what way would this facilitate Israel knowing that He was the LORD their God? What does it mean for the “man who obeys [the laws of the LORD] will live by them”? Is this even possible or is the LORD holding out something that is impossible for Israel (or anyone for that matter)? Once more, what is the motivation for the LORD not utterly destroying Israel in their rebellion? In verse 25, what are the “statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by” which the LORD gave Israel (see Block *NICOT* I:637-41)? Also, how were they defiled through the sacrifice of their firstborn? (see 2 Kings 17:17)

20:27-29 – The Generation that Lived in Canaan. Not only did Israel repeatedly sin against the LORD on the way to the Promised Land, but once in the Promised Land they worshipped other gods desecrating the whole land of promise.

20:30-38 – The Generation of Israel in Ezekiel’s Day. Did they continue in the sins of their fathers? Note how this demonstrates the justice of the LORD’s judgment against them for their own disobedience in light of chapter 18. Again, the LORD explains that they are not allowed to inquire of Him in their current state. “We want to be like the nations” (compare 1 Sam.8:5-18) who “serve wood and stone” (Deut.4:28)? What was the motivation? How will the LORD exert his ruler-ship over His people? He would punish them with the same might and power of His deliverance of them from Egypt (Exo.6:6; Deut.4:34; compare 1 Kings 8:42). They will meet with the LORD in the desert as judgment and purging of the wicked among them. What is the stated purpose?

20:39-44 – Why does the LORD tell Israel, “Go and serve your idols”? (cf. Jer.44:25; Rev.22:11) How will the LORD redeem His people and what does it mean for His name to not be “profaned”? When was (or will) the prophecy of the return from exile for Israel and the establishment of the LORD’s “holy mountain” fulfilled? Why is the LORD’s Name so essential and how is the promise of the Promised Land connected to His Name? Note that the righteous lives of returned Israel will result in recognition of self-loathing (contrasted to the modern notions of self-aggrandizing and self-loving). Has Israel (or anyone for that matter) been deserving of the goodness of the LORD? Even once they are accounted as righteous will they be deserving of the goodness of the LORD?

Ezekiel 20:45-21:32 – The Sword of Judgment

20:45-21:5 – What does the LORD mean by opposing “the south”? There was never a forest of the Negev (one of the three terms used for “south” here and so not to be taken as referring to the Negev region specifically). The “trees” of the south appear to actually refer to the leaders of Jerusalem. The explanation is given in verses 1-5 (English versification): the first “south” (Heb. *teman*) = Jerusalem, the second “south” (Heb. *darom*) = the sanctuary (Heb. *miqdashim* lit. “sanctuaries”), and the Negev (or third “south/land” in some translations) = the land of Israel. The unquenchable fire to be set is answered by the flashing of the unsheathed sword (cf. Gen.3:24; Matt.10:34; Lk.12:49). Whose fire is unquenched and sword unsheathed? The “green” and “dry” that are consumed refer to the righteous and wicked (LXX “unrighteous and lawless”) that will be cut off. This is best “seen as a deliberately offensive rhetorical device intended to shock, designed to awaken his audience out of their spiritual lethargy” (Block *NICOT* I:670). Note the peculiar references “from south to north”. Why might this be phrased in this manner? Also, note the emphatic use of “all/every”. What is the significance of Ezekiel being called a teller of parables?

21:6-7 – How might we understand Ezekiel’s prophetic groaning? (comp. Rom.8:22-27) What will be the reaction of those who hear the news of judgment? (cf. Eze.7:17; 9:4)

21:8-17 – The Sword Song. (cf. Lev.26:25, 33, 36-37) Why is the sword sharpened and polished? (see Eze.21:10) Why would Judah think the sword a good omen and self-referentially be called “the scepter”? (cf. Gen.49:9-10; 1 Sam.7:14; Eze.19:10-14; perhaps their hopes were based upon Jer.50:35-38) What does it mean for the sword to “despise”? Note whose people are to be judged? Why might Ezekiel clap his hands? (see Eze.6:11; 21:17) What kind of slaughter will it be and who will ultimately carry it out?

21:18-27 – The LORD’s sword has become the sword of Babylon. Why should Ezekiel make a signpost pointing the way to Jerusalem? Likely this was at Damascus where one might choose either the road leading down to Rabba of Ammon or to Jerusalem. Three omens would confirm the signpost (cf. Prov.16:10). “The irony is that this use of pagan means of discerning the will of the gods is here an accurate discernment of the true God” (Duguid *NIVAC* 276). Verse 27 refers to the end of Zedekiah’s reign. “A ruin” reads literally “a twisting or bending” (Dan Block translates it as “topsy-turvy” *NICOT* I:691). Who is the one to whom kingship/judgeship “rightfully belongs”? (cf. Gen.49:10) Ezekiel’s usage of the patriarchal prophecy that pointed to a messianic figure of deliverance here is turned on its head through referring this promised one into the king of Babylon – Nebuchadnezzar (Block *NICOT* I:692-3; Duguid *NIVAC* 279).

21:28-32 – A taunting sword song. Possibly Dan Block (*NICOT* I:695-7) is correct in seeing verse 28 as a taunting song in the mouth of the people of Ammon. The “sword” (Babylon) would be finally sheathed in order to also be judged by the LORD. Babylon though the sword of the LORD was not beyond the severe judgment of the LORD and would be judged so harshly as to not be remembered any longer.

Ezekiel 22-23 – Jerusalem Under Judgment

22:1-5 – Jerusalem is named “city of bloodshed” (see the similar naming of Nineveh in Nahum 3:1). The making of idols and shedding of blood were violations of the two-fold sense of the commandments: love the LORD your God with all heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Jerusalem therefore faced judgment at the hands of the LORD and mockery before the other nations.

22:6-12 – The specific sins of the “princes” of Jerusalem. “Treated father and mother with contempt” (Exo.20:12; 21:17; Lev.19:3; 20:9); “oppressed the alien and mistreated the fatherless and widow” (Exo.22:21-22; Deut.14:29; 24:17, 19-21); “desecrated the Sabbaths” (Exo.20:11; Lev.25:1-7; Deut.5:15); “slandorous” (Lev.19:16); “eat at mountain shrines” (Lev.19:26); “dishonor your father’s bed” (Lev.18:7-8; 20:11); “violate women during their period” (Lev.18:19; 20:18); “detestable offense with his neighbor’s wife” (Lev.18:20; 20:10); “defiles his daughter-in-law” (Lev.18:15); “violates his sister” (Lev.18:9; 20:17); “accept bribes” (Exo.18:21; Deut.27:25); “take usury and excessive interest” (Lev.25:36); “unjust gain” (Lev.19:13). All of these sins were indicative of the sin of having “forgotten” the LORD (Deut.4:9, 23; 8:19).

22:13-16 – Why would the LORD clap his hands against Jerusalem? Who can stand in the day of God’s judgment? What is the positive and negative significance of the LORD scattering Israel among the nations as judgment? What is the LORD’s reason for doing this? (vs. 16)

22:17-22 – The process of silver-smithing as the metaphor for judgment here refers to those who remain in Jerusalem as nothing more than the dross of the process (cf. Prov.25:4; for specifics of the process see A. Konkel, *NIDOTTE* “sig”).

22:23-31 – Note the various classes of Israel and their respective failures towards the covenant (cf. Mic.3:5-12; Zeph.3:3-4). What is the significance of no rain? (Lev.26:19-20; Deut.28:23-24) Also, note how the priests are censured here concerning their failure to distinguish between the holy/profane and clean/unclean (Lev.10:10; 11-15). “Those who pervert ‘Thy kingdom come’ to ‘my kingdom come’ invite the wrath of God” (Block *NICOT* I:728). Verse 30 declares that no one was found to be a righteous intermediary on behalf of the people and therefore Jerusalem would be judged.

23:1-4 – A tale of two sisters: Oholah and Oholibah. Oholah (Samaria) means “her own tent” and Oholibah (Jerusalem) “my tent in her” though the possible reasoning for these names remains rather obscure, the point of the names is to identify the two as indeed sisters belonging to the same family (Block *NICOT* I:735-6). What might be the significance of the LORD taking two wives who are sisters (cf. Gen.29; Lev.8:18).

23:5-10 – What does the spirit of prostitution from Oholah’s days in Egypt refer to? Her adultery with Assyria seems to refer at least to the alliance King Jehu made with Shalmaneser III of Assyria in 840BC (memorialized on the Black Stele). What are the consequences of her adulterous seeking after the Assyrians? Who is declared to suffer for her sins? (vs. 10)

23:11-21 – What was the difference between Oholah and Oholibah? Notice that Oholibah not only saw what happened to Oholah, but committed the same adultery with Assyria and then still went after Babylon based off of pictures of them on a wall. The adultery with Assyria seems to refer at least to the seeking of an alliance by King Ahaz with Tiglath-Pileser in 734BC (2 Kings 16:5-7); while the adultery with Babylon seems to refer at least to the attempts by King Hezekiah to allure Merodach-Baladan in 714BC (2 Kings 20:12-13). Did Oholibah's fornication lead to either fulfillment or satisfaction? The lusting after the images of the Babylonians is similar to the idolatry committed by the elders of Jerusalem in the secret room of the wall of the Temple (Eze.8:9-12). Had Oholibah ever really been faithful or pure? What kind of satisfaction was she seeking?

23:22-35 – Who will carry out the judgment? In verse 23, Pekod means "punishment"; Shoa means "war cry"; Koa means "shriek". What sorts of things will Oholibah suffer? What is the charge laid against her in verse 30? The "cup" of the LORD's wrath is described here as elsewhere (Isa.51:17, 22; Jer.25:15-17; 49:12; Lam.4:21; Matt.20:22; 26:39; Rev.14:10). Again note the charge of having forgotten the LORD.

23:36-49 – The charge of adultery and murder. How did these apply? Notice that the children sacrificed were the LORD's own, and it was His temple that was defiled and His Sabbaths that were violated. What does the LORD call Oholah and Oholibah for their adulteries? How did the LORD intend to cleanse the land? Finally it is once again stated that when all this would be accomplished that they would know the LORD as sovereign. How does judgment demonstrate this?

Ezekiel 24-25 – A Time To Mourn and a Time To Not Mourn

24:1-5 – The siege begins. The exact date (January 5, 587BC according to Daniel Block *NICOT* I:772-774) is given in order to verify that indeed the word of the LORD declared what happened before it could be verified. Note the emphasis on the date in the second verse. The siege would be finished within 18 months. The LORD addresses those in Jerusalem as “this rebellious house”, but who is Ezekiel speaking to when he proclaims this message? Why does the LORD give a “parable”? Jerusalem is the cooking pot and the inhabitants are the “choice pieces” of meat for cooking. This could actually have been initially taken in a positive way by Israel if not for the following explanation.

24:6-8 – The “choice” portions ruin the pot. It is the blood which has been shed and treated contemptibly that Israel is charged with ruinous judgment (note the commands about “blood” in Lev.17:10-16 and the failure to “cover it” in Deut.12:16, 24; 15:23; and Job 16:18).

24:9-14 – The explanation of the parable is that the LORD will cook (judge by the suffering through the siege by Babylon) the inhabitants of Jerusalem and they will be completely cleansed from the pot (city) because of their rebelliousness and lewdness. It is guaranteed to be accomplished by the LORD. Why would He not have pity or relent? Will He really have no pity or relent?

24:15-18 – The love of Ezekiel’s life is taken and he is not allowed to publicly mourn. Why would the LORD take the life of Ezekiel’s wife and what purpose might be served by refusing him the comfort of the normal public mourning process? (cf. 1 Cor.7:29-31)

24:19-27 – The death and mourning of Ezekiel’s wife serves as a sign to Israel in exile. They will lose the love of their eyes (the LORD’s Temple and their children) and will not be allowed the normal rites of public mourning because all of this happens as a result of sin’s judgment. What is the intended result? When the news finally reaches the exiles that Jerusalem has fallen suddenly Ezekiel will be freed to speak (Eze.3:26-27).

The oracles which follow in the next chapters until the thirty-third are against the nations surrounding Israel that persecuted and joyfully benefited from Israel’s judgment. Daniel Block (*NICOT* II:5) notes that the order of the nations mentioned (with the exception of the closing messages concerning Egypt): Bene-Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre and Sidon are listed in clockwise order from the north east of Israel to the north west. Iain Duguid succinctly writes concerning the shift to judgment of the surrounding nations that “Judgment may begin with the house of God, but it doesn’t end there” (*NIVAC* 325).

25:1-7 – The prophecy against Ammon. Who were the people of Ammon? (A son of Lot born by his daughter in Gen.19:36-38; Deut.2:19; Judges 10-12; 1 Sam.11:10-11; 14:47; 2 Sam.8:11-12; 10) Why was Ammon to be judged? Who would conquer them and what would become of their territories? What was the goal of the judgment of Ammon?

25:8-11 – The prophecy against Moab. Who were the people of Moab? (Another son of Lot born by his other daughter in Gen.19:36-38; they enticed Israel to sin after several failed attempts

to have Balaam curse Israel in Numbers 21-24; Judges 3:12-30; Ruth 1-4; 2 Kings 1:1; 3:4-27)
Why was Moab to be judged? Who would conquer them and what would become of them?
What was the goal of the judgment of Moab?

25:12-14 – The prophecy against Edom. Who were the people of Edom? (Gen.25:30; 36:1-43; Num.20:14-23; 1 Sam.14:47; 2 Sam.8:11-14; 1 Kings 11:14-16; 2 Kings 3:1-27; 8:20-22)
Why was Edom judged? (cf. Obadiah) Who would conquer them and what would become of them? What was the goal of the judgment of Edom?

25:15-17 – The prophecy against Philistia. Who were the people of Philistia? (Gen.10:14; 21:34; 26:1-18; Judges 3:3-4, 31; 10:6-7; 13-16; and the continual struggles against them in 1-2 Samuel) Why were the Philistines judged? Who would conquer them and what would become of them? What was the goal of the judgment of Philistia?

Ezekiel 26-28 – A Message Against Tyre

26:1-6 – The date given (while presenting textual difficulties) suggests Feb. 3, 585 BC (Block *NICOT* II:35). This would place this prophecy at about the very time that Nebuchadnezzar began his thirteen year siege of Tyre and just one month after the notice of Jerusalem's fall would have reached the Babylonian exiles. What is the reason stated for the judgment of Tyre? (26:2) Note that the descriptions which follow of Tyre being in the midst of the sea (and also the metaphor of Tyre the merchandising ship that sinks) pictures the island capital that sat just off the coast of modern Lebanon. It was an amazing island fortress that would not actually be taken by force until 332BC by Alexander the Great (and even then only by great cost and building a land-bridge to the island to conquer it). Iaian Duguid notes the prophetic irony of Tyre's self-seeking and self-promoting ways and their results when he writes, "Does Tyre hope to become the new meeting place for the nations? The Lord will bring many nations against her (26:3). Did Tyre rejoice to see Jerusalem's doors shattered? Her walls will be destroyed and her towers torn down (26:4). Did Tyre expect to prosper? She will become plunder for the nations (26:5)" (*NIVAC* 334). What is the stated purpose for the judgment?

26:7-14 – The description of the destruction at the hands Nebuchadnezzar offers explanation for the analogy that was in the previous verses. What effect does Nebuchadnezzar being called the "king of kings" have in relation to this prophecy? What significance might be suggested by the silencing of the sounds of the city in verse 13? How should we understand the absoluteness of the prophecy of Tyre's destruction in verse 14?

26:15-18 – A brief statement about the reaction of the nations who had benefited from Tyre's glory days. The rulers will leave their thrones and royal garments in terror and trembling at the destruction and raise a lament (Heb. *qinah*). Tyre seems to be the basis for the descriptions of "Babylon" in Rev.17:1; 18:9, 12-13, 17.

26:19-21 – The end of Tyre will be destruction. Tyre is described as descending to the "pit" (that is to death and the grave; on the "land" of the dead cf. Ps.22:29; Isa.26:19; Jonah 2:2, 6; Ugaritic texts: CTA 4.8.5-14; 10:2.24-25) where there will never be a recovery (cf. Eze.27:36; 28:19). How might this be fulfilled?

27:1-36 – A further lament over Tyre. Tyre is described as "perfect in beauty" because of the great splendor she has been adorned by. Ezekiel uses the metaphor of Tyre as a great mercantile vessel that was manufactured of exquisite materials and staffed by the finest of merchants and sailors. A description of the many lands and wares of Tyre's trading are laid out in great detail in order to emphasize the greatness of Tyre's wealth and power. The Mediterranean nations from furthest west, to the Anatolian, Levant, and Arabian kingdoms as well as Mesopotamian lands are named with all their particular wares. The LORD declares though that the ship of Tyre will sink to rise no more. The terror of Tyre's "sinking" will strike all the nations that had traded with her.

28:1-10 – A prophecy against the ruler (Heb. *nagid*; and see also the "king" or *melek* in verse 12) of Tyre. The ruler that was on the throne of Tyre at that time was Ethbaal III (591-573 BC). The ruler declared himself to be "a god", but the LORD reminds him that he is nothing more

than “a man” despite his unparalleled wisdom and wealth (cf. the praise of Herod as “a god” by the Tyrians and Sidonians and his judgment in Acts 12:22). The ruler had become arrogant and self-congratulatory instead of recognizing his dependency upon the LORD.

28:11-19 – The king of Tyre (which appears to simply be another designation for the ruler mentioned in verses 1-11). Who does this prophecy refer to? It seems mistaken to make the metaphor of the king being a “guardian cherub” created in “perfection” (and on blameless in your ways” see Gen.6:9; 17:1) adorned in many precious stones (which though lacking three specifically are those found in the Israelite High Priest’s chest-piece in Exo.28:17-20; 39:10-13 though Daniel Block *NICOT* II:110-2 rejects the specific priestly connection) and living in “Eden” (which is later also applied to Pharaoh in Eze.31:8-9) to be a reference to Satan. Ezekiel is certainly using the language of Genesis 1-3, but it seems to be more for rhetorical effect to demonstrate the heights of glory and blessing that the king of Tyre has lost through pride and greed. What will be the end of the king?

28:20-23 – A prophecy against Sidon. Sidon (which is north of Tyre along the coast) and Tyre struggled for much of their history against one another and at varying times controlled one another. “Sidon” was in fact the generic name for “Phoenicians” that was used throughout the Mediterranean region though in this case it would possibly refer to the actual city of Sidon. There is no specific accusation made against Sidon, but only judgment promised. What is the intention of the judgments?

28:24-26 – Hope for Israel. The LORD promises to remove all of Israel’s troubling neighbors that are “painful briars and sharp thorns” (cf. Eze.2:6). The LORD Himself will gather His people from among the nations and return them to the land of His covenant with Jacob. What relation do the people and the land share? What is the intended goal of the restoration of Israel?

Ezekiel 29-31 – A Message Against Egypt

29:1-6a – A prophecy against Pharaoh. The date notice places this prophecy on January 7, 587 BC. The prophecy against Pharaoh (king of Egypt) is also in connection a prophecy against all of Egypt. Pharaoh Hophra (Greek—Aphries 589-570 BC; see Jer.44:30; Her. *Hist.* 2.161; Jos. *Ant.* 10.7.3 §§108-110), a Saite of the Delta region, was the great “monster” (Jer.51:34; Heb. *hattannim* “jackals” should read as Targ. and Syr. *tyn*; cf. “Rahab” in Job 9:13; 26:12; Ps.87:4; 89:10; Isa.30:7; and “Leviathon” in Job 41; Ps.74:14; 89:10; Isa.27:1) of the Nile (which may refer to a crocodile that is somewhat mythologized). Though he thinks himself great the LORD will catch him from the streams of the Nile with all the fish and cast him out into the desert as food for others. What is the point of this judgment?

29:6b-21 – Egypt: a staff of reed (2 Kings 18:21; Isa.36:6). Staffs are never made of reed because they are both weak and will easily splinter. Egypt proved to do nothing for the help of the House of Israel (Judah) other than to wound Israel; therefore the LORD promises desolating judgment upon Egypt (cf. Jer.43-44; 46:13-24) for opposing His plan to judge Israel at the hands of the Babylonians. The LORD would judge Egypt forty years for pride and opposing His purposes and send them into exile. After the forty years Egypt would be restored, but not to their former glory and power. If there was hope for Egypt it would seem to be because at least they (unlike Judah’s neighbors) offered assistance against the Babylonians even if this was against the will of the LORD. The date notice (vs. 17) means April 26, 571 BC which was nearly 17 years after the previous prophecy. The LORD would reward Babylon since they did not receive the rewards of conquering Tyre. Does this mean that the prophecy against Tyre had failed (see Eze.26-28)? Is it possible that the lack of the fulfillment was the result of Tyre choosing to submit to Babylon after thirteen years of siege and therefore the LORD relented of the judgment that was promised (much as the judgment of Ninevah was promised by Jonah, but it was actually the LORD’s intention that Ninevah should repent and be spared)?

30:1-19 – A Lament for Egypt. Egypt would not only face the “day of the LORD” but also all those who were allied with Egypt. All of Egypt’s most important cities and allies would be made desolate. How was this fulfilled historically, by whom (vs. 10), and what was the LORD’s intention (Eze.30:8, 19)? In 568 BC, Nebuchadnezzar marched against Egypt which had just finished with a civil war that left Hophra dead and Amasis (570-526 BC) as his successor (Block *NICOT* II:151).

30:20-26 – Pharaoh’s arms will be broken by the LORD. The date notice places this prophecy on April 29, 587 BC. The pharaohs as well as their gods were often referred to as the “strong arm/s of Egypt” (cf. the repeated references to the “arm” of the LORD in Israel’s deliverance from Egypt). The LORD would make sure that there would be no strength left to Egypt and that Babylon instead would receive the strength of the LORD.

31:1-18 – Pharaoh is compared to Assyria (reading ’šwr “Assyria” instead of t’šwr “Cypress” with MT in verse 3; see Block *NICOT* II:184-5) and likened to a great cedar. The date notice refers to June 31, 587 BC which is just two months after the last prophecy. The description of the tree (cf. Dan.4:10-12) is splendid. Its branches provide shelter for all the creatures and it reaches to the heavens. It is sustained by the waters of the “deep” (Heb. *tehom*) and so finds no

comparison even among the trees of Eden. However, because of its pride it will be humbled by the LORD by being cut off from the waters of the deep, felled and cast into the “pit” (or the “grave”) along with all others that exalt themselves and were united with that great tree. Who is the tree declared to be? (see 31:2, 18)

32:1-16 – A “lament” for Pharaoh (Heb. *qinah*; though once again the *qinot* of Ezekiel do not follow the typical 3:2 pattern). The date notice points to March 3, 585 BC nearly two years after the former prophecy. The Pharaoh is compared to a lion (which is another typical self-designation of the pharaohs as well as other kings of the ancient Near East) and once again a “monster” but this time in the “seas”. This represents the Pharaoh as a terror to all others, but the LORD declares that he (and Egypt with him) will be captured and cast into the desert where his flesh will feed all the creatures and will be spread far and wide. Also, there will be a darkening of the heavens in the judgment (cf. Exo.10:21-23; Isa.13:10; 34:4; Joel 2:31; Matt.24:29; Rev.6:12-13; 16:10). At Egypt’s judgment the nations will be terrified. The waters and land will no longer be troubled by Egypt but given a reprieve in order to bring Egypt to know the LORD (see Isa.19:16-25 that speaks of Egypt and Assyria becoming the people of the LORD and being redeemed).

32:17-32 – The descent to the grave (“Sheol”). The date notice suggests March 18(?), 585 BC which is just two weeks after the *qinah* prophecy. Egypt will not be alone in being consigned to Sheol. Egypt will be among all the “uncircumcised” (used theologically rather than naturally since several of the nations including Egypt were known to practice circumcision; see Duguid *NIVAC* 375fn.5). Assyria, Elam, Meshach and Tubal, Edom, the princes of the north and the Sidonians will all be in Sheol in their respective places having been killed by the sword and being among the “uncircumcised” in judgment. Pharaoh with his army will suffer the same fate. Why would the LORD command Ezekiel to “wail” for the Egyptians in their judgment?

Ezekiel 33-34 – The Beginning of the Gospel According to Ezekiel

33:1-6 – The choosing of a watchman. Who is the one who will bring “a sword”? What are the duties of a watchman? What are the consequences for the watchman and the people if the watchman gives warning? What are the consequences if he fails to give warning? What does it mean to be “taken away” because of sin? What does it mean to be “accountable for his blood”?

33:7-9 – Who has been chosen as the watchman of Israel and who has chosen him? What is Ezekiel’s responsibility toward those who are “wicked”? On the “watchman” motif for the prophet who gives warning: see Isa.21:6-9; Jer.6:17; Eze.3:16-21; Hab.2:1.

33:10-11 – What were some of Israel saying while in captivity? What is the basis upon which the LORD promises that they shall “live” though they feel the crushing burden of their sins weighing upon them? Does the LORD take pleasure in the death of the wicked? What is the call to the wicked?

33:12-16 – Are the wicked and righteous locked into their respective consequences? What is necessary to live? Is the promise of the LORD to the wicked that they “will surely die” a lie or a conditional promise? In what practical ways can the wicked indeed do what is righteous and be guaranteed life? Will sins committed be remembered if righteousness replaces wickedness?

33:17-20 – Are the ways of the LORD just? What would it mean for us to be just and what does it mean for the LORD to be just? According to what standard will the LORD judge Israel?

33:21-22 – The first survivor (Heb. *pālīt*) of the destruction of Jerusalem arrives in Babylon as confirmation of the word of the LORD and of the prophet-hood of Ezekiel (cf. Eze.24:25-27). The date notice refers to January 8, 585 BC. This places the following passage approximately five and a half months after the fall of Jerusalem (which is about the proper amount of time for travel between Babylon and Jerusalem). Note that prior to the survivor’s arrival the “hand of the LORD” was on Ezekiel to open his mouth. What does it mean that his mouth was opened after ten years? It seems to mean that he was released from the prophetic silence and could actually cry out to the LORD on behalf of his people since the city and the temple were finally destroyed as prophesied.

33:23-33 – Those remaining in the ruined land of Israel still clung to the promise as if it did not matter how they responded to the covenant. Were they safe to assume for themselves the promises to Abraham? What does the LORD accuse them of? What will be the actual consequences of their lifestyles? What is the stated purpose of the LORD in further destroying the land and making it desolate? Note that the LORD regularly says “*your* countrymen” to Ezekiel. What is the significance of this? Who (besides those actually still in Israel) are accused of practicing wickedness despite their outward attentiveness to the word of the LORD given by Ezekiel? What does it mean that to those in captivity Ezekiel is “nothing more than one who sings love songs”? What will be the vindication of the ministry of Ezekiel?

34:1-10 – A prophecy against the shepherds of Israel. How did the shepherds fail to care for the flock? Isn’t the shepherd allowed to eat from the produce of his flock and does not the flock

exist for him? What would be the reason for the LORD accusing the shepherds in this manner? (cf. Gen.31:38-40; Job 5:23; Isa.11:6-9; Jer.23:1-6; Hos.2:18-23; also concerning the “shepherds” of the Church see Acts 20:28-29; 1 Pet.5:1-5) What is the consequence of their failures—both to the flock and to the shepherds? Who are the “shepherds” of Israel? Who is against the shepherds and who actually owns the flock?

34:11-24 – The LORD Himself promises to care for His sheep (cf. Ps.23; Eze.24:26; John 10:1-18; Rev.7:17). What does it mean for the LORD to gather His sheep? In what manner does the LORD promise to shepherd His sheep and also what is the promise concerning the actual land of Israel? Note that the LORD will judge among his flock and deal with those among them who have cared only for themselves and even troubled the lives of others. Who are those among the flock that the LORD is referring to here as opposed to the shepherds that were accused earlier of selfish living? Who will be placed over the LORD’s flock as a shepherd? What does it mean for “David” to be chosen for this position (since David had been dead for several hundred years? “God’s solution to a history of bad shepherds is not to replace shepherding with a better system, but to replace the bad shepherds with a good shepherd” (Duguid *NIVAC* 396; and Duguid *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel* 47).

34:25-31 – The LORD will make a “covenant of peace” with His people. What are the promises of this covenant of peace? Security, fruitfulness, freedom, and intimate covenantal knowledge of the LORD are all part of the promise. What does it mean for the LORD to be their God and them to be His people, the sheep of His pasture? “What does it mean to be a shepherd? It is a unique combination of afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted” (Duguid *NIVAC* 399).

Ezekiel 35-36 – A Prophecy for Two “Mountains”

35:1-9 – A prophecy against Mount Seir. Where is Mount Seir and what does it represent? It is the primary site for the kingdom of Edom (house “father” was Esau) which lies to the southeast of Israel and Judah. However, “Edom in Ezekiel 35 is merely one representative of the nations at large who oppose Israel and her God” because “Edom was the arch-type of the non elect the very paragon of a nation raging against the Lord and against his anointed” (Duguid *NIVAC* 406, 409; cf. Stuart 331). This is a motif that began with the prophetic word concerning the twins, Jacob and Esau, which Rachel gave birth to (cf. Gen. 25:23). From the beginning there was animosity and this actually continued even to the days of Jesus when Herod, an Idumean (of Edom) tried to kill Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem (Matt.2:16-18) and the later Herod who actually shared complicity in the crucifixion of Jesus (Lk.23:6-12). What did the LORD promise to do to the Mountain of Seir and what was the end goal? Why was Edom to be judged (cf. Ps.137:7; Obadiah) and is there any hope for Edom (cf. Deut.23:7-8)? In what sense was this fulfilled or meant to be fulfilled?

35:10-15 – Why it matters what we say? What did Edom say that the LORD would hold them accountable for? Who are the “two nations” that Edom looked to take over as their own? Note that though the LORD removed his people from Israel and Judah that it was still His land and He would not give up His claim to it. “Yahweh may indeed have left the temple and the city, allowing Nebuchadrezzar, his agent of judgment on his own people, to raze Jerusalem; but this did not mean he had abandoned all interest in the place, nor did it authorize any other nation to seize his land” (Block *NICOT* II:319). Also, note that the “mountains of Israel” (as opposed to the traditional term “land of Israel”) were rejoiced over for being made desolate, but the LORD would in fact make Mount Seir (and all it represented; cf. a similar use of “Babylon” in Rev.17-18) desolate.

36:1-15 – A prophecy to the mountains of Israel. What did the LORD promise to the mountains and all the desolated regions of Israel? Why would the LORD promise judgment against those who slandered the land and savagely took possession of it? Note that it has to do with the LORD’s zeal and jealousy. What does this tell us about the LORD’s motivation for judgment? Was it primarily for Israel’s benefit or His (with Israel to benefit as He does)? What theological significance might be attributed to knowing that “I am concerned for you” reads literally “I will turn to you” (cf. Lev.26:9) in Eze.36:9? Whose people are Israel? Is the LORD concerned for the land? Note the promises of fruitfulness in both agriculture and the people of Israel. Has this prophecy been fulfilled? (see particularly verses 12-15) What was said about the land concerning its ability to sustain or “devour” a population (cf. Num.13:32) and how would this be changed?

36:16-23 – What led to the defilement of Israel and why would they be redeemed? In what way should we understand Israel’s defilement to be like a woman with her monthly period? (cf. Lev.15:19-24) It seems to signify that Israel was to be separated from all things sacred and clean and therefore excluded from both the land and the people that have been set apart. This would explain the LORD’s exiling of His people. How was the LORD’s name profaned among the nations by the exile? What role does the LORD’s “name” play in how He acts towards people,

both in judgment and redemption? For whose sake will the LORD return His people to the land and bless them? Note the emphasis upon what is “holy”. What significance does this make?

36:24-32 – The gathering of Israel. Who will gather Israel from the nations? (cf. Deut. 30:4) What will the LORD do as a part of this gathering? What does it mean for the LORD to “sprinkle clean water” on His people and to? (cf. Lev.15) What will the LORD do to redeem His people? Is it enough to have them outwardly acting the way that they should or is there a necessary inward change? (cf. Deut.30:6-8) Dan Block sees Jeremiah’s influence in this passage, but notes that what Jeremiah attributes to Torah Ezekiel attributes to “the infusion of the divine *rûah*” (NICOT II:356-7). Note that the LORD promises the Spirit to redeemed Israel just as the believer in Christ is promised the Spirit. Will there be any room for personal boasting after the people of Israel are redeemed? What should and will their response be?

36:33-36 – The promise of a resettled land. What is the prerequisite for the resettlement? Will the land simply be restored to its former state or will the state after redemption be better than the former? The comparison “like the garden of Eden” is something that other prophets also mention (cf. Isa.51:3; Joel 2:3) Why does the LORD say that He will do all of this?

36:37-38 – The “flocks” that are heard. What does it mean for the LORD to finally “yield to the plea of the house of Israel”? Note that earlier Ezekiel had been denied pleading with the LORD on behalf of Israel, but now the LORD will answer such cries. Why are the people likened to sheep and what picture does this present? What is the reason for all of this?

Ezekiel 37 – Sticks and Bones

37:1-14 – The valley of dry bones. Once again the “hand of the LORD” was on Ezekiel (cf. 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 33:22; 40:1) and the Spirit (Heb. *rûah*) of the LORD set him right in the middle of a valley filled with dry bones (note the contrast between this valley of death and the mountains of fruitfulness in the previous chapter). The bones are strewn everywhere showing that there was no proper burial for those who died and they are described as “dry” because they were well beyond any type of resuscitation. Why did the LORD ask Ezekiel if these bones could live and what does Ezekiel’s reply signify? Can the LORD do this work, or better, *will* the LORD do this? It demonstrates Ezekiel’s dependence upon the LORD and recognition that everything depends upon His will and doing. Why should Ezekiel prophesy to the bones? “Yahweh’s goal in reviving these bones is not simply the biological-chemical reconstitution of the body or even the restoration of physical life. He desires spiritual revival: a new recognition of and relationship with himself” (Block *NICOT* II:376). What are the contents of his prophesying to the bones?

Note the emphasis upon the breath (Heb. *rûah*) of life in order for the bones to live even after being attached with everything else anatomically necessary (cf. Gen.2:7). What is the point of the LORD’s giving life? Ezekiel seems surprised by the immediate reaction and sound of the bones being joined to each other and then the tendons, flesh and skin being added. Note the lack of life because there was no breath (Heb. *rûah*) in them. Why might the LORD require Ezekiel to prophesy again before they would be given life? What does it mean for Ezekiel to prophesy to “breath” (Heb. *rûah*) and call it from the “four winds” (Heb. *rûahot* cf. Deut.28:25-26; Jer.34:17-20) before the “breath” (or “Spirit/spirit” again Heb. *rûah*) would come into them so that they might live? The Hebrew term *rûah* occurs ten times in the first fourteen verses of this chapter with the nuanced meanings as agency of conveyance (vs. 1), direction (vs. 9), and animation (vv. 5-6) (see Block *NICOT* II:373).

The bones which were brought to life as people stand up on their feet much like Ezekiel at his commissioning (cf. Eze.2:2; 3:24). What do the bones represent? (see vv. 11-14) Note that the metaphor is no longer of a valley of bones, but of the graves of the whole house of Israel (Judah and Israel) that will be opened (cf. Matt.27:52-53) and from which they will be raised to life by the infusion of the LORD’s Spirit (Heb. *rûah*) into them. Why does the LORD state that He will do this? There are many of the Church Fathers that understood this first section as referring to a general resurrection: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius of Constantine, Ambrose, Severus and John of Damascus (Zimmerli *Hermeneia* II:264).

27:15-28 – One king over one nation of Israel. Ezekiel is told to take two “sticks” (Heb. *‘ēšîm* which may also be translated as “writing tablets” which would possibly include the contents of the two part prophecy that makes up the remainder of the chapter – in favor of this interpretation see Block *NICOT* II:398-406, 409) and write on each addressing the two previous nations: Judah and Israel (Ephraim who was the youngest son of Joseph – cf. Gen.48:8-20; 49:22-26; Deut.33:13-17). Why are the two sticks inscribed and what does holding them together signify?

Notice in the explanation the LORD gives through Ezekiel that Judah takes the priority before “Ephraim” though they are joined together to form a unity in the LORD’s hand. This is not only a prophecy of unity, but of a return from exile for all of the tribes of Israel as the one people of God. What would be the obstacles to accomplishing this and where would the LORD

return His people? There would no longer be any multiplicity of kings, but only one king chosen by the LORD to rule the one nation. Also, the one kingdom would be holy and no longer continue in sin and depravity, but would be cleansed and enter into the covenant they were always supposed to have with the LORD as their own God and they as His own people. What does it mean for “David” to be the one king and “shepherd” over the united kingdom of Israel? (cf. 2 Sam.7) Does election to be a part of the one people mean there is no requirement for how one lives?

Note the repetitive use of “forever” and “one” in this extended passage (cf. Gen.28:13-15; 35:9-15). What is a “covenant of peace” (Heb. *běrit šālôm* cf. Eze.34:25-31) that is “an everlasting covenant” (Heb. *běrit ’ólām* cf. Isa.24:5; 55:3; 61:8; Jer.32:40; 50:5)? What does it mean for the LORD’s sanctuary and dwelling place to be among His newly constituted people? How does His presence make “holy”?

Ezekiel 38-39 – Gog and Magog

38:1-9 – Who is Gog and what will he do? It is believed that this is a reference to the recent figure Gyges of Lydia (reigned in approximately the first half of the seventh century BC according to certain Assyrian records) who was a usurper of the Lydian throne and reputed to have first printed coins. He is recorded here in Ezekiel as being of the land of “Magog” (which may be possibly taken as “land of Gog”) and the “chief prince of Meshech and Tubal” (cf. Eze.27:13; 32:26 for their presence in the grave; also Ps.120:5-7). The names Magog, Meshech and Tubal are all listed in Genesis 10:2 as sons of Japheth. They appear here to refer to locations in the western Anatolia and thus to be representing those at the fringe of the north for Israelite concerns. Who is actually bringing Gog and his horde against Israel? Allied with them are the combined forces of Persia (?), Cush (upper Egypt) and Put (Libya) representing the southern hordes. From still further north than Lydia (and east), the armies of Gomer and Beth Togarmah (likely the Cimmerians) are gathered as well. These would serve as representatives of the most wild and vast armies of the world. They are called to gather at some distantly future time in order to invade a regathered Israel that is finally at peace.

38:10-16 – The thoughts and conversations of Gog. Who will be responsible for Gog’s plans to conquer Israel? Also, who intends to benefit from Gog’s plans? The representative nations are from east (Sheba and Dedan) to west (Tarshish). This would then entail the peoples from every direction in the plot to destroy the nation that lies at the center of the LORD’s plan for the ages. “Why would Yahweh bring Gog against his own people after the covenant relationship had been fully restored? Because an element in the divine agenda, the universal recognition of his person, remains unfulfilled” (Block *NICOT* II:451). Is there a distinction between the self-revelation of the LORD and the revelation of the holiness of the LORD?

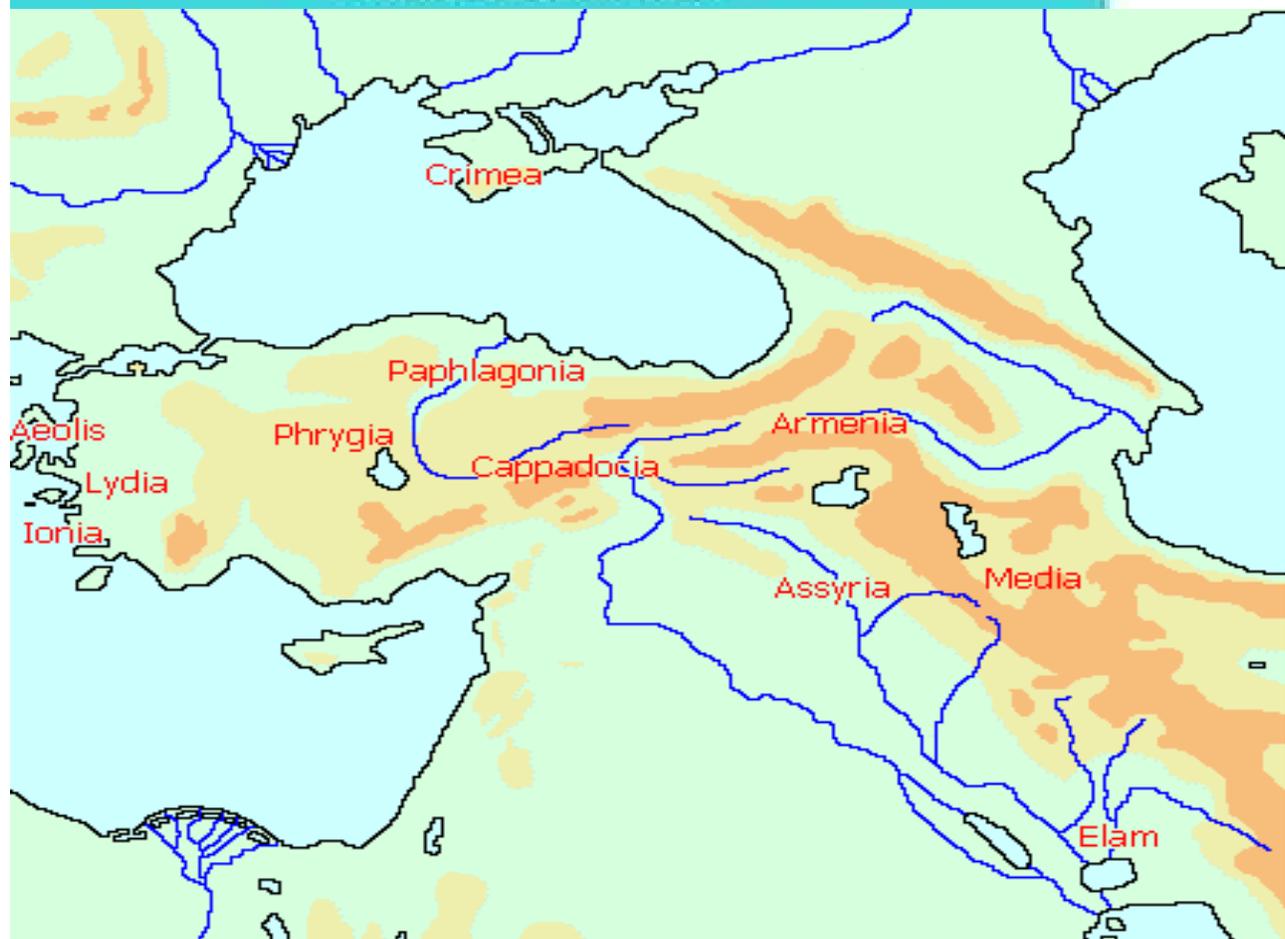
38:17-23 – The battle between Gog and the LORD. How should we understand the question in verse seventeen? Where would such prophecies possibly be found? Some have suggested a radical changing of Isaiah 14:24-25 and Jeremiah 6:22, however it may be that the question was rhetorical and should receive the answer of “No”. Gog was not called as the hand of judgment against Israel (as the Assyrians and Babylonians before him had been), but instead is brought against Israel for the judgment of the nations. At some undefined moment in the future the battle would be engaged, but instead of Israel taking up the fight the LORD Himself would fight on their behalf. The world will be shaken and made to tremble and radically altered (cf. Isa.24:17-20; Joel 2:10; 3:3-4, 15-16; Hag.2:6-7; Zech.14:4-5; Matt.24:29-30; Rev.16:17-21). Not only will the LORD bear the sword against the hordes, but they will fight against one another (as at other pivotal moments in Israel’s history). Divine judgment (as plague, bloodshed, torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur) will be poured out on that great host in order to demonstrate the greatness and holiness of the LORD.

39:1-8 – The slaughtering of Gog and his allies. Notice that once again the LORD says He will be the one bringing Gog against Israel, but He will also be the one to defeat Gog (particular emphasis upon the weapons of archers for which the northern kingdoms were renowned). Those who gathered for the battle will be destroyed as well as those who supported the invasion. Note the reason the LORD gives for this: both for the nations and for Israel. Though the day is far off from Ezekiel’s pronouncement does this mean that it will not happen?

39:9-16 – Israel must be cleansed. Those who were living in safety now leave their homes to pick up all of the weaponry (seven types listed) that remains (which is said to last seven years) to use as fuel for their home-fires and to bury all of the dead (which is said to take seven months). The use of seven seems to suggest completeness as to the destruction and cleansing. There will be so many to bury that there won't even be room for travelers through that portion of Israel which is then to be called the Valley of Hamon ("horde of") Gog – sounding rather like a play on the Valley of Hinnom outside of Jerusalem. What does Ezekiel mean by stating that the cities name will be "Hamonah"? It may likely be a symbolic name for Jerusalem which had earlier in his prophecies been described as being filled with *hāmôn* (cf. 5:7; 7:12-14; 23:40-42; and Block *NICOT* II:471-2). This would serve as a memorial of what Jerusalem had once been and how the LORD Himself had delivered her.

39:17-21 – The sacrificial feast of the nations. Ezekiel is told to call all of the carrion creatures of the land and air to gather for a gluttonous and macabre feast upon the armies that were slaughtered (cf. Isa.34:6-8; Zeph.1:7; Rev.19:17-21). The rulers and great men are referred to by names of animals for divine sacrifice and the parts usually reserved for God are consumed by the creatures of the earth. What is the point of including such a grotesque description?

39:22-29 – Israel is returned. Will Israel be able to take credit for returning from exile? What significance is given by the LORD's face having been turned from Israel and what might be the difference between that and His face being turned against Israel? Is Israel's blessing (and was their judgment) for themselves or for the nations? Does the LORD leave any of His people behind? It is a wonderful thing to know that whereas the LORD had once poured out His wrath (Eze.7:8; 9:8; 30:15; 36:18) in that day He will pour out His Spirit (cf. Joel 2:28-32).



Ezekiel 40-42 – The New House of the LORD

40:1-4 – A new vision. The date given in verse one marks the twenty-fifth year of the exile of Jehoiachin and the fourteenth year since the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (April 28, 573BC). The twenty-five year mark may be given in particular to suggest the turning point towards the fifty year Jubilee (Block *NICOT* II:512). The tenth day of the first month (likely Nissan for the religious calendar and not Tishri of the civil calendar) would be the commencement of the Passover festival (Exo.12:3) though Ezekiel curiously does not mention this. It has been proposed that Ezekiel may be giving a counter to the Babylonian New Year's celebration (Akk. *akītu*) which was celebrated on the same day and wherein Marduk their chief deity was annually re-enthroned (see Block *NICOT* II:513). Where might "the very high mountain" be located and what does this mountain represent? (cf. Eze.17:22; 20:40; Isa. 2:2-3; Mic.4:1; Rev.21:10) What does Ezekiel see from the south side of the mountain? The man who appears to Ezekiel acts as a guide and will reveal to Ezekiel particular dimensions of the visionary temple in order for Ezekiel to share this with Israel.

40:5-27 – The outer gates and the outer court. What is the purpose of the wall surrounding the temple? The measurement tool of the visionary guide follows the royal cubit instead of the common cubit and measures approximately 1 and $\frac{3}{4}$ feet long and so his "rod" is approximately 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ yards (or 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet) long. This would make the wall about 10 feet thick and 10 feet tall (though almost no other height measurements are listed anywhere else). Why did Ezekiel approach from the east first? Note the many rooms for guards in the massive gate. Why would there need to be so many guards and security? Take note of the many measurements that are multiples of 25 throughout this visionary temple and the very simple carvings. Who accessed the "outer court"? Note the dimensions of the gates and the outer court. Also, the steps from to the gates are seven.

40:28-47 – The inner gates and the inner court. Note the dimensions and decorations of the inner court and the eight steps which led up into it. Each of the gates are identical (both outer with each other and the inner with each other respectively). The furniture of the inner court is specifically only for the various sacrifices – burnt (Heb. *'ōlâh*; cf. Lev.1:3), sin (Heb. *hāttā't*; cf. Lev.4:2-3, 13) and guilt (Heb. *'āšam*; cf. Lev.5:6; 6:6; 7:1-2) – whether tables, hooks (?), or utensils. The guards were apparently Zadokite Levites responsible for all of the temple precincts security and priestly ministry (Block *NICOT* II:537-9; cf. Num.18:1-7; 2 Sam.8:17; 2 Kings 11:4-7). Note the place of the altar in relation to the temple proper.

40:48-41:26 – The temple proper. The temple was again located higher (10 steps up) than the inner court (eight steps up) which had been higher than the outer court (seven steps up) – leading to a total of twenty-five steps. It is also set up higher so as to protect the holy from the profane and the profane from the holy. While Ezekiel is taken through much of the wider building(s), he is only informed about the dimensions of the "Most Holy Place" of the temple. The doors of each level also get progressively smaller and there are fewer and fewer that are permitted beyond each. The decorations of the temple itself are cherubim and palm trees, which is considerably less ornate than Solomon's temple or even the tabernacle of Moses. The wooden table in the holy place just in front of the most holy place was likely for showbread (though there is not specific mention of its purpose here).

42:1-20 – Rooms for the priests of the temple. Rooms stacked three stories high were built along the north and south sides of the temple proper in order to provide sacred space for the priests to eat the special offerings and to change out of their priestly garments. Why should they change their clothes or eat in the sacred areas? What are the dimensions of the whole complex as shown to Ezekiel?

Some Questions and Comments Concerning This Temple – What does a comparison and contrast of this temple demonstrate with regard to the tabernacle of Moses, the temple of Solomon and the “New Jerusalem” of Revelation 21-22? Note that while many dimensions are given for this temple of Ezekiel there are no materials mentioned other than with regard to the altars and tables. Also, while there is great detail provided for dimensions there is no instruction to Ezekiel (or even through Ezekiel to Israel) to build such a temple. The temple that was constructed under Ezra’s leadership never did fit the description of Ezekiel’s vision, nor does there appear to have been any attempt to even try. Why is this? What might this temple point to? Is this temple representative of something or will it (as according to typical Dispensational beliefs) be built in a millennial reign of Christ? If it would be built in such a time, why should there be continued sacrifices offered and what does this make of the once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps the best way forward is not to view this temple as prescribed to be built at some future time, but simply as indicative of the utter holiness with which God dwells. Also, how might we understand this temple in light of Jesus claim of being the “temple” (John 2:19-21) and of Paul’s later comments regarding the individuals of the Church (1 Cor.3:16-17; 6:19) as well as the Church corporately being the “temple” (2 Cor.6:16)?

Ezekiel 43-44 – The Glory of the LORD and the Temple Torah

43:1-5 – The glory returns. Why does the glory of the LORD approach from the east? (cf. Eze.11:23) There is no ignoring the approaching glory which radiates the land and comes with a great tumult of sound. This vision is likened to the appearing of the glory in chapters 8-11, but also to the appearing in the very beginning of the book. Note that the reference is to the vision by the Kebar River when the glory had first come to destroy Jerusalem. Ezekiel's posture is as it was before when the glory appeared: prostrate. And just as the Spirit had previously lifted Ezekiel up for action, here the same thing occurs. Note what the glory of the LORD does. (cf. Isa.6:4)

43:6-12 – The temple torah is given. Ezekiel hears an undisclosed person's voice that gives him the temple instructions (*torah*). Contrast the presence of the LORD in this temple to the one which Solomon built (1 Kings 8:48-49; Isa.66:1). It was always the LORD's design to live with His people Israel. However, His continuing presence depends upon the holiness with which His people live. The LORD promises that Israel and her kings will no longer do what they had done before in defiling the temple and rejecting Him. In particular are the sins of the kings against the sanctity of the temple of the LORD when they set up idols for themselves (NIV's "their high places" Heb. *bāmôtām* should likely read Heb. *b^emôtām* "at their death"; see Duguid *NIVAC* 490fn5) and fornicated themselves. It is notable that the glory of the God of Israel no longer is enthroned upon the ark of the covenant, but upon Jerusalem itself and His temple (Jer.3:16-17; Block *NICOT* II:581). How might the plan of this temple cause Israel to feel shame for their sinfulness? It would appear that the whole of this temple area is designed for guarding the holiness of the LORD. The torah of Ezekiel and his function in the process of sanctifying the temple likens him to a second Moses (cf. Exo.29; Block *NICOT* II:606-7).

43:13-27 – The altars design and sanctifying. Why might the dimensions of the altar be of significance to Ezekiel's audience? This altar area was approximately 1100 sq. ft. while the altar itself was nearly 600 sq. ft. and stood some 15 feet high. The trench on the outside of the altar could handle nearly 3800 gallons! (see Block *NICOT* II:601). This made it actually smaller than the one in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 1:50-53; 2:28-29; 8 ½H x 17W x 17L) and much smaller than the one in Herod's temple (Josephus *JW* 5.5.6§§222-226; 15H x 50W x 50L). The steps (against Mosaic instruction in Exo.20:26) to the altar notably face east when traditionally all of the altars had the officiating priest facing east. The altar still needed dedication through purifying (Heb. *ḥattā't* traditionally read as "sin offering"; see Duguid *NIVAC* 491fn10) sacrifices and burnt offerings that were supposed to last the course of a week for atonement and then on the eighth day the priests would begin making regular offerings upon it. The animals were to be salted (cf. Lev.2:13; the "covenant of salt" in Num.18:19; 2 Chron.13:5; and see Mark 9:49-50) and their bodies disposed of outside the sanctity of the temple. How will the LORD treat this sanctifying work and what will be His response?

44:1-4 – The eastern gate was shut permanently once the glory of the LORD had entered through it. The prince (Heb. *nāsī'*) was the only one permitted into the gate to eat a fellowship offering before the LORD, but not through the gate. While this would offer some special blessing to the prince, he was still excluded (as the rest of Israel) from entering the temple itself

and could not enter through the gate which the LORD had entered. Again, note Ezekiel's response to seeing the glory of the LORD as the glory fills the temple.

44:5-9 – The entrances and exits of the temple. It was not only the priests and the kings of Israel that were responsible for the defiling of the temple, but the whole of the house of Israel. They were responsible for bringing foreigners into the temple (cf. 2 Kings 11:14-19) when the Levitical priests were supposed to have guarded the sanctity of it (Num.18:7, 21-23). It was not that foreigners weren't allowed, it was that these foreigners were not a part of the covenant people of God and had not purified themselves.

44:10-14 – The restoration of the Levites. While the Levites had sinned they were promised to receive restoration as those responsible for the gates and certain of the sacrifices on behalf of the people of Israel. However, their idolatry was not without repercussions. They would not be given responsibility to actually approach the LORD, but instead would represent the people's presence in the temple itself.

44:15-31 – The Zadokites priest's blessings and responsibilities. It was not because the Zadokites were sinless, but they were more faithful than the Levites in general (cf. 1 Sam.3:11-14; 1 Kings 1:5-8; 2:26-27, 35). Therefore, they would be given the particular blessing and responsibility of serving directly before the LORD and making the necessary sacrifices. Their clothing was regulated in order to avoid both contaminating it with sweat (i.e. body fluids; see Deut.23:11-13) and to not "consecrate" the people when they leave the inner court before the LORD. On holiness as a dangerous contagion see Lev.10:1-3; Num.4:15; 1 Sam.6:19; 2 Sam.6:6-9. Their hair was never to be either unkempt or shaved off (cf. Lev.21:5, 10; 19:27), they were never to have alcohol when ministering (Lev.10:9), nor were they to marry any woman that might allow for the common Israelites to share in their inheritance. They were to teach the people, to serve as judges and to celebrate all that the LORD had commanded. They were to be kept from that which was dead (Lev.21:1-3) and to receive their inheritance in the LORD (Num.18:20) enjoying the sacrifices given by Israel (Exo.22:31; Lev.22:8; Num.15:20-21; 18:8-20).

Ezekiel 45-46 – Sacred Land and Days

45:1-6 – The sacred district. The full sacred area would cover an area seven miles wide and seven miles long. One section stretching seven miles long and three miles wide would be for the priests and would be for the “Most Holy Place”. Another section stretching seven miles long and three miles wide would be for the Levites who serve on behalf of the people of Israel in the temple. They would no longer have towns scattered among the tribes (as in Josh.21), but would live with all of the rest of Israel focused upon the center: the temple as the presence of the LORD in the midst of His people. The “city” would take up a section about one mile wide and seven miles long for the whole of Israel.

45:7-12 – The prince(s) of Israel. No longer would the princes be allowed to abuse Israel as had occurred throughout Israel’s history, but would receive a portion of the land surrounding the sides of the sacred districts. What is the importance of fair measurements? (cf. Lev.19:36; Deut.25:13-16; Prov.11:1; Amos 8:5-6; Hos.12:7) One *shekel* would be approximately 4 oz. and therefore one *minah* about 24 oz. The *ephah* (for dry measurements) and *bath* (for liquid measurements) would be about 5.8 gallons and so the *homer* would be about 58 gallons total.

45:13-20 – Offerings for atonement. Why would the LORD be so specific about the offerings Israel was to offer? The offerings made of wheat and barley were nearly 2% of the total, the oil 1% and the sheep .5%. These sacrifices were specifically for atonement. What need would Israel have for atonement? Also, note that the prince plays a particular role in making provision for the sacrifices as well. There was to be an atonement made on the first day of the year and the seventh (were these to be repeated?) for atonement of the temple. Why would the temple need atonement? What sorts of sins were said to be covered by this sacrifice?

45:21-25 – The feasts. The requirements here are notably different than those found in the Torah concerning the Passover celebration (cf. Exo.12:1-28; Num.9:1-14; Deut.16:1-8). However, it is also notable that whereas there was never a repetition of the smearing of blood on the doorposts after the exodus from Egypt, yet in verses 19-20 the posts of the temple were to be smeared in sacrificial blood prior to the actual celebration of Passover that would begin a week later. The other feast day is unnamed but is said to occur at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (cf. Deut.16:13).

46:1-12 – The Sabbath and New Moon feasts. The eastern outer court gate was perpetually kept shut, but the inner courts eastern gate was opened every Sabbath and New Moon when the prince was to come and offer sacrifices and stand at the entrance of the gate giving worship to the LORD. The people were also to worship the LORD at that gate. The prince must come and go at the same gateway, but the people were to leave at the opposite (if they entered north they left south and vice-versa). What is the point of the control at the gates? The prince was to act as just another person and would not stay longer than the rest of the people though he was the only one permitted use of the eastern inner court gate which would be shut at evening after he had gone. There was a marked difference between what Ezekiel was instructed and what had happened throughout Israel’s history in regard to the ruler’s relations to the temple.

46:13-15 – The command to make daily offerings. Why might the language have shifted from the third person to the second person (“you”) for these few verses? Was Ezekiel expected to participate in this? Also, how does the nature of the sacrifices being a “lasting ordinance” relate to what is written in Hebrews 7:27; 9:25-10:18?

46:16-18 – The prince and his land. What is the importance of the inheritance being kept within the prince’s family and of the prince not being able to take any property from the rest of the house of Israel? (on acquisition of Israelite territories and inheritance issues see Deut.17:14-20; 2 Sam.9:7; 16:4; 24:24; 1 Kings 9:16; 16:24; 21:1-29) Many have often confused the notion of this “prince” with the Messiah, but Iain Duguid astutely notes, “It is the temple that points us to Jesus, not the prince” (*NIVAC* 524).

46:19-24 – The importance of the kitchens. Why should Ezekiel be shown the kitchens in the temple and why should these be mentioned for us? It is significant because temples of the ancient Near East were places for the gods to feast, but not for the general population, but in the temple of the LORD He prepares a table before His people and shares it with them (cf. Ps.23:5; Matt.22:1-14; Rev.3:20; 19:9).

Ezekiel 47-48 – The River And The Land

47:1-6 – A trickle from the temple becomes a great river. The location that Ezekiel is shown may indicate where the “sea” was once kept in Solomon’s temple, but there is no mention of such a thing in this temple (1 Kings 7:23-26). While the directional descriptions are difficult it seems that the trickle flowed through the temple and out the eastern gate that was closed (Ezekiel even uses a Hebrew term that sounds like gurgling from a jug for it coming out the gate). Again, the man has his measuring rods and begins taking notes. At 1000 cubits (1500ft.) it was ankle deep, at 3000ft. it was knee-deep, 4500ft. it was waist-deep and at 6000ft from the temple it was already so deep that Ezekiel was forced to swim...and all of this without tributaries and from a trickle!

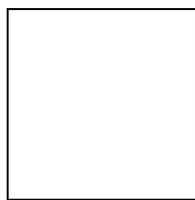
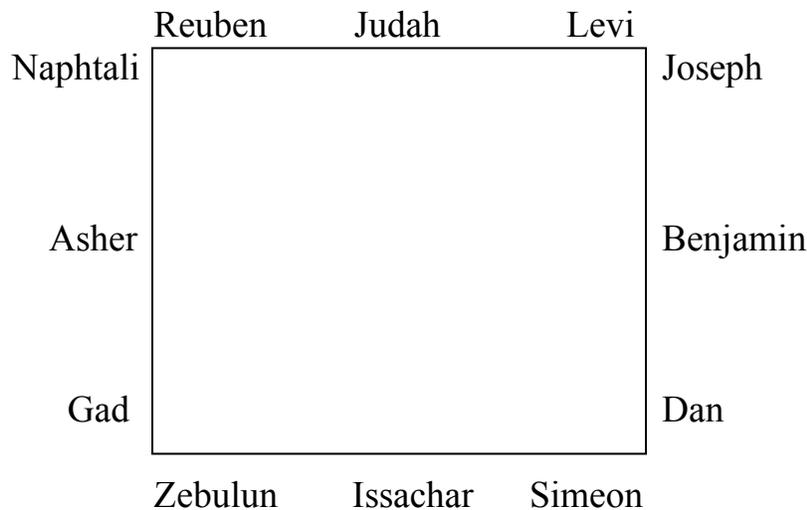
47:7-12 – The river from the temple brings miraculous life wherever it flows (cf. Gen.2:10-14; Ps.36:8-9; 46:4; Joel 3:17-18; Zech.14:5-11; John 7:38; Rev.22:1-2). “The scene calls for a miraculous act, the converse of that experienced by the Israelites at the Red Sea. Instead of creating a dry path through the sea, this holy stream produces a water course through the desert” (Block *NICOT* II:694). On the banks are many trees whose leaves will not wither providing “healing” and whose seasons have become months because of the life they receive from the river (cf. Ps.1:1-3; Rev.22:2). The river will flow to the Arabah (or the Jordan valley) and into the Salt Sea (the aptly named “Dead” Sea because it sits at 1400 feet below sea level and cannot sustain life) where it will not only turn its waters to fresh water (cf. Exo.15:25; 2 Kings 2:19-22), but will cause its waters to have more life than even the Mediterranean (the Great) Sea. In fact the whole (“from En Gedi to En Eglaim” refers to the western and eastern shores respectively) of the Sea will be changed to give life, with the exception that the low areas will still produce salt. Why should they be left? “It is necessary that salt should be available as an element of covenant consummation” (Duguid *NIVAC* 533). It will also serve as a blessing to those who fish and those who harvest.

47:13-23 – The boundaries of the land of Israel (cf. Num.34:1-15). Why does Joseph get two portions? Because there must still be twelve (this was also the counting of the tribes) and Levi receives his portion as a priestly portion and because Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh as his own (Gen.48:8-20). Of particular significance are four things: first that they receive their portions as “inheritance” in the form of gift from a sovereign and not by right, and second that they “are to divide it equally among them”. This is significant, because this had never been done before. There was a greater equilibrium to be accomplished in Israel by this act. As part of this they each had a portion that ran from the Mediterranean inland and was exactly the same distance north-to-south. Third, all twelve of the tribes were to be reunited into one land again which had not been possible for several hundred years. Fourth, their boundaries were to exceed anything in their previous history. It is also notable that Ezekiel mentions the “aliens” (Heb. *gēr*) as being permitted to receive an inheritance if they settle and have children (cf. Lev.19:33-34; or the “foreigner” in Isa.56:3-8). In other words, this was not only a promised blessing for ethnic Israel, but for all who would identify themselves with the covenant community.

48:1-29 – The tribal, princely, sacred and city allotments. The tribes are largely rearranged from their earlier portions and there is no longer any mention of the territories possessed in the Trans-Jordan. Dan Block notes that in the allotment Bilhah and Ziphah’s sons are furthest out

with Benjamin and Judah on both sides of the sacred precinct (cf. Josh.18:28; 1 Sam.9; 2 Sam.5:5-6)—though Judah is on the north and Benjamin the south—and Rachel and Leah’s sons are closest with Ephraim and Manasseh by each other (*NICOT* II:723-724; for the matronage see Gen.35:22-26). In the midst of verses 1-8 and 22-29 describing the tribal allotments is the focus of the chapter—the special allotment that is for the prince, the city and the sacred precincts. We have previously discussed this area in chapter 45 (for more detail see the notes there). Some of the new things emphasized here pertain to the workers that would be necessary for maintaining the city and the supply of food for all of the tribes as they take their turns in coming to the temple and the city.

48:30-35 – The exits of the city. There are twelve gates to this city which is considerably more than any normal city not to mention that it would be exceptional that any city should be square to begin with which has sacred connotations. The city is approximately one mile by one mile (contrast this to the New Jerusalem that is described as a cube-like structure approximately 1400 miles by 1400 miles by 1400 miles! Rev.21:16). Interestingly, Levi has a gate and so Joseph has a gate (which would be for both Ephraim and Manasseh).



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