

Ezekiel

The goal of this Bible Class is to give the students a working knowledge of the book of Ezekiel. It is based on an expository approach to teaching the Bible, preparing the students for the worship of our Savior. The material in the lesson is to be viewed by the teacher as thematic suggestions to help with preparation. While the lesson is not intended to be read to the class word for word, the main ideas should be the substance of what is taught. The teacher, in preparation for the class, should consider reading through the whole curriculum before beginning the class, as well as the book of Ezekiel several times. This will provide the instructor with a broad and comprehensive understanding of the book as it is being taught.

It is important that the instructor be not only knowledgeable about the material, but also able to teach it with enthusiasm and conviction. Students best learn from teachers that are themselves excited about the scriptures. The use of maps, diagrams, white boards etc. is extremely helpful. Some of these have been provided in the curriculum. It is suggested that the class be conducted in an interactive manner. This can be accomplished by having them read short portions of the scripture texts, asking them questions, and wholeheartedly encouraging them to ask questions. All students should be encouraged to bring a Bible to class.

The possible inclusion of the Westminster Shorter Catechism as part of the curriculum is designed to help the students acquire a broad understanding of Christian doctrine along with the specific Bible teaching. The Elders of the church will coordinate the specific questions and answers to be used in the class.

It will become evident to the teacher that this course curriculum, while not dealing with every verse and concept in the book of Ezekiel, is comprehensive and deeply theological. It is designed to help the students understand the book in their wider biblical context, with emphasis on its place in the redemptive history of God's covenant people. The students will be confronted with and asked to understand and remember fairly difficult concepts. It should be remembered that children are able to comprehend much more than we often give them credit for. While this class will be a challenge for both the teacher and the students, the rewards for the efforts of those in the class will be surprising and exciting.

Our primary sources of information from these lessons are:

Jordan, James, *Ezekiel - Eighteen Lectures (cassette tapes with outlines)*, (Niceville, FL, Biblical Horizons, 1991)

Jordan, James, *Doorways and Passages (cassette tapes and outlines)*, (Niceville, FL, Biblical Horizons, 1996)

Jordan, James, *Through New Eyes, Developing a Biblical View of the World*, (Brentwood, TN, Wolgemuth and Hyatt Publishers, 1988)

In preparation for these lessons, it would also be helpful to consult some of the following:

Calvin, John, *Calvin's Commentaries on the Prophet Ezekiel Vol I and II* (Edinburgh, Scotland, T. Constable, 1849)

Dorsey, David A., *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament – A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Books, 1999)

Henry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Peabody, MS, Hendrickson Publishers, 1991)

Leithart, Peter J., *A House for My Name – A Survey of the Old Testament*, (Moscow, ID, Canon Press, 2000)

Simeon, Charles, *Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible, Volume 9*, (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Book House)

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People
Lesson 1 – Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel

Objective – To introduce the students to the authorship, historical and theological context, main themes and literary flow of the book of Ezekiel

❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class this term

❖ **Attendance and Accountability**

Introduce yourself and your substitute teacher

The teacher is asked to take attendance at the beginning of each class period in order to provide encouragement and extra help to students when they miss a class.

Make sure all class members know each other’s **names**.

Requirements – Writing utensils, Bibles, a good night’s sleep

There will be **tests** on the outlines of the book and some other material

Memory verses will be assigned

We will take **attendance** each week and have some **accountability** questions as well.

❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – Briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.

❖ **Lesson – Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel**

A. Historical Context – A brief review of Biblical history will be helpful for the students to place the book of Ezekiel into its historical context.

Write and talk through the following historical timeline with the students. As you do, ask them to anticipate the next event or main person to be mentioned. You should proceed rapidly as this material should be very familiar to your students...no more than 5 minutes!!

If all of your students are well versed in Old Testament history, this section can be abbreviated or skipped.)

God → Creation → Adam and Eve → Cain and Abel → Seth → Many Generations → Noah → Ham, Japheth, Shem → Many Generations → Abram (Abraham) → Isaac → Jacob (Israel) → 12 Sons by 4 women → Joseph to Egypt → Jacob and 11 Sons to Egypt → Slavery in Egypt → Moses → Joshua → Judges (Samuel) → Saul → David → Solomon → Rehoboam

During Rehoboam’s reign, the Kingdom of Israel became divided into two kingdoms

1. Jeroboam ruled 10 northern tribes (known as “Israel”, “Samaria”, or “Ephraim”)
2. Rehoboam ruled Judah and Benjamin in the south (known as “Judah” or “Jerusalem”)

Israel, with her capital city of Samaria, was ruled by a series of ungodly kings. She became idolatrous and wicked and was taken into captivity by the nation of Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah, with her capital city of Jerusalem, initially was more faithful than Israel but eventually succumbed to the same sins of idolatry and social injustice. Because of these sins, the Lord drove Judah out of the Promised Land and into exile. In approximately **605 B.C.**, during the reign of king Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Jerusalem and took many of the prominent citizens captive, including Jehoiakim, Daniel and his three friends. The city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army in **586 B.C.**

According to Bible historians, **Ezekiel** was taken captive by the Babylonians in **598 B.C.**, approximately seven years after Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were taken captive, and twelve years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Bible historians say that Ezekiel, Daniel and the other exiles lived in houses and were relatively well cared for by their Babylonian captors. However, the prophet Jeremiah who remained in Israel ministering to those left behind, was very mistreated and even imprisoned by the Jewish leaders.

By the time we get to the beginning of the book of Ezekiel (around **592 B.C.**) approximately 6 years have passed since Ezekiel was taken captive. The entire book of Ezekiel takes place while he is a captive in Babylon.

Note to teacher – In this study, when we use the term “Israel” at the time of Ezekiel, this will nearly always refer to the southern kingdom of Judah and her capital city, Jerusalem

B. Geographical Context – Use a map to show the students the extent of the Babylonian rule during the time of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:1 begins with Ezekiel with the captives in Babylon by the River Chebar, the location of which is unknown but which may have been a tributary of the Euphrates River.



The Babylonian Empire

C. Ezekiel the man

Virtually all that we know about Ezekiel comes from the book of Ezekiel itself.

- The name, Ezekiel can mean **“God is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”**. Because of their sin, God is going to stop being gracious towards Israel, and instead, His “face” (His countenance, His attitude) towards them will be **“hard”** in judgment. As His representative, Yahweh will say to Ezekiel, “Set your face against...” (i.e. “be hard towards”) Israel, the nations around her, etc. many times in this book.
- Ezekiel’s name is mentioned only twice in all of Scripture, both times in the book of Ezekiel itself (1:3, 24:24).
- Ezekiel 1:3 tells us that Ezekiel was the son of Buzi and that he was a priest. Thus Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet.
- It is likely that Ezekiel was **30 years old** when the book of Ezekiel begins (See Ezekiel 1:1). If this is true, then Ezekiel was also likely born in the year of King Josiah’s reforms and his Great Passover (see 2 Kings 23 and 2 Chronicles 34-35). The age of 30 is the age when priests were to be ordained (See Numbers 4) and in chapter 2, Ezekiel is set apart by God for his priestly and prophetic work.
- Ezekiel was married, but his wife died during his ministry (see Ezekiel 24:15-27)
- Some Bible commentators see Ezekiel as a prophetic successor to Jeremiah who had ministered in Jerusalem for over three decades, warning the people of the judgment of God to come. Once Jeremiah was silenced by his enemies, God raised Ezekiel up in his place as His prophet/priest during the exile.
- Throughout the book, Ezekiel is referred to as “Son of man” (over 90 times!). This is a clear reference to Ezekiel as a sort of new Adam, ushering in a “new creation” for Israel, and as a forerunner of Jesus, the ultimate new Adam, who brought about a new creation to the entire created order through His life, death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven.

D. Outline of the book of Ezekiel

Several Bible scholars see the book of Ezekiel as consisting of seven sections.

Whenever we see a seven part structure to a portion of Scripture, it is good to ask ourselves if perhaps we might see hints of each the original seven days of creation in that portion of Scripture. Ezekiel is a book about God's judgment on sinful Israel (and the nations around her) and of her ultimate restoration as He once again shows mercy on her. Thus, in many ways, the book of Ezekiel is a sort of de-creation and re-creation and follows the original seven day creation account as our outline of the book will reflect:

Outline: (Note – Many thanks to Rev. James Jordan for his work on the overall and section outlines for Ezekiel from which our outlines are derived.)

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God's People

Note: If everyone in your class does not know the seven days of creation in their correct order you could employ this rhyming memory tool:

Day one, God made the light but not the sun

Day two, God made the firmament, forming the waters into two

Day three, God filled the land, with first fruits of plant and tree

Day four, God made ruling lights, sun, moon and stars, where the rockets soar

Day five, God filled the sea and sky with fish and birds that teem and thrive

Day six, God made animals, then man, the former and ruler of the mix

Day seven, God rested in heaven

All but one of these seven sections of Ezekiel are set apart by detailed references to time (years, months, days), making it easy to see where each of these seven sections begin. (Have a student read the beginning of each of these verses to see the time markers at the beginning of all but one of the seven parts of Ezekiel):

1. Ezekiel 1:1-2 - Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month...On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity...

2. Ezekiel 8:1 - And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month...

3. Ezekiel 14:1 (no time marker) - Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.

4. Ezekiel 20:1 - It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth *day* of the month...

5. Ezekiel 24:1 - Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth *day* of the month...

6. Ezekiel 33:21 – And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month...

7. Ezekiel 40:1 - In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day...

Not only does the entire book of Ezekiel seem to be structured around the seven days of creation, but some of the seven sections also contain hints of the seven day creation account within themselves, which we shall see as we consider them in turn.

E. Overview of Ezekiel

Note: Though it is Judah (and Benjamin) who is in captivity in Babylon, we will use the terms “Judah” and “Israel” interchangeably in this study, since Judah now represents the entire nation of Israel.

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand

Time: Fifth year of the exile

On the first day of creation, the Lord sent the Spirit to dispel the darkness that was over the surface of the waters. In this first section of Ezekiel, we will see God the Father send the Spirit into Ezekiel to defeat the darkness that has enveloped Judah. Ezekiel’s call and commission are followed by a series of three experiences (chapters 1-3) in which Ezekiel sees visions of God’s glory and receives instructions about his task as a prophet/priest to the exiles. Four messages about the coming destruction of Jerusalem follow these visions (chapters 4-7).

2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged

Time: Sixth year of the exile

On day two, the Lord created the firmament which served to divide the waters above it from the waters below. This dividing is often seen in Scripture as a separating of God and His faithful people from His enemies. Chapters 8–11 are a series of four visions once again depicting glory of God, who is departing from the temple (separating himself from His wicked people) and judging Jerusalem for her sins. This is followed in chapters 12 and 13 by five messages of judgment, the first two involving symbolic actions on Ezekiel’s part of 1) packing and leaving and 2) eating food with fear.

3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment

Time: Undated, but may be during the sixth or seventh year of exile?

Day three of creation saw the Lord bringing forth the land from the midst of the waters and also filling it with the first plants and trees (“firstfruits”). Chapters 14-19 of Ezekiel are a

series of seven messages of judgment against Judah that depict her as a fruitless vine (chapter 15) and as a tree and vine that have revolted against the Lord (chapter 17). Instead of being faithful to Yahweh and obeying Him (“bearing good fruit”), Judah, like Israel before her, has become fruitless and “ripe” for destruction.

4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed

Time: Seventh to ninth year of exile

The “lights” in the firmament (sun, moon and stars), created on Day 4, are seen as “ruling” over the day and the night. Thus we often associate the fourth day of creation with ruling. In this climactic section of Ezekiel, a series of four messages of judgment are given, beginning with an indictment of the wicked rulers of Judah, given just before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (chapter 20). In chapter 21, God says he is using the sword (rule) of Babylon to punish the rulers of Judah. Chapter 22 ends with Yahweh rebuking the priests, the religious rulers of Judah.

5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall

Time: Ninth year of exile

Day five sees God making the creatures of the sea and sky (birds and fishes), who travel together in large numbers. In the Scripture, these “swarming” creatures are often associated with the Gentile nations. Ezekiel 24-33 is a series of oracles of judgment against seven Gentile nations (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt) who have acted wickedly towards God’s people.

6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden

Time: Twelfth year of exile

The land animals were created on the sixth day of creation. On that same day, the Lord created Adam and Eve to rule over the entire created order throughout the earth, beginning in the Garden of Eden. In this section of Ezekiel we see a movement from de-creation (“For I will make the land most desolate” 33:28) to a new creation (the dry bones live – Chapter 37). After this, God’s enemies are defeated (chapter 38-39) and His people are reestablished as the New Adam, ruling for God in the New Eden, the land of Israel.

7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

Time: Twenty-fifth year of exile

On day seven, “God rested in heaven”. In these last chapters of Ezekiel we see his vision of the New Temple and the New Land, once again giving hope to Judah, that they will again be granted Sabbath-rest in the land as His beloved people.

G. The Gospel of Jesus in Ezekiel

Though the nation of Judah is “dead in trespasses and sins” and though she will endure severe judgments of God, the book ends with much hope that God will forgive Judah and once again return her to the land and bless her. This reminds us of Jesus who endured the

wrath of God for our sins and who restores us to loving relationship with the Father as His beloved children.

❖ **Lesson Plan for Ezekiel – (No need to go over this with students)**

- Week 1 – Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel
- Week 2 – God Takes the World in Hand – Part 1 – Chapter 1-2a
- Week 3 – God Takes the World in Hand – Part 2 – Chapter 2b-5
- Week 4 – God Takes the World in Hand – Part 3 – Chapter 6-7
- Week 5 – Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged – Part 1 – Chapter 8-9
- Week 6 – Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged – Part 2 – Chapter 10-11
- Week 7 – Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged – Part 3 – Chapter 12-13
- Week 8 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment – Part 1 – Chapter 14-15
- Week 9 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment – Part 2 – Chapter 16-17
- Week 10 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment – Part 3 – Chapter 18-19
- Week 11 – Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed – Part 1 – Chapter 20-21
- Week 12 – Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed – Part 2 – Chapter 22-23
- Week 13 – Swarms of Nations Fall – Part 1 – Chapter 24-28
- Week 14 – Swarms of Nations Fall – Part 2 – Chapter 29-33a
- Week 15 – A New Adam and a New Eden – Part 1 – Chapter 33b-34
- Week 16 – A New Adam and a New Eden – Part 2 – Chapter 35-37a
- Week 17 – A New Adam and a New Eden – Part 3 – Chapter 37b-39
- Week 18 – A New Sabbath for God's People – Part 1 – Chapter 40-45a
- Week 19 – A New Sabbath for God's People – Part 2 – Chapter 45b-48, and Review
- Week 20 – Student Evaluation

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 1-3; Begin to memorize the outline for Ezekiel; Read the article by Pastor Tuuri on the offices of Jesus as related to three of the four faces of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship** - Pray with the students that they would worship the Lord with vigor and be attentive during the service.

Priest, King and Prophet – A Contemplation by Dennis Tuuri (with modifications)

Prophet, priest and king, this is the order of the offices of Jesus that is most familiar to us, and which is followed by the Catechism. And from one perspective, this order is good and proper. The prophets in the Old Testament anointed both priests and kings. But from another perspective the order in our title, “priest, king and prophet” is also true.

Consider, for instance, the general flow of the Old Testament books of the English bible. We begin with the priestly books (the Pentateuch), then move to the kingly books and conclude with the prophetic books.

To consider the value of this order, we need to think a little about what these offices are, and how they function in the bible. But before we begin, a note of caution is in order. What follows are not hard and fast categories. Jesus Christ is not three officers; he is one person whose work can be seen from these three perspectives or emphases. Having said that, it is advantageous to look at these three distinct offices of the Bible, with a view to seeing how they might be distinguished one from another.

We start with the priest. The priest does precisely what he is told to do. Leviticus, the most obvious priestly book of the Old Testament, is a series of divine speeches. The priests are not supposed to figure out what to do – they simply follow the detailed set of instructions that they are given. The priest’s focal point for his labor is the worship environment at the center of a culture. From one perspective, the priest is a representative of the Father, whose specific directions the priest follows.

The king, on the other hand, has to know how to take the general equity of the laws provided by God in one historical circumstance and make application to their specific context. They engage in a set of specific actions to enforce the equity of God’s law and serve the people of their kingdom. The book of Proverbs is given to instruct a prince in how to become a king. This takes wisdom, not simply following a set of laws woodenly. (By the way, much of the debate over “theonomy” resulted, in my opinion, from a misunderstanding of the manner in which kings reign. Kings always had to apply a set of laws in a wise fashion. No theonomist worth his salt ever thought that the civil ruler was to apply, for instance, the case laws of Exodus 20-23 in a wooden unthinking fashion. The king was not a priest.) The focal point of the king’s labor is his own land – those within his specific jurisdiction. From one perspective, the King is a representation of the Son, who is King Jesus, ruling His people through service.

The prophet goes one step further. While the priest serves by acting in particular specific ways and the king serves by making judicial determinations in wisdom, the prophet advances the culture by means of his speech. The prophet speaks into the historical condition and by his Spirit-empowered tongue, brings a new historical situation into existence. He accomplishes this by means of language. His is not the preservative kingly function of civil order, but the function of advancing the culture in an increasing maturity and godliness. His focal point of labor is the world. He is a representation of the Spirit’s calling the world to worship the Son.

The priest listens with his *ear* so that he might obey, the king acts with his *hand* that he might serve his people in love and the prophet speaks with his *mouth* that the world might be transformed and go from glory to glory.

This pattern of office can be seen in the general history of Old Testament Israel. From Moses to David to Daniel, Israel seemed to move through a progression of emphases. First, the priestly period going from Moses to Saul, then a kingly period going from Saul to the Exile, and finally a prophetic period from the Exile to the time of our Savior. Israel began with a stress on *sanctuary* service, then moved to ruling well in her own *country* and finally became the advisor to the *nations*.

Now, some may point to the life of the greater Israel, Jesus, as the basis for the order of prophet first, then priest and king. After all, one could reason, Jesus began with a teaching ministry, then served as both priest and sacrifice on the cross, and was then enthroned as King of Kings. But at least in the gospel of John, we see the order I have suggested above.

Over and over in the climactic fourth gospel, Jesus tells us that He is not acting of His own initiative, but He is obeying the Father in his earthly minister.

Jn 8:28 “I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.”

Jn 8:29 “I always do those things that please Him.”

Jn 14:31 “as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do.”

Jn 5:19 “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”

As the priest hears and obeys, so does Jesus in the record of his earthly ministry in John’s gospel.

And from John’s perspective, Christ on the cross is more king than priest. From the cross, Jesus dispenses gifts, exercises sovereignty over both Pilate and the soldiers, and culminates His work with a victor’s cry of “It is finished!” The Servant-King brings the community of the Church into being through his kingly labors on the cross.

Finally, John’s gospel concludes with the gift of the empowering Holy Spirit being breathed into the disciples so that they might be sent forth to change the face of the world through their speech. The great prophetic work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be accomplished by those He has raised up for global mission.

So, from this perspective, both Israel and the greater Israel moved from priest to king to prophet. And so do we.

When we are children, our job is to be priest-like. We are to have wide open ears to hear the words of our fathers and to obey them in detail. When we mature into adult life, we are ready to become kings, ruling wisely in our homes and our communities by means of loving sacrificial service with our hands, bleeding for those we are called by God to command. And finally, we turn hoary-headed. We are called and enabled to pour forth wise speech. This Spirit-empowered analysis and corrective to our culture is the tool by which God brings a new reality into existence. We move from being sons to fathers to grand-fathers.

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 2 – Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand – Part 1 Chapter 1:1-2:7 – Ezekiel’s Vision and Commission

Objective – To understand the vision of judgment and hope that Ezekiel saw as he was commissioned by God to be the priest and prophet to God’s people in captivity

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse** – **(Go through this verse several times with the students)**
Ezekiel 2:3 – And He said to me: “Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; They and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.”

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – (Got through this several times with the students)**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review – Use the following questions and answers to review the last lesson with the students (5 minutes or less) Write all important dates and events on the board as you review:**

- Who wrote the book of Ezekiel? (Ezekiel)
- Under King Rehoboam, Israel was divided into two kingdoms; The Northern Kingdom of Israel (ten tribes) and the southern kingdom of Judah (Judah and Benjamin). What became of the Northern Kingdom of Israel? (They became idolatrous and ungodly under the reigns of wicked kings. God sent the Assyrians to conquer them and take them into exile in 722 B.C.)
- What became of the Southern Kingdom of Judah? (They too gave in to the sins of idolatry and social injustice God sent the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar to conquer them and take them into captivity)
- Who was the king of Judah when they were first defeated by the Babylonians? (Jehoiakim) In what year? (605 B.C.)
- In addition to Jehoiakim, name four other well known men of Judah who were taken into captivity at this time? (Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego)
- Ezekiel was taken captive in what year? (598 B.C.)

- Approximately what year is it when the book of Ezekiel begins? (592 B.C.)
- In what year was Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army? (586 B.C.)
- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name "Ezekiel" mean? ("Go is strong", "God strengthens", or "God makes hard")
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What name or title is Ezekiel called by over 90 times in the book of Ezekiel (Son of man)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and re-creation of the nation of Israel)

❖ Introduction - Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand

Time: Fifth year of the exile

As we saw last week, the seven sections of the book of Ezekiel can be seen as corresponding to the seven days of creation. The entire book can be seen as a picture of God de-creating and then re-creating the nation of Israel, and the whole world as well. On the first day of creation, the Lord sends the Spirit to dispel the darkness that was over the surface of the waters. In this first section of Ezekiel (chapters 1-7) we will see God the Father send the Spirit into Ezekiel to defeat the darkness of sin, rebellion, defeat and exile that has enveloped Judah.

James Jordan also sees a seven-fold outline, corresponding to the seven days of creation, in these first seven chapters of Ezekiel (taken from Jordan's outlines of the book of Ezekiel):

1:1-2:2 – Vision of the Chariot – Day 1 - Light

2:3-7 – Commission – Day 2 - Firmament

2:8-3:11 – Message – Day 3 – Food

3:12-21 – Watchman – Day 4 - Rule

3:22-5:17 – City – Day 5 - Swarms

6 – Mountains – Day 6 - Man

7 – Land – Day 7 - Rest

In today's lesson, we will look at the first two of these seven "Days":

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 1:1-3:11 – Ezekiel's Vision, Commission, and Message

1:1-2:2 – Vision of the Chariot – Day 1 - Light

On Day 1, the Father sends the Spirit (Light) to the world to defeat darkness (see Genesis 1:1-5). In this portion of Ezekiel, the Spirit enters Ezekiel to make him an image of God, one who will defeat the darkness that is in Israel and the world. Ezekiel sees the chariot (mobile throne) of God and becomes a sort of incarnation of the chariot (see Ezekiel 3), bringing light (the message of God) to His people who are in the darkness of sin and captivity in Babylon.

As the book of Ezekiel opens, Ezekiel is in captivity with the rest of the exiles from Judah by the River Chebar (1:1) (which may have been a tributary of the Euphrates River) in Babylon (see map). Running water is often pictured in Scripture as bringing about cleansing, and Ezekiel meets with God and His people to bring about a cleansing from sin to Israel.

In the first two verses we see two time markers:

Verse 1 - It was “in the **thirtieth year**...”. This “thirtieth year” may refer to Ezekiel’s age. Thirty was the age at which the priests of Israel would assume their duties in the temple (see Numbers 4) and Ezekiel, as the priest to Israel in exile, is commissioned by God at the age of thirty as well. Recall too that Jesus, the Great High Priest, began his earthly ministry at the age of thirty (see Luke 3:23)

Verse 2 – “...in the **fifth year** of King Jehoiachin’s captivity” – It has been five years since the exile to Babylon began and the Lord has sent no prophet to the captives before now. God will be silent no longer and, through Ezekiel, will bring His people a message of judgment and hope.

Verse 3 identifies Ezekiel as a priest to the captives in the land of the Chaldeans (Babylon) and the ordaining hand of the Lord comes upon him here. He will also be commissioned by God as a prophet, a spokesman for God, in chapter 2.

Verses 4-28 depict Ezekiel’s amazing vision of God’s mobile chariot-throne and the four powerful angels who uphold and propel it wherever the Spirit of God directs them (**Have the students refer to the illustration**). The coming of God in His fiery chariot to Babylon demonstrates that, though God has abandoned the Temple in Jerusalem, He is present with His people while in exile. He will act on their behalf, both to judge them and to restore them.

Bible scholars differ as to the meaning of the details of the vision, but some general observations can be made:

1) Natural Forces – (**Have the students point out all of the natural forces mentioned in chapter 1 – see verses 4,13,14,24,27 for example**)

The coming of God on His chariot-throne was accompanied by the great forces of nature – a whirlwind, clouds, fire/smoke, lightning, etc. demonstrating the power, and majesty of God as He comes to judge Israel and the nations.

The chariot comes “out of the north” which is a picture of God coming from Heaven (see Isaiah 14:13 and Job 37:22 for example). This can also be seen as a picture of the Babylonian armies whom God will use as His instrument of judgment. (See Jeremiah 4:13, and Isaiah 66:15) Additionally, it reminds us of the days of Moses when God made covenant with Israel from Mount Sinai accompanied with fire, smoke, earthquakes, etc. (see Exodus 19 esp. verses 18-19) and perhaps gave Ezekiel hope that the Lord would indeed renew covenant with Israel after He had judged her. We will see this chariot

several times in the book of Ezekiel (see chapters 3,10 and 11) and the angels (cherubim) are also seen prominently (see chapters 9,10,11,28,41)

2) Colors – (See verses 4,16,22,26,27,28)

Many colors are mentioned in this vision such as bronze, beryl, crystal, sapphire, amber, and the colors of the rainbow reminding us of the holiness and beauty of the Lord, his entourage, and of Heaven itself. These brilliant colors also remind us of the First Day of Creation in which God brought **light** to a **dark** world that was formless and void.

3) The Four Angels (“living creatures”) - These four living creatures who accompany the chariot throne of God are identified as cherubs in 10:1, powerful angels who do God’s bidding. These angels are likely the same four “living creatures” worshipping before the throne of God in Heaven seen in Revelation 4. We also recall that there were four cherubim in the Holy of Holies of Solomon’s temple, two on the ark of the covenant (God’s throne in the Temple), and two on the wall behind the ark (see 1 Kings 6). Thus we see the three duties of these four living creatures are to 1) praise God to 2) bear His throne and 3) to guard His throne in Heaven.

These living creatures are described in Ezekiel 1 as follows:

a) Man-like (verse 5) – Angels are the original rulers (stars) of the creation under God. Though God intended men to take over the rule of the earth, Adam and Eve’s sin returned the rule to the angels until the coming of Jesus. Jesus turned the keys (rule) of the kingdom over to His people (Matthew 16:19) who now assume the “angelic” duties of 1) praising God, 2) bearing His name (i.e. carrying His “throne”, declaring Jesus to be King) and 3) guarding His name through godly rule and holy living. Thus, angels are like men (and vice versa) in many ways, and it is logical that angels would appear “man-like”.

b) Four faces (verse 6,8,10) – Each of the living creatures has four faces: **(Have the students name them)**: ox, lion, eagle, man. The chart below shows us how these four faces can be related to many events and people in the Old and New Testaments **(Note – The chart is not intended to be the last word of the significance of the four faces of the cherubim. Additionally, the teacher will need to decide how much of the details of the chart to go into, depending on the time available.)**

The Gospels and the Four Faces of the Cherubim

Gospel	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Focal Decade	30s	40s	50s	60s
Cherubim Face	Ox	Lion	Eagle	Man
Distinctives	Moses' Life, Sermons, Retelling of Law	"Immediately," Kingly Works	Gentiles and Women, Travel Narrative	"Son of Man"
Focus of Action	Jerusalem	Land	World	Throne land (Sanctuary, Heaven)
Office Stressed	Priest	King	Prophet/Emperor	New Adam
Covenantal Period Connection	Moses (Mosaic Covenant)	David (Davidic Covenant)	Nehemiah (Restoration Covenant)	Jesus (New Covenant)
OT Historical Period	Sinaitic	Kingdom	Restoration	
Aaron's Blood Anointing	Ear (Priestly Hearing)	Hand (Kingly Action)	Foot (Worldly Witness)	
Architectural Stress	Tabernacle	Temple	Ezekiel's Temple	
Epistles	James	1 and 2 Peter	Acts, Paul's 14 Epistles (Hebrews)	Jude, John's 3 Epistles, Revelation

i) The four main periods in the history of God's people:

Ox = Moses/Priestly – From the times of the exodus, the leadership role of Israel largely fell to her priests who, like an ox, simply carried out the commands of Torah, the Law.

Lion = David/Kingly – Beginning with Saul and especially David, Israel was ruled by kings (lions) until the time of the exile

Eagle = World Empires – After the exile, the world is ruled by great Empires (Assyria, Babylon, Greece and Rome) and emperors (eagles) such as Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great, and the Caesars.

Man = the Church after Jesus' ascension – The Church of Jesus has been given the keys of the Kingdom of God to rule in His place and to bring the gospel of peace to the world.

ii) The three (or four)-fold office of Jesus, the great High Priest, King, Prophet, and New Adam to come: Ox = Priest, Lion = King, Eagle = Prophet, Man = The New Adam

iii) Each of the four gospels can be seen to emphasize one of these four offices of Jesus

Matthew = Ox/Priest Luke = Eagle/Prophet

Mark = Lion/King John = Man/New Adam

iv) The epistles too can be grouped according to these “four faces”

James – Emphasis on works of the Law (Priest)

1 and 2 Peter – Christian soldiers dealing with suffering as David did (King)

Acts, Paul's Epistles, Hebrews – Emphasis on the gospel going to the nations (Prophet)

Jude, John's Epistles, Revelation – Emphasis on the new creation in Jesus (New Adam)

c) Four wings (verses 6,8,9,11,23-25) – These four living creatures each have four wings two of which were spread out and used for mobility and the other two covered their bodies, reminding us of the linen garments which the priests wore.

d) Straight feet or legs / the soles of their feet were like bronze calves' feet (verse 7) – This reminds us of the pillars of the temple with their sockets of bronze (see 2 Chronicles 3:17)

e) Like burning coals of fire with lightning (verse 13) – see also Psalm 104:4. In the middle of the four angels is an altar with burning coals. In chapter 10 we will see that these burning coals are used to bring judgment on Israel for her sin.

f) Led by the Holy Spirit (verses 12,17,19-21) – These cherubim do not act on their own behalf, but direct the chariot-throne of God only as the Spirit of God leads them. They are swift and mobile, and they travel in four directions in straight lines (not arcs) like an army of God, carrying out His commands.

4) The Chariot – The angels themselves are, in a sense, the chariot of God, the bearers of his Heavenly throne (**Have someone read Psalm 104:4 and compare this verse with Hebrews 1:7**). In the days of Moses, it was the Levites who carried the earthly throne of

God (the ark of the covenant) and now, it is the church who bears the name and the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ to the world.

Wheels - This “chariot” (four angels) in Ezekiel had four wheels that each consisted of a “wheel in a wheel” (see verses 15-17) which some commentators see as indicating that the chariot could go instantly in any direction. It is the wheels which connect the chariot-throne of God to the earth, reminding us of the prayer we pray every Lord’s Day (“Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven”)

Eyes - The rims of the wheels are said to be “full of eyes, all around the four of them” (see verse 18). This reminds us that the eyes (providential oversight) of the Lord see in all directions all the time and in all periods of history, as the Scripture says: “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those whose heart is loyal to Him...*” 2 Chronicles 16:9

5) The Firmament - Above the angels and the wheels was the beautiful firmament (an expanse) which separates Heaven and the throne of God, from the earth (see verses 22, 23, 25, 26). And above this firmament was the throne of God.

6) The Throne – This throne is also beautiful and upon this throne “was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it” (verse 26). It is the Lord Himself who is awesome in appearance and full of light (verse 27). The voice of the Lord sounds from this throne (verse 24) and will soon speak to Ezekiel as well. Around the throne was a beautiful rainbow (verse 28a) which reminds us of the covenant that God made with Noah never again to destroy the earth by flood, and of the covenant He will renew with Israel after He has judged her.

7) Ezekiel’s reaction - Ezekiel, as the new High Priest of Israel, has been ushered into the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God. He is so overwhelmed by what he sees that he falls on his face (verse 28b). The voice of God speaks to him and the Spirit enters Ezekiel and tells him to “stand on your feet”, just like the four living creatures who stood straight legged on their feet. This is a picture of Ezekiel becoming like the angels (the chariot) and he will bear the name of Yahweh and do the Spirit’s bidding (Chapter 2:1-2). Ezekiel will be the one to bring the Light of the Word of the Lord to God’s people who are in the Darkness of their own sin and of exile.

2:3-7 – Commission - Day 2 - Firmament

2:3-7 – Commission – On Day 2, God sets up the firmament chamber between heaven and earth, the place where man is to reside under God and over the world (see Genesis 1:6-8). In this section we see Ezekiel placed between God and Israel as High Priest and prophet. Later, on Day 4, God placed the sun, moon and stars in this firmament to “rule” over the day and the night. God’s people, in a sense, are to abide in this firmament (between God and the creation), ruling over the whole created order, bringing God’s Word and will to the earth (“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven”). Here, in the rest of

chapter 2, we see Ezekiel being placed by God in the “firmament” so to speak, standing between God and sinful Israel, and commissioned as both High Priest and Prophet.

Verses 3-4 – The Lord speaks to Ezekiel, addressing him as “Son of man” (literally, “son of Adam”). Ezekiel will be referred to by this name over 90 times in this book. As was said in Lesson 1, this is a clear reference to Ezekiel as a sort of new Adam, ushering in a “new creation” for Israel. He is a forerunner of Jesus, the ultimate new Adam, who brought about a new creation to the entire created order through His life, death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven. God tells Ezekiel that he is sending him to the children of Israel. **Ask the class, “Why is God sending Ezekiel to His people?” (Because they are a sinful and rebellious people)** As we learn in other portions of Scripture (see Isaiah and Micah for example), the sins that were most condemning for the people of Judah were that of idolatry and social injustice (enslaving and abusing their fellow Jews).

The Lord describes their sin as generational – Both they and their fathers are guilty. They are also called “impudent” (literally “hard of face”) and “stubborn” because they have not repented, even in their state of exile.

Verses 5 and 7 - Twice in this portion, the Lord tells Ezekiel to speak to the people **whether they listen or not**. The Lord repeats this exhortation in 3:11 as well – We are all called to be faithful to do the Kingdom work that that God gives us. How successful our Kingdom work is (in terms of visible results) is up to the Lord..

Verse 6 - Ezekiel is to fear the Lord and not the people to whom he will speak, who are described as “briers and thorns and scorpions”. This tells us that the Israelites who will oppose Ezekiel are like the cursed ground of the Promised Land (briars and thorns) and the evil rulers who have led Israel astray (scorpions). Ezekiel is not to be afraid of their words not be dismayed by their looks (v.6).

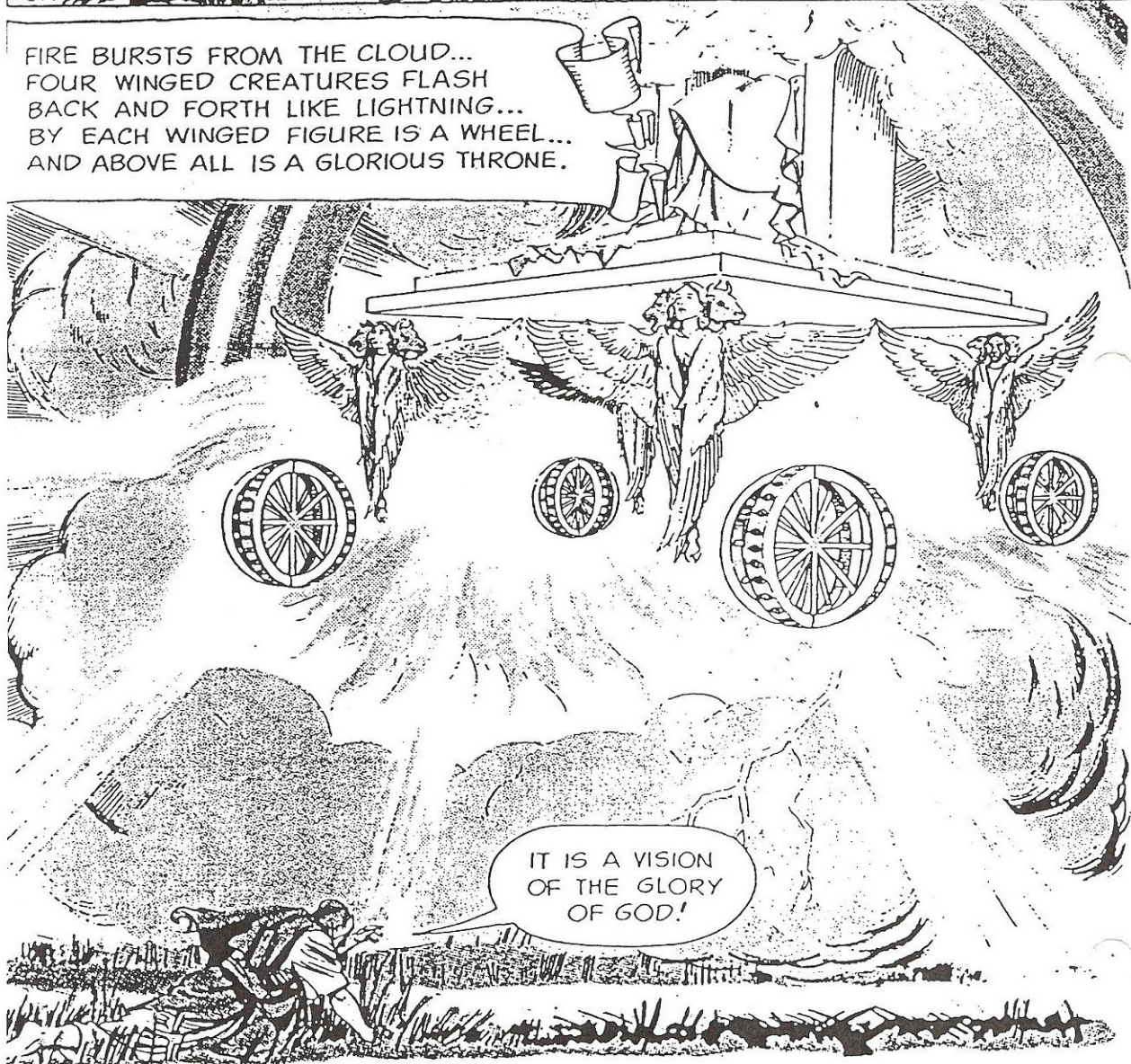
When we sin, let us be those who are soft hearted when it comes to receiving rebukes from the Lord, through His word and through the voice of our brothers and sisters in Christ, that the Lord may restore us to fellowship with Himself and them

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 3:12-5:17. Try and figure out how this portion of Scripture relates to the fourth and fifth day of creation. Work on memorizing the outline for Ezekiel and Ezekiel 2:3.

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**



FIRE BURSTS FROM THE CLOUD...
FOUR WINGED CREATURES FLASH
BACK AND FORTH LIKE LIGHTNING...
BY EACH WINGED FIGURE IS A WHEEL...
AND ABOVE ALL IS A GLORIOUS THRONE.



Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 3 – Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand – Part 2

Chapter 2:8-5:17 – Food, Rule, and City

Objective – To understand that chronic unrepentant sin results in the severe judgments of God

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse** – **(Go through this verse several times with the students)**
Ezekiel 2:3 – And He said to me: “Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; They and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.”

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – (Got through this several times with the students)**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review – Use the following questions and answers to review the last lesson with the students (10 minutes or less)**

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel and of the whole world!)
- How is the coming of the chariot throne of God like Day 1 of creation? (God, through Ezekiel is bringing the light of His Word into the darkness of the sin and captivity of Israel)
- Why is the coming of the chariot throne of God to Ezekiel both good and bad news to Israel? (Good – God has not abandoned them, but is with them in Babylon; Bad – God’s judgment is coming)
- Name the four faces of the living creatures (ox, lion, eagle, man)

- How do these four faces relate to the four main periods in the history of God's people? (Ox = Moses/Priestly; Lion = David/Kingly; Eagle = World Empires; Man = the Church after Jesus' ascension)
- How do these four faces relate to the work of Jesus? (Ox = Priest; Lion = King; Eagle = Prophet; Man = New Adam)
- What will the burning coals of fire (with lightning) in the midst of the four living creatures be used for? (In chapter 10 we will see that these burning coals are used to bring judgment on Israel for her sin).
- Describe the wheels of the chariot – (Wheel within a wheel; eyes all around the rims)
- What sits above the wheels? (The firmament)
- What sits above the firmament? (The throne)
- Who sits on the throne? (God)
- How did Ezekiel react when he saw the four living creatures, the chariot and the throne of God? (Fell on his face)
- In chapter 2, who is placed like a firmament as priest and prophet between God and the Israelite exiles? (Ezekiel)
- What name does God call Ezekiel many times that tells us that Ezekiel is a sort of New Adam? (Son of Man)
- True or False – God is sending Ezekiel to the exiles to tell them of their sin and of the judgments to come and of their need to repent. (True)
- True or False – God wants Ezekiel to continue to speak to the Israelites only if they listen to him (False)

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 2:8-5:17 -

So far, in our study of Ezekiel we have seen echoes of the seven days of creation two times:

- 1) The book as a whole seems to reflect the seven days of creation as seen in the outline which we are memorizing
- 2) The first seven chapters of Ezekiel can also be linked to the seven days of creation. We covered the first two of these “days” in our last lesson

1:1-2:2 – Vision of the Chariot – Day 1 – Light – On Day 1, the Father sends the Spirit to the world to defeat darkness. In these verses, God comes riding on His chariot-throne bringing light to Israel who sits in the darkness of sin and exile. God's Spirit then enters Ezekiel who, in a sense, becomes the chariot, bringing light (God's presence, judgment, and hope) to His people.

2:3-7 – Commission – Day 2 - Firmament – On Day 2, God sets up the firmament chamber between heaven and earth, the place where man is to reside under God and over the world (see Genesis 1:6-8). In this section we see Ezekiel as a firmament mediator (priest and prophet) between God and Israel.

In today's lesson we will see echoes of Days 3, 4, and 5.

2:8-3:11 – Message – Day 3 – Food

2:8 - Ezekiel is exhorted by the Lord not to become rebellious himself by failing to speak all of the words the Lord will give him to say. These words are given to Ezekiel in the form of **food** (a scroll) written on both sides which he is to eat. We too should “eat” (read, memorize, meditate on) God’s Word, for our own edification and so that we can speak it accurately to those whom God brings across our path.

2:9-3:3 – Ask the students, What did God create on the third day?

On Day 3, God sets up the altar-world and it grows grain plants and fruit plants (see Genesis 1:9-13), which reminds us of the bread and wine that we partake of at our Communion meal during Lord’s Day worship. Ezekiel too is given his message in the form of **food** (a scroll which he eats). These words, written on the scroll, are like those of a lawsuit (charges) being brought by God against Israel for violating the terms of the wonderful covenant He had made with them.

3:4-7 – Israel, who has been given the Law of God and the prophets, who speak to them in their own language, should be eager to repent when Ezekiel comes. However, they have become impudent (Stubborn - literally, “hard faced”) and hard hearted and will not listen to Ezekiel’s words. The Lord says that even the pagan nations around Israel would be more responsive to Ezekiel’s exhortation than Israel will be.

3:8-11 – (Have a student read verses 8-9) - Israel is hard-faced and hard-hearted when it comes to her sin and the Lord will make Ezekiel just as hard when it comes to the words of judgment which he will speak to them. (Remember, Ezekiel’s name means “God makes hard”) He is again exhorted to not be afraid of those who will oppose his message, and to speak the Words of God to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear.

3:12-21 – Watchman – Day 4 – Rule

On Day 4, God sets up rulers in the firmament (sun, moon and stars) to govern/watch over the world (see Genesis 1:14-19). As James Jordan points out, in this portion of Ezekiel, Ezekiel is lifted up by the Spirit into the firmament to act as a ruler (priest and prophet) over Israel. Ezekiel says that he is taken up “in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit” (verse 14) because he is imaging God’s indignation at the sin of Israel. Ezekiel undergoes his priestly, 7-day ordination in verses 15-16 (c.f. Leviticus 8), and is made a watchman (ruler) over Israel (2:17).

Have a student read verses 18-21 and have someone summarize God’s warning to Ezekiel: If Ezekiel does not warn the people of the coming wrath of God, Ezekiel will be held responsible for their destruction. However if Ezekiel does warn them and they do not repent, then their blood is on their own heads.

Remember, pastors are in the same difficult position that Ezekiel was. They are charged by God to warn the people of their sin and woe to them if they fail to do this!

3:22-5:17 – City – Day 5 – Swarms

On Day 5, God created the swarms of birds and fishes, representing a cloudy host of worshippers (angels and men) around His altar-land. In the nation of Israel, Jerusalem was the very heart of this altar-land complex. In this portion of Ezekiel we hear in various ways of the judgment that is coming to Jerusalem and on the “swarm” of the people of Israel who have abandoned the true worship of Yahweh.

This seven-part discussion of the judgment that is to come to Jerusalem and her “swarm” (Ezekiel 3:22-5:17) reminds us a third time of the seven days of creation:

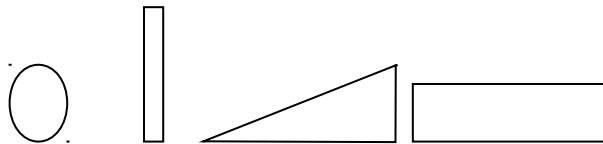
3:24-27 - Day 1 – Light– Ezekiel is being shut up in his house and this images God’s position in His heavenly house, bringing **light** (judgment and restoration) to the darkness of Israel’s sin and exile. Ezekiel’s house becomes like a mini-Temple, the place from which God speaks (brings light to) to His people. Ezekiel is isolated from God’s people, and they from Him picturing God’s separation from those who should be gathered as a swarm about the Temple of the Lord, worshipping Him.

Ezekiel’s being tied up with ropes in verse 25 may be literal or figurative but, in either case, Ezekiel is a bondservant of the Lord and is to only speak and act as the Lord directs. Israel, on the other hand, is like those rebellious nations in Psalm 2 who try and break the bonds (ropes) of servitude towards Yahweh (see Psalm 2:1-3).

Notice in verse 26-27 that Ezekiel is not to have normal conversation with this rebellious people, but only speak those words of judgment and hope that God will place in his mouth. The fact that Ezekiel is barred from going out among the people and from having normal conversation with them is a sign of God’s separation from and judgment of sinful Israel.

4:1-8 - Day 2 – Firmament – Have a student read these verses. Draw a picture on the white board illustrating this object lesson:

- Clay tablet with the city of Jerusalem displayed on it.
- Siege ramp - An earthen ramp laid against the city wall, which the Babylonians will build in order to enter and destroy Jerusalem
- Iron plate between the ramp and Ezekiel
- Ezekiel lying on his side on the far side of the iron plate



Ezekiel Iron Plate Siege Ramp Clay Tablet

Clay reminds us of the “dust of the earth” that men are made of (see Genesis 2:7) and so represents the people of Israel as well as Jerusalem itself. The iron barrier between Ezekiel and Jerusalem pictures the **firmament** barrier of separation between God and Jerusalem (the people), which cannot be penetrated because of their sin. It reminds us of Leviticus 26:14ff in which God describes the curses (judgments) that will come upon Israel if they did not obey His Law. On the other hand, for the time being this “iron plate” also holds back God’s full wrath.

Have a student read Leviticus 26:18-20 and look for the word “iron” in these verses. The iron plate also reminds us that Ezekiel is to be hard-faced towards the people who have disobeyed Yahweh.

While lying on his side, Ezekiel is to bear (hold up) the sin of Israel before God for particular lengths of time:

According to verse 4, how many days is Ezekiel to lie on his left side, and for whom? (390 days for the “house of Israel”)

Verse 5 tells us that he was then to lie on his right side for how many days and for whom?(40 days for the “house of Judah”)

Bible scholars do not agree on what these particular days mean.

-390 days may represent the time of Israel’s idolatry which lasted approximately 390 years from just after the building of the Temple until the exile to Babylon

- 40 days may represent the 40 years from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem until the time when Cyrus the Persian gave the command for the Israelites (consisting mainly of the tribe of Judah) to return to the land and rebuild the Temple.

Also, when we add $390 + 40$ we get 430, which is the number of years that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt prior to the exodus (Exodus 12:40-41). Israel is once again in slavery, this time in Babylon, which is like another Egypt.

No matter what the particular numbers of days mean, it is clear that Israel’s iniquity is “full” and that all of the judgments warned about in Leviticus 26:14ff are going to come on God’s people

4:9-17 - Day 3 – Bread and Wine – Ezekiel is given bread and water to eat reminding us of Day 3 of creation in which grain plants and fruit trees begin to grow. However, the food which Ezekiel is to eat is poor man’s food. Moreover, Ezekiel is to eat only a small amount per day and he is limited to less than a liter of water ($1/6$ of a hin) per day as well, pointing to the poverty, famine and thirst that awaits those in Jerusalem at the time of its destruction. (see verses 16-17)

At first God tells Ezekiel to bake his bread on a fire of human dung (v. 13) which rendered whatever it touched unclean (see Deuteronomy 23:14-15). Human dung in Ezekiel’s house (which represents the Temple) shows that the Temple of God had become defiled by Israel’s sin, especially the sin of the priests.

Ezekiel’s pleading with God not to have him use human dung can be seen as a prayer of intercession for the nation of Israel. In response, God allows Ezekiel to bake his bread over cow (clean) dung instead, which is a picture of hope for the future.

God will now give Ezekiel a second object lesson for the people, telling them once again of the judgment that is to come upon Jerusalem.

5:1-2 - Day 4 – Rulers – Ezekiel is positioned as heavenly judge (ruler) judging Jerusalem. reminding us of the sun, moon and stars, rulers of the day and night, that God

created on Day 4. Ezekiel, as ruler (priest and prophet) in Israel, uses his own body as the picture of the judgment that is to come on the city.

God commands him to take a sharp sword and to use it to cut off all of his head and beard.

What is he to do with the hair?

- 1/3 of it he is to burn with fire
- 1/3 third of it he is to strike with the sword
- 1/3 third of it he is to scatter

As the students to tell you what they think this means. This object lesson will be explained in verse 12.

5:3-6 - Day 5 – Swarms – The hair on Ezekiel’s head and face (his “glory cloud”) reminds us of the swarms of birds and fish that God created on Day 5 which pictures the people of God gathered around his altar-throne as a sort of glory cloud, worshipping Him. Thus the people of God are being cut off from the presence of God just as Ezekiel’s hair is cut off from his head and face.

God then tells Ezekiel to take a few of the hairs and to hide them in his cloak (verse 3).

Ask the student to tell you what they think this means. God will mercifully rescue a remnant of the people from the judgment that is to come to Jerusalem, but even some of these will perish (see verse 4).

Verses 5-6 tell us that Israel was to be a priestly nation, bringing the worship of Yahweh to the nations. Instead, they have sinned more than the nations that are around her.

5:7-12 - Day 6 – Man – Man was created on Day 6 and these verses show us that the object lesson using Ezekiel’s hair is a judgment against the men (and women) of Jerusalem. Because of Israel’s sin, judgment unlike anything seen before will fall on the city of Jerusalem (verses 7-9). As the Babylonian siege continues, famine will become so severe that the people in Jerusalem will even resort to cannibalism (verse 10). God will not show pity on them but will bring on them all of the curses of Leviticus 26:14ff

1/3 of the people will perish by pestilence and famine

1/3 of the people will perish by the sword of the Babylonians

1/3 of the people will be scattered (flee the city) and be pursued

5:13-17 - Day 7 – Sabbath – Verse 13 tells us that, when the full wrath of God has come upon Jerusalem and the people, He will rest (Sabbath) from his fury. The result will be that after all of the judgments of God have fallen on Jerusalem and the people (verses 16-17) the nations around Israel will see what has become of her and be astonished (verses 14-15) and (hopefully) taught a lesson as well.

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 6 and 7 and write down any connections you see between these chapters and the 6th and 7th Days of the Creation Week. As you read chapter 7, write down repeated phrases. Work on outline and verse memorization

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 4 – Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand – Part 3 Chapters 6-7 – Mountains and Land

Objective – To help the students to see that though God is patient and merciful, the wrath of God is severe when it comes

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse – QUIZ NEXT WEEK!**

(Go through this verse several times with the students)

Ezekiel 2:3 – And He said to me: “Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; They and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.”

❖ Outline of Ezekiel – (Got through this several times with the students)

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ Review – Use the following questions and answers to review the last lesson with the students (10 minutes or less)

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel)

In our study of Ezekiel we have seen echoes of the seven days of creation:

- 1) The book as a whole seems to reflect the seven days of creation as seen in the outline which we are memorizing. **Remind the students that we are still on the Day 1 portion of the main outline for Ezekiel.**

2) The first seven chapters of Ezekiel (Day 1) can also be linked to the seven days of creation. We have covered the first five of these “days” in the last two lessons:

Write the scripture references on the board and ask the students if they remember what was talked about in each of these sections of Ezekiel and how that related to the days of creation (Have them use their Bibles if they can’t remember).

1:1-2:2 – Vision of the Chariot – Day 1 – Light – On Day 1, the Father sends the Spirit to the world to defeat darkness. In these verses, God comes riding on His chariot-throne bringing light to Israel who sits in the darkness of sin and exile. God’s Spirit then enters Ezekiel who, in a sense, becomes the chariot, bringing light (God’s presence, judgment, and hope) to His people.

2:3-7 – Commission – Day 2 - Firmament – On Day 2, God sets up the firmament chamber between heaven and earth, the place where man is to reside under God and over the world (see Genesis 1:6-8). In this section we see Ezekiel as a firmament-mediator (priest and prophet) between God and Israel.

2:8-3:11 – Message – Day 3 – Food - On Day 3, God sets up the altar-world and it grows grain plants and fruit plants (food) which reminds us of the bread and wine we partake of at our Communion meal during Lord’s Day worship. Ezekiel too is given his message in the form of food (a scroll which he eats).

3:12-21 – Watchman – Day 4 – Rule - On Day 4, God sets up rulers (sun, moon and stars) in the firmament to rule/watch over the world (see Genesis 1:14-19). In this portion of Ezekiel, Ezekiel is lifted up by the Spirit into the firmament to act as a ruler (priest and prophet) over Israel.

3:22-5:17 – City – Day 5 – Swarms - On Day 5, God created the swarms of birds and fishes, representing a cloudy host of worshippers (angels and men) around His altar-land. In the nation of Israel, Jerusalem was the very heart of this altar-land complex. In this portion of Ezekiel we hear in various ways of the judgment that is coming to Jerusalem, the Temple and on the “swarm” of the people of Israel who have abandoned the true worship of Yahweh.

- What two object lessons did God have Ezekiel use to illustrate the judgment that was coming on Jerusalem and what do they mean?

1) Ezekiel lies on the ground with an iron plate between him and the city of Jerusalem which is under siege by the Babylonians. God has separated Himself from Israel (Jerusalem) and His judgments will fall upon her.

2) Ezekiel cuts off his hair and beard and destroying it in three ways. The full wrath of God as seen in Leviticus 26:14ff will come on Jerusalem

In today’s lessons, we will see echoes of Days 6 and 7 of the creation week

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 6-7 – Mountains and Land

6:1-14 – Mountains - Day 6 - Man – Have one of the students read Genesis 1:28. On Day 6 of the creation week, God established man, His image bearer, as world ruler on the mountain of Eden. However, one of the prevailing sins of the Israelites prior to their exile was the worship of false gods on high places (mountains) under the direction of the priests (rulers). In chapter 6, the Lord commands Ezekiel to prophecy against this high place worship and to declare His judgments that are coming as a result of this idolatry.

In verse 1 we see that this is a new word from the Lord comes to Ezekiel as it has on two other occasions thus far in the book (See Ezekiel 1:3 and 3:16). The Lord tells Ezekiel to preach judgment to the mountains. As James Jordan has pointed out, mountains are where the worship of Yahweh was to take place. They represent the heavenly realm where God dwells and is worshipped. The first altars to Yahweh were made in the shape of small mountains. The Temple was in the shape of a mountain and was placed on a mountain itself (Mt. Moriah – see 2 Chronicles 3:1). Additionally, mountains are made of rock, and rock is made of soil (the dust of the earth) and so too are men. Thus mountains also represent the people of God who are supposed to be like mountains, holding up the throne of the one true God, worshipping Him alone, just as the four living creatures held up the chariot-throne of Yahweh in Ezekiel 1.

However, instead of worshipping Yahweh on the mountain He established, the Israelites had worshipped idols on mountains (high places) of their own choosing for most of the years leading up to the exile. These high places (and the people they represent) are now undergoing the judgment of God.

Have a student read verses 2-7 and ask, “What sort of judgments are coming to these high places?”

Verse 3 – The Lord will bring a sword against them

Verse 4 – Their altars shall be desolate, their incense altars broken and men shall be slain there

Verse 5 – Dead bodies defile (make unclean) whatever they touch and the Lord will defile the high place altars with the corpses and bones of the Israelite idolaters

In Ezekiel 37 we will see (what some believe to be) these very bones live again as God shows mercy on those he is now judging!

Verse 6 – The result of this judgment is the laying waste and desolation of the cities, high places and altars where this idolatrous worship takes place.

All of these judgments are coming with one purpose in mind (see verse 7): **“...and you shall know that I am the Lord”**. Yahweh is asserting His supremacy over all other (so called) gods. This is the first of over **60 times** in Ezekiel (and four times in this chapter alone!) that the phrase “...you (or “they”) shall know that I am the Lord” is used!

As we skip to Verses 11-14 of chapter 6, we learn that the judgments of God will be severe, relentless and complete.

Have a student read verses 11-14:

- Those who live far from Jerusalem will die by pestilence (plague) which God will send
- Many who live nearby Jerusalem will die by the sword of the Babylonians.
- Those who escape to within the walls of Jerusalem will starve to death as the Babylonians besiege the city (surround it and wait for all of the food and water to run out within the city)

Thus, there is nowhere to hide when the wrath of God falls!

Verse 11 tells us that Ezekiel is to clap (pound) his hands and stamp his feet as he tells the people of the judgments to come. These physical gestures emphasize the severity of the wrath that is coming upon them. God tells them in verse 12, “Thus I will spend (finish, completely exhaust) My fury upon them”. Just as the Lord will tear down the high place idol worship and make them desolate, so too the people themselves will be torn down and the whole Promised Land will be made desolate as well (verses 13-14).

However, there is hope for Israel! Chapter 6 of Ezekiel is laid out in a chiasm:

6:1-7 – Judgment

6:8-10 – Mercy

6:11-14 – Judgment

As we will see throughout the book of Ezekiel, in the midst of severe wrath and chastisement that we read about in verses 1-7 and 11-14, the Lord will still extend mercy to Israel.

Have a student read verses 8-10. Israel has been an unfaithful bride to Yahweh, her “husband” and, in fact has acted like a harlot, going after other “husands” (gods). The Lord says that he was “crushed” (broken, shattered) by their adultery, yet He will mercifully preserve a remnant of His people. The Lord, through His judgments on her, will make this remnant to be ashamed of their adulterous deeds. As God says in verses 10 and 14, “And they shall know that I am the Lord...”

7:1-27 – Land – Day 7 – Sabbath – On Day 7 of the Creation week, the Lord brings an **end** to His **creation** work and rests. Here in chapter 7 we see a description of the final **de-creation** of Israel as the wrath of God is fully unleashed against them. **Have the students look over the first 7 verses of chapter 7 and point out all of the places where the God speaks of the end coming (see verses 2,3 and 6).**

Throughout her history, the people of Israel have repeatedly been unfaithful to Yahweh, especially in terms of unholy worship and ungodly behavior towards each other. The Lord was very patient with them and, over and over again, He sent them prophets as well as chastisements to bring them to repentance. However, Israel abused the mercy of God and continued in her unholy, sinful ways. This resulted in the exile to Babylon of her king (Jehoiakim) and some of her best people, including Ezekiel and Daniel. Her unfaithfulness will now result in her final defeat in the Promised Land, the destruction of

the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the exile of most of the rest of the people to Babylon.

Galatians 6:7 says “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” And Hebrews 10:30-31 says, “For we know Him who said, *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,”* says the Lord. And again, *“The LORD will judge His people.”* ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

As portrayed here in chapter 7, Israel, because of her sin, has fallen into the hands of the living God and His wrath will come now upon them with no further pity (see verse 4) nor opportunity for repentance.

Chapter 7 is laid out like a poem or, perhaps, even a song that Ezekiel said/sang to the exiles. There are many repeated words and phrases in chapter 7. **Have the students look at the following verses and state what word or phrase is repeated or nearly repeated:**

Verses 2,3,6 (see also verses 10-12)– “An (the) end has come...”

Verses 3,4,8,9 (see also verses 20 and 27) – “ways” and “abominations”

Verses 4, 9 – “My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity”

Verses 4,9,27 – “Then you shall know that I am the Lord”

Verse 11 – “None”

We will consider each of these repeated phrases in turn:

A) Verses 2,3,6, (see also verses 10-12) – “An (the) end has come...” - God’s mercy and patience are not without limit. If a man of a nation continues in unrepentant sin, they can be sure that the wrath of God will come upon them. Just as the sin of the Caananites became full prior to God sending Israel to defeat them and to take the Promised Land as their own, so too Israel’s sin has become full and they are about to be thrust out of the land...the end has come. The “four corners of the land” (verse 2) could refer just to the Promised Land, or it could refer to the whole world, as God will bring judgments to bear, not only on Israel, but on the nations around her as well (see Ezekiel 20-23).

In verse 6 we see God’s judgment described as the coming of the dawn and verse 7 calls it “a day of trouble”. The “Day of the Lord” of+ the “Lord’s Day”, which we celebrate every Sunday, is a day where God comes and evaluates His people. This can be a day of rejoicing, or, as in the case of unrepentant Israel, a day of doom (see verses 7 and 10).

Verse 10 says “Behold, the day! Behold, it has come! Doom has gone out; The rod has blossomed, Pride has budded.” Just as Aaron’s rod blossomed to prove who the true priests of Israel were (see Numbers 17), false priests and worship has sprung up in prideful Israel and their sin (and the judgment that results) has come to full bloom.

Verse 12 says, “The time has come, the day draws near” – This “time” and “day” has been warned of by God from the times of Moses (see Leviticus 26:14ff), through the days of Joshua, the judges, and all of the kings of Israel by means of His prophets. None of what

God is going to bring upon Israel should be a surprise to them, nor to us when we fail to repent of our sin!

B) Verses 3,4,8,9 (see also 20, 27) – “ways” and “abominations”

God’s wrath is not arbitrary. It is directly related to Israel’s sin. Specifically, it is related to her:

1) Ways – The Hebrew word speaks of a path, or journey and may refer to the overall moral direction of the people. Instead of following hard after Yahweh and His Law, the nation of Israel walked in the ways of the heathen nations around them, both in their daily life and in their worship.

2) Abominations – This word “abominations” also refers to Israel’s sin, particularly in regard to her position as a priest (representative of Yahweh) to the nations. Israel was not to commit the “abominable” sins of the nations around her. Instead she was to be an example of submissive, joyful obedience to Yahweh, drawing all the nations to Him.

C) Verses 4, 9 – “My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity” – When the Lord appeared to Moses to renew covenant with Israel Exodus 34:6-7 says, “And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.” Though God is merciful and longsuffering, when His wrath finally comes, it comes in full force, without sparing and without pity. We saw this phrase in Ezekiel 5:11 and will see it again in chapters 8 and 9.

D) Verses 4,9,27 – “Then you shall know that I am the Lord”

Here we see three more examples of the more than 60 instances in the book of Ezekiel where God tells the people the purpose of His judgments; That Israel will understand that Yahweh is the one true almighty God, and there is no other Lord of heaven and earth

E) Verse 11 – “None” – This word is repeated three times in verse 11. God’s judgment will fall on all of those who remain in the Promised Land. **None** will be unaffected, though a remnant will be saved from death.

The results of this terrible judgment of God are seen in verses 12-27 (**Write these five on the board**):

1) Financial ruin

- Verses 12-13 tell us that normal buying and selling are coming to an end
- Verse 19 says that, because of war and famine, silver and gold will become worthless. This can speak both of the silver and gold used for buying and selling and the idols themselves, many of which were made of silver and gold

2) Death by the sword or starvation

- Verses 14-18 - Those who stay outside of the walls of Jerusalem will perish by the sword of the Babylonians and those who flee to Jerusalem will starve in the siege or die of disease within the city. Those who escape the city will be scattered and suffer miserably in the wilderness. Recall that we saw these same three judgments (sword, famine/pestilence and scattering) in chapters 5 and 7 in our last lesson.

3) Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple

- Verses 20-25 that the idols that now fill the Temple will be destroyed along with the Temple itself by the hands of the “worst of the Gentiles” (the Babylonians). All of the wealth of the city and the Temple will be taken by them. The phrase “make a chain” in verse 23 is difficult to interpret but could be a similar metaphor to the iron plate in chapter 4 in that God is separating Himself from His people.

4) A Famine for the Word of God

- Verse 26 tells us that God will send no more prophets to Israel, nor will the Law be taught any longer in Israel. When the Lord stops speaking to a person or a nation, there is nothing left but judgment.

5) Terror and confusion – Throughout this chapter the Lord, through Ezekiel describes the troubling emotions that the people will endure - **Have the students look through the chapter and find examples of the range of emotions that the Israelites in the land will experience as the Babylonians defeat them:**

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) Not rejoicing – v. 7 | b) Wailing – v. 11 |
| c) Mourning – v. 16, 27 | d) Horror – v. 18 |
| e) Shame – v. 18 | f) No peace – v. 25 |
| g) Rumors – v. 26 – When trouble is upon us, rumors of worse calamities can be particularly terrifying. | h) Trembling hands – v. 27 |

May the Lord keep us sensitive, both as individuals and as a nation, to the promptings of the Holy Spirit regarding our own sin and not allow us to become hardened as Israel had become, lest His terrible, pitiless wrath fall upon us. For He indeed is the Lord!

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 8-9. QUIZ ON EZEKIEL 2:3; Work on outline memory.

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 5 – Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged – Part 1 Chapter 8-9 – Abominations That Cause Desolation

Objective – To help the students to understand “the abomination of desolation” with a view to pray for holiness, especially within the church leadership and to keep themselves from sin as well.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse – QUIZ!** Pass out a sheet of paper to each student and have them write out and pass in Ezekiel 2:3 – And He said to me: “Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; They and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.”

New memory verse (Go through this several times with the students) :

Ezekiel 11:19-20 Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – (Got through this several times with the students)**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review – Use the following questions and answers to review the last lesson with the students (5 minutes or less)**

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel)

- In chapter 6, which can remind us of Day 6 of creation, the Lord calls upon Ezekiel to speak against what geographical feature? (mountains)
- What did these mountains represent? (the high place worship of idols that was so common in Israel)
- How is chapter 7 of Ezekiel like the 7th Day of Creation? (The Lord speaks of bringing an end (Sabbath) to the judgments against Israel)
- True or False – When His full judgments come upon Israel, Yahweh says that he will not have pity on them. (True)
- Name some of the hardships that will come upon Israel in the midst of these judgments. (financial ruin, death by sword or starvation, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, a famine for the Word of God, terror and confusion)

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 8-9 – Abominations that Cause Desolation

Introduction to Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged

Setting: We see a time marker that tells us that this is a new section in the book of Ezekiel (Have as student read Ezekiel 8:1).

On Day Two, the Lord created the firmament which served to separate the waters above it from the waters below. This dividing is often seen in Scripture as a separating of God and His faithful people from His enemies. On Day 4, the sun, moon and stars are placed in the firmament to rule the day and the night. Israel's kings and priests were supposed to be rulers for Yahweh over Israel and, ultimately, the whole world. Instead they have become His enemies, committing many abominations (sins) even before His face in the Temple. In Chapter 8, Ezekiel is shown all of the abominations that are taking place in Jerusalem and in the Temple. Chapters 9-11 are a series of three depictions of the judgment that God is bringing upon Jerusalem, culminating in Yahweh's desolating (leaving) the Temple, the city and the entire Promised Land, thus separating Himself from His wicked people. This is followed in chapters 12 and 13 by five messages of judgment, the first two involving symbolic actions on Ezekiel's part of 1) packing and leaving and 2) eating food with fear.

Introduction: Abomination (Detestables) of Desolation

The word "abomination(s)" (Hebrew word "toebah" or "towebah") is used over 140 times in the Old Testament. This word can denote nearly any of the practices that the Law of God forbade, but it often particularly refers to those sins which the heathen nations around Israel practiced:

Leviticus 18:26-28 (NKJV)

²⁶ You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these **abominations**, *either* any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you ²⁷ (for all these **abominations** the men of the land have done, who *were* before you, and thus the land is defiled), ²⁸ lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that *were* before you.

The worship of false gods (idolatry) was prominent among these sins:

Deuteronomy 12:29-31 "When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their

gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ ³¹ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every **abomination** to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.

These sins were bad enough when practiced in the homes and daily lives of the Israelites, or even on the high places of Israel. However, when these same sins were practiced in the context of Temple worship, and particularly by the priests and Levites (i.e. right in God’s face!), the Scripture often uses a different Hebrew word to describe them. This word, “shiqquwts or shiqquws” (pronounced shik-**koots**), which is also usually translated “abomination”, literally means “detestable”. These high-handed sins (“detestables”), committed right before the face of God provoked Yahweh to remove his presence from among his people several times in the history of Israel, an event termed **“the abomination of desolation”** or the **“abomination that makes desolate”**. Simply put, in response to the “abomination” (detestable acts) of the people, God packs up and departs, leaving the land of Israel and the people of God “desolate” of His presence. This is often followed by the coming in of the enemies of God as His instrument of judgment on His people.

James Jordan sees three occurrences of the abomination of desolation in the Old Testament. (**Ask the students if they know any of these occurrences in Scripture**):
1) The Flood of Noah – As the sin (abominations) of man came to full maturity, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5). At this point, God departs from (desolates) the Garden of Eden and sends the enemy (the Flood) to destroy both the Garden and the people. A remnant (Noah and his family) is preserved in “exile” with God in the ark and then are returned to the land to begin a new covenant.

2) Eli and His Sons (see 1 Samuel 1-4) – As we read in 1 Samuel, in the days of the judges, Hophni and Phineas, the wicked sons of Eli and priests to Yahweh, committed many abominations involving the worship of God and their dealing with the women who served at the Tabernacle. Eli sinned as well by not correcting his sons. God responded to these abominations by desolating (leaving) the Tabernacle and Israel, as pictured by the ark of the covenant being captured by the Philistines. At the same time the Philistines were allowed to defeat Israel for a season.

3) The Apostasy of the Priesthood in Ezekiel’s Day – Ezekiel 8-11 will detail the great abominations being committed by all of Israel, especially by the priests and Levites, and much of it in very the Temple itself! Once again, these “detestables” will cause God to desolate the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, opening the door for the Babylonians to come in and destroy them both.

Of course the great “abomination of desolation” spoken of in Daniel 9 and Matthew 24 takes place in the times of Jesus and His disciples. Though the Temple had been rebuilt, the priests, Levites and other religious leaders of Israel continued to commit great

abominations, including hypocrisy, adding to the Law of God, turning the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple into a “den of thieves”, and oppressing the poor, the fatherless and the widow. They refused to listen to John the Baptist and, when Jesus the Messiah came preaching repentance and obedience, they crucified Him. Finally, their abominations came to full fruit in the stoning of Stephen, the murder of James, and the persecution of Paul and the rest of the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven. As prophesied by Jesus Himself, God once again desolated (abandoned) the Temple and the city of Jerusalem, opening the door for the Romans to destroy them both in 70 A.D., just as in the days of Ezekiel.

Notice that in every case, it is not the Gentile unbelievers, but rather those who claim to be the people of God, who commit the abomination(s) that causes God to desolate (leave). We will now consider the abominations that were taking place in Jerusalem during the time when Ezekiel was with the captives in Babylon:

Chapter 8 – A Four-Fold Abomination

Ezekiel is in his house with the elders of Judah who are with him in exile. While he is there, the hand of the Lord comes upon him (remember 1:3) and he again sees a vision of the Lord similar to 1:26-28. The Spirit of the Lord takes Ezekiel by the hair and lifts him up into the firmament, where He shows Ezekiel four visions of the abominations that are taking place in Jerusalem and in the Temple there. It is these and other abominations that will cause God to desolate Jerusalem and the Temple (see verse 6).

It seems likely that Ezekiel is receiving these visions and communicating them to the elders who are with him in exile to show them what will happen as a result of Israel’s abominations. This is to exhort them not to look to God to save Jerusalem or the Temple at this time, but rather to look forward to the time of the restoration after Israel is judged.

This four-fold abomination shows the depth to which the abominations of Israel had extended (**Have students refer to table below and the drawing of the city**):

Verses	Abomination	Location	People
8:3-6	Image of Jealousy	North gate of city	All
8:7-13	Shrine of Idols	Outer wall of Temple	Elders
8:14-15	Weeping for Tammuz	Inner wall of Temple	Women of Temple
8:16-17	Worshipping the Sun	Temple court	Priests

This vision also begins at the northern border of Jerusalem, the direction from which God’s judgment comes (see 1:4). It moves from the gates of the city to the Temple itself and from sin among the people in general to abominable sins of the priests, who were supposed to represent Yahweh to the people and the world. :

1) The Image of Jealousy – Verses 3-6 – The first place Ezekiel is taken (in the Spirit, not literally) is to the northern gate of the city, where the common people would be found. The gates of Jerusalem were where the elders (rulers) sat to guard the entrance to the city,

allowing the righteous to enter and keeping the wicked out. Instead, what we see in these verses is that the elders have allowed wickedness to enter the city in the form of this “Idol of Jealousy”. Bible scholars are uncertain as to what this idol was exactly, but it is clear that it has provoked Yahweh to jealousy. This language reminds us of a marriage in which the husband (Yahweh) is righteously jealous for his wife (Israel) who has been unfaithful and has gone after other suitors (false gods). In the Scripture, a husband who suspected that his wife had been unfaithful could put her through a test, called the “law of jealousy” and, if she were guilty, she would suffer greatly (see Numbers 5:11ff). Additionally, in the Scriptures, if the daughter of a priest was found to be a harlot, then she was to be burned with fire (Leviticus 21:9). As we shall see in Chapter 10, because of her unfaithfulness, especially among her priests, Israel will suffer greatly under the fiery wrath of God. However, Ezekiel “will see greater abominations” (verse 6b).

2) The Shrine of Idols – Verses 7-13 – **Have a student read these verses.** Next, the Lord takes Ezekiel to the outer gate of the Temple which has a hole in it. Ezekiel is instructed to dig into this wall, and to go through the door and see what is inside. **Ask the students, “Where in the Old Testament Law do we see walls being dug into?”** In Leviticus 14:33-57, we see the laws regarding “leprosy” (mold, mildew, dry rot, etc) in a house. If, after seven days, a house was found to be completely full of this decay, then it was to be torn down. Jerusalem has become full of the leprosy of her abominations and God will use the Babylonians to tear her walls down completely in conquest. When he gets inside, Ezekiel sees that the walls are full of pictures of “every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel” and that the elders (rulers) of the city are worshipping these images (verses 11-12). This reminds us of the Egyptians who worshipped the creatures of the earth in the days when Israel was held captive there. Israel has looked to Egypt for help against the Babylonians, and even her elders have become like Egypt in their idolatry. God tells Ezekiel once again that he “will see greater abominations that they are doing” (verse 13b).

3) Weeping for Tammuz – Verses 14-15 – In these verses, we see the women who serve at the temple (Jordan says “deaconesses”) “weeping for Tammuz”. In Babylonian pagan worship, Tammuz was a goddess who died and came to life after being wept over. The weeping ceremony was connected with agricultural rites in that the seed that was sown was wept over (resembling rain or fertilizer) in the name of Tammuz, so that, when they cast seed in the soil “to die”, it might spring up as a new grain plant. It seems as though the worship of Babylonian deities had made its way into Temple worship. But, Ezekiel “will see greater abominations than these” (verse 15b).

4) Worshipping the Sun – Verses 16-18 – Finally, Ezekiel is brought right into the very Temple courtyard, where he sees the worst of these four abominations. He sees 25 priests (likely the 24 chief priests and the high priest) with their backs to the Temple and facing east, worshipping the sun. This idol worship, being led by the priests themselves, right before the face of God in the Temple, along with the other abominations, will cause

Yahweh to desolate (leave) the Temple and the city and bring His wrath and judgment upon them both. **Have a student read verses 17-18. Note that “they have put the branch to their nose” may be a vulgar sign of contempt towards God.**

Ezekiel has been shown a series of four abominations being committed throughout the city of Jerusalem and in the Temple. In chapters 9-11, Ezekiel will now be shown a series of three aspects of the same judgment that God will bring as a result of these abominations:

Chapter 9 – Judgment by God’s angels

Chapter 10 – Judgment by God’s fiery presence

Chapter 11- Judgment by God’s Word

Chapter 9 - Judgment by God’s Angels

Verses 1-3 – Angelic Elders / Priests / Levites

In verse 1, Ezekiel hears the Lord summon to Himself “those who have charge over (or who “guard”) the city”. In response to His summons, six “men” come from the north (the direction of God’s judgment) along with a seventh “man” in a linen garment carrying writing tools. They come and stand in the Temple courtyard beside the bronze altar. Just as the elders are supposed to guard access to the city, it is the priests and Levites who are supposed to be the ones who guard access to the Temple (see Numbers 3:38-39).

However, all of these leaders have failed in their guarding duties and now abominations abound throughout Jerusalem and the Temple. And so the Lord summons these seven, who are almost surely angels, to carry out His judgments. **Ask the students what it is that Lord wants them to do?**

Verses 4-7 – A New Passover / Flood

The angel in linen with the “inkhorn” is to go throughout Jerusalem and “put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.” Those with the mark will be spared the wrath to come. (**Ask the students, “How many people likely received this mark?”** James Jordan thinks that, since The Lord compares Israel with Sodom, very few people received this mark; perhaps fewer than 10!) This marking of the foreheads reminds us of the Passover when Israel marked their door posts with blood so that the angel of death would pass over them. It also reminds us of Day 2 of Creation. As we said above, on Day 2, the Lord created the firmament which served to divide the waters above it from the waters below. This dividing is often seen in Scripture as a separating of God and His faithful people from His enemies, which is clearly portrayed in this portion of Ezekiel.

The other six angels are destroying angels. **Have a student read verses 5-7.** They are to go into the city and kill all who do not have the mark on their foreheads and they are not to let their “eye spare, nor have pity” - verse 5b). Unlike the Passover, when only the firstborn males of the Egyptians were killed, these angels are to “utterly slay old and young, men, maidens and little children and women” (verse 6a) and they are to begin with “the elders who were before the temple”. This utter destruction also reminds us of the

Flood of Noah, when nearly all of the people were killed. The angels carry out the Lord's command, which fills both the city and the temple with dead bodies, thus defiling it physically, just as Israel and her leaders had defiled it spiritually.

Verses 8-11 – The New Moses Intercedes – Have a student read these verses

Just as Moses interceded for the Israelites when 3000 of them were killed in one day for worshipping the golden calf, so too Ezekiel prays to Yahweh to spare a remnant of those in Jerusalem. The Lord will indeed spare those who carry the mark on their foreheads, but will show no pity on the rest, because “the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity”.

We should all pray that the Lord would show us, individually and as a church, how we have sinned against Him, and that He would drive this sin far from us. We should especially pray for our elders and deacons, that the Lord would give them grace to live holy lives as they serve Him, lest He withdraw His presence from us and leave us desolate.

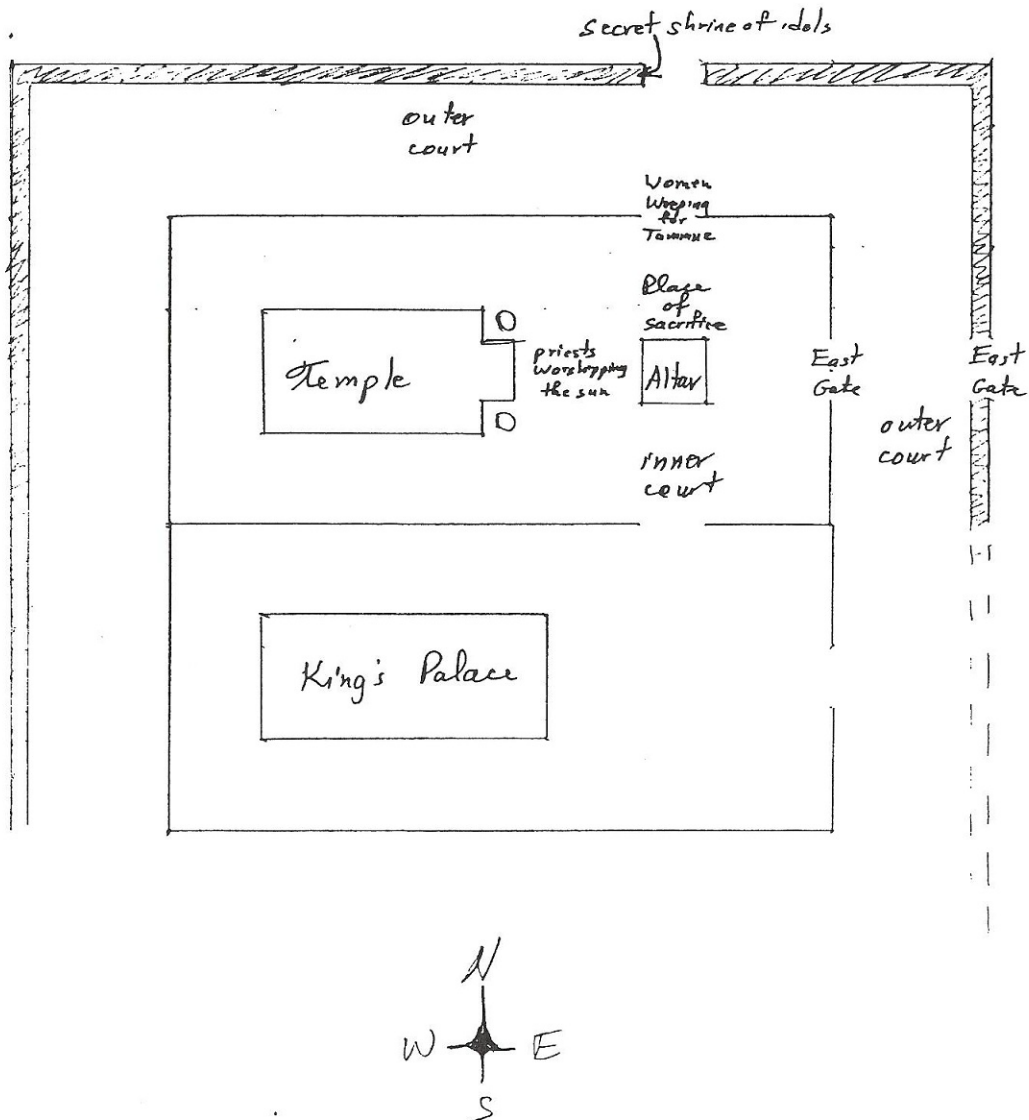
❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 10-11 and work on memorization of Ezekiel 11:19-20 and of the outline for the book.

❖ **Pray / Prep for worship**

City Wall

North Gate (Altar or Sheep Gate)

□ idol of jealousy



Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 6 – Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged – Part 2 Chapter 10-11 – Judgment by Yahweh’s Fiery Presence and Word

Objective – To help the students understand that God is indeed a “consuming fire” in His righteous judgments for sin and that they should be responsive to His Word as it calls them to repentance and to lives lived in holy obedience to Him

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse** – (Go through this several times with the students)

Ezekiel 11:19-20 - Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

- ❖ **Outline of Ezekiel** – (Got through this several times with the students)

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

- ❖ **Review** – Use the following questions and answers to review the last lesson with the students (10 minutes or less)

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel)
- How does Ezekiel 8-13 remind us of Day 2 of creation? (On Day 2, God created the firmament, separating the waters above from the waters below. In this section of Ezekiel, God separates Himself and His faithful people from His sinful enemies).
- What is the “abomination of desolation”? (Horrible sins (abominations), committed by the people of God which result in God leaving (desolating) them)

- Name some times in Israel's history when this "abomination of desolation" occurred: (The flood of Noah, at the time of Eli and his wicked sons, during the times of Ezekiel, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus)
- In Ezekiel 8, what were the four abominations being committed in Jerusalem that the Lord showed to Ezekiel, where did each take place and what people were involved? (Draw this table on the board. The students can use their Bibles to answer this one. Give them the scripture references if they are struggling)

Verses	Abomination	Location	People
8:3-6	Image of Jealousy	North gate of city	All
8:7-13	Shrine of Idols	Outer wall of Temple	Elders
8:14-15	Weeping for Tammuz	Inner wall of Temple	Women of Temple
8:16-17	Worshipping the Sun	Temple court	Priests

- In Ezekiel 9-11 Ezekiel is shown three views of the judgment that is coming to Jerusalem and the Temple. What are these three judgments? (Chapter 9 – Judgment by God's Angels, Chapter 10 – Judgment by God's Fiery Presence, Chapter 11- Judgment by God's Word)
- In Ezekiel 9, what is the man (angel) in linen with the writing kit supposed to do? (Place a mark on the forehead of the faithful people in Jerusalem, sparing them from judgment)
- What is the task of the other six angels? (To kill the unfaithful in Jerusalem).
- What other event(s) in the Old Testament does this event remind us of? (The Passover and the Flood)
- True or False - When Ezekiel intercedes, God says He will not bring this judgment on the people, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple after all. (False – He says that he will show no pity! See Ezekiel 9:9-11)

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 10-11 – Judgment by Yahweh's Fiery Presence and Word Introduction

As we learned in our last lesson, the four-fold abominations going on in Jerusalem, the Temple and throughout Israel (chapter 8), will result in the severe judgments of Yahweh who will ultimately "desolate" (leave) the Temple and the Promised Land. Ezekiel is shown a three-fold picture of this judgment/desolation in chapters 9-11. Each of these chapters shows the same judgment with a different emphasis. In Chapter 9 we saw judgment by God's angels. In chapters 10 and 11 we will see the second and third depictions of this judgment.

Ezekiel 10 – Judgment by Yahweh's Fiery Presence

As chapter 10 begins, Ezekiel once again sees the throne of God above the four living beasts, now identified as cherubim (angels) and also above the blue firmament. **Ask the students, "Who is missing from this picture?" Yahweh is not seated on His throne.**

Recall in Ezekiel 9:3 that Yahweh left His throne and is standing on the porch of the Temple. He is preparing to desolate (leave) the Temple!

Yahweh speaks once again to the “man” (angel) in linen who placed the mark on the foreheads of the faithful in Jerusalem in chapter 9. **Have a student read verses 2-7.**

What is his mission this time? In verse 2, the man in linen is instructed to take fiery coals from among the cherubim (recall Ezekiel 1:13) and scatter them over the city. This fire is the heavenly altar-fire of God, equivalent to the fire on the bronze altar in the Temple that burned up the sacrifices. Recall that when the tabernacle was first erected in the wilderness that it was God’s fire from heaven that actually lit the fire on the bronze altar! (See Leviticus 9:23-24)!

God Himself is spoken of in Scripture as being a “consuming fire” (see Hebrews 12:29, c.f. Exodus 24:17 and Deuteronomy 9:3). In Old Testament times, Yahweh’s fiery presence among His people burned up the sacrifices on the bronze altar in the Tabernacle and Temple, making atonement for their sins. These sacrifices all pointed to Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice offered freely by God for the forgiveness of the sins of those who put their faith and trust in Him. However, the Israelites have rejected Yahweh and His holy fire of forgiveness and instead have sought after other gods. His fiery presence will now consume them!

In verse 3 we learn that the four cherubim are standing on the south side of the temple as the man in linen goes in among them to get the coals of fire. Accompanying Him is the glory (presence) of the Lord as seen in the glory cloud that filled the Temple (verse 4). Both the fire and the cloud are earthly evidences of the presence of God among His people. **Where else have we seen a cloud and fire together in the history of Israel?** Recall that the children of Israel were led from Egypt through the wilderness to the Promised Land by the Lord Himself as seen in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (see Numbers 14:13-14). This time, Yahweh’s glory cloud and His fiery presence, instead of bringing blessing and protection to the Israelites, will bring judgment to the people in Jerusalem, to the city itself, and to the Temple, because of their abominations.

The sound of the wings of the cherubim, as heard in the temple, is like the voice (the Word) of God, but it is a word of judgment and destruction (verse 5). We will learn more of this word in chapter 11. In verses 6 and 7, the man (angel) in linen obtains the coals of fire from among the four cherubim, goes out and (presumably) scatters them over the city as he was commanded to do in verse 2.

Verses 8-17 is another detailed description of the chariot throne of God as we saw in chapter 1. **Have the students refer to the drawing of the chariot throne. Ask the students, “Which feature of the chariot throne is emphasized in these verses?”**

The word “wheel” or “wheels” is mentioned 12 times in these verses, as well as four other times in this chapter. They are described in detail (**Ask the student to give these details**):

- There are four of them, one by each cherub (verse 9)
- Their color is that of a beryl (yellow) stone (verse 9)
- They were arranged as a “wheel in the middle of a wheel” (see the drawing) – this allowed them to roll in any of the four directions in straight lines. (verse 10-11)
- They are full of eyes, emphasizing the omniscience of God; He sees everything. God’s eyes also judge and evaluate what they see and, in the case of Jerusalem and the Temple, what they see is the wickedness of the people. (verse 12)
- They are called “rolling” or “whirling” (translated “wheel”) in verse 13. These wheels will be used to transport Yahweh out of the Temple, the city and the Promised Land as He “desolates” Israel.
- The four faces that we saw on the four living creatures in chapter 1 are also seen in the wheels themselves (verse 14) with one difference. **Ask the students, “What is this one difference?”** The face of the ox is replaced with that of a **cherub**. As we said before, the ox represents both the sacrifices which brought forgiveness and the priests who, like angels before them, were to be the spokespersons for Yahweh on earth (see Revelation 2-3 to see a New Testament connection between angels and pastors). Israel has rejected the atoning sacrifices and Israel’s priests have become corrupt. Their face (ox) is replaced by that of an angel who will carry out God’s judgments on Jerusalem.
- The wheels follow the four cherubim wherever they go (verses 15-17)

The emphasis on the wheels in this whole section points to the fact that Yahweh is preparing to depart from the Temple and Jerusalem. In verses 18, Yahweh leaves His place at the threshold of the Temple, and mounts his chariot throne. We see the cherubim lift their wings and carry the chariot throne to the door of the east gate of the Temple. From here Yahweh will leave the Temple and the city of Jerusalem and desolate the land of His presence. However, God will not leave His people forever! Later, in Ezekiel chapter 43, Yahweh, in His mercy, will reenter Jerusalem from the east gate, the direction of the sunrise...a new creation!

Ezekiel 11 – Judgment by God’s Word

Ezekiel, as prophet and priest of Yahweh, is like an earthly incarnation of the four cherubim and the chariot. In fact, he represents Yahweh Himself to the people. It is Ezekiel who, like the cherubim/chariot/Yahweh, is transported (by way of vision) here and there to witness the abominations of the people and to bring judgments as well. In chapter 11, we see the third and final vision of this judgment which is to come on the people, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple, and it directly involves Ezekiel himself.

Have a student read verses 1-3. Ezekiel is lifted up by the Spirit (like the chariot) and taken to the east gate of the Temple, just as the cherubim, the chariot and Yahweh were in chapter 10. There he sees twenty five city leaders (not priests, as in 9:16), “princes of the

people”, who are among those leading the people of Jerusalem into sin. Two in particular are named along with their fathers, and the meaning of all four names is significant:

- Jaazaniah means “Yahweh **hears**”
- Azzur (Jaazaniah’s father) means “**Help**”
- Pelatiah means “Yahweh **delivers**”
- Benaiah (Pelatiah’s father) means “Yahweh **builds**”

The meaning of their names is ironic in that Israel is at a point in her history where Yahweh is no longer **hearing** the prayers of His rebellious people, He will no longer **help** them against their enemies, He will not **deliver** them from the hand of the Babylonians, and He will destroy Jerusalem and the Temple instead of **building**! All of this is because, as verse 2 says, “...these are the men who devise iniquity and give wicked counsel to the city.” These 25 city leaders, like the 25 priests in chapter 8, are leading the people to commit the abominations which will cause Yahweh to desolate Jerusalem and the Temple.

Instead of leading the people to repent and return to the true worship of Yahweh, these 25 leaders say two interesting things. **Ask the students what they think verse 3 means:**

1) “The time is not near to build houses” – Bible scholars do not agree on the meaning of this phrase. Two possible explanations are:

- a) They could be talking to the exiles in Babylon, exhorting them not to settle into their life in exile, thinking that they would soon defeat the Babylonians and win their release. They think themselves to still be the holy people of God, safe in His care, when in fact, judgment hangs over their heads
- b) The rich have already been taken away to exile, leaving their houses and lands behind which these leaders have taken over, making the building of new houses unnecessary. They think themselves not only safe, but even better off than they were before the exile of the prominent people of the city.

2) “...this city is the caldron, and we are the meat” - Matthew Henry sees this as an expression of safety and confidence on the part of the city leaders; i.e. “We are as safe and secure in Jerusalem as meat is inside a cooking pot”. Another way of looking at this expression is to say that the city leaders still consider themselves, and all of Israel, as the favored ones of God just as the meat is the favored food in the cooking pot. This may even refer to the peace offerings that the Israelites bring to Yahweh as evidence of their close relationship with him, a relationship which the city leaders still think they have with the Lord.

Have a student read verses 4-13. In verses 4-12, Yahweh calls upon Ezekiel to prophecy against these 25 city leaders. Thus this third vision of judgments comes in the form of the **Word of God as spoken by Ezekiel.**

In verses 6-7, the Lord places the responsibility for the judgment and death to come upon Jerusalem squarely at the feet of her leaders. God says that He will not only slay men and women in the city, but he will bring the leaders out of the safety of the city (the cauldron) and slay them by the hands of pagan strangers. **And why will this happen to them?** (see

verse 12) The Lord tells them, "...for you have not walked in My statutes nor executed My judgments, but have done according to the customs of the Gentiles which are all around you." **What does Ezekiel do in response to this judgment?** Right in the midst of Ezekiel's prophecy, Pelatiah dies! (verse 13) Just as he did in Ezekiel 9:8, Ezekiel intercedes for the people.

Have a student read verses 14-21. Ask the students, "What was Yahweh's response to Ezekiel's prayer in chapter 9, and how does this compare to His response to his prayer in 10:13?" In chapter 9, Yahweh's response to Ezekiel's prayer was to say..."My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity..." Here in chapter 11, Yahweh includes words of hope!

- 1) Verses 14-15 – Even though the wicked leaders in Jerusalem think of the exiles as those who are forsaken by the Lord, Ezekiel's "brothers", his fellow exiles, are the true house of Israel whom the Lord is preserving in Babylon.
- 2) Verse 16 – Yahweh is a true sanctuary (the true cauldron) for His people who are in exile in Babylon.
- 3) Verse 17-18 – The Lord will bring the exiles back from Babylon and settle them once again in the Promised Land. When they arrive, they will remove all of the idolatry and all of the other abominations that now permeate the land.
- 4) Verses 19-20 – Yahweh will not only bring them back to the Promised Land, He will also change the hearts of the people so that they will once again have the desire and the power to obey the commands of God, and to worship Him alone.

Despite His severe judgments, the Lord, in His mercy, is willing to once again renew His covenant with the remnant in exile. However, just as He said in chapter 9, those who will not turn away from their abominations can expect only the severe judgments of God (verse 21).

Verses 22-23 – The Desolation!

Have a student read verses 22-23. The climax of this third vision of judgment is Yahweh departing from Jerusalem on his chariot throne and standing on the mountain east of the city. He has desolated the city, leaving her at the mercy of the Babylonians who will finish her destruction! **Ask the students, "What mountain lies just east of Jerusalem?"** The Mount of Olives lies just east of Jerusalem and it is on this mountain that Yahweh stands after he desolates the city. **Where else do we see the Mount of Olives in the Bible?** Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 all record a sermon given by Jesus from the Mount of Olives detailing the judgments that would come upon Jerusalem, at the hands of the Roman armies, after His ascension. Both Ezekiel and Jesus are called "the son of man" in the Scripture and both are used by God to bring judgment to His rebellious people.

In verses 24-25, The Spirit (in the form of a vision) returns Ezekiel to the exiles in Babylon where he tells the elders seated there with him “all the things the Lord has shown (him)”.

Like Ezekiel, may the Lord grant us to know the state of our own personal lives, and that of our families, cities and nation so that may think, speak, and act rightly in response to His judgments upon us.

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 12-13; Work on the memorization of the outline of Ezekiel (quiz in two weeks!) and the memorization of Ezekiel 11:19-20

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 7 – Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged – Part 3 Chapter 12-13 – Five Messages of Coming Judgment

Objective – To encourage the students to be true prophets and prophetesses of God, speaking and acting only according to what the Scriptures say.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse** – (Go through this several times with the students)

Ezekiel 11:19-20 - Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – QUIZ NEXT WEEK!**

(Take 10-15 minutes to go through this with the students in preparation for next week’s quiz.)

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

As we said at the beginning of this study, the book of Ezekiel seems to be organized into seven distinct sections which have hints and shadows of the seven days of creation in them. Ezekiel is a book about God’s judgment on sinful Israel (and the nations around her) and of her ultimate restoration as He once again shows mercy on her. Thus, in many ways, the book of Ezekiel is a sort of de-creation and re-creation and follows the original seven day creation account as our outlines reflects:

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand

On the first day of creation, the Lord sent the Spirit to dispel the darkness that was over the surface of the waters. In this first section of Ezekiel, we saw God the Father coming on his chariot throne surrounded by the four living creatures (cherubim). He sent the Spirit into Ezekiel to defeat the darkness that has enveloped Judah. Ezekiel’s call and commission are followed by a series of three experiences (chapters 1-3) in which Ezekiel sees visions of God’s glory and receives instructions about his task as a prophet/priest to the exiles.

Four messages about the coming destruction of Jerusalem follow these visions (chapters 4-7).

2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 - Firmament-Rulers of Israel to be Judged

On day two, the Lord created the firmament which served to divide the waters above it from the waters below. This dividing is often seen in Scripture as a separating of God and His faithful people from His enemies. In Chapters 8–11 we saw a series of four visions once again depicting glory of God, who is departing from the temple (**separating** himself from His wicked people) and judging Jerusalem for her sins.

In chapter 8, Ezekiel is shown all of the **abominations** that are taking place in Jerusalem and in the Temple. Chapters 9-11 are a series of three depictions of the judgment that God is bringing upon Jerusalem

Ask the students if they can remember the themes of chapters 9-11:

Chapter 9 – Judgment by Angels

Chapter 10 – Judgment by God’s Fiery Presence

Chapter 11 – Judgment by the Word of God

This culminated in Yahweh desolating (leaving) the Temple, the city and the entire Promised Land, thus **separating** Himself, like a **firmament**, from His wicked people. This desolation is followed in chapters 12 and 13 by five messages of judgment.

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 12-13 – Five Messages of Coming Judgment

The five messages of coming judgment, as seen in chapters 12 and 13 will be the first of three series of messages leading to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar:

Chapters 12-13 - **Five** Messages of Coming Judgment

Chapters 14-19 - **Seven** Messages to the Elders of Israel

Chapters 20-23 - **Seven** Messages of Doom for the Elders

Chapter 24 – **The Destruction of Jerusalem!**

Why is the Lord having Ezekiel give all of these messages to those in exile?

Yahweh, through Ezekiel, is exhorting the elders and the people in exile to no longer look to the priests, to the Temple, to the city of Jerusalem, to the kingly line of David, or to the nations around Israel for their salvation and wellbeing. All of these are being judged and destroyed. Instead, the remnant in captivity are to look to Yahweh Himself and to the future hope of restoration that He promises to those who remain faithful to Him.

Additionally, there is still idolatry and other sin among the exiles themselves which needs to be repented of, lest they too be judged.

Chapters 12-13 - Five Messages of Coming Judgment

Each of these five messages begin in a similar fashion (**Ask the students to tell you what the similar beginnings are**):

- 1) 12:1-16 - The Prince Will Flee – “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”
- 2) 12:17-20 - The People Will Eat Bread in Horror – “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ...”
- 3) 12:21-25 - No More False Visions – “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”
- 4) 12:26-28 - No More Delay of Visions – “Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”
- 5) 13:1-16 - False Prophets and Prophetesses Will Be Judged – “And the word of the Lord came to me saying...”

Message 1) 12:1-16 - The Prince Will Flee

Have a student read verses 1-7. In verses 1 and 2 the Lord tells Ezekiel that even the people in exile are “a rebellious house which has eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear, but does not hear; for they are a rebellious house.”

Just as He did in the early chapters of Ezekiel, the Lord instructs Ezekiel to go through a series of actions to demonstrate to the exiles what He is doing in Jerusalem that they may learn, fear and turn in obedience to Him. **What is Ezekiel to do (verses 3-7)?**

- Pack up his belongings by day
- Dig a hole in the wall of the city
- Leave thru the hole in the wall by night

To understand what these actions mean, we need to turn to 2 Kings 25:1-7 (**Have a student read these verses**). When the Lord brings the army of Nebuchadnezzar to Jerusalem to destroy it, Zedekiah, the man whom Nebuchadnezzar had made king after he took king Jehoiachin captive, will try to escape. In this prophetic message, Ezekiel is depicting Zedekiah’s escape attempt. **What will be the end result for Zedekiah in 2 Kings 25:5-7?** He will be captured and made to watch the murder of his sons before the Babylonians put out his own eyes and carry him off to captivity

In verses 10-11 , the Lord tells Ezekiel that this action he is taking involves the “prince in Jerusalem (Zedekiah) and all the house of Israel who are among them”.

- Verse 12 tells us that Zedekiah will carry his own belongings and that he will have his face covered so that he cannot see the ground (the Babylonians will blind him).
- Verse 13 tells us that Zedekiah will be taken captive to Babylon “yet he shall not see it” (because of his blindness).
- Verses 14-15 tell us that those who are with Zedekiah, including his troops, will be scattered throughout the nations. Verse 16 says that a few of those scattered will be spared the death of the others from the sword, famine, and pestilence, that they might tell of Yahweh among the Gentiles.

Again we have the oft repeated phrase “Then they shall know that I am the Lord” (verses 15, 16)

The Lord, through Ezekiel is telling the captives to not look to the king of Israel nor his armies for their deliverance from their Babylonians captors.

Message 2) The People Will Eat Their Bread in Horror – 12:17-20 – Have a student read these verses. What is Ezekiel instructed to do in these verses? (“..eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and anxiety”) The Promised Land was to be “a land of milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8) where every man would eat in peace from his own vine and fig tree (1 Kings 4:25) However, as 2 Kings 25:3 tells us, when Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem, the people will eventually begin to perish from starvation (Recall Ezekiel 5:16-17, 6:11-12, 7:15). Many in the city will have only bread and water and will eat these with quaking, trembling, and anxiety, because the provision and protection of Yahweh have been removed by His desolation of the city. Ezekiel’s actions communicate their plight to the exiles.

Message 3) 12:21-25 - No More False Visions - Have a student read these verses – The false prophets in Israel have been telling the people that the land would never fall to their enemies and that the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and others of the coming judgment would not come to pass. (Read Jeremiah 5:12 for example). The Lord now comes to Ezekiel once again and tells him to tell the captives that these prophecies are false and, instead, “The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision” Verse 23b.

Message 4) 12:26-28 - No More Delay of Visions – “Again the word of the Lord came to...” Ezekiel saying that the prophets in Israel (and perhaps those in exile as well!) are saying that the judgment to come is still a long way off. However, what is Yahweh’s reply to this? **Have a student read verse 28.** Though He has been patient and merciful to His people for many, many years Yahweh’s judgments “will (not) be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done.” Every Lord’s Day we pray the Lord’s prayer which includes the sentence, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”. The judgments to come upon Jerusalem and the Temple have been decreed from heaven and are now about to come to pass on earth.

Message 5) Chapter 13 - False Prophets and Prophetesses Will Be Judged

5a) 13:1-16 - The False Prophets Will be Judged - “And the work of the Lord came to (Ezekiel)...”.

Verses 1-9 – False Divination / Futile Visions

In this message Ezekiel, as the true prophet of God speaks directly to “the prophets of Israel”, probably both in Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 23:14) and in exile as well (see Jeremiah 29:8-9). **What is the Lord’s basic complaint against these prophets?**

- They “prophecy out of their own heart” (verse 2) and “follow their own spirit” (verse 3)
- They claim to speak for Yahweh, but they do not have any words from Him (verses 3, 6, and 7)
- Their words are supposed to equip Israel to deal with the hardship they are facing, like soldiers defending the walls of a city. The sin of Israel has become like a gap in the city wall of Jerusalem, a gap through which the Babylonian army will soon pour. The prophets of Israel should have placed themselves between Yahweh and the people, preaching

repentance to the people, and interceding to the Lord on their behalf, thus closing this gap in the wall. Instead, they are “like foxes in the deserts” (verse 4); As Matthew Henry says, “...running to and fro, and seeming to be in a great hurry, but it was to get away and shift for their own safety, not to do any good: *The hireling flees, and leaves the sheep*. They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves.” And what are they prophesying?

1) False divinations (verses 6,8) – “Divination” is the ungodly attempt to discover hidden knowledge, especially regarding future events, through the interpretation of omens, or by the aid of demonic powers. As we said before, these false prophets are telling the people that there is no need for repentance, that Yahweh still favors them, and that He will deliver them from the Babylonians, end their captivity quickly, and bring them peace. These words are not only false, they hinder the people from returning to the loving favor of Yahweh.

2) Futility / futile visions – These words (translated “vanity” or “vain visions” in the King James Version) are used four times in this chapter (verses 6,7,9,23). They mean “empty” or even “desolate”. The futile, vain, empty words spoken by these false prophets are the very ones that will result in Yahweh desolating the Temple and Jerusalem, leaving it for the Babylonians to come in to and destroy.

Because of their false divinations and their futile visions, Yahweh is against them (see verses 8,9). According to Deuteronomy 13, false prophets were to be put to death. Verse 9 tells us that their very names are going to be removed from the list of God’s people. Their descendants shall not return to the Promised Land during the times of restoration to come. One could even go so far as to say that these false prophets are doomed to Hell!

Verses 10-16 – Whitewashed Walls – **Have a student read these verses**

The Lord then compares these false prophets to poorly built walls that are covered with nice looking paint. They stand against Yahweh like walls but are not what they appear to be. The wall looks strong because of the paint, but it is easily knocked down because it has no real strength in it. It is built with untempered (weak) mortar which cannot hold the bricks together. Because they are preaching “Peace” when the judgment of the Lord is right at the very walls of their city, they are like those walls themselves that will not withstand the judgment of God in the form of the Babylonian army!

This reminds us of Acts 23:1-3 when Paul was arrested and taken before the false religious leaders of his day: “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, “Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”² And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.³ Then Paul said to him, “**God will strike you, you whitewashed wall!** For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?”

They too opposed the true prophets of God such as Paul, and were responsible, to a large degree for the judgment of God to fall once again on Jerusalem in the form of the destroying armies of the Romans in 70 A.D.!

5b) 13:17-23 – The False Prophetesses Will be Judged – In this section, Ezekiel is commanded by Yahweh to “set your face against the daughters of your people who prophesy out of their own hearts.” These prophetesses (again probably both in the land of Israel and among the exiles) are practicing false prophecy in a different way than the male prophets:

- 1) They sew magic charms (“pillows” – KJV) on their sleeves
- 2) They make veils (“kerchiefs” – KJV) for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls

The meaning of these phrases is somewhat obscure, but it seems that these prophetesses were in the business of sewing accessories (phylacteries and veils) used in the worship of false gods. These articles of clothing were supposed to give the wearer greater access to the favor of these gods and so ensnare the worshipper in his idolatry.

Like the prophets, these prophetesses are profaning the name of Yahweh and lying to the people, telling them what they want to hear for a profit, keeping them from repentance and dooming them to judgment (verse 19). It is if they are hunters and the people are the prey! (verses 18-20)

Yahweh says that He will “tear off your veils and deliver My people out of your hand, and then they shall no longer be as prey in your hand. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” Like Elijah who stood against the prophets of Baal (see 1 Kings 18), Ezekiel is to stand in the strength of Yahweh against these false prophets and prophetesses

These false prophets, whether men or women have made the righteous (who will not listen to them) sad and have hardened the wicked in their sin and rebellion against Yahweh (verse 22). Yahweh is a defender of the righteous and will deliver them out of the hand of these false prophets (verse 23)

Unlike the false prophets and prophetesses, as God’s representatives in the world, we must be careful to say only those things which are consistent with the Word of God both in our daily speech and in speaking to others about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 14-15; Quiz on outline next week! Work on memory verse

❖ **Pray / Prep for worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People
Lesson 8 – Day 3 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment – Part 1
Chapter 14-15 – Israel, the Fruitless Vine

Objective – To exhort the students to be fruitful vines in the Kingdom of God

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse – QUIZ NEXT WEEK! (Go through this several times with the students)** Ezekiel 11:19-20 **Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh,²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.**

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – QUIZ - Have each student fill out the outline quiz and turn it in.**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review – Note – We will be spending a bit more time this week reemphasizing the overall literary structure and flow of Ezekiel to help the students once again see the bigger picture of de-creation / re-creation depicted in the book.**

Remember that we said that the book of Ezekiel seems to consist of seven sections and that six of these seven have “time markers” associated with them:

1. Ezekiel 1:1-2 - Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month...On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity...

2. Ezekiel 8:1 - And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month...

3. Ezekiel 14:1 (no time marker) - Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.

4. Ezekiel 20:1 - It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth *day* of the month...

5. Ezekiel 24:1 - Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth *day* of the month...

6. Ezekiel 33:21 – And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month...

7. Ezekiel 40:1 - In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day...

As our outline indicates, each of these seven sections seems to have connections to the seven days of the Creation week.

Review the seven days of creation with the students:

Day one, God made the light but not the sun

Day two, God made the firmament, forming the waters into two

Day three, God filled the land, with first fruits of plant and tree

Day four, God made ruling lights, sun, moon and stars, where the rockets soar

Day five, God filled the sea and sky with fish and birds that teem and thrive

Day six, God made animals, then man, the former and ruler of the mix

Day seven, God rested in heaven

Ezekiel deals with Yahweh's de-creation (judgment) and re-creation (restoration) of the nation of Israel and so it is not surprising that the seven days of creation would be prominent in the book.

Ask the students, “Which of these seven sections have we just completed?”

We have just finished the second section of the book of Ezekiel (Chapters 8-13) which we entitled “Day 2 – Firmament – Rulers of Israel to be Judged”. On Day Two, the Lord created the firmament (sky), which served to divide the waters above it from the waters below. This dividing is often seen in Scripture as a **separating** of God and His faithful people from His enemies. We saw this in chapters 8-13 as the abominations (sin) of those in Jerusalem (chapter 8) brought about a three-fold judgment of God on the city and the Temple (chapters 9-11) culminating in Yahweh desolating (leaving) the Temple and the city, **separating** Himself from them. This was followed by a series of five additional messages of coming judgment (chapters 12-13).

❖ Lesson - Chapters 14-15 – Israel, the Fruitless Vine

We now begin the third section of Ezekiel (Chapters 14-19) which corresponds to Day 3 of the Creation week:

Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment

Time: Undated, but may be during the sixth or seventh year of exile?

Day Three of creation saw the Lord bringing forth the land from the midst of the waters and also filling it with the first plants and trees (“firstfruits”). Chapters 14-19 of Ezekiel are a series of six messages of judgment against Judah that depict her as a fruitless vine (chapter 15) and as a tree and vine that have revolted against the Lord (chapter 17).

Instead of being faithful to Yahweh and obeying Him (“bearing good fruit”), Judah, like Israel before her, has become fruitless and “ripe” for destruction.

This third (Day 3) section of Ezekiel seems to also be arranged in a seven-fold manner, again reminding us of most of the seven days of creation (from James Jordan's outlines of Ezekiel) **Have the students glance over these chapters in Ezekiel as you briefly discuss their possible connection to the seven days of creation:**

Day 1 – Chapter 14:1-11 – The elders have idols in their hearts instead of the true God

Day 2 – Chapter 14:12-23 – The righteous are those who have maintained their position in the firmament under God

Day 3 – Chapter 15 – Israel is talked about as being a dead vine, reminding us of Day 3 when “God filled the land, with first fruits of plant and tree”

Day 4 – Chapter 16 – The marriage imagery here may remind us of the rule of men (Moon) as the bride under God (Sun) the bridegroom.

Day 5 – Chapter 17 – The eagle (creature of the sky) that lives among the trees reminds us of Day 5 when “God filled the sea and the sky with fish and birds that teem and thrive”.

Day 6 – Chapter 18 – Images are set aside and persons instead are addressed, reminding us of Day 6 in which man was created.

Day 7 - Chapter 19 – The lamentation (mourning) for the princes of Israel is clearly an instance of sabbatical (full) judgment.

As we said in our last lesson, Ezekiel 14-19 is also a series of **seven messages** to the elders of Israel which followed the **five messages** of judgment in chapters 12 and 13:

Message 1 - Chapter 14:1-11 – Day 1 – Elders' Idolatry

Message 2 - Chapter 14:12-23 – Day 2 - Jerusalem is Worse Than Sodom

Message 3 - Chapter 15 – Day 3 - Parable of the Vine

Message 4 - Chapter 16 – Day 4 - Parable of the Adulterous Wife

Message 5 - Chapter 17 – Day 5 - Parable of the Great Eagles

Message 6 - Chapter 18 – Day 6 - Judgment for Present Generation's Sins

Message 7 - Chapter 19 – Day 7 - Lamentation for the Line of David

After these **seven messages** will come **seven messages** (chapters 20-23) of doom leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in chapter 24!

Message 1 - Chapter 14:1-11 – Day 1 – Elders' Idolatry

Instead of using a time marker, this section of Ezekiel begins, “Now some of the **elders** of Israel came to me and sat before me”. These next six chapters will consist of a series of messages to these **elders** and this opening verse sets the stage for these messages.

Have a student read verses 1-8. It seems obvious that the elders in exile with Ezekiel are no better than the elders in Jerusalem. They too have “set up their idols **in their hearts** and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity” (verse 3).

The word “heart(s)” is used four times in these first seven verses. This Hebrew word, “leb”, refers to the whole of the inner personality (thoughts, emotions, will) as expressed in the outward actions of a person. All of these elders' thoughts, words, and deeds have

been given over to the worship of other gods and this false worship has led to all sorts of other sin. Added to this is the sin of gathering false prophets around them who will support them in their idolatry (verse 4).

In verse 3b, Yahweh says that these idolatrous elders should not even presume to come to Him with their prayers. In verse 5 He says that their idolatry has “estranged” themselves from, or made them strangers towards, Him. This reminds us of Isaiah 59:2 which says, “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.”

However, in verses 4 and 7, Yahweh says that He will indeed answer them when they pray to Him, but it will be with judgment, not with mercy and deliverance! God will answer them according to their own folly and will act for the glory of His own name! If we pray to God while still hardened in our own sin, we should realize that He will indeed be faithful to answer us when we pray, but that the answer we get will be one of chastisement for our sin, with a view to our repentance!

The **hearts** of the elders are far from Yahweh and, in verse 5, He says that he will seize (capture) them by their idolatrous **hearts**. Jesus too dealt with religious leaders (Pharisees, scribes, Saducees, priests, etc.) who were just like these elders and He quotes the prophet Isaiah in Matthew 15:8 “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their **heart** is far from Me.”

The captivity that these idolatrous elders are now experiencing will spread to all of Israel and will last for 70 years! He calls them to repent and to turn away from their idolatry and abominations (verse 6).

In verse 8, God tells them what judgment awaits them if they do not repent:

- 1) He will set His face against them – God will become their enemy (in the form of Nebuchadnezzar and the army of Babylon!)
- 2) They will become a sign and a proverb – History will remember them as examples of sinful idolaters who spurned the mercy and favor of Yahweh and who, instead, suffered His wrath.
- 3) He will cut them off from the midst of His people – They will no longer be counted in the number of the people of God – They will be eternally doomed!

Yahweh is a very personal God and, though these elders should not even presume to pray to Him, God will deal indeed answer them with a very personal judgment unless they turn away from their idolatry. He will seize (capture) them by their sinful hearts and then they shall know that He is the Lord!

Have a student read verses 9-11. In these verses Yahweh says that He will judge the prophet who speaks for these false gods with the same harsh judgment with which He punished the elders who inquired of them. In verse 11, Yahweh leaves Ezekiel and the

elders with the hope of restoration. If they no longer stray from the Lord, they will once again be His people and He will be their God!

This section can be seen as a reversal of Day 1 of Creation in which the Spirit of the true Lord brought true light to the world. The elders in their idolatry have brought only darkness and judgment

Message 2 - Chapter 14:12-23 – Day 2 – Jerusalem is Worse than Sodom

Have a student read verses 12-13a

The word of the Lord again comes to Ezekiel and Yahweh speaks words of both judgment and hope to Ezekiel, to the exiles, and to all of Israel. In verse 13 Yahweh tells Ezekiel, "...when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it:" **Ask the students to look through verses 13b-20 and tell what four judgments God would bring against this persistently unfaithful land:**

- 1) Famine – verse 13
- 2) Wild beasts – verse 15
- 3) Sword – verse 17
- 4) Pestilence – verse 19

Where have we seen these judgments mentioned before in Ezekiel?

Look back for a minute at Ezekiel 5:12, 16, and 17, where we saw all four of these judgments mentioned, and Ezekiel 6:11-12 and 7:15 where famine, sword, pestilence are mentioned.

In verses 14, 16, 18 and 20, Yahweh makes mention four times of two great men of the past and one of the present. **Who are they?** (Noah, Daniel, and Job)

- Noah was "perfect in his generations" and he "...walked with God" (Genesis 6:9)
- Daniel is the prophet with them in Babylon who is likely hated by the exiles because of his close connections to Nebuchadnezzar. Yet he would not compromise his righteous witness before Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1) and the Lord raised him up to a position of power and influence in Babylon which ultimately resulted in Nebuchadnezzar's salvation. (Daniel 4)
- Job was called "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1) and was used by God to defeat Satan in his day

In the days of Lot, the people of Sodom (and Gomorrah) were so wicked that God could not find ten righteous men in the city (see Genesis 18-19) and so He destroyed it.

However, Israel's sin is **even worse than that of Sodom** Israel is so wicked that, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in Israel, their righteous lives would not be enough to offset the extreme wickedness of the land. Only they would be spared and the whole land would be made "desolate" (verses 15,16), devoid of people, just as it is desolate of God's presence. They would be "cut off" (verses 19,21) from God's favor and presence.

Verses 22, 23 give hope to those in the land who remain faithful and obedient to Yahweh (in his "firmament" so to speak – Day 2). Those sons and daughters will be brought out

from Jerusalem (the land), comforted by Yahweh concerning the great destruction to take place there, and joined to the people of God in exile.

Message 3 - Chapter 15 – Day 3 - Parable of the Vine (Have a student read this chapter and have someone else explain what God is telling Ezekiel in this parable)

Again the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel and He speaks to him in the form of a parable in which Israel is compared to a vine. This whole parable reminds us of Day 3 of Creation in which God created the grain plants and fruit bearing trees as well. Grape vines are supposed to bear good fruit which may be eaten for nourishment (grapes or raisins) or made into wine to make the heart glad. If grape vines do not bear good fruit, then they good for little else since their wood is too small and weak to build with or to even use as pegs to hang things on (verse 3). The only thing left to do with fruitless grape vines is to burn them as fuel and after this, they are good for nothing at all.

Israel, a small, weak nation (vine) was chosen by Yahweh to represent Him before all nations (the trees of the forest), to feed them with the Word of God and to bless them with the joy and prosperity that comes from living in covenant with Yahweh. Instead, they cut themselves off from Yahweh, the True Vine, through their idolatry and other sins and have not produced the good fruit that they should have.

Because of their persistent unfaithfulness, Jerusalem and the land of Israel is already a dry, rotted, and charred vine. The Lord will burn them completely with his fiery presence in the form of the army of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the land will be made “desolate” (verse 8) of God’s presence and of the presence of His people.

This was also true in Jesus’ day. **Have a student read John 15:1-11.** The religious leaders and the people they led had become fruitless grape vines because they had separated themselves from the Lord and would reject Jesus, the True Vine, as their Messiah.

Each of us who call ourselves followers of God are called vines in the Kingdom of God and as such are to bear fruit. This fruit consists of worship of Him, obedience to His word, and lives lived in holiness and love before all men. This fruit is to feed and bless others with the gospel of salvation and joyful lives in covenant with our gracious Vine, God Himself. To bear this fruit, we must “abide” in Him, which means staying connected to His Word, and to His body, the church. May we all pray and strive to this end!

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 16 and 17 – How do these chapters remind you of Days 4 and 5 of Creation?; Memorize Ezekiel 11:19-20 - QUIZ NEXT WEEK! Work on outline memory

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Name _____

Ezekiel Outline

1. Ezekiel 1 - _____ – Day 1 - God Takes the _____ in Hand
2. Ezekiel _____-13 – Day 2 - _____-Rulers of Israel to be _____
3. Ezekiel 14-_____ – Day 3 - Plants, _____ and the Coming _____
4. Ezekiel _____-23 – Day 4 - _____ – Rulers, _____ and Land to be _____
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - _____ of _____ Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-_____ – Day 6 – A New _____ and a New _____
7. Ezekiel _____-48 – Day 7 - A New _____ for God's _____

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 9 – Day 3 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment – Part 2

Chapter 16 – Parables of the Adulterous Wife

Objective – To encourage the students to remember how good the Lord has been to them and to serve Him with gladness all of their lives

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse – QUIZ** – **Have each student write out these verses and hand them in**

Ezekiel 11:19-20 - Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel –Review with students for a few minutes**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review –**

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel)
- Last week we began the third section of Ezekiel (Chapters 14-19) which has some hints of Day 3 of the Creation week. Who is being addressed in this section? (the elders in exile – 14:1)
- What is the primary sin of these elders? (They have set up idols in their hearts 14:3)
- What judgments will Yahweh bring against these elders and all of Israel (famine, wild beasts, sword, pestilence – 14:12-21)

- How is Israel (especially Jerusalem) worse than Sodom? (Even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, only they would be spared this four-fold destruction – 14:14-20)
- To what is Israel compared to in Chapter 15 that reminds us of Day 3 of Creation? (A fruitless vine, good for nothing except to be burned)

❖ Lesson – Chapters 16 – Parables of the Adulterous Wife

The text of Ezekiel is leading us up to the destruction of Jerusalem that will take place in chapter 24. Prior to this climactic event, three series of messages are delivered by Yahweh to Ezekiel:

Five Messages of judgment – Chapters 12-13

Seven Messages to the elders in exile – Chapters 14-19

Seven Messages of doom for the elders – Chapters 20-23

Last week we covered the first three of the seven messages of chapters 14-19.

- **Message 1 - Chapter 14:1-11 – Day 1 – Elders’ Idolatry**
- **Message 2 - Chapter 14:12-23 – Day 2 - Jerusalem is Worse Than Sodom**
- **Message 3 - Chapter 15 – Day 3 - Parable of the Vine**
- Message 4 - Chapter 16 – Day 4 - Parable of the Adulterous Wife
- Message 5 - Chapter 17 – Day 5 - Parable of the Great Eagles
- Message 6 - Chapter 18 – Day 6 - Judgment for Present Generation’s Sins
- Message 7 - Chapter 19 – Day 7 - Lamentation for the Line of David

In today’s lesson, we will cover Message 4 in chapter 16.

Message 4 - Chapter 16 – Day 4 - Parable of the Adulterous Wife

On Day 4 God made the Sun, Moon and Stars which we usually associate with **rulers** of nations (kings, emperors, etc). However, Adam and Eve (bridegroom and bride) were the first **rulers** over the created order (Genesis 1:28). Remember too that in Genesis 37, Joseph had a dream that the **sun, moon** and stars, which represented his **father, mother** and brothers, were bowing down to him. Marriage between a man and a woman (rulers over a household) is an earthly picture of the covenant between Yahweh and the nation of Israel and later, between Jesus, the Great Bridegroom and His bride the church. Israel was to represent and rule for Yahweh on earth just as the moon reflects the light of the sun. However, Israel was an unfaithful bride to Yahweh and went after other “husbands” in the form of idolatry and seeking help from the pagan nations around her. Thus we can see Day Four reflections in the parable of the Adulterous Wife in Ezekiel 16.

Have the students look at the outline for Chapter 16 to see the overall flow:

A. Ezekiel 16:1-22 – Israel, the Unfaithful Bride, Does Not Remember Yahweh

B. Ezekiel 16:23-34 – Israel’s Pagan “Lovers”

C. Ezekiel 16:35-43 – Yahweh Judges Israel for Her Unfaithfulness

B’ Ezekiel 16:44-52 – Israel is Worse Than Her Unfaithful Sisters

A’ Ezekiel 16:53-63 – Yahweh, the Faithful Bridegroom, Remembers Israel

A. Ezekiel 16:1-22 – Israel, the Unfaithful Bride, Does Not Remember Yahweh

Verses 1-9 - In the beginning of this chapter, Yahweh calls upon Ezekiel (“Son of man”) to “cause Jerusalem to know her abominations”, to understand the depth of her sin against Him. Through the use of a parable regarding a helpless baby, Ezekiel is to remind Israel of how Yahweh cared for her when she was small in numbers and helpless against the nations around her, and how He made her His bride by covenant:

The “birth” of the nation of Israel is found in Genesis 12 when God calls Abram and Sarai out of the land of the Chaldeans and tells them to go to the land He would show them (Caanan). When they arrive there, they do not come as conquering warriors, but as a man and wife with a few others who are dependant on the people of the land such as the Amorites and the Hittites, much like a helpless baby is dependant on its parents (verse 3). Even by the time Jacob and his twelve sons made their way to Egypt, Israel still numbered a mere seventy people (Genesis 46:27). They were like a baby that no one cared for (verse 4). **Have a student read verses 5 and 6.** Even worse than this, Israel was enslaved by the Egyptians (“cast into the open field”) and felt themselves forsaken even by God (Exodus 2:23) much like a dying newborn. However, Yahweh caused Israel to prosper despite her hardship and she grew into a full-fledged nation there, much as a baby girl grows into an adult woman (see verse 7). Under the leadership of Moses, Yahweh took Israel as his betrothed bride, led her out of slavery in Egypt and made (a marriage) covenant with her in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai. This is pictured in verses 8-9.

Verses 10-14 - Have a student read these verses.

Not only this, but Yahweh brought his new “bride” into the Promised Land under Joshua, and caused her to prosper there from the times of the judges until the days of King David and Solomon. By the time Solomon built the Temple, Yahweh had made Israel the most powerful nation on earth. She was like a bride, beautifully adorned for her husband (Yahweh) in fine clothing (verse 10, 13) and beautiful jewelry (verses 11-13). She ate the finest food as well (verse 13). And, as verse 14 says, Israel’s “fame went out among the nations” as seen in the coming of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon’s court (1 Kings 10).

Ask the students, “What was Israel’s response to all that Yahweh had done for her?”

Verse 15 - The word “beauty” or “beautiful” is used eight times in this chapter. Yahweh made Israel beautiful, but verse 15, the central verse of this section (verses 1-22), tells us that Israel did not remember that her beauty had come from Yahweh, nor was she thankful to Him. Instead, she trusted in her own beauty (her fame and power) instead of in Yahweh. She gave herself over to the worship of other gods and to ungodly alliances with the pagan nations around her.

Verses 16-19 (These verses match up with verses 10-13 above)

And what did the bride, Israel, do with all of the good gifts that (clothing, jewelry/gold/silver, and fine food) that Yahweh, her bride, bestowed upon her? Instead of being grateful to Yahweh for His blessings and using them to His glory, Israel, the unfaithful bride:

- 1) Took her wonderful clothing and decorated her high places of pagan worship with it
- 2) Took her beautiful jewelry, gold and silver and made idols from them
- 3) Offered her food as sacrifices to these false gods

Verses 20-22 – Have a student read these verses

Israel did not remember the love and mercy of God when she was like a naked, helpless infant (recall verses 1-9). Instead, she offered up her own infants and children as sacrifices to the pagan gods she worshipped. Yahweh had pity on Israel but Israel had no pity on her children. She slayed and burned them!

B. Ezekiel 16:23-34 – Israel’s Pagan “Lovers”

Israel worshiped the pagan gods of the nations around her (verses 23-25 and 31-34) pictured in this parable as the unfaithful bride who becomes a harlot and offers herself to multiple lovers. These gods are tied to the nations themselves and so too Israel made unholy alliances (covenants) with the nations around her such as Egypt (verse 26), Philistia (verse 27), Assyria (verse 28) and Babylon (Chaldea, verse 29). In her idolatry and unholy alliances, Israel was worse than the average harlot. Most harlots are paid by their lovers, but Israel is the one who paid these nations (her “lovers”), in money and service, to be in alliance with her! (see verses 31-34)

C. CENTER - Ezekiel 16:35-43 – Yahweh Judges Israel for Her Unfaithfulness

The center of this chapter is verses 35-43 which begins with this frightening command: “Now then, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord!” Israel has been judged guilty of harlotry, and her sentence is about to be read!

Verses 36-37 and 43 – In these verses Israel’s “abominations” will be result in the nations around her (especially Babylon) to “uncover (her) nakedness, to show who she is to the world.

Verses 38 and 42 – In Numbers 5:11ff, if a husband suspected his wife of unfaithfulness, he could bring her before the priests to be put through the “inspection (ordeal) of jealousy”, a rather unusual ritual that resulted in severe consequences for the wife if she had indeed been unfaithful. In these verses, Yahweh is the jealous husband who brings a charge of unfaithfulness against Israel, His bride. As both accuser and judge, will exact full vengeance on his unfaithful bride until His jealousy has been satisfied.

Center - Verses 39-41 – Because of her unfaithfulness, Yahweh will return Israel to the poor, helpless state in which He found her (verses 2-6). In destroying Jerusalem, the Babylonians, in a sense, will remove from Yahweh’s bride her clothes and her jewelry, and leave her as naked and helpless as she was in the beginning. The high places of idol

worship will be destroyed and the Israelites themselves will be killed and have their own homes burned as well.

B' Ezekiel 16:44-52 – Israel is Worse Than Her Unfaithful Sisters

No only did Israel go after false Gods and unholy alliances with the pagan nations around her (see “B. Ezekiel 16:23-34 – Israel’s Pagan ‘Lovers’” above), she was worse than both of her “sisters” Samaria and Sodom.

Samaria (verses 46-47, 51) – As you recall, in the days after King Solomon died, Rehoboam, his son, caused the kingdom of Israel to be divided into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and was referred to as “Judah” or sometimes as “Jerusalem”. **(Reminder - In this study, when we refer to “Israel” at the time of Ezekiel, we are really referring to the southern kingdom of Judah and her capital city, Jerusalem.)**

The northern kingdom, which consisted of the other ten tribes was called various names in Scripture including “Israel”, “Ephraim”, and “Samaria”. “Samaria”, the northern kingdom of Israel, was idolatrous from her very foundation. She had a series of wicked, idolatrous kings such as Jeroboam and Ahab and went from bad to worse until Yahweh caused her to be defeated and taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., long before the time of Ezekiel. In these verses, Yahweh says that Jerusalem (Judah) had become even worse than Samaria

Sodom (verses 49-50) – As you also recall, Sodom was the epitome of wicked cities in the time of Abraham and Lot (See Genesis 18-19). Not only was she full of sexual sin, but verses 49-50 tells us that “she and her daughter (Gomorra) had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me...” God could not find even ten righteous men in Sodom and so He destroyed the city with “brimstone and fire” (Genesis 19:24).

As verses 44-45, 50 and 52 say, Jerusalem had become more wicked than either Samaria or Sodom. In fact, in verse 52 Yahweh in essence says that Jerusalem needs to apologize to Samaria and Sodom for having judged them as wicked, since she is even worse than they. Jesus said a similar thing regarding the cities of Israel in His time (e.g. Matthew 11:20-24).

A' Ezekiel 16:53-63 – Yahweh, the Faithful Bridegroom, Remembers Israel

The word “covenant” appears five times in this chapter, once in verse 8 where Yahweh first entered into covenant with Israel, and four more times in these verses.

Once again we see that God’s long term purpose in chastening and judging Jerusalem and the entire nation of Israel at this time is so that He may renew covenant with her and restore her. This is the “golden thread” that runs through the entire book of Ezekiel.

The Lord is reconciling the whole world to Himself, and even Sodom and Samaria will also be drawn back into covenant with Him (see verses 53).

The word “**remember**” is also prominent in this section. Israel has not **remembered** Yahweh as we saw in the beginning of this chapter. However, after He has dealt with her for her sins, Yahweh says in verse 60, “Nevertheless I will **remember** My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.”

After this,

Verse 61 says that Israel will indeed “...**remember** (her) ways and be ashamed...” so that they “may **remember** and be ashamed...”.

When we are discouraged or brought under conviction of sin, we should **remember** how good and how gracious God has been to us. He has called us to Himself in salvation through Jesus. He has made us His children and part of His bride, the church, by covenant. He has sustained us day by day in body, soul and spirit. He has assured us that He will never leave us nor forsake us. And He has given us the Holy Spirit as a seal and guarantee of our eternal inheritance in heaven.

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 17-19 looking for connections with Days 5, 6 and 7 of creation; Work on memory of the outline

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 10 – Day 3 – Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment – Part 3

Chapter 17-19 – Punished for Their Own Sins

Objective – To remind the students to keep short accounts of their own sins, to not blame others, and to repent in order to be restored to fellowship with God and men.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and read your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **New Memory Verse - Ezekiel 18:31-32 - Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”**

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel –Review with students for a few minutes**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel)
- What did God make on Day 4 of Creation? (Sun, moon, and stars)
- In Ezekiel chapter 16, Judah is portrayed as the adulterous wife of Yahweh. What links can we make between this account and Day 4 of Creation? (Israel was to represent God as His faithful bride, and to rule for Him on earth. Instead, they went after other lovers (gods) and unholy alliances with the nations around her.)
- In what ways was Israel like the baby she is compared with in the first few verses of chapter 16? [She was small (in numbers), helpless (no army), and dependant on the people of the land to support her (like a baby is dependant on its parents)]

- Later in this chapter, Israel is portrayed as a bride, beautifully adorned with jewelry, clothing and given fine food. What period in Israel can this refer to? (The times of David and Solomon when Israel was the most powerful nation on earth)
- Instead of trusting in Yahweh, what did Israel trust in? (Her own beauty)
- What did Israel, the bride of Yahweh do with all of the wonderful gifts He gave her?
 - 1) Took her wonderful clothing and decorated her high places of pagan worship with it
 - 2) Took her beautiful jewelry, gold and silver and made idols from them
 - 3) Offered her food as sacrifices to these false gods.)
- How was Israel worse than the average harlot? (Instead of receiving pay, she paid her Lovers (the nations around her), to be joined to her)
- In verses 35-43, the center of this chapter, what judgments does Yahweh bring upon Judah? (He will destroy her, returning her to the poor, helpless state in which He found her)
- In verses 44-52 – Who does Yahweh say that Judah is worse than? (Samaria (Israel), and Sodom)
- **True** or False - In spite of the fact that Israel will not remember Yahweh, Yahweh will remember Israel and bring her back to the Promised Land

We will see hints of Days 5, 6 and 7 in Ezekiel 17, 18, and 19 respectively

❖ Lesson – Chapters 17-19 – Punished For Their Own Sins

Message 5 - Chapter 17 – Day 5 – Parable of the Great Eagle

On Day Five of creation, “**God filled the sea and sky with fish and birds that teem and thrive**”.

In chapter 17, we see Yahweh present a parable involving **birds**, trees and vines.

The chapter is laid out in three sections:

Verses 1-10 – The Parable of the Great Eagles

Verses 11-21 – The Parable Explained

Verses 22-24 – Future Fulfillment

The main components of this parable are summarized in this table:

Ezekiel 17 – The Parable of the Great Eagles

Parable – v. 1-10	Explanation – v. 11-21	Future Fulfillment – v. 22-24
Great eagle	Nebuchadnezzar	God the Father
Highest cedar branch	Jehoiachin	Zerubbabel / Jesus
Land / Mountain	Babylon	Promised Land / World
Fruitful vine / tree	Judah in Babylon	Restored Israel / Church
Second great eagle	Pharaoh / Egypt	
Seed of the land	Zedekiah	
Birds / Trees of the field		Nations around Israel / World coming to Jesus via the church

Verses 1-10 – The Parable of the Great Eagles – Have a student read these verses and retell what happens in the parable.

The word of the Lord again comes to Ezekiel in the form of a parable

The parable itself may be summarized as follows:

- A great eagle takes a young twig from the top of a cedar tree
- The eagle carries the twig to a “land of trade” and plants it there
- The eagle also plants “seed of the land” in a fertile field
- This seed sprouted into a vine whose branches grew towards the great eagle
- A second great eagle appears and the vine now grows towards it instead
- The Lord asks whether or not the vine will now prosper or ought to be destroyed.

Verses 11-21 – The Parable Explained

The word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel again, explaining the parable:

- The great eagle is the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) who came to Jerusalem (Lebanon in the parable) with his army (2 Kings 24:8-16). He has long wings with long feathers of many colors, possibly representing the many nations which he has conquered and now rules over.
- The cedar tree is the royal family of David. King Jehoiachin, who was but eighteen years old when he became king, is the “topmost young twig”. Jehoiachin was captured by Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon (“a land of trade”) along with his princes (verse 12, c.f. 2 Kings 24:12)
- Verse 13 explains that the “seed of the land” planted in a “fertile field” is Zedekiah, who was placed by Nebuchadnezzar on the throne of Jerusalem in Jehoiachin’s place. The Lord through Jeremiah had instructed Zedekiah that he would prosper only if he served Nebuchadnezzar and did not rebel against him (see Jeremiah 27:12-15 and 38:17-18).
- The second great eagle is Pharaoh of Egypt. Verse 15 says that, instead of serving Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah turned to Egypt for deliverance (see also Jeremiah 37ff). But, Pharaoh and his army will be of no help to him (verses 16-17). Instead, because he trusted in Egypt instead of in Yahweh, the Lord says that Zedekiah will also be taken captive to Babylon (verses 16-21). 2 Kings 25:1-7 tells us that during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, Zedekiah attempted to escape but was captured by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. He was taken to before Nebuchadnezzar and forced to watch as his sons were executed right in front of him. They then put out Zedekiah’s eyes, bound him in fetters and took him to Babylon. All of this is spoken of in chapter 17 of Ezekiel as ultimately coming from the hand of the Lord, whose command Zedekiah despised (see verses 18-22).

Verses 22-24 – Future Fulfillment – Have a student read these verses.

With the coming of the sobering prophecy concerning Zedekiah, the elders in Babylon who are hearing it would be tempted to be very discouraged and perhaps even despair that the royal line of David (the cedar tree) might be cut off forever. However, in 2 Samuel 7, the Lord had promised David, “...your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” Though men and nations fail, the promises of Yahweh never fail.

In these verses the Lord God tells Ezekiel and the elders with him that one day, in the future, there will come another “young twig” from the royal line of David who will be planted on a mountain and who will grow and bear fruit, and be a shelter for birds of every sort. This points first to Zerubbabel, the grandson of Jehoiachin from the royal line of David, who, after the captivity in Babylon is over, will be used of God to lead the first group of Jews back to the Promised Land and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. However, this ultimately points to the coming of Jesus who, after he had suffered and died, would rise again and ascend to the right hand of the Father. The tree that grows from Him is **the church** which will grow and prosper and fill the whole earth. And the birds represent every tongue, tribe, people and nation that will come to faith in Jesus and find their rest in the church (see Matthew 13:31-32).

May we be those who understand our own times and who seek first and foremost to obey the Lord, so that His Kingdom might grow and fill the whole earth

Message 6 - Chapter 18 – Day 6 - Judgment for Present Generation’s Sins

What did God make on Day 6 of the Creation week? (**Day six, God made animals, then man, the former and ruler of the mix**) In Genesis, when Adam and Eve sinned, they sought to shift the blame for their disobedience to someone else:

Who did Adam blame? (Eve)

Who did Eve blame (the serpent)

In this chapter, we will see much talk about **men**, about the evil of blaming others and about the responsibility they have before God for their own sins.

Have a student read verses 1-3. Apparently, there was a proverb circulating among the Jews that they were using to describe their present situation: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge’

Ask the students, “What do you think this proverb means?” The Jews were saying that their current tribulations (defeat and exile at the hands of the Babylonians) were due to the sins of their “fathers” (the generations that came before them) and had nothing to do with anything they themselves did or did not do.

Now it is true that the sins of parents can have serious negative effects on their children as well. **Ask the students to give examples of this.** However, the Jews are saying that they themselves are without sin in this matter. In other words, they are saying that they are the innocent recipients of the punishment that is due to their ancestors. Even worse than this, the Jews are saying that they are the innocent victims of an unjust and vengeful God. They are accusing Yahweh of not loving them as a true father or husband would.

The Lord immediately rebukes them in verse 3: - “As I live,” says the Lord God, “you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel. 4 “Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; John Calvin, in his commentary on Ezekiel, says this about verse 4:

“When, therefore, God pronounces that all souls are his own, he does not merely claim sovereignty and power, but he rather shows that he is affected with fatherly love towards the whole human race since he created and formed it.” Yahweh is indeed a loving father and husband towards the Jews, even towards those who are now in exile!

Though we inherited our sin nature from Adam, if we are condemned to Hell, it will be on the basis of our own sin, not for the sin of Adam, nor for those of our earthly fathers or extended family either. For as Yahweh goes on to say, “The **soul who sins** shall die.” He then describes three scenarios involving a righteous man, his wicked son, and his righteous grandson, which are found in this table below (**Have the students look over this table**). The sins described are likely those of Israel in the days of Ezekiel and are meant to silence the Jews in regards to declaring their own innocence:

The Righteous Father 18:5-9	The Wicked Son 18:10-13	The Righteous Grandson 18:14-18
5 But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right;	10 “If he begets a son who is a robber Or a shedder of blood, Who does any of these things 11 And does none of those duties,	14 “If, however, he begets a son Who sees all the sins which his father has done, And considers but does not do likewise;
6 If he has not eaten on the mountains, nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel,	11b But has eaten on the mountains 12b Lifted his eyes to the idols Or committed abomination	15a Who has not eaten on the mountains, nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel,
6b Nor defiled his neighbor’s wife, nor approached a woman during her impurity;	11c Or defiled his neighbor’s wife;	15b Nor defiled his neighbor’s wife;
7a If he has not oppressed anyone, but has restored to the debtor his pledge; Has robbed no one by violence,	12a If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence Not restored the pledge	16a Has not oppressed anyone, Nor withheld a pledge Nor robbed by violence,
7b But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing;		16b But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing;
8 If he has not exacted usury nor taken increase, but has withdrawn his hand from iniquity and executed true judgment between man and man;	13a If he has exacted usury or taken increase	17a Who has withdrawn his hand from the poor And not received usury or increase,
9a If he has walked in My statutes— And kept My judgments faithfully—		17b But has executed My judgments And walked in My statutes
9b He is just; He shall surely live!” Says the Lord God.	13b Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.	17c He shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live!

Notice that the sins mentioned are of two main types:

- The sins mentioned at the beginning and end of each example are sins directly against God: Idolatry and a general disregard for His Law
- The sins mentioned in the middle of each example are sins against their fellow men: adultery, oppression, robbery, greed, failure to do good to one's neighbor, etc.

In the days of Ezekiel, Israel was the Wicked Son of verses 10-13. The Jews were guilty of unholy worship, of disregarding the Law of God, and of sins against each other, and it is for these sins and especially for failing to repent of them, that they are now being judged by God.

Have a student read verses 19-22 – The Lord is indicating that both the ancestors of the Jews and the current Jews are guilty of the same sins and that the worst of these sins is a failure to repent. If they were willing to repent fully, the calamities being prophesied by Ezekiel could still be avoided. He will make this more plain later in the chapter. Thus, far from being the vengeful God that the Jews in their proverb accuse Him of being, Yahweh says that he does not have any pleasure in the death of the wicked (verses 23,32).

In verses 24, Yahweh says that if a man (or a nation) truly repents from their sin, mercy is readily available to them, though he still may have to suffer earthly consequences for his/their sin. As He told Moses, the Lord is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth”, (Exodus 34:6) in spite of the fact that those closest to the sinner often suffer in this life along with them (verses 26-28). Israel has accused God of unfairness (verses 25,29), and yet it is she who is unfair. She has not repented of her sin and yet would deny God's justice in punishing them for it. In spite of this, Yahweh, in His abundant mercy, makes an impassioned appeal for Israel to repent, even at this late hour:
 30 “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord God.
 “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.
 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?”
 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

We too must keep short accounts of our own sins by acknowledging them, not blaming others for them and fully repenting of them that we too might live in communion with the Lord and His people.

Message 7 - Chapter 19 – Day 7 - Lamentation for the Line of David

Chapter 19 is a lamentation (a wailing) over the fall of the “princes” (kings) of the southern kingdom of Judah. The kingly line of David is coming to an end, recalling **Day 7 of Creation, when God rested from all of His work.**

Verses 1-9 - Young lions – In this portion of Ezekiel's “lamentation”, Israel (Judah) is pictured as a lioness who “lay down among the lions”. The tribe of Judah was called a lion elsewhere in Scripture, but instead of a stately lioness, Judah had become a lioness who “lays down among the lions”. She had become like the pagan nations (lions / young

lions) around her and had forged ungodly alliances with them. From her came a cub who, as we see in verse 3, “learned to catch prey” and who “devoured men”. This refers to **King Jehoahaz**, the son of righteous King Josiah (see 2 Kings 23:31-34 and 2 Chronicles 36:1-4). Instead of following in his father’s footsteps, “he did evil in the sight of the Lord...” (2 Kings 23:32). Both John Calvin and Mathew Henry see verses 3-4 as an indication of the cruelty and corruption of the short reign of Jehoahaz, so much so that the Gentile nations around Judah heard of it (verse 4a). Unlike righteous Joseph, who was raised up out of a pit and taken to Egypt where he became ruler under Pharaoh, verse 4b tells us that Jehoahaz was trapped like a lion in a pit and taken in chains to Egypt. Indeed, God did use Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, who captured Jehoahaz and put him in prison in Egypt where he lived out the rest of his days (2 Kings 23:33-34).

Verses 5-9 tell us of another “young lion”, **King Jehoiakim**, who, like Jehoahaz before him, also “did evil in the sight of the Lord...” (2 Kings 23:37). Jehoiakim reigned for eleven years in Jerusalem in a cruel and sinful fashion (see verses 6-7) like a lion who “learned to catch prey” and who “devoured men” as Jehoahaz had done. As a result, the Lord sent Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to Jerusalem with his army and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years (2 Kings 24:1). After Jehoiakim rebelled against the king of Babylon, “the Lord sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon” (2 Kings 24:2) as we see pictured in verse 8. As verse 9 depicts, Nebuchadnezzar himself came up against Jehoiakim, bound him in bronze fetters and carried him off to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6).

Verses 10-14 – Vine - In this section, the kingly line of Judah is now compared to a fruitful vine, which the Lord raised up and made strong and prosperous, above all of the other nations on the earth. **Zedekiah**, the last king to reign in Jerusalem, may be in mind here. He had many sons and (“strong branches”) and became very prosperous (“dense foliage” see verse 11). However, contrary to the word of the Lord, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and, as we spoke of earlier, his sons were killed and he was made blind and taken to Babylon. Because of the sin of the rulers of Judah and of all of the people, the Lord will cause this fruitful vine to be plucked up, cast down, dried up, broken, withered, and burned (verse 12). As the book of Ezekiel progresses, we will see that Jerusalem and the Temple itself will be broken down and burned to the ground, and the people either killed or taken into exile in Babylon

However, this chapter ends in hope as this thoroughly worthless vine will once again be “planted in the wilderness” of Babylon (verse 13) where Yahweh will preserve her, and eventually cause her to prosper once more in the Promised Land. God indeed is merciful!

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 20-21; On the sheet provided, write down all of the verse numbers in which you find the following words/phrases in Ezekiel 20:1-44.

❖ **Pray / Prep for worship**

Repeated Words / Phrases in Ezekiel 20:1-44

Read Ezekiel 20:1-44 and write down the verse numbers where each of the following words or phrases is found. (New King James Version)

Inquire - _____

Abominations - _____

Oath - _____

(My) hand - _____

Rebelled - _____

Idols - _____

My anger - _____

My fury - _____

My name - _____

Profaned - _____

Gentiles - _____

Wilderness - _____

My Sabbaths - _____

My statutes - _____

My judgments - _____

Fathers - _____

Bring you/them in/out - _____

Repeated Words / Phrases in Ezekiel 20:1-44 (Answer Key)

Inquire – Verses 1,3,31

Abominations – Verses 4,7,8,30

Oath – 5,6,15,23,28,42

(My) hand - Verses 5,6,15,22,23,28,33,34,42

Rebelled – 8, 13, 21,38

Idols – Verses 7,8,16,18,24,31,39

My anger – Verses 8,21

My fury – Verses 8,13,21,33,34

My name – Verses 9,14,22,39,44

Profaned – 9,14,16,21,22,24,39

Gentiles – 9,14,22,23,32,41

Wilderness – 10,13,15,16,17,18,21,23,35,36

My Sabbaths – Verses 12,13,16,20,21,24

My statutes – Verses 11,13,16,18,19,21,24,25

My judgments – Verses 11,13,16,18,19,21,24,25

Fathers – Verses 4,18,24,27,30,36,42

Bring you/them in/out – Verses 6,9,15,34,35,37,38,41,42

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 11 – Day 4 – Climax – Rulers, City, and Land to be Destroyer - Part 1 Chapter 20-21 – Abominations Bring Fire and the Sword

Objective – To help the students to continue to see the hope of Israel’s restoration and of the salvation of the world in the midst of God’s judgment.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse - Ezekiel 18:31-32 - Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”**

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel –Review with students for a few minutes**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review – No more than 2-3 minutes!**

In the last lesson, we saw:

- 1) Chapter 17 - The parable of the great eagle told us of how Nebuchadnezzar will come with his army and defeat the kings of Judah, who trusted in Egypt for her protection. However, Israel will one day be restored and bless all of the nations of the earth
- 2) Chapter 18 – The elders of Israel felt that they were incurring the wrath of God for the sins of their “fathers” (ancestors) but Ezekiel shows them that they are just as guilty as their “fathers”.
- 3) Chapter 19 – Judah’s kings are compared to lions who are taken into captivity and the nation is compared to a vine that is plucked up, cast down, dried up, broken, withered, and burned
 - What do we see at the end of Chapter 19 that should give Israel hope? (The withered vine is planted in the wilderness (Babylon) where it will still live and, eventually, be restored.)

❖ Lesson – Chapter 20-21

Ask the students, “How can we tell that Chapter 20 begins a new section of Ezekiel?”

In most instances, time markers are what usually divide Ezekiel into its various sections.

We have seen this before:

1. Ezekiel 1:1-2 - Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month... On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity...

2. Ezekiel 8:1 - And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, on the fifth *day* of the month...

3. Ezekiel 14:1 (no time marker) - Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me.

This fourth section of Ezekiel also begins with a time marker:

Ezekiel 20:1 - It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, on the tenth *day* of the month... This is now about two years after Ezekiel first received the vision of the four living creatures and of the chariot throne of God.

Ask the students, “What did God create on Day 4 and what do we usually associate with this?” “On Day 4 God made the ruling lights, sun, moon, and stars where the rockets soar.” Genesis 4:16 says, “Then God made two great lights: the greater light to **rule** the day, and the lesser light to **rule** the night. He made the stars also.” **Ruling**, over families, armies, and especially over nations and Empires, is often what is associated with the fourth day of creation. In this fourth section of Ezekiel, which covers chapters 20-23, judgment on **rulers**, as well as the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel will be seen prominently.

This entire section can be outlined as follows (from James Jordan’s notes on Ezekiel)

20:1-44 – Abominations of the Fathers

20:45-49 – Prophecy of Fire

21:1-32 – The Prophecy of the Sword and its Fulfillment

22:1-16 – Abominations of the Bloody City

22:17-22 – Dross

22:23-31 – Wild Animals

23 – Abominations of the Daughters

Today we will cover the first three portions of this outline:

Chapter 20:1-44 – Abominations of the Fathers

The opening of this section of Ezekiel deals with God’s judgment on Israel’s “fathers” (**rulers** of prior generations). This part of chapter 20 is laid out in an interesting fashion with a lot of repeating words and phrases. (**Ask the students to share a few of their findings from their homework sheets. We will cover them in detail later**)

Inquire – Verses 1,3,31
 Abominations – Verses 4,7,8,30
 Oath – 5,6,15,23,28,42
 (My) hand - Verses 5,6,15,22,23,28,33,34,42
 Rebelled – 8, 13, 21,38
 Idols – Verses 7,8,16,18,24,31,39
 My anger – Verses 8,21
 My fury – Verses 8,13,21,33,34
 My name – Verses 9,14,22,39,44
 Profaned – 9,14,16,21,22,24,39
 Gentiles – 9,14,22,23,32,41
 Wilderness – 10,13,15,16,17,18,21,23,35,36
 My Sabbaths – Verses 12,13,16,20,21,24
 My statutes – Verses 11,13,16,18,19,21,24,25
 My judgments – Verses 11,13,16,18,19,21,24,25
 Fathers – Verses 4,18,24,27,30,36,42
 Bring you/them in/out – Verses 6,9,15,34,35,37,38,41,42

These repeated words and phrases will help to guide us in our understanding of what the Lord is communicating to Ezekiel and to the elders in this portion of the book.

The chapter opens with the elders of Israel coming to Ezekiel in order to “inquire of the Lord” (to pray to Yahweh and to seek His favor and guidance). **Have a student read verses 1-3.** Yahweh challenges and then refuses to allow the elders’ to “inquire” of Him. He repeats this statement in **verse 31 (Have a student read this verse).** These two “bookends” should raise a question on our minds: Why is Yahweh refusing to hear the prayers of these elders?

Yahweh answers them by telling Ezekiel to recount to them the history of their “fathers”, the previous generations of Israelites, particularly their leaders. In verses 4-29 Ezekiel is to remind the elders multiple times how Yahweh blessed their “fathers” and made covenant with them and how many times their “fathers” rebelled against Him and were guilty of abominations against Yahweh. We can summarize as follows:

- 1) Verses 5-12 – Unfaithful in Egypt**
- 2) Verses 13-21 – Unfaithful in the Wilderness**
- 3) Verses 22-29 – Unfaithful in the Promised Land**
- 4) Verses 30-44 – Unfaithful in Exile, like their “fathers”**

Summary of Ezekiel 20:1-44

Beginning in Egypt, the Lord had his hand upon Israel. He swore an oath (made covenant) with her fathers (descendants) and took her as His own special people. Yahweh commanded Israel to cease her abominations (wicked ways) get rid of her idols and to

worship Him alone. Instead, Israel rebelled against Yahweh and continued in her idolatry, which angered the Lord. However, for His name's sake, He relented and brought her out of Egypt into the wilderness where He gave her His statutes, judgments, and Sabbaths. In the wilderness as well as in the Promised Land, Israel continued in her abominations and idolatry. Each time the Lord's anger/fury was aroused, and yet, each time Yahweh relented in bringing His full wrath to bear on Israel, for His name's sake and so that the Gentiles would not profane it. Right up to the days of Ezekiel and the elders with him in exile, Israel has continued in her rebellion. They are just like their "fathers". And so, Yahweh asks them how they can dare to inquire of Him and hope that He will answer their prayers or come to their aid.

Let us return to some of these repeated words and phrases to see what else the Lord can teach us. **Have the students refer to the sheets they filled out:**

1) Oath – Yahweh lovingly took Israel to be His special people and pledge Himself to her by oath (covenant) to bring her into the Promised Land (5,6,28). Yet when they continued in rebellion, He also made an oath to judge and scatter them (15,23). However, Yahweh will be faithful to His oath of blessing and will bring them back to the Promised Land (42)

2) Abominations / Idols / Rebelled – In verse 4 we see Yahweh exhorting Ezekiel to show these elders their own abominations (sins) which are just like those of their "fathers". Though time and time again Israel was commanded to put away her abominations and idols (7, 18) yet in Egypt (8), in the wilderness (16), and in the Promised Land (24), she continued in her rebellion (8,13,21). Now in Ezekiel's day, these abominations and idolatry have continued as before, even to the point of making their children "pass through the fire" (be wholly devoted) to their false gods.

3) (My) hand – Yahweh's loving hand was raised in an oath of blessing upon Israel (5,6,28), yet, when they rebelled, His hand was upon them for chastisement (15,22,23,28)

4) My anger / fury – Israel's rebellion roused the anger/fury of Yahweh (8,13,21) in the wilderness and in the Promised Land. Now, at the end of Israel's history, the full anger/fury of God will be poured out upon her because these elders and the people with them are as bad as, or even worse than, their "fathers" (33,34).

5) My name / profaned / Gentiles – **Look at verses 9,14, and 22. When Israel rebelled in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the Promised Land, what two reasons does the Lord give for not carrying out His full wrath upon her?** (see verses 9,14,16,21-23, 39,44)

1. For the sake of His own name
2. So that the Gentiles would not profane His name; that is, so that they would not consider His name and the worship of Him to be of little value. In reality, it is Israel who has profaned the name of Yahweh. Now at the end of Israel's history, Yahweh will judge His people fully and also fully restore them for His name's sake (39,44).

We must always remember that God acts for the glory of His own name, over and above His great love for His people. If He did not, He would cease to be God and worthy of all praise.

6) Wilderness / Bring them out – God brought Israel out (6,9,15) of Egypt into the wilderness (10,13,15,16,17,18) and then into the Promised Land. The land of Israel, because of her abominations and idolatry, has become like Egypt and Yahweh is bringing her out of this “Egypt” into the wilderness of captivity in Babylon (35,36), and will once again bring her out of that wilderness, back to the Promised Land (34,35,37,38,41,42).

7) My statutes, judgments, Sabbaths – Three gracious gifts that Yahweh gave to Israel when He made covenant with her were His statutes (laws), His judgments (blessings for obedience and punishments for disobedience) and His Sabbaths (rest, worship, and celebration in the presence of God) – (12,19, 20). They were not to walk in the statutes of their fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile themselves with their idols (who gave them false Sabbaths) (18). Nevertheless, Israel despised Yahweh’s judgments, did not walk in His statutes, and defiled and profaned His Sabbaths (13,16,21,24). And so, Yahweh gave them up to the statutes and judgments of the pagan Babylonians who now hold them captive (25), and thus Israel can no longer keep Sabbath in exile.

8) Fathers – Yahweh commanded Ezekiel to make known to the elders the abominations of their “fathers” (4). He commanded Israel in the wilderness not to walk in the sinful ways of her fathers in Egypt(18). However, they were continued in the idolatry of their fathers’ in the wilderness (24) and in the Promised Land (27). These elders and those with them in captivity, as well as those still in Israel, are still like their fathers (30, 36) and will suffer the destruction of Jerusalem and captivity in Babylon as a result. However, just as God made covenant with their fathers in the wilderness, so too he will renew covenant with Israel in the wilderness of Babylon and will bring her back to the Promised Land (36,42)

Israel and especially the city of Jerusalem are ripe for judgment. In the chapters that follow, Yahweh announces the coming of this judgment against her using the images of fire (Chapter 20:45-49), the sword (Chapter 21) and dispersion (Chapter 22)

Chapter 20:45-49 – Prophecy of Fire

In the Hebrew Bible, these verses begin the next chapter. The Lord tells Ezekiel to:

1) “Set your face toward the south” – The word for “south” here is “teman” which literally means “towards the right hand (as you face east)” and also refers to a city in Edom, to the south of Israel. Recall that it was Edomites (the descendants of Esau) who would not let Israel pass through their land on the way to the Promised Land when they came out of Egypt (see Numbers 20). Israel once held the position of the special people of God. They were those “on his right hand” so to speak, and now they have become like the wicked city of Teman, in Edom which will be also be judged by Yahweh in chapter 25.

2) “Preach against the south” – The word for “south” in this verse is “darown” which is used most frequently to describe the southern portions of Ezekiel’s temple in Ezekiel 40-42. The current Temple in Jerusalem is doomed to destruction, but the use of this word may indicate hope for the future temple.

3) “Prophecy against the forest land, the South” – This Hebrew word for “south” here is “negeb” which refers to the land including southern Israel, once apparently covered by forests and which today is a dry wasteland. The Lord was about to send Nebuchadnezzar and his army to destroy Judah and Jerusalem as a fire destroys a forest.

Notice that the Ezekiel says that the elders of Israel do not believe that he is speaking the truth about what is going to happen but rather he is speaking in parables, stories meant to scare them!

Chapter 21:1-17 – The Prophecy of the Sword

As verse 21 tells us, the word of the Lord again came to Ezekiel as he is there with the elders. Now, instead of using fire as a metaphor for the coming destruction at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the sword is used. This section can be outlined as follows

A. Verses 1-2 – Yahweh is against His people

B. Verses 4-5 - Because He will cut off the righteous and the wicked

C. Verses 6-7 – Ezekiel should sigh deeply

D. Verses 8-10a – The sword of the Lord is polished and sharp!

E. Verse 10b – Is this a time for rejoicing?

D’ Verse 11 – The sword of the Lord is polished and sharp!

C’ Verse 12 – Ezekiel should cry and wail

B’ Verse 13 – Because it is a testing

A’ Verses 14-17 – The Lord has spoken

Verses 1-2 (A.) and 14-17 (A’) – It is the Lord, first and foremost, who is against His people, to chastise them for their abominations and idolatry. These verses tell the elders with Ezekiel that the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar will be used by Yahweh as His sword to destroy Jerusalem and to conquer Judah.

Verses 4-5 (B.) and 13 (B’) – This judgment will affect both the wicked and those faithful to Yahweh (such as Ezekiel) and will result in the final defeat of the kings of Judah (“the scepter”) in the line of David.

Verses 6-7 (C.) and 12 (C’) – Notice in these verses what great emotions the Lord tells Ezekiel to exhibit before these elders. The elders seem to still be holding out hope that Israel will defeat the Babylonians and end their exile. Ezekiel, through his great sighing, crying and wailing, is to demonstrate to them that all hope of victory is lost and that the full judgment of the Lord “...is coming and shall be brought to pass” (verse 7b). We too should sigh, cry and wail deeply over the sin in our own lives and over the sin in our nation.

Verses 8-10a (D.) and 11 (D') – Both of these sets of verses emphasize that the Babylonian army is prepared and powerful, like a polished and sharpened sword, to carry out the full wrath of God against Judah and Jerusalem.

Center - Verse 10b (E.) – Because of the fierceness and sureness of the “sword” what is coming upon God’s people, this is no time for rejoicing or for false security on the part of the elders.

Chapter 21:18-32 – Fulfillment of the Sword

Again the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, giving him the details of this judgment of the “sword” which is coming upon Israel and upon the nation of Ammon, who also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. This section can be outlined as follows:

A. Verses 18-20 – The sword for Judah or Ammon

B. Verses 21-23 – Babylonian divination

C. Verse 24 – Judah receives the sword

D. Verses 25-27 – Judah overthrown until He comes

C' Verse 28 – Ammon receives the sword

B' Verse 29 – Ammonite divination

A' Verses 30-32 – Fire for Ammon

Verses 18-20 (A.) and 30-32(A') – Though both Judah and Ammon will be judged by the Lord, as 1 Peter 4:17 says, judgment begins at the house of God. Through pagan divination, Nebuchadnezzar will decide to conquer Judah before dealing with Ammon who has also rebelled against him. In the end it is the Lord who judges them both, with the sword and with fire (as we also saw at the end of chapter 20).

Verses 21-23 (B.) and 29(B') – Nebuchadnezzar makes use of pagan rituals to determine whether to attack Judah/Jerusalem or Ammon first. He uses arrows, idols, and even the internal organs of an animal to try and determine what to do. In the end, even these pagan rites are in the hand of the Lord and Nebuchadnezzar comes against God’s people first. The Ammonites too make use of pagan divination to try and help them to defeat the Babylonians (verse 29) but it is of no use to them.

Verse 24 (C.) and Verse 28 (C') – Regardless of the order, both Judah and Ammon are under the wrath of Yahweh and will be defeated by the sword of the Babylonians

Center - Verses 25-27 (D.) – Indeed both the priesthood (the turban) of Judah and her king Zedekiah (the crown) shall be utterly defeated yet, in these verses we still see hope. There will come a day when another will come, who will have the right to wear both the turban and the crown. Israel will be restored. Jesus will come as both King of Kings and as the Great High Priest and those who are humble enough to recognize Him and give all honor and glory to Him will be exalted.

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 22-23; Work on the memory verse and outline

❖ **Prayer / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 12 – Day 4 – Climax – Rulers, City, and Land to be Destroyer - Part 2 Chapter 22-23 – The Bloody City and the Unfaithful Sisters

Objective – To show the students the consequences of long term sin in the life of the nation of Israel and in their own lives as well.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse - Ezekiel 18:31-32 - Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”**

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel –Review with students for a few minutes**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

We are currently in the fourth section of the book of Ezekiel. As you recall, Day 4 of Creation has to do with **rulers**. In chapter 20 we saw Yahweh speaking through Ezekiel to the **rulers** (elders) who are with him in exile in Babylon and showing them their abominations (sins) and idolatry, which are just like their “fathers” who were before them. At the end of chapter 20 and in all of chapter 21, we saw that this wickedness is bringing about Yahweh’s severe wrath on Judah and Jerusalem pictured as **fire** and the **sword**. As we saw last week “Day 4” section of Ezekiel can outlined as follows:

- 20:1-44 – Abominations of the Fathers
- 20:45-49 – Prophecy of Fire
- 21:1-32 – The Prophecy of the Sword and its Fulfillment
- 22:1-16 – Abominations of the Bloody City
- 22:17-22 – Dross
- 22:23-31 – Wild Animals
- 23 – Abominations of the Daughters

Today we will cover the last four sections of this outline

❖ Lesson – Chapter 22-23

In chapter 22, the sins of Jerusalem are detailed. In chapter 23, Israel and Judah are compared to two sisters, both of whom have been unfaithful to their husband, Yahweh.

Chapter 22 – Abominations of the Blood City, Dross and Wild Animals

Notice the pericope (section) markers in this chapter:

Verse 1 – “Moreover the word of the Lord came to me saying...”

Verse 17 – “The word of the Lord came to me saying...”

Verse 23 – “And the word of the Lord came to me, saying...”

These tell us that there are three separated but related sections in this chapter.

Verses 1-16 - The specific sins of the city of Jerusalem are detailed at the beginning of the

Verses 23-31 - The sins of Jerusalem’s leaders, pictured as wild animals, will be brought to light at the end of the chapter.

Verses 17-22 - In the middle of the chapter, we will see that Jerusalem and Judah, as a result of these sins, have become like “dross”.

Verses 1-16 – Abominations of the Bloody City

Have the students look through verses 1-16 and ask them to find a word, or related words, used six times in these verses, that describes the city of Jerusalem (Hint: the words begin with a “B”). Throughout this section, **blood, bloody, and bloodshed** are prominent. Jerusalem, in her sin, has become a bloody city.

What was the first murder recorded in the Bible? Cain’s murder of Abel.

What did God say to Cain about Abel’s blood? He said that it was crying out of the ground to Him. It was as if Abel’s blood was praying to God for justice to be done on his behalf. In other parts of the Scripture we learn that the blood of the murdered person pollutes the ground, rendering it unclean (see Numbers 35:31-34) and unfit for the holy God to dwell in. In the days of the nation of Israel, God dwelt in the midst of His people in a special way, particularly in the Temple in Jerusalem. However, now that Jerusalem has become polluted with murderous bloodshed and with idolatry, Yahweh is about to leave and bring His judgments to bear on her by bringing of the army of the Babylonians to destroy her.

Recall that in chapter 16 God told Ezekiel to “cause Jerusalem to know her abominations...”. Now in verses 1-3, the introduction to this chapter, God again instructs Ezekiel to not only make known to the elders with him the abominations of the city of Jerusalem, but to judge her as well.

In verse 3, Yahweh once again accuses Jerusalem of two basic categories of sin (**Ask the students what two basic types of sin they find in verse 3**):

1) Sins against her own people – “The city sheds blood in her own midst...”

2) Sins directly against Yahweh - Idolatry – “And she makes idols within herself...”

As a result of these two types of sins, Jerusalem is defiled and her time of judgment has come. The rest of this section of chapter 22 is a detailed account of these sins and the punishment to come. Notice that Jerusalem is guilty of breaking all of the Ten Commandments as we can see throughout these verses **(If there is time, have the students try and pick out violations of each of the Ten Commandments in verses 4-16)**

I. Have no other gods – 16

II. Do not make idols - 4

III. Do not take Yahweh's name in vain -
5, 12c

IV. Keep the Sabbath - 8

V. Honor father and mother - 7

VI. Do not murder - 6

VII. Do not steal – 12b

VIII. Do not commit adultery - 11

IX. Do not bear false witness - 9

X. Do not covet – 12a

We will start at the center of this section and work our way outward towards the beginning and the end.

Verses 9-11 - At the very center of this section are a list of sexual sins – The people in Jerusalem are sinning against each other even in their most intimate relationships, a sign that they have absolutely no real love for one another and are ripe for judgment.

Verses 8 and 12 – Instead of honoring God on the Sabbath and resting from their own money making (v. 8) , those in Jerusalem are stealing money from one another in the form of bribes, usury (high interest rates), and extortion (obtaining money through threats of harm) as seen in verse 12.

Verses 6-7 and 13 – Instead of honoring their father and mother, they have mistreated them. They have also abused those who are without normal family protections; the fatherless and the widow (v. 6-7). The Lord is extremely angry at them for this mistreatment of one another (v. 13)

Verses 4-5 and 14-16 – Punishments – Because of all of these sins against one another and because of their idolatry (see v. 4), Yahweh has made Jerusalem and all of Judah a reproach and a mockery to the nations around her (verses 4-5). Because they bear the name of Yahweh, The Lord cannot let them continue in this sinful, reproachful state (v. 14). He will take them out of the Promised Land, into the land of the very nations who are mocking them, and cause them to repent of their wickedness (v. 15-16)

Verses 23-31 – Wild Animals

The sins of Jerusalem's **leaders**, pictured as wild animals, are featured at the end of chapter 22. **Have a student read verses 25 and 30.** With the removal of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel from Judah, there are no true prophets left to speak the true words of Yahweh to the people left behind. In fact all of the leadership has now become like wild lions (v. 25) and wolves (v. 27), self-serving and corrupt:

- 1) The Priests (v. 26) – The priests have not kept Yahweh's Law, nor have they led the people properly in keeping Sabbath.
- 2) The Princes (v. 27) - The princes have been like wolves, abusing and even murdering those they are supposed to serve in order to make themselves rich.
- 3) The Prophets (v. 28) – Instead of speaking truthfully for Yahweh, the prophets have uttered false words to the people, which God did not tell them to speak

Ungodly leadership encourages ungodliness in those under their charge. As verse 29 tells us, the people of the land are acting like their corrupt priests, princes and prophets by mistreating each other in every conceivable way. Thus Yahweh commands Ezekiel to be a true prophet and tell Judah and Jerusalem that she is not cleansed of her sin (v. 24). Instead, she will be cleansed by the pouring out of the wrath of God upon her (v. 31).

Verses 17-22 – Dross

In the middle of Chapter 22, we see that because of the sin of the people (verses 1-16) and the corruption of the leadership (verses 23-31), Yahweh says that “...the house of Israel has become like dross to me”. **Ask the students what dross is.** When men want to obtain precious metals such as silver and gold from rock (ore), they take the ore and heat it up, causing the various materials to melt. They then remove the materials of lesser value (bronze, tin, iron, lead, etc.) and collect the precious metals. Yahweh says that Israel, though once precious (silver) in His sight, has become like dross through her sins against each other and her idolatry. She is about to be “melted” by the fury of His wrath.

Chapter 23 – Two Unfaithful Sisters

As you recall, during the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon, Israel was one united kingdom of twelve tribes, descendants of the twelve sons of Judah.

During the reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam, the Kingdom of Israel became divided into two kingdoms

1. Jeroboam ruled 10 northern tribes (known as “Israel”, “Samaria”, or “Ephraim”)
2. Rehoboam ruled Judah and Benjamin in the south (known as “Judah” or “Jerusalem”)

Here in Ezekiel 23, the history of Israel and Judah is recounted to Ezekiel and the elders with him. Israel (also called “Samaria”, the name of her capital city) and Judah (also called “Jerusalem”, the name of her capital city) are depicted as two women who are both unfaithful to Yahweh their husband.

In this chapter, the northern kingdom of **Israel** is called “**Oholah**” (“Aholah”, KJV) which means “**her own tent/tabernacle**”. Recall that when Jeroboam became king over these ten northern tribes, he rejected the worship of Yahweh in the tabernacle in Jerusalem. Instead, he had two golden calves made and established two new worship places, in Bethel and Dan (see 1 Kings 12:25ff). Thus the name “Oholah” reminds us that Israel had made “her own tent/tabernacle”, a wicked substitute for the true tabernacle and worship of Yahweh (see verse 4).

The southern kingdom of **Judah** is called “**Oholibah**” (“Aholibah” KJV) which means “**woman of the tent or the tent is in her**” since the true tabernacle and worship of Yahweh was in Jerusalem, her capital city (see verse 4).

Both of these “daughters” come from the “one mother” (verse 2), the united kingdom of Israel. The Israelites were unfaithful to Yahweh while in captivity in Egypt (in their youth) as verse 3 tells us. Yet, Yahweh, in His mercy, brought them out of Egypt under Moses and established them in the Promised Land. Israel prospered and grew under the reigns of David and Solomon but, after the kingdom was divided under Rehoboam, everything changed. Under Jeroboam, the northern kingdom of Israel immediately became idolatrous and wicked and was eventually taken into captivity by the nation of Assyria in 722 B.C.

Judah was initially more faithful than Israel at first, but eventually succumbed to the same sins of idolatry and social injustice. Because of these sins, the Lord drove Judah out of the Promised Land and into exile. In approximately **605 B.C.**, during the reign of king Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded Jerusalem and took many of the prominent citizens captive, including Jehoiakim, Daniel and his three friends. The city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's army in **586 B.C.**

Chapter 23:5-49 can be outlined as follows:

Verses 5-8 – Israel is unfaithful

Verses 9-10 – Israel's ruin

Verses 11-21 – Judah is unfaithful

Verses 22-35 – Judah's ruin

Verses 36-43 – Israel and Judah are unfaithful

Verses 44-49 – Joint ruin

Verses 5-8 – Israel is unfaithful – In these verses we see the northern kingdom of Israel portrayed as a harlot (a woman who is paid for sexual favors) and her lover is the kingdom of Assyria. Under the reigns of both King Menahem and King Hoshea of Israel tried to gain the favor of the king of Assyria by giving him money which they extracted from the people of the land (see 2 Kings 15 and 17). Israel also embraced the pagan gods of the nations around her (including those of the Assyrians) during this time.

Verses 9-10 – Israel's ruin – As a result of this unfaithfulness, Yahweh delivered Israel into the hands of her wicked “lover” the Assyrians, as we see graphically depicted in these verses. During the reign of King Pekah, the king of Assyria, named Tiglath-Pileser, invaded Israel and carried many of the people into captivity in Assyria (2 Kings 15:27-31). Israel did not repent, and in fact, during the reign of Hoshea, she made an alliance with the king of Egypt in an effort to defeat the Assyrians. It was at this time that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, defeated Israel once and for all and took most of the remaining people captive (2 Kings 17).

Verses 11-21 – Judah is unfaithful – It would be logical to think that Judah, seeing what happened to her “sister” Israel, would never have gone down the same path of harlotry. However, verse 11 tells us that, even though she saw, she did not learn from Israel's error and, in fact, became worse than her “sister”, as we saw in Ezekiel chapter 16:51 “Samaria did not commit half of our sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all the abominations which you have done.” Verses 12-13 say that Judah too became enamoured of the Assyrians and longed to be like her both politically, militarily, and in her worship. Later, Oholibah (Judah) also fell into league with the Babylonians (Chaldeans) who had defeated Assyria to become the dominant Gentile nation. We also saw this in the life of King Hezekiah who, for all his godliness, foolishly endeared himself to the Babylonians and showed them all of the treasures that was in his house (2 Kings 20:12ff and Isaiah 39:2ff).

Under the reign of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, Judah entered into more sin and idolatry than even Israel, her "sister" had done, as 2 Chronicles 33:9 says: "So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel." As a result, the Lord strengthened the hand of the Babylonians against her and later, under Nebuchadnezzar, they defeated Judah. Jehoiakim, Judah's king at that time, became Nebuchadnezzar's vassal for three years (2 Kings 24:1). "Oholibah" (Judah) again switched lovers and made an alliance with Egypt as we see in verses 19-21 of Ezekiel 23. Though Judah behaved as a wicked harlot and went after many lovers (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt), it is her true lover, Yahweh, who ultimately alienates Himself from her as we see in verse 18 of this chapter. Her ruin is now prophesied in verses 22-35

Verses 22-35 – Judah's ruin – Have a student read verses 22-34. As verse 30 says, because Judah has "gone as a harlot after the Gentiles" and she has "become defiled by their idols", Yahweh says that her lovers will defeat her and take her into captivity as we see depicted very graphically in verses 22-29. He will place the same wrath upon "Oholibah" (Judah) that he did upon "Oholah" (Israel) (verses 31-34). Yahweh takes this rejection of Him by Judah and her taking other lovers to herself very personally. **Have a student read verse 35.** They have forgotten Yahweh and cast Him behind their back, and so they will bear the penalty of her sin.

Verses 36-43 – Israel and Judah are unfaithful – Just as we saw in chapter 22, Ezekiel is to judge Israel and Judah (Oholah and Oholibah) by showing them their abominations. And, like chapter 22, Ezekiel is to judge them for two sorts of sins. **Ask the students what these two sorts of sins are; see verse 37. They are 1) adulterers and 2) blood is on their hands.**

1. Adultery – These are sins directly against God Himself such as idolatry and seeking protection and security by making alliances with the pagan nations around Israel as verses 40-44 tell us. Instead of leading the nations to Yahweh, the one true God, Israel and Judah had joined them in their idolatry. This will not only lead to God's wrath upon Israel and Judah, but also upon the Gentile nations they were supposed to convert as we will see in the next section of Ezekiel

2. Blood is on their hands – They committed horrible sins against one another that were linked to their idolatry. **Ask the students to look at verses 37 and 39 and state what it was that Israel and Judah did that was so awful.** Apparently, Israel and Judah had "even sacrificed their sons whom they bore to (Yahweh), passing them through the fire, to devour them" (verse 37) and had "slain their children for their idols" (verse 39). These verses may refer to actual child sacrifice, or it may refer to a full dedication of their children to service to the pagan gods which they were worshipping.

Verses 45-49 – Joint ruin

Because of these sins, the nations treated Israel and Judah like the harlots that they were.

Ask the students, “What was the punishment for adultery and murder in the Mosaic Law? See Leviticus 20:10, 24:17. Both of these sins were punishable by death! In these verses, Ezekiel and the elders are called upon to act as righteous judges against the sisters Oholah and Oholibah (Israel and Judah). Both Israel and Judah received “death sentences” for their sins against Yahweh. In the case of adultery, both the man (The Gentile nations) and the woman (Israel and Judah) were to be put to death. Thus Yahweh will also judge the nations who committed spiritual adultery with Israel and Judah, as we will see in our next lesson.

May the Lord grant us all the grace and strength to remain faithful to Him and not play the part of the “lewd woman” by being unfaithful to the Lord as Israel and Judah did.

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel chapters 24-28; Work on memorizing outline and memory verse.

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People
Lesson 13 – Day 5 – Swarms of Nations Fall - Part 1
Chapter 24-28 – The Fall of the Six

Objective – To help the students to see that sin in the church will result in greater sin among the non-Christians and bring about God’s judgment on both.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse** – Due to the length of this lesson, do not review these verses but let the students know that there will be a **QUIZ** on these verses next week!

Ezekiel 18:31-32 - Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

- ❖ **Outline of Ezekiel** – Due to the length of this week’s lesson, skip the outline review

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

- ❖ **Review – 2-3 minutes only**

- Where does the entire book of Ezekiel take place? (Babylon)
- What does the name “Ezekiel” mean? (“Go is strong”, “God strengthens”, or “God makes hard”)
- Was Ezekiel a priest, a prophet, or both? (Both)
- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel)
- What is Jerusalem called throughout chapter 22? (A bloody city)
- In chapter 22, what are Israel’s leaders compared to? (Wild animals)
- As a result of the sins of the people and their leaders, what is Israel compared to that reminds us of the processing of metals (Dross)
- In chapter 23, Israel is called Oholah and Judah is called Oholibah, sisters who both were unfaithful to Yahweh. What do these names mean? (Oholah = her own tabernacle;

Oholibah = woman of the tent)

❖ Lesson – Chapters 24-28 – The Fall of the Six

Ask the students, “How can you tell that chapter 24 starts a new section of Ezekiel?”

The time marker that we see at the beginning of chapter 24 tells us that this is a new section:

Ezekiel 24:1 Again, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me, saying,...

It has now been four and a half years since Ezekiel first received his vision of the four living beasts and the chariot throne of God that we talked about in chapter 1.

This is the **fifth** section of Ezekiel and we can see echoes of **Day 5 of Creation** in this portion of the book.

Ask the students, “What did God create on the Fifth Day?” See Genesis 1:20-23.

On Day Five of creation, **“God filled the sea and sky with fish and birds that teem and thrive”**. Birds and fish tend to travel in large groups (flocks and schools); They are “swarming” creatures. In chapters 24-33a, we will see God’s judgments on the “swarm” of Gentile nations around Israel.

Seven nations will be judged:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Ammon – 25:1-7 | 5) Tyre – 26:1-28:19 |
| 2) Moab – 25:8-11 | 6) Sidon – 28:19-24 |
| 3) Edom – 25:12-14 | 7) Egypt – 29:1-32:32 |
| 4) Philistia – 25:15-17 | |

This seven-fold (full) judgment on the Gentile nations around Israel was a result of their particular sins which will be described in turn, and for their participation in the destruction of Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 27:3,6). **However, we must not forget that Israel was supposed to be the priestly nation, drawing all nations to the worship of Yahweh.** Israel (and Judah) failed to do this, and instead became like the pagan nations around them, causing God to judge both them and the Gentile nations as well. So, in a sense, Israel and Judah bear significant responsibility for the judgment that comes on these seven Gentile nations.

In chapter 24, prior to the fall of the “swarm of nations”, we will see that judgment begins with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17)

Chapter 24 – The Siege of Jerusalem

Verses 1-14 – Jerusalem, the Cooking Pot

God’s warnings through Ezekiel of coming judgment have gone unheeded by those in Judah for over four years. In this chapter, we see the wrath of God begin to fall. **Have a student read verse 2.** Nebuchadnezzar and his army have surrounded the city of Jerusalem and laid siege to it. This means that they are not allowing anyone or anything (including food or other needed provisions) in or out of the city. In ancient times, sieges could last for weeks, months, or even years and would continue until the citizens in the

city surrendered, tried to escape (only to be captured and/or killed), starved or killed one another.

The events surrounding the siege of Jerusalem are recorded in 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 39 and 52. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon first besieged Jerusalem in the days of Jehoiachin the king of Judah (2 Kings 24:8ff). Jehoiachin was captured by Nebuchadnezzar and taken to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king over Judah and changed his name to Zedekiah. Jeremiah brought the word of the Lord to Zedekiah telling him that the Babylonians would be back and would capture Jerusalem (Jeremiah 37-38). He told Zedekiah that if he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar he would preserve his own life, his family's life and the whole city of Jerusalem as well (Jeremiah 38:17). However, Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and, as a result, Nebuchadnezzar came once again with his army to Jerusalem and besieged it (2 Kings 25:1) which is the same siege mentioned in Ezekiel 24:2. This second siege lasted a year and a half and, near the end, "...the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land" (Jeremiah 52:6, c.f. 2 Kings 25:3).

Have a student read verses 3-14 and ask them, "What do you think this parable means?"

Remember back in Ezekiel 11:1-13, Jerusalem's leaders had said "...this city is the cauldron and we are the meat" (Ezekiel 11:3). By this they falsely assumed that Jerusalem and the people there were still the favored and protected ones of God (i.e. they were as safe from their enemies as meat in a pot is safe from the flames of fire). Here in chapter 24, the Lord, through the words of Ezekiel, turns this saying back on them.

Jerusalem was indeed once a protective pot and the people inside were the choice pieces of meat (Yahweh's chosen people). However, as we saw in chapter 22 and here in verse 6, Jerusalem has become a "bloody city", a "pot whose scum is in it". Her idolatry and sins against one another have become very great. As we saw in our last lesson, the bloodshed in Jerusalem has polluted the city, rendering her unfit for Yahweh to dwell in. Her "blood" (sin) is uncovered, i.e. it has not yet been atoned for (verses 7-8). And so, instead of Yahweh using Jerusalem (the pot) to protect His people (the meat), they will be tossed out piece by piece into captivity in Babylon (verse 6b) and those who remain will be "burned up" (verses 4-5, 9-12). Even the pot itself (Jerusalem) will be destroyed (verse 11). As verse 13 says, Yahweh had cleansed the pot before (through the taking of some of the people such as Daniel and Ezekiel captive to Babylon), but this did not produce real cleansing (repentance) in Jerusalem. Because of this, the full fury of the Lord will now be poured upon the city (verse 14).

Verses 15-27 – Ezekiel's Wife Dies

Have a student read verses 15-17 - The word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel again, this time with devastating news: Ezekiel's beloved wife, "the desire of (his) eyes" will be taken from him by the Lord (verse 16). But, more than this, Ezekiel is commanded to neither

mourn nor weep for her. **Ask the students, “Why is Ezekiel’s wife being taken from him and why is he not allowed to mourn for her?”**

As we have said before, Ezekiel represents Yahweh to the exiles (and all of Judah) and his wife therefore, represents all of Israel (and particularly Jerusalem). Her death is a sign to Israel of the death and destruction that is coming upon the people of God, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple itself. The Lord holds the life of every one of us in His hands and it is up to Him to determine the number of our days on this earth. In the case of Ezekiel’s wife, she was ushered into her eternal reward sooner than the average child of God. For some of God’s servants such as Ezekiel and his wife, the Lord requires greater personal sacrifice than others.

As to why the Lord forbade Ezekiel from mourning the death of his wife, there may be at least two reasons:

- 1) **Have a student read Leviticus 21:10-12** - Ezekiel was the High Priest of Yahweh to the exiles in Babylon. As such, his devotion to the Lord was to take precedence over all other relationships, including those of father, mother, and (presumably) wife. Since he served in the Temple, no sign of death (including mourning) was to be upon him.
- 2) Ezekiel represents Yahweh to the people. Yahweh, though merciful and longsuffering, has determined that Jerusalem (his “wife”), and the Temple, which is the “desire of (the) eyes” of those in exile (see verse 21) must “die”. In His justice, He can no longer pity (mourn for) His people/land, and Ezekiel’s lack of mourning represents this.

In verses 19-27, the Lord, through Ezekiel, tells the elders in exile that the Temple, which is their “boast” and the “desire of (their) eyes, the delight of (their) soul” is about to be profaned (destroyed) by Him. Additionally, many of their own loved ones left behind in Israel will perish in the coming judgment and, as lesser representatives of Yahweh to the people, they are not to mourn them either,

After delivering the word of the Lord to the elders, Ezekiel is now to become silent (see verse 17). He will not speak again (at least by way of public prophecy) until the destruction of Jerusalem that will take place nearly three years from the time of this last word from him. (see Ezekiel 24:1 - “ninth year” and compare to Ezekiel 33:21- “twelfth year”)

And now, the Lord’s judgment flows from the people of God to the nations

Chapters 25-32 – Judgment on the Nations

Introduction

Ezekiel is now in his time of public silence (verse 17) and it is likely that, in this three-year period, from the start of the siege of Jerusalem to her destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, he wrote chapters 23-32. In these chapters, the judgments against the Gentile nations around Israel are pronounced. **(See map)**

As was said earlier, there are seven of these judgments:

- 1) Ammon 4) Philistia 7) Egypt
- 2) Moab 5) Tyre
- 3) Edom 6) Sidon

The **seventh** nation, Egypt, has **seven** separate judgments declared against her. This “double seven” reminds us once again of the seven days of creation and tells us that these judgments, beginning with Jerusalem herself, represent a spiritual de-creation of the entire world. This is necessary at this time so that a new creation / restoration can follow, beginning with the people of God and flowing out to the world.

None of these seven nations were among those whom the Israelites were to destroy when they came into the Promised Land. They have had over 1000 years to repent of their idolatry and other sin and turn to the one true God. Their time of grace is now at an end.

In today’s lesson we will cover the first six of these nations and the judgments against them. They seem to be grouped into three pairs.

First Pair - Ammon and Moab – Ezekiel 25:1-11

The Ammonites and Moabites were two nations located to the east and southeast of Israel respectively (see map). They were the descendants of the children born to the daughters of Lot who had sexual relations with their father after they came out of Sodom (see Genesis 19, especially verses 30-38). It was these nations who would not provide food for Israel on her journey to the Promised Land, (See Deuteronomy 23:3) and who fought against Israel at various times in her history (e.g. Judges 3:12ff, 1 Samuel 11). Both of these nations are now being judged by Yahweh for the same reason (**What is this reason?** see verses 3 and 8). Ammon and Moab both **mocked Israel** when the Lord brought His judgments against her and are now being judged for this. The judgment that both of them will receive is also the same (**What is this?**) Yahweh will deliver both Ammon and Moab into the hands of the “men of the East”. This usually refers to the Ishmaelites, descendants of Ishmael the son born to Abram and Hagar (Genesis 16).

Second Pair – Edom and Philistia – Ezekiel 25:12-17

Edom was a nation to the southeast of Israel and Philistia lay to her west (see map). The Edomites were descendants of Jacob’s brother Esau and the Philistines traced their lineage to Egypt (see Genesis 10:6-14 – descendants of Ham). Both of these nations had hostile relations with Israel, especially during the times of the Judges and during the reigns of Saul, and David. They are now being judged for taking “vengeance” against Israel in her weakened state (verses 12,15). The Lord will use His people to take vengeance on them (verses 14, 16).

Third Pair – Tyre and Sidon – Ezekiel 26-28

The Lord chose to take nearly three chapters to describe the judgment on the city of Tyre and so one might ask, “Why so much detail about this nation and her judgments?”

Unlike the other Gentile nations described in this section, Tyre (along with her sister city Sidon) was once fully committed to the worship of Yahweh, the one true God. Recall that, in the days of David and Solomon and the building of the Temple, Hiram, king of Tyre had provided much of the materials for its construction. In addition, Hiram himself had professed faith in Yahweh (see 2 Chronicles 2:11-15). Unfortunately, by the time we get to the times of king Ahab who ruled the northern kingdom of Israel, Tyre and Sidon have rejected Yahweh as their God and are devoted to Baal worship instead. We see in 1 Kings 16:29-33 that Ethbaal, king of Sidon gave his daughter, Jeze-baal (Jezebel) in marriage to Ahab. Now instead of the king of Tyre being a worshipper of Yahweh and a vassal of the King Ahab, and Israel with her became worshippers of Baal and a vassal to Ethbaal!

Thus, like Israel and Judah, Tyre and Sidon have fallen from a state of grace into the pagan idolatry of their neighbors. Their fall is thus greater than these other Gentile nations and so the Lord devotes more time to announce their judgments (Chapter 26), to lament their fall, (chapter 27) and to condemn their rulers (Chapter 28).

Chapter 26 – Proclamation Against Tyre

Tyre, in Phoenicia, was a major seaport, a “the gateway of the peoples” (verse 2). As we will see in detail in chapter 27, Tyre was the economic center of the ancient world, just as Jerusalem, in her prime, was the religious and political center. Many great nations came there to engage in commerce and she was “perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 27:3,4,11) as well. Ultimately, the economic success of Tyre must be attributed to the blessings of Yahweh on this city which had at one time embraced faith in Him. All of this prosperity is now coming to an end.

Verses 1-14 – Judgment Against Tyre

Verse 2 tells us at least one of the reasons for the judgments to come on Tyre: Ezekiel 26:2 “Son of man, **because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha!’** She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.”

Like Ammon and Moab, Tyre rejoiced at the tribulations taking place in Jerusalem at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Also, we will see in chapter 28 that **pride**, especially on the part of the leaders of Tyre was at the heart of her sin.

In verses 3-4 and again in verses 12-14 we learn that the walls of Tyre will be broken down, so much so that she will become like a flat rock that fishing nets are spread over to dry on. In verses 6 and 8 we find out that not only will the city of Tyre be destroyed, but also her “daughter villages”. **Ask the students, “How will this destruction come to pass?” See verse 7.** Nations will be sent up against her like the **waves of the sea** (verse 3). Specifically, as with Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon will come with his army and lay siege to the Tyre (see verse 8). Verses 9-14 tell of the great destruction that Nebuchadnezzar will bring to the city.

Verses 15-21

News of Tyre's destruction will spread throughout the other peoples of the coastlands who will also tremble and be astonished that so great a city could fall (verses 15-16, 19-21). They will even take up a lamentation for Tyre (**Have a student read verses 17-18**). Tyre was, in a sense, a sister city to Jerusalem in her devotion to Yahweh. **Thus, it is not surprising that the description of Tyre's destruction is similar to that of Jerusalem (c.f. Ezekiel 5, 9, and 21).**

Chapter 27 – Lamentation For Tyre

Unlike the other four Gentile nations we have discussed so far, when God pronounces judgments against Tyre, He also instructs Ezekiel to “take up a lamentation” (a prayer of mourning) for her (verses 1-2). **Why is this?** Remember that Tyre is a “lost sheep”, a “prodigal son”, one that had embraced the worship of Yahweh and has turned back to pagan idolatry. The apostasy of this city is nearly in the same category of that of Jerusalem herself. A lamentation is indeed appropriate.

As verses 3 indicates, Tyre was a great sea port and trading center, utilized by nearly every great civilized nation on earth. Tyre was a city full of skillful craftsmen (verses 4-7), wise men (verses 8-9), great sailors (verses 8-9, 25-26) warriors (verses 10-11), and merchants/traders (verses 12-24), all drawn to the beauty and prosperity of the city. Those in Tyre said of it, “I am perfect in beauty” (verse 3), and indeed she was (verse 11b)!

The lamentation spoken in verses 3-26 consists of a long list of the **great nations** that traded with her, including Judah and Israel (verse 17). They brought goods of all kinds (including silver (12) slaves (13) and ivory tusks (15)!) which they bartered for other valuable products in Tyre. **What are these nations called over and over in these verses?** These nations are called “your merchants” or “your traders” repeatedly in verses 12-24. In a sense, Tyre ruled these nations, not politically, but economically!

Verses 27-36 tell us that all of this is coming to ruin. **Have a student read these verses.** All the nations who did business in Tyre will take up the lamentation and enter into mourning for this once godly city who has abandoned the living God for dead idols and who has become prideful and full of sin. Much as Israel blessed the other nations with the Law of Yahweh and the whole worship system that sprang from this, so too Tyre had blessed the nations with her beauty and economic prosperity. Her fall causes the nations to be “astonished” (verse 35) and “afraid” (verse 35). The fall of Tyre will be complete and Yahweh tells her that she will “be no more forever” (verse 36)

Chapter 28 – Proclamation against Tyre's Rulers

As in the case of Jerusalem, it is Tyre's rulers that bear a large burden of the blame for her reverting to Baal worship and becoming an enemy of Israel. In this chapter, the Lord, through Ezekiel condemns Tyre's **political leader** (verses 2-10) and her **religious leader** (verses 11-19)

Verses 2-10 – Tyre’s Political Leader Condemned

The “prince of Tyre” spoken of in verses 2-10 is likely her king who had set himself up as a “god” in the place of Yahweh (verses 2,6,9) and has amassed riches for himself. The Lord is sending Nebuchadnezzar against him and he will be taken from his lofty seat and be thrown down into “the Pit” (the grave, the place of corruption), dying “the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of aliens” (verse 10).

Verses 11-19 –Tyre’s Religious Leader Condemned

Bible scholars do not agree as to who the “king of Tyre” is in these verses. Typical theories say he is 1) The political king of Tyre, 2) Adam, or 3) Satan

However, recall that Tyre once embraced the worship of Yahweh and had helped build the Temple in the days of David and Solomon. In those days, the High Priest of Israel was Tyre’s spiritual “king”, representing Yahweh on earth. The description of the “king” in these verses seems to support the possibility that it is **Judah’s apostate high priest** that is being referred to:

- 1) Eden, the Garden of God (verse 13) can refer to the Jerusalem and the Temple in which the High Priest ministered (see Ezekiel 31:8-9, 16, 36:35)
- 2) The precious stones of verse 13 are very similar to those in the breastplate of the High Priest (Exodus 28:15ff)
- 3) The “mountain of God” where this person ministered (verses 14,16) frequently refers to Mount Moriah, the Temple site (Psalm 48:1, Isaiah 2:3)
- 4) The High Priest and all who served under him had indeed defiled the sanctuary of the Lord by a multitude of sins (verse 18).

Verses 18-19 tell us that the Lord is judging the High Priest in a manner similar to the city of Tyre and Sidon. Like them he has “become a horror, and shall be no more forever” (c.f. 27:36). James Jordan says that the judgment on the High Priest shows us that, though all of these nations bear their own guilt for their sin, “...it was Israel’s apostasy that had misled the nations. It was the High Priest, the spiritual King of Tyre, whose sin had ultimately caused the Prince of Tyre to go astray”.

Chapter 28:20-24 – Proclamation Against Sidon

The judgments against Sidon, the sister city of Tyre, remind us a lot of those spoken of concerning Judah / Jerusalem (pestilence and the sword, c.f. Ezekiel 5:12,17, 6:11-12, 7:15, 12:16, 14:19-21)

Chapter 28:25-26 – Future Hope

Even in the midst of all of this judgment and wrath on Israel and the nations around her, there is yet hope, both for her and for them. Yahweh will again gather the people from exile and bring them back to the Promised Land. Instead of being a mockery in the sight of the Gentile nations, Israel will be hallowed in their sight (verse 25). Israel will again be established as the priestly people of God, and a light to the Gentiles all around her.

❖ **Homework** –Read Ezekiel 29:1-33:20; Quiz on memory verses next week!.

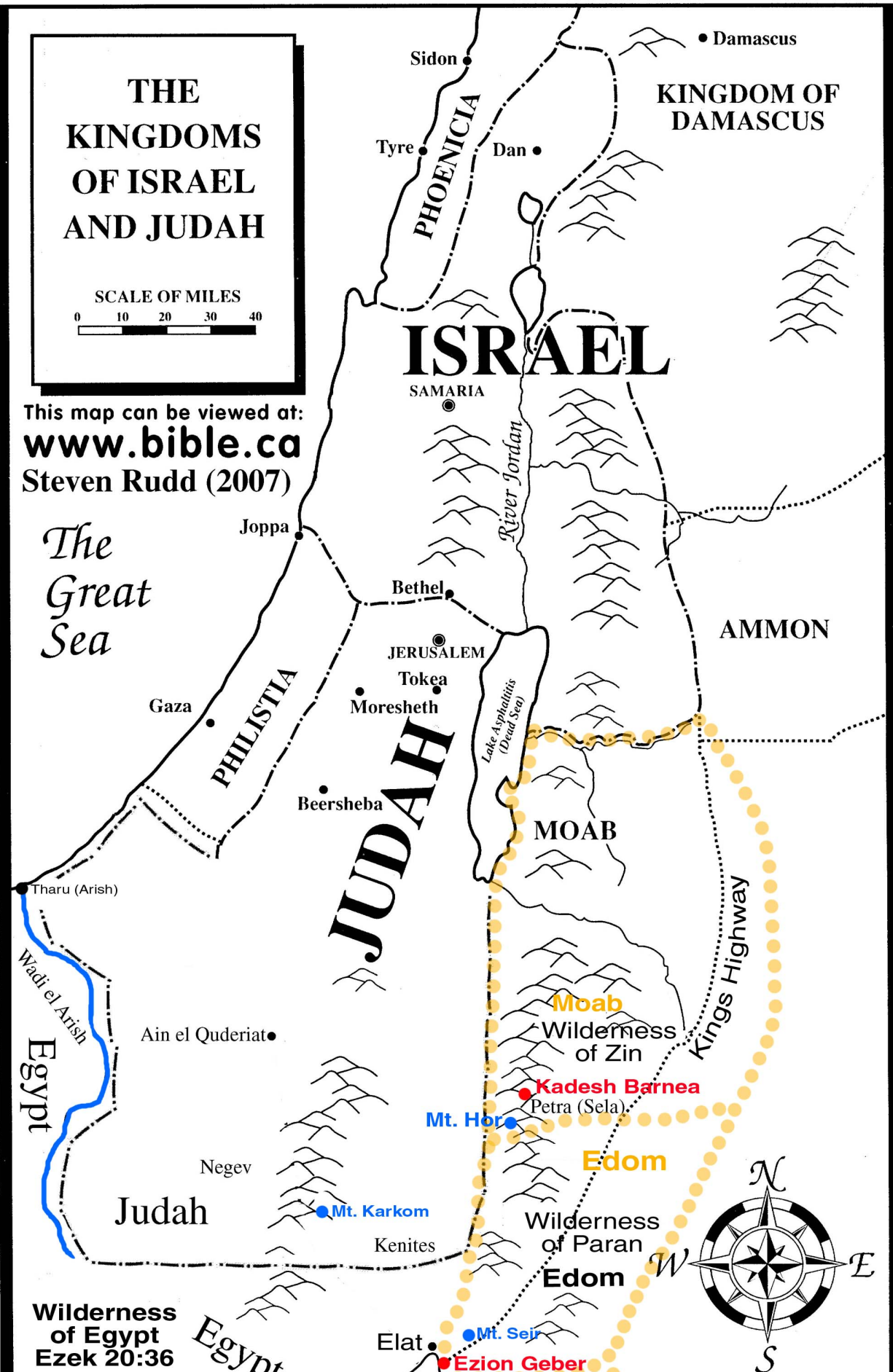
❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

SCALE OF MILES
0 10 20 30 40

This map can be viewed at:
www.bible.ca
Steven Rudd (2007)

*The
Great
Sea*



Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People
Lesson 14 – Day 5 – Swarms of Nations Fall - Part 2
Chapter 29-33a – The Fall of Egypt and Her Allies

Objective – To help the students to see that trust in any other savior (Egypt) other than the Lord Jesus will result in God’s judgment and misery.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verse** – **Provide each student with a piece of paper and have them write their name on it plus the memory verses and turn it in.**

Ezekiel 18:31-32 - Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

- ❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – QUIZ NEXT WEEK! Just read through this with the students one time and let them know about the quiz next week.**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel, and of the whole world!)
- How is the fifth section of Ezekiel (chapters 24-33a) like the fifth Day of Creation? (The “swarms of nations” that are judged remind us of the “swarming” birds and fish of Day 5)
- Why did the Lord take Ezekiel’s wife? (Ezekiel represents Yahweh to the exiles (and all of Judah) and his wife therefore, represents all of Israel (and particularly Jerusalem). Her death is a sign to Israel of the death and destruction that is coming upon the people of God, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple itself.
- Why did Yahweh not allow Ezekiel to mourn her death? (Ezekiel was the High Priest of Yahweh to the exiles in Babylon who were not allowed to publicly mourn their deceased relatives. Also, Ezekiel represents Yahweh to the people. Yahweh, though merciful and

longsuffering, has determined that Jerusalem, his “wife”, and the Temple, which is the “desire of (the) eyes” of those in exile (see verse 21) must “die”. In His justice, He can no longer pity (mourn for) His people/land, and Ezekiel’s lack of mourning represents this.)

- Name the seven nations judged in chapters 24-28. (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt)

- Why are the nations being judged by Yahweh? (For their own idolatry and other sin and because Israel has not fulfilled her role as the priestly nation to the world, drawing all nations into the worship of Yahweh, the one true God.

- Why is it likely that 3 whole chapters (26-28) in Ezekiel are devoted to the judgments coming to Tyre (and Sidon)? (Tyre and Sidon were once fully committed to the worship of Yahweh, the one true God. Thus, like Israel and Judah, Tyre and Sidon have fallen from a state of grace into the pagan idolatry of their neighbors.

- Look at Ezekiel 28:25-26 - What was the future hope for Israel and the nations described in these verses? (Yahweh will again gather the people from exile and bring them back to the Promised Land. Instead of being a mockery in the sight of the Gentile nations, Israel will be hallowed in their sight (verse 25)).

❖ Lesson – Chapters 29-33a – The Fall of Egypt and Her Allies

Introduction

As we said in our last lesson, it is likely that Ezekiel wrote the accounts of the fall of the swarms of nations **during the three year period of time of his public silence**.

While three chapters in Ezekiel (26-28) were given over to a description of the judgments on Tyre (and Sidon), the four and a half chapters (29-33:20) of this lesson are all devoted to the judgments that will come upon Egypt. Again, the question could easily be asked, “Why so much detail about Egypt?” **Ask the students if they have any ideas.** Some possible explanations include:

1) Egypt is the “false savior” of the world who gives “false Sabbath” – Over and over in Scripture, Egypt is referred to as a “house of bondage” (see Exodus 13:3, Deuteronomy 5:6, Joshua 24:17, Judges 6:8, etc.) and Israel at one time was in slavery there. Now, as Yahweh begins to bring His judgments upon Judah in the form of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, instead of turning to God in repentance, she looks to Egypt, the “house of bondage” (slavery) for deliverance. **(Have a student read Jeremiah 37:1-9)**

Additionally, many Israelites fled to Egypt (ruled by Pharaoh Hophrah) during this time, despite the warnings of Jeremiah not to do so (see Jeremiah 42-44). Thus, when Yahweh brings judgments against Egypt, He is also bringing those same judgments against His own people who are dwelling there and who have trusted in Egypt instead of in Him for their Sabbath (rest and security), as well as against the nations around Israel.

2) Egypt’s judgment represents the end of the “Old Creation” and the beginning of the “New Creation” – Back in the days of Moses, in order for Yahweh to establish His people in the Promised Land (New Creation), He brought judgments (plagues) against Egypt (Old Creation). The Israelites came out of Egypt under Moses and they conquered the Promised Land under Joshua, thus establishing the nation of Israel. Here in Ezekiel we

see another judgment against Egypt (and the other nations). Thus, we can expect another exodus (to Babylon) and another conquest (restoration to the Promised Land) by God's people. The judgment of Egypt marks an end to the Old Creation and the beginning of the New Creation for the people of God and, ultimately, for the whole world!

This portion of Ezekiel seems to consist of seven sections and a conclusion (from James Jordan) **(Don't go through this outline in detail now as we will cover each of the seven sections in turn):**

- A. 29:1-16 – Pharaoh and Egypt's Future
- B. 29:17-21 – Nebuchadnezzar Given Egypt
- C. 30:1-19 – Egyptian Cities Fall
- D. 30:20-26 – Arms of Pharaoh Broken
- C' 31 – Multitude of Egypt Brought Low
- B' 32:1-16 – Lamentation for Pharaoh
- A' 32:17-32 – Lamentation for Multitude of Egypt
- Conclusion: 33:1-20 – Watchman – Punished for One's Own Sins

Most of these sections are marked off by time references that are in chronological order except for 29:17-21 (29:17 - "...twenty seventh year...") which has a common theme with the others.

A. 29:1-16 – Pharaoh and Egypt's Future (Tenth year, tenth month, twelfth day)

The year is around 587 B.C. and Jerusalem, ruled by King Zedekiah, is suffering under siege at the hands of the Babylonians as we learned about in Ezekiel 24. As we read about in Jeremiah 37:1-9, it is at this time that Pharaoh Hophrah comes up from Egypt in an attempt to give aid to Jerusalem. When the Babylonians hear that Pharaoh's army was coming, they temporarily abandon the siege against Jerusalem. It is at this very time that the prophecy against Egypt, seen here in chapter 29, takes place.

Have a student read verses 1-7. This first portion of this judgment against Egypt is specifically "against Pharaoh, king of Egypt,...and against all Egypt". **What is Pharaoh compared to in verses 2-6?** Pharaoh is called a "great monster" which may refer to a sea serpent or (more likely) a crocodile, which was a common inhabitant of the Nile River. Pharaoh has pridefully said,, "My River (the greatness of Egypt) is my own; I have made it for myself!" The Lord is going to cause this proud "crocodile" (Pharaoh) to be taken up out of the River with a hook and killed. The other nations who look to Egypt for protection may be the "fish in the rivers" that stick to the scales of the crocodile and are killed along with it. Verses 6-7 tell us that Israel (and other nations) has depended on Egypt for support like a man who uses a reed like a walking stick. However, the Lord will cause this reed (Egypt) to be broken and those that depended on her will be injured (judged) as they fall as well because their support is broken.

Have a student read verses 8-12. Instead of being a prosperous nation that was blessed by the waters of the Nile, Egypt will become “desolate and waste” and will learn once and for all that Yahweh (who owns the River!) is the Lord. The people will be scattered into other nations, just as Israel was and Judah is about to be. The Lord, through Ezekiel says that this judgment will last for 40 years. **Ask the students, “What does this time period remind you of?”** Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years after coming out of Egypt and Egypt will now become a wilderness for 40 years!

Verses 13-16 are verses of HOPE to Egypt. They tell us that, after these 40 years, Yahweh will restore the people of Egypt to their land, just as He will do for Israel, but she shall never again be the great nation she once was. Additionally, verse 16 tells us that Israel will no longer place her trust in Egypt either.

B. 29:17-21 – Nebuchadnezzar Given Egypt (Twenty seventh year, first month, first day) This prophecy was given by Ezekiel much later, but is included here because it is closely connected to the prophecies regarding both Egypt and Tyre. Apparently, when the Lord allowed Tyre to be defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, a lot of the people of Tyre, along with their wealth, escaped. (verse 18). Now, as a reward for Nebuchadnezzar’s efforts in carrying out the judgments of Yahweh, the Lord will give Egypt and all her wealth into his hands. These verses remind us that it is the Lord who holds the power of these nations in His hand, and that these events are all part of His sovereign will for the earth.

C. 30:1-19 – Egyptian Cities Fall (No time reference)

At the beginning and end of this portion of Ezekiel (verses 1-3 and 19) we see that this judgment that is coming on Egypt and those nations near to her is called a “Day of the Lord”. **Ask the students to tell you what a “Day of the Lord” is.**

In the Scripture, a “Day of the Lord” is a time of where God comes to evaluate/judge the acts of men. The first “Day of the Lord” in the Bible is found in Genesis 3 when the Lord comes to Adam and Eve to judge them after they had sinned. The judgment that is coming on Israel/Judah is also a “Day of the Lord” (see Isaiah 2:12, Jeremiah 46:10, Joel 2) and the judgment that will later come upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (after Jesus ascends into Heaven) will also be called a “Day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20, 2 Peter 3:10). Every Lord’s Day worship service at RCC is also a “Day of the Lord” (see Isaiah 58:13ff) where we come to present ourselves to the Lord for evaluation, forgiveness, worship, instruction and feeding.

Verses 4-6 and 13-18 in Ezekiel 30 are lists of cities and regions that will be swept up in this “Day of the Lord”, the judgment that is coming on Egypt and the nations she rules. In verses 7-9 and 12 we see that Egypt is being made desolate and a waste. All of this is by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian armies he commands (verse 12).

D. 30:20-26 – Arms of Pharaoh Broken (Eleventh year, first month, seventh day)

Have a student read verses 20-26 and ask them, “What word is repeated throughout these verses”. The word “arm” or “arms” is used 6 times in these verses and refers to

political power and military might. Pharaoh's "arms" are going to be cut off (he will be defeated and dethroned) and Nebuchadnezzar's arms are going to be strengthened. **Ask the students if they remember another place in Scripture where arms were broken off.** Recall in 1 Samuel 5, when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant and placed it before a statue of their pagan god Dagon that the Lord caused the statue to fall over and broke off its arms, a sign that the Philistines would be judged and defeated for taking the Lord's ark. Pharaoh has become prideful and will be judged for putting himself in the place of Yahweh.

C' 31 – Multitude of Egypt Brought Low (Eleventh year, third month, first day)

As James Jordan has pointed out, men and nations are spoken of as trees or associated with trees throughout the Scripture. For instance, in Psalm 1, the man who delights in the law of the Lord will be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water..." (Psalm 1:3). Israel is described as Yahweh's "planting" (Exodus 15:17, Psalm 44:2, etc.) and Jotham described Israel as "trees" in Joshua 9. Abraham dwelled among oaks (Genesis 12:6, 13:8, etc.) and Deborah judged Israel under a palm tree (Judges 4:5). The Tabernacle (which represented the nation of Israel) was built of boards and the Temple had carvings of trees in it. Jesus himself was a carpenter, one who works with wood (i.e. who saves and sanctifies men and nations). Trees represent power (against the forces of nature), provision (fruit, wood, etc.) and protection (shade).

Ask the students, "Here in Ezekiel 31, which two nations are depicted as trees?" In verses 2-3 and again in verse 18 we see Yahweh compare Egypt to Assyria. In verses 4-18a, Assyria is depicted as a tree that was once great, but has been cut down. Pharaoh and all of Egypt are like a great tree as well but, like Assyria, will be cut down in their pride and sin.

"Walk" the students briefly through chapter 31 and ask them to describe Assyria as a tree and what the various elements of this symbolism likely mean:

1) Assyria's greatness – verses 3-9 – She was a cedar tree, with fine branches, tall, and planted by abundant water. The birds of heaven made their nests in her branches; she was beautiful and all of the other trees envied her, including those in "the garden of God/Eden". Yahweh had raised Assyria up as a mighty nation, with great wealth, and allowed her to conquer many other nations. All of the other nations, including Israel, looked to Assyria with envy.

2) Assyria's sin – verse 10 – Instead of being thankful to Yahweh and worshipping Him alone, Assyria's "heart was lifted up in its height". She remained in her pagan idolatry and became prideful and ruthless in her dealings with the nations around her

3) Assyria's judgment – verses 11-18a – In these verses we see that this great tree (Assyria) was delivered into the hands of "the mighty one of the nations" (Babylon). It will be cut down (defeated) and lose its power and influence over the other trees (nations). Never again will Assyria be as powerful or influential as it once was.

4) Pharaoh/Egypt, like Assyria - verse 18b - Pharaoh too, and all of Egypt with him, had been raised up by God as a mighty, wealthy nation. However, Egypt has become prideful

and sinful and so, like Assyria before her, she will be judged and destroyed. Note too that “the trees of Eden” (Israel/Judah) will be brought down with her!

Later on, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, will also be depicted as a tree that was raised up by God to greatness but was also “cut down” in his pride (Daniel 4:1-33). However, Nebuchadnezzar, unlike Assyria and Egypt, will repent of his pride be restored by the Lord (Daniel 4:34-37).

B’ 32:1-16 – Lamentation for Pharaoh (Twelfth year, twelfth month, first day)

In verse 2 of this chapter, Yahweh commands Ezekiel to “take up a lamentation (a chant or wailing) for Pharaoh king of Egypt”. At the end of this section, the Lord says, “This is the lamentation with which they shall lament her...” (verse 16). **Ask the students, “Why would Yahweh have Ezekiel (and all Israel) lament the fall of Pharaoh, the prideful, idolatrous ruler of a pagan nation?”**

1) Pharaoh was raised up by God for His own glory and, had he repented and followed the Lord, could have accomplished much for the kingdom of God. His failure to do so is to be lamented.

2) The Hebrew word “lamentation” can be translated “a chant” and may simply refer to Ezekiel’s “chanting” or declaring the judgments that are coming upon Pharaoh

3) Another interesting possibility is that “Pharaoh” in this section and “Egypt” in the next section of chapter 32 may also indirectly refer to Jerusalem/Judah. Notice that this prophecy takes place after the fall of Jerusalem (see 32:1 and compare with 33:21). Judah had become like Egypt in her idolatry and pride, and her fall is thus spiritually linked to that of Pharaoh and of Egypt.

The verses in between these “bookend” verses (2 and 16) describe Pharaoh as a mighty beast (lion, sea monster) who troubled many waters (nations) and who himself will now be troubled (defeated) by Nebuchadnezzar and his armies. He will trouble the waters of the nations no longer and Egypt herself will become desolate so that her people will know that Yahweh is the Lord

A’ 32:17-32 – Lamentation for the Multitude of Egypt (Twelfth year, twelfth month (presumably) fifteenth day)

In these verses, Ezekiel is commanded to “wail over the multitude of Egypt”. This Hebrew word, “nahah” refers to the making of mournful sounds for one who has died and is in Sheol (see verse 21), the place where the dead await judgment. Ezekiel is to mourn over the fact that Egypt and her people are going the way of other nations before her (Assyria, Elam, Meshach, Tubal, Edom, Sidon, etc.) who were judged for their sin. They too will go down to the “Pit” (used six times in these verses) where they will “lie with the uncircumcised, slain by the sword”, a phrase used in various forms **nine times** in these verses. Egypt must endure death (the Pit) prior to her resurrection!

Conclusion: 33:1-20 – Watchman – Punished for One’s Own Sins (No time reference)

On the “eve” of the destruction of Jerusalem (33:21ff), Ezekiel receives a personal exhortation from Yahweh.

Verses 1-11 - Ezekiel is the “watchman” for sinful Judah and must continue to speak God’s warnings of judgment to the people. If he does not, then he will bear some of the responsibility for the “sword” when it falls. In verses 10-11 we see the false excuses that the men of Jerusalem and Judah make for remaining in their sin. They say, in effect, “If God already wants to judge us, how can we repent and live”. Yahweh answers them in no uncertain terms: **Have a student read verse 11.** Yahweh’s remedy for sin is always the same: “Repent and live!”

The elders of the church today are called to be watchmen over their flocks and must exhort, and rebuke those members when they sin. (see Hebrews 13:17) In a similar way, all Christians are commanded to bring correction to one another when they sin (see Galatians 6:1).

Verses 12-20 – In these last verses before the destruction of Jerusalem, we see Yahweh, through Ezekiel, tell the people of God that His judgments of them are just. Those who sin and do not repent eventually reap the just judgements of God. Those who are righteous, or who sin and repent, are shown mercy and granted blessings. The people accuse Yahweh of not being “fair”, but Yahweh responds by saying that “...it is their way which is not fair” (verse 17b).

The destruction of Jerusalem is at hand! In between the siege of Jerusalem (chapter 24) and her destruction, which we will come to in the next lesson (chapter 3:21ff), we have seen the judgment of many great Gentile nations. This tells us that the book of Ezekiel is not just the account of the fall and rise of Israel, but of the de-creation and re-creation of the entire world!

❖ **Homework – Read Ezekiel 33:21-34:31; QUIZ ON OUTLINE NEXT WEEK!**

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 15– Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden – Part 1

Chapter 33b-34 – The False Shepherds / Yahweh the True Shepherd

Objective – To show the students that repentance and the reestablishment of godly leadership, in family, church and state, is what will bring a nation back from apostasy and the judgments of God

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verses** – **Read through this together once! Ezekiel 36:24-28 - For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.**
- ❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – QUIZ – Have each student fill out the quiz on the outline of Ezekiel and hand it in. Do not review the outline this week**
 1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
 2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
 3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
 4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
 5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
 6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
 7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People
- ❖ **Review**
 - What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
 - How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and a re-creation of the nation of Israel, and of the whole world!)
 - How is the fifth section of Ezekiel (chapters 24-33a) like the fifth Day of Creation? (The “swarms of nations” that are judged remind us of the “swarming” birds and fish of Day 5)
 - After the siege of Jerusalem began and after Ezekiel’s wife died in chapter 24, he gave no public prophecy until the day that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. What did he likely do during this period of silence? (Wrote the judgments against the seven nations)

- Name the seven nations judged by Yahweh in chapters 24-28. (Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt)
- Which two of these nations have the most written about their judgments in the book of Ezekiel? (Tyre and Egypt)
- What is the likely reason for this? (Tyre – They were believers in Yahweh and therefore their fall was similar in significance to Judah's; Egypt is the “false savior” of the world who gives “false Sabbath”; Egypt's judgment also represents the end of the “Old Creation” and the beginning of the “New Creation”)

❖ Lesson – Ezekiel 33b-39 - Day 6 - A New Adam and A New Eden

Introduction

Ask the students, “How can we know that a new (6th) section of Ezekiel has begun in 33:21?” Nearly all of the seven sections of Ezekiel are marked off by time markers. This sixth section is no exception:

Ezekiel 33:21 (NKJV) And it came to pass in the **twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month**, that one who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, “The city has been captured!”

Ask the students, “What did God create on Day 6?”

Review the seven days of creation at this time:

Day one, God made the light but not the sun

Day two, God made the firmament, forming the waters into two

Day three, God filled the land, with first fruits of plant and tree

Day four, God made ruling lights, sun, moon and stars, where the rockets soar

Day five, God filled the sea and sky with fish and birds that teem and thrive

Day six, God made animals, then man, the former and ruler of the mix

Day seven, God rested in heaven

The land animals were created on the sixth day of creation. On that same day, the Lord created Adam and Eve to rule over the entire created order throughout the earth, beginning in the Garden of Eden. In this section of Ezekiel we will see a movement from de-creation (“For I will make the land most desolate” 33:28) to a new creation (the dry bones live – Chapter 37). After this, God's enemies are defeated (chapter 38-39) and His people are reestablished as the New Adam, ruling for God in the New Eden, the restored land of Israel.

This section of Ezekiel can be outlined as follows (Jordan)

A. 33:21-33 – Who Will Possess the Land?

B. 34 – False and True Shepherds

C. 35:1-36:15 – Mount Seir (Edom) Verses Israel's Mountains

D. 36:16-38 – Regathering and New Heart

C' 37:1-14 – Resurrection

B' 37:15-28 – Reunion Under a True Shepherd

A' 38-39 – Gog and Magog

We will see some connections between this seven part outline and the seven days of creation as we consider each section in turn.

Part 1 - Chapter 33b-34 – The False Shepherds / Yahweh the True Shepherd

A. Chapter 33:21-33 – Who Will Possess the Land?

Yahweh had appealed to Judah for years and years to repent of her idolatry and other sins through the **words** of great prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. None of these **words** have produced any repentance on the part of Judah. And so, we have seen that Ezekiel, Yahweh's spokesman, has been rendered **silent** (at least as far as public prophecy) from the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's army (Ezekiel 24) right up to where we are now in Ezekiel 33:21. The time for **words** of exhortation has now passed. Only God's judgment and the fierce wrath remain. Our lesson today begins with the arrival of news that Jerusalem has been captured!

Verses 21-22 – Jerusalem Captured / Ezekiel Speaks

The siege of Jerusalem began in “the **ninth** year (of the reign of King Zedekiah), in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month” (Ezekiel 24:1, c.f. 2 Kings 25:1). During this siege, the Babylonian soldiers surrounded the city and waited for all of the food and other necessities to run out. 2 Kings 25:3 tells us that by the ninth day of the fourth month of the **eleventh** year, “the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land”. After an agonizing siege of a year and a half, the army of Nebuchadnezzar breaks through the walls of Jerusalem and captures the city. Word of the fall of Jerusalem comes to the captives in Babylon by way of a man who escaped the city. **Have a student read Ezekiel 33:21-22. Ask the students, “What happens to Ezekiel when he receives word that Jerusalem has been captured?”** Yahweh opens Ezekiel's mouth, bringing his silence to an end. Having carried out His judgments on Jerusalem and Judah, Yahweh is prepared to once again speak, through Ezekiel, to His people.

Verses 23-29 – Who Will Possess/Inherit the Land!

The nation of Israel has been totally defeated, and the city of Jerusalem lies in **ruins**. We see this depicted at the beginning and end of these verses (see verses 24,28 and 29). This reminds us of Day 1 of creation where the earth was “formless and void” and ready for full creation (or new creation in this case!). Verse 29 tells us that the land has become **desolate** physically, and **desolate of God's presence** too, because of the abominations of the Israelites. God, in a sense, has packed his bags and left the Promised Land because of Israel's persistent sin. However, even after suffering the severe judgments of God, those left behind in Israel still sinfully claim that they, like Abraham before them, should be the ones to possess the Promised Land.

Verses 25 and 26 give us a list of the specific “abominations” (sins) of Israel that brought about this desolation: **Ask the students to name them:**

- 1) Eating meat with blood – Not following the dietary laws
- 2) Worshipping idols

- 3) Murder
- 4) Relying on the sword (military strength)
- 5) Abominations – These are often sins that took place in the context of the Temple
- 6) Adultery

God repeats a question to those in the Promised Land twice: “Should you then **possess** the land?” The obvious answer is, “No, not until we repent of these sins and return to a full devotion to Yahweh and His Law!” In fact, Yahweh says that those who remain in the ruined Promised Land will suffer three additional judgments. **What are they?** (sword, beasts, pestilence). This reminds us other parts of Ezekiel (Chapters 5,6,7,12, etc.) where similar judgments are detailed. It will be a total of **70 years** until the Israelites in exile return to the land.

Verses 30-33

The Israelites in exile are also guilty of sin, but of a different sort than those in the ruins of Jerusalem. **Have a student read these verses and explain the sin of the exiles.**

In order for the Israelites to once again possess the Promised Land, they must be willing not only to repent of their sins, but also to **hear and obey the Word of God** as spoken to them by His prophets. Those in exile are deceiving themselves into thinking that they want to do this. They come and sit before Ezekiel and listen to his prophecies and enjoy what they hear, much as a person today might go to a concert and enjoy the music.

However, their sin is that they hear but do not obey the word of the Lord as spoken by Ezekiel.

This reminds us of James 1, where James exhorts his readers:

“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” James 1:22-25.

Romans 2:13 also tells us, “...for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;”

1) Repenting of their abominations and 2) hearing and doing the Word of God are the first two steps the Israelites must take in order to be set free from their exile in Babylon and restored to the Promised Land. This is also true of us, both individually and as a nation!

B. Chapter 34 – False and True Shepherds

Verses 1-10 – False Shepherds

Have the students look through chapter 34 and ask them, “What word is repeated over and over in this chapter?” The word “shepherd” or “shepherds” is used 15 times in this chapter and only one other time in the book of Ezekiel (37:24).

Today, when we say that someone is a “shepherd” in the church, who is it that we are usually talking about? (Pastors/elders) It is the pastors/elders of the church who are usually referred to as shepherds in the New Testament:

1 Peter 5:2 **Shepherd** the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **shepherd** the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Pastors perform two main roles in the church: They **teach** and they **rule**. In Old Testament Israel, those roles were usually filled by the priests and Levites (**teach**) and by the king and those under him (**rule**).

As we have said before, the priests and Levites of Israel/Judah had done a very poor job of “shepherding” the people in proper worship and holy living, both in their **teaching** and in the **examples of their lives**. In fact, as you remember from Ezekiel 8, the priests and Levites were doing great “abominations”, even in the house of God, which caused Yahweh to “desolate” (leave) the Temple. In like manner, the kings and other rulers of Israel had also failed to “shepherd” (**rule**) the people well in that they encouraged the idolatrous worship, they amassed huge wealth for themselves, and they entered into unholy alliances with the pagan nations around Israel all of which led to the exile to Babylon.

Here in chapter 34 of Ezekiel, Yahweh commands Ezekiel to “prophecy against the shepherds of Israel...” (verse 2). For the next 8 verses, the sins of the “shepherds” are spelled out. Many commentators believe that the “shepherds” referred to here are both the priests/Levites/prophets and the king and other civil rulers. However, the emphasis in these verses seems to be on the **king**, two of whom were in captivity in Babylon at this time (Jehoiachin and Zedekiah). They are said to **rule** over the people “with force and cruelty” (verse 4) and will be replaced by a “shepherd” who is called “My Servant David”. David, as you recall, was a **shepherd** prior to becoming perhaps the greatest **king** to rule over Israel.

Have a student read verses 2-6. What are the sins that the “shepherds” (kings) of Israel are being accused of?

1) Feeding themselves instead of the sheep – verses 2-3; The kings took the wealth from the people in the form of excessive taxation and the confiscation of their property (recall king Ahab stealing Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21)

2) Not caring for the weak and the sick – verse 4; The kings ruled over the people with “force and cruelty” and not with justice and equity by punishing evildoers and praising those who did well (1 Peter 2:14).

3) Scattering the sheep, putting them at risk from the “beasts of the field” – verse 5; The kings made unholy alliances with the pagan nations around Israel.

4) Causing the sheep to wander and to be lost – verse 6; As a result of all of these sins, Israel became a nation that was like a flock of sheep without any shepherd at all!

Have a student read verses 7-10. What is Yahweh going to do to these evil “shepherds”?

He will take the flock out of their hands and hold them accountable for their poor shepherding. So who will now shepherd Israel? Verses 11-31 give us the answer!

Verses 11-31 – Yahweh, the True Shepherd

Have a student read verses 11-22. Who will now shepherd Israel?

On Day 2 of creation God made the firmament (division) between the waters above it and those below. Here in Ezekiel we have a division (firmament) between the false shepherds of Israel and Yahweh, the true Shepherd of Israel.

In these verses, **Yahweh Himself**, in His great mercy, commits to being the shepherd over Israel. He will feed, care for, and protect them like the kings of Israel (and the religious leaders) failed to do. Israel is now a flock scattered in exile in Babylon and Yahweh will “seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away” (verse 16). After 70 years, He will “lead His flock” back from captivity to the Promised Land! In verses 17-22 we see that Yahweh will not only judge the shepherds of Israel, but the flock who followed them as well!

Have a student read verses 23-31.

Though He has severely punished His people and sent them into exile, verses 24-31 tell us that Yahweh will once again make a “covenant of peace” with Israel. After 70 years, Israel will once again be brought back to the Promised Land (the “garden of renown” - verse 29) and be established as the people of God. There He will bring about a reversal of all of the evil that the false shepherds of Israel have created:

Starving – verses 2-3	Well fed – verses 26-27a, 29
Sick, weak and vulnerable - verse 4	Dwelling in safety – verse 25b, 27b, 28b
Prey for the beasts of the field – verse 5	Beasts driven out – verse 25a, 28a
No shepherd – verse 6	Flock of God – verses 30-31

The time of the kings of Israel has come to a close and Israel is in exile in Babylon. This can be seen as a tragic failure on the part of God’s people, and so it was. However, even this is a part of the sovereign plan of God for Israel and for the world. God intends that the worship of Him should spread to every people, nation, tribe, and tongue. As James Jordan points out, in a sense, the Kingdom of God had outgrown the little kingdom of Israel. From now until the coming of Jesus, God’s people will be under the rule of emperors over many nations, some of whom will be godly worshippers of Yahweh (Nebuchadnezzar, Ahasuerus, Cyrus, etc.).

Who will be the human “shepherd” over Israel after she is restored to the Promised Land? In verses 23-24, the Lord, through Ezekiel, says that he will “establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, My servant David”. Some commentators say that the “David” of the Restoration Period after Israel’s exile was **Joshua, the high priest** who wore the crown of David and ruled over the returning exiles as we see in Zechariah

6:9-14 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: 10 “Receive the gift from the captives—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon—and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. **11 Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.** 12 Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: “Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the Lord; 13 Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; **So He shall be a priest on His throne,** And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” ’ 14 “Now the elaborate **crown** shall be for a memorial in the temple of the Lord for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah.

It is likely that all of Ezekiel 34-37 is prophetic of the initial restoration of Israel to the Promised Land and the building of the new Temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua) as seen in the book of Ezra.

Ultimately, these verses point to the coming of the Lord Jesus Himself. We also see in Micah and in Matthew, that Jesus is the **shepherd** to come who will **rule** over His people: Micah 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be **Ruler** in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”

Matthew 2:6 ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a **Ruler** who will **shepherd** My people Israel.’ ”

Jesus was born in the family line of David, the shepherd-king, and called himself the Good Shepherd who came to save His sheep from their sins and from the false shepherds (religious leaders) of Israel:

John 10:11-14 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. 12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. 13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

Jesus, as the **Good Shepherd** (priest, king, and prophet), the **Greater David**, laid down His life for His flock and then ascended to the throne of God where He now rules as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Through the work of His “shepherds” (pastors/elders) and the “sheep” they care for in the church, the gospel is now going forth to every people, nation, tribe and tongue, bringing “showers of blessing” to the world.

Let us pray that the shepherds in our churches will be faithful to teach and rule their flocks according to the Word of God and that the sheep will hear and obey this Word as well!

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 35-37 and work on the new memory verses. What sins does Yahweh accuse Mount Seir (Edom) of in chapter 35?

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Name _____

Ezekiel - Outline

1. Ezekiel 1- ____ – Day 1 - _____ Takes the World in _____
2. Ezekiel ____-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - _____ of _____ to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-____ – Day 3 - _____, Trees and the _____ Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – _____, City and _____ to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24 - _____ – Day 5 - _____ of Nations _____
6. Ezekiel 33b-____ – Day 6 – A _____ Adam and a _____ Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-____ – Day 7 - A New _____ for _____ People

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 16– Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden – Part 1

Chapter 35-37a – Mountains Judged, Dry Bones Live

Objective – To help the students to see and to trust that the Lord is more powerful than even their own sin to accomplish His will in their lives

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verses – Ezekiel 36:24-28 - For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.**

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and re-creation of the nation of Israel, and of the whole world!)
- What happens to Ezekiel when he hears that Jerusalem has been captured? (Yahweh opens his mouth and he begins to prophecy publicly again)
- **True** or False – The Israelites living in the ruins of Jerusalem and Judah still felt that they had a right to possess the Promised Land even though they had not yet repented of their sin.

- True or **False** – One of the great sins of the exiles was their unwillingness to either hear or obey Yahweh’s words spoken to them through Ezekiel. (False – They were eager to hear, but unwilling to obey.)
- Who are likely the false “shepherds” spoken of in Ezekiel 34? (The kings of Judah and those under them)
- Who was the greatest shepherd-king in Israel (David)
- What sins does Yahweh accuse these “shepherds” of? (Feeding themselves instead of the sheep, not caring for the weak and the sick, scattering the sheep, putting them at risk from the “beasts of the field”, causing the sheep to wander and to be lost.)
- Who will now be the shepherd over Israel? (Yahweh himself, the high priest of Israel and, ultimately, Jesus, the greater David!)
- Now that Jesus has gone back to heaven, who are the shepherds of the church? (pastors/elders)

❖ Lesson – Chapters 35-37a

We are in the sixth section of Ezekiel which contains some elements of **Day 6 of Creation** in it. As we said last week, the land animals were created on the sixth day of creation. On that same day, the Lord created Adam and Eve to rule over the entire created order throughout the earth, beginning in the Garden of Eden. In this section of Ezekiel we will see a movement from de-creation (“For I will make the land most desolate” 33:28) to a new creation (the dry bones live – Chapter 37). After this, God’s enemies are defeated (chapter 38-39) and His people are reestablished as the New Adam, ruling for God in the New Eden, the restored land of Israel.

As we also saw last week, this whole sixth section of Ezekiel can be outlined as follows (Jordan):

- A. 33:21-33 – Who Will Possess the Land?
- B. 34 – False and True Shepherds
- C. 35:1-36:15 – Mount Seir(Edom) Verses Israel’s Mountains
- D. 36:16-38 – Regathering and New Heart
- C’ 37:1-14 – Resurrection
- B’ 37:15-28 – Reunion Under a True Shepherd
- A’ 38-39 – Gog and Magog

Last week we covered parts A. and B. of this outline and this week we will cover parts C., D., and C’ and look for some elements of Days 3, 4, and 5 of Creation respectively in them.

C. Chapter 35:1-36:15 – Mount Seir (Edom) Cursed / Israel’s Mountains Blessed
Mountains were created on Day 3 of creation and here in chapters 35 and 36 we see mountains as a dominant theme of this third portion . There will be a contrast seen between Mount Seir in Edom which will be judged, and Israel’s mountains as she is restored.

Chapter 35 – Mount Seir is Judged

Have a student read verses 1-5. Chapter 35 opens with Yahweh commanding Ezekiel to “set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it” (verses 1-2). Mount Seir is in the land of Edom (south and east of Israel – see map). As you recall, the Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, who gave up his birthright to his brother and who received a lesser blessing from their father, Isaac (See Genesis 25:21-34, 27:1-46). Esau then tried to kill Jacob, but Jacob escaped and the two were later reconciled. However, the Edomites remained enemies of Israel throughout their history. When the Israelites, under Moses, were traveling from Egypt to the Promised, the Edomites refused to allow them to pass through their land (Numbers 20:14-21). Later, they were conquered by David (2 Samuel 8:14, 1 Kings 9:26), and again by Amaziah (2 Chronicles 25:11-12), but they regained their independence and made war on Israel during her decline (2 Kings 16:6). Jeremiah 27:3,6 records that the Edomites joined with Nebuchadnezzar in the capture of Jerusalem

In Ezekiel 25: 12-14 we saw that Edom was included in the “swarm” of nations that are being judged along with Israel. In that chapter, Edom is accused by Yahweh of “taking vengeance” on Judah (25:12). **Ask the students to scan through chapter 35 and ask them, “What sins is Yahweh accusing Mount Seir (Edom) of in this chapter?”** These sins were:

- Verses 5 and 11 – Having an “ancient hatred” against Israel
- Verse 5 – Shedding the blood of the children of Israel at the time of their calamity
- Verse 10 – Saying that Israel and Judah would be theirs
- Verse 11 – Anger against Israel
- Verse 11 – Envy of Israel
- Verse 12 – Blasphemy against Yahweh (the mountains of Israel)
- Verse 13 – Boasting against Yahweh
- Verse 13 – Multiplying words (speaking on numerous occasions) against Yahweh
- Verse 15 – Rejoicing at the fall of the house of Israel

The first of the accusations of Yahweh against the Edomites is that they have an “ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end” (verse 5). Not only did Edom join with the Babylonians in Jerusalem’s destruction, Psalm 137:7 says that they encouraged Nebuchadnezzar to “Raze it, raze it, to its very foundation!” Though Yahweh used Edom to punish Israel, she too will be punished for her “vengeance” against Israel, her “ancient hatred” of her and her shedding of the blood of God’s people.

Have a student read verses 6-9 - The name “Esau” means “hairy” and the word “Edom” means “red” harkening back to the fact that when Esau was born, he was a hairy, red baby! (Genesis 25:25) Red reminds us of blood and verse 6, through the four-fold use of the word “blood”, tells us that because the Edomites have shed the blood of the Israelites (verse 5), their blood will also be shed. The “bloody” (red) people will be made bloody!

Verses 7-9 give us the details of the judgments to come upon Mount Seir (Edom). **Have the students name them:**

- Verse 7 - She will become desolate
- Verse 8 – Many of her people will be killed by the sword
- Verse 9 – She will be perpetually desolate and her cities uninhabited

Have a student read verses 10-15 – Edom’s hatred, murder, anger, and envy against Israel and Judah have caused her to pridefully say that she would conquer and possess “these two nations” (verse 10). Yahweh will turn her sins back on herself (verse 11). Though Edom was used of God to judge Judah and Jerusalem, the Edomites sinfully rejoiced in their downfall. In verses 12-13 Yahweh calls Edom’s sin “blasphemies”, “boasting” and a “multiplying of words” against the **Lord Himself!** In response to this, Yahweh Himself will rise up in judgment against not only Mount Seir, but against “...all of Edom...all of it!” (verse 15)

The Scripture is full of prophecies against Edom, in addition to those seen here in Ezekiel (Isaiah 34:5, 6; Jeremiah 49:7–18; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11; Obadiah.; Malachi 1:3, 4) and all of these prophecies have been remarkably fulfilled. The last we hear of the Edomites is during the times of Jesus. The Herods who ruled as puppet-kings in the New Testament gospels and the book of Acts were Idumeans (Edomites). One of the Herods tried to murder Jesus when He was a baby and did indeed murder many Israelite babies (see Matthew 2). After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. we never again hear of the Edomites in the annals of history, and even their language has been forgotten. The land where the Edomites once lived is now a desolate land, where virtually no human being lives. The Word of the Lord is indeed a true word!

Though Mount Seir (Edom) is being judged, the mountains of Israel will be blessed!

Chapter 36:1-15 – The Mountains of Israel Will Be Blessed

Verses 1-8

Here in chapter 36, Ezekiel, the “son of man”, is called upon by Yahweh to prophecy to the mountains of Israel. The city of Jerusalem sat on Mount Moriah and the Temple itself was designed in the shape of a mountain. Jerusalem and the Temple, the most important mountains of Israel, now lie in ruins and the people have been taken into exile. The Lord used the sinful nations around Israel to judge and destroy her. However, as verse 2 says, these “tools of God” sinned against Him by:

- 1) Rejoicing at the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem
- 2) Taking possession the Promised Land for themselves.

Have the students glance through these verses and find every occurrence of the word “therefore”. We see the word “therefore” used in verses 3,4,5,6,7 in this section. Whenever we see the word “therefore” in Scripture, we ought to ask ourselves, “What is it **there for?**”

In summary, because of the two sins above, **therefore** Yahweh will cease speaking words of judgment against Israel, and begin speaking words of judgment against the pagan nations around her. The mockery and rejoicing of the nations at the downfall of Israel is a direct insult to the name of Yahweh and He will defend the glory of His name in His “burning jealousy” and in His “fury” (verses 5 and 6).

In fact, verse 7 tells us that Yahweh has sworn an oath that the nations are now going to “bear (the punishment for) their own shame.

Verses 8-15

Verse 4 told us that, as a result of the judgments of God on Israel, her mountains, hills, rivers and valleys had become “desolate wastes”, her cities had been “forsaken” and she had become “plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around”. Israel has been de-created.

In verses 8-15, we see the promises of the Lord to re-create her!

Verses 8-9 – The land will once again produce abundant fruit

Verse 10-12 – The people will multiply (come back to the land) and rebuild her cities and the livestock will flourish as well

Verses 13-15 – The Lord will not allow the nations to mock Israel again

The false mountains of Edom are ruined (chapter 35) while the redeemed mountains of Israel flourish!

D. Chapter 36:16-38 – Re-gathering and New Heart

On Day 4 of Creation, God made the sun, moon and stars, which we usually associate with rule. Though there is not clear connection between this section of Ezekiel and Day 4 of Creation, we do see evidence of the rule of Yahweh moving from that of judgment and punishment to that of grace and mercy.

Have a student read verses 16-20

As we see in these verses, Yahweh sent the people out of the Promised Land for defiling it (making it unclean) by her bloodshed and her idolatry. Wherever the Israelites went (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, etc.) the people of the land knew about what had happened to the Israelites and why. Verse 20 says that the fact that the people of God were thrown out of His land caused the name of Yahweh to be profaned among these Gentile nations.

Have a student read verses 24-30. What is Yahweh going to now do for His people?

- Verse 24 - He will take them out of exile and bring them back to the Promised Land. This will happen 70 years after their captivity, after the defeat of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Cyrus the Persian ruler will issue a decree ordering the exiles to return to the Promised Land and to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple (see Ezra 1:1-4).
- Verse 25 - He will cleanse (forgive) them from their uncleanness and idolatry
- Verse 26-27 – He will give them a heart of flesh in place of their stony heart and put a new spirit in them. His Spirit will cause them to be willing and able to hear and obey the word of the Lord, to worship Him according to His law and to live lives of righteousness and mercy towards one another.

- Verse 28 – God will dwell among them in the Promised Land and they will be His people once again.
- Verse 29-30 – He will prosper them in the Promised Land with abundant grain and fruit so that they never need to go hungry again.

The obvious question that should arise in our minds is, “Why is God going to be so merciful and gracious to the people whom He has just poured His fierce wrath upon?”

Have a student read verses 21-23 and answer the above question.

Yahweh answers this question in the same way three times in verses 21-23. It is not ultimately for the sake of the exiles that He will once again show mercy to them. **It is for the sake of His own holy name, which they have profaned among the nations that He will do this.** This is **humbling, comforting, and helpful.**

- It is **humbling** because it forces the Israelites to admit that they do not deserve God’s mercy.
- It is **comforting** because God is not giving them what they really deserve, which is death and eternal punishment in Hell.
- And it is **helpful** because, as verses 31-32 say, the mercy of God will cause the exiles to remember their evil ways and deeds, to despise themselves for them, and to seek the grace of God to walk as obedient followers of Yahweh from then on.

Have a student read verses 33-38. The sin of Israel has caused the Promised Land to be turned from a prosperous garden into a deserted wasteland, much like the howling wilderness that the Israelites wandered around in for 40 years under Moses. When Yahweh restores His people to the land, it will be as if creation has started all over again, complete with a new Garden of Eden (verse 35) and with beautiful, prosperous cities. And, as we shall see in the beginning of chapter 37, the people themselves will be re-created as well!

C’ Chapter 37:1-14 – Resurrection

Have a student read verses 1-10 and describe this account.

- Ezekiel is brought by God in the Spirit (a vision) to a valley full of bones that are very dry i.e. they have been there a long time! (verses 1-2)
- God asks Ezekiel if these bones can live? Ezekiel of course knows that normally, the answer to Yahweh’s question would be, “No, of course not!”. However, Ezekiel knows that all things are possible with God and so he says, “O Lord God, You know.” (verse 3)
- Yahweh then commands Ezekiel to prophecy the word of the Lord to the bones and, as he does, the bones come together and take on flesh and skin. (verses 4-8)
- Yahweh then commands Ezekiel to prophecy to “the breath” from “the four winds” (the Holy Spirit) and as he does, the newly resurrected men came alive and stood on their feet as a great army (verses 9-10). This “swarm of men” reminds us of **Day 5 of Creation**, with swarming fish and birds!
- Where in Ezekiel have we seen bones before? Way back in Ezekiel 6:1-7 we saw Ezekiel prophecy about the judgment of God which would come on the high places of idol

worship in Israel. Many of those who worshipped on those high places would be slain and their **bones** would be scattered around the pagan altars (Ezekiel 6:5). These slain idolators were the committing the very worst of sins in Judah at the time that the wrath of God fell. The dry bones that live again in chapter 37 may be referring to these very people, not literally, but as a metaphor of the power of the Holy Spirit to bring new resurrection life even to Israel who had committed such horrible abominations that had caused Yahweh to leave her desolate and in exile.

Have a student read verses 11-14

In these verses, Yahweh Himself gives Ezekiel the interpretation of the vision of the dry bones coming to life:

Verse 11 - The “bones are the whole house of Israel” (in exile), i.e. the people who have suffered the loss of the Temple, the Promised Land, many of their friends and family members and their own freedom. They feel abandoned by Yahweh and without hope. They are indeed “dead in (their) trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) and in the “grave” of exile in Babylon. **Can a nation of “dry bones” (idolators on high places) ever be resurrected?**

Verses 12-13 - The Lord, through Ezekiel, says that he will one day bring them back to the land of Israel which, to them, will be like rising from the grave (of exile). The first task they will accomplish there will be the initial rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest (See Ezra 1-3). Then they will once again know that Yahweh is the Lord when He performs this great deed.

Verse 14 – Once again it is only the Holy Spirit who will be able to accomplish this mighty work both of transforming the hearts and minds of the exiles and of working in time and in history, even in and through the lives of emperors like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, to bring God’s people back to the Promised Land. As in Ezekiel 36:36-27, it is the filling with the Holy Spirit, and not merely social, political, or even religious reform, that will truly bring resurrection life to Israel! And it is the Holy Spirit that will fill the newly rebuilt Temple accomplished in the book of Ezra under Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest.

This all points forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who, through His life, death resurrection, and ascension into heaven has defeated sin and death and has ushered us into resurrection life in Him. It also points forward to the book of Acts where, after Jesus ascended to the throne of God, he sent the Holy Spirit to fill His disciples, empowering them (and His church today!) to take the gospel message to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth!

The Spirit of God is more powerful than even sin (and the misery and death it brings) to forgive, restore and empower individuals and even whole nations to follow the Lord! This is our hope and our joy!

- ❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 37-39 and the whole book of Esther, work on memory verses and the outline
- ❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 17 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden - Part 3

Chapter 37b-39 – Gog, Magog and the Book of Esther

Objective – To help the students to see the connections between the battle of God and Magog and the book of Esther

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verses – Ezekiel 36:24-28** - **For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.**

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
 - How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and re-creation of the nation of Israel, and of the whole world!)
- One of the clearest passages that tell us that the fall of Judah was a de-creation event is found in Jeremiah 4:23-28. **Have a students turn to this passage and have one of them read it.**

It may be helpful at this time to take a step back and review with the students where we have come thus far in the book of Ezekiel:

Chapters 1-23 – Judgment against Judah (sections 1-4 of our outline)

Ezekiel and some of the leading people of Judah had previously been taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. The first half of Ezekiel consists of a series of visions and prophecies given to Ezekiel while in captivity detailing Judah's sin against Yahweh and the coming judgment against her. Yahweh will send Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army to Jerusalem to lay siege to her and ultimately to destroy both the city and the Temple. Most of the people of Judah will then be taken into captivity in Babylon, completing the "de-creation" of Israel

Chapters 24:1-33:20 – The siege of Jerusalem begins / Judgment against the Nations (section 5 of our outline)

Here we see the beginning of the fulfillment of the visions and prophecies of chapters 1-23. The Babylonians lay siege to Jerusalem, Ezekiel's wife dies, and Ezekiel is rendered silent, at least as far as public prophecy is concerned (chapter 24). Yahweh is finished speaking words of exhortation to Judah. Only judgment remains. This judgment begins with the people of God and will flow out to the whole sinful world. During the three year time period from the siege of Jerusalem to the time that Ezekiel and the exiles hear of the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel likely wrote chapters 25:1-33:20, which detail the judgments against "the world", the seven sinful Gentile nations around Israel.

Chapters 33:21-33 – Jerusalem is captured (beginning of section 6 of our outline)

In this second part of chapter 33, Ezekiel and the exiles with him learn of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. Ezekiel's prophetic mouth is "opened" and he declares reasons behind her ruin. Yahweh's de-creation of Israel is now complete.

Chapters 34-37a – New Creation Begins (middle of section 6 of our outline)

In these chapters, Yahweh assures the exiles that, though their "shepherds" (kings) have failed them, He will be their shepherd and will lead them back to the Promised Land (chapter 34). Mount Seir (Edom) will be judged, but the mountains (land and people) of Israel will be blessed and restored (chapters 35-36). Ezekiel's vision of dry bones coming to life in chapter 37 is Yahweh's message of hope to the exiles in Babylon. Israel, though "dead" in Babylon, will "live again". The Babylonians will be defeated by the Medes and Persians and, after a total of 70 years in captivity, Cyrus, the Persian ruler, will issue a decree for the exiles to return to the Promised Land. Zerubbabel and Joshua, the high priest will lead the people back to Promised Land and they will rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1-3).

❖ Lesson - Chapter 37b-39 – Gog, Magog and the Book of Esther

We are still in the sixth section of Ezekiel (33b-39) and, as we might expect, there have been some associations with Day 6 of Creation. There are references to a restored Eden (36:35) and Israel's mountains are also restored (chapter 36). More specifically, when asked who may possess the land (chapter 33), the answer is the New Adamic Prince David (chapters 34 and 37b) and not Gog (chapters 38-39 - see today's lesson) reminding

us of the first Adam created on the 6th day. As we said last week, this prophecy of the coming of “David” points to the crowning of Joshua, the High Priest when the Jews return to the Promised Land and, ultimately, to Jesus, the Greater David, the second Adam! As saw in the last two lessons, this whole sixth section of Ezekiel seems to be divided into seven parts which also have some “Seven Days of Creation” connections (Jordan):

A. 33:21-33 – Who Will Possess the Land?

B. 34 – False and True Shepherds

C. 35:1-36:15 – Mount Seir(Edom) Verses Israel’s Mountains

D. 36:16-38 – Regathering and New Heart

C’ 37:1-14 – Resurrection

B’ 37:15-28 – Reunion Under a True Shepherd

A’ 38-39 – Gog and Magog

Today we will cover sections B’ and A’ from this outline and see some hints of the 6th and 7th Days of the Creation week.

Chapter 37:15-28 – One Kingdom, One King

Remember that, after the reign of Solomon, Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms; the northern Kingdom (called “Israel” or “Ephraim”) consisting of the ten northern tribes and the southern Kingdom (called “Judah”) consisting of Judah and Benjamin. Prior to Judah’s exile to Babylon, the northern Kingdom of Israel had been defeated by the Assyrians and exiled to Assyria. Now Judah too has been defeated (by the Babylonians) and her people are in exile as well. Here, in the last half of chapter 37 we see that Yahweh’s intention is to once again unite Israel as one people for Himself!

Have a student read verses 15-17 and explain what Yahweh is telling Ezekiel to do in front of the people in exile. Yahweh instructs Ezekiel to take two sticks and write on them the following:

Stick 1 – “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions”

Stick 2 – “For Joseph, the stick of Ephram, and for all the house of Israel, her companions”

Ezekiel is to then join the two sticks together and when he does, Yahweh says that “the two will become one in your hand” (verse 17).

Have a student read verses 18-24 and ask them, “What does this illustration mean?”

Yahweh intends to once again bring all of the tribes of Israel back together as one nation and He says that “they will be one in My hand” (verse 19). Not only will Judah be restored, but the people of the ten northern tribes, exiled to Assyria and scattered among the pagan nations, will also be gathered to the Promised Land. They will be one nation with one king (verse 22). Verse 24 says that “**David**, My servant shall be **king** over them and they shall all have one **shepherd**;

Who is this David/king/shepherd?

As we noted in our study of chapter 34, this prophecy is initially fulfilled in the person of **Joshua, the High Priest** who, along with Zerubbabel, led the people back from captivity. Zechariah 6 tells us that it is Joshua who will wear the crown of Israel as a priest/king (See Zechariah 6:9-14).

Not only will Israel be united as one nation, verse 23 says that never again will Israel defile themselves with idols. This was literally fulfilled in that, after the exile, we never again here of the nation of Israel falling into idolatry. Yahweh will cleanse them of their sin and they will once again be His people and He will be their God (verse 23b)! Verse 24 says that they will also walk in the judgments of the Lord and observe His statutes (laws). This is a true re-creation of Israel as a holy nation under Yahweh!

Verses 25-28 says that as a result of Yahweh's mercy, the united people of Israel will once again dwell in safety in the Promised Land and "David shall be their prince forever". Yahweh will make a covenant of peace with them and He will multiply them and establish His sanctuary (His dwelling place) among them "forever". Again Yahweh repeats "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (c.f. verse 23b), and the nations will know that Yahweh has done this.

Ultimately, all of this points to the Lord Jesus, the Greater David who, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, will send His disciples (His sanctuary, the church) into all of the world. The preaching of the gospel and the conversion of men and nations will spread the reign of King Jesus to every corner of the earth and all nations will know that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

Both Joshua the high priest and Jesus are also like New Adams, succeeding in obedience and righteousness where the first Adam failed, connecting this section to Day 6 of Creation.

However, both in the case of the restoration of Israel after the exile, and of the ministry of the disciples after Jesus' ascension, the enemies of God are not going to bow the knee to the Lord willingly! They won't go down without a fight!

Ezekiel 38-39 – Gog and Magog - Introduction

There has been much speculation among Bible scholars as to the meaning of chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel. Who is Gog and why does he, and a multitude of other nations, wage war against Israel? When does all of this take place?

- Some Bible commentators place these events into the far distant future, beyond our own day.
- Others link these events to the attack on Israel by Antiochus Epiphanes during the time in between the Old and New Testaments.
- Still others say that these chapters are simply symbolic of the conflict between the church and the enemies of God in all ages

However, James Jordan, once a proponent of the Antiochus Epiphanes theory, feels that the prophecy of Ezekiel involving Gog and Magog may be point to **the events that took place in the book of Esther**, which is why we assigned the reading of the book of Esther to the students last week.

Chapter 38 – Gog Attacks God’s People

We will begin by reviewing the events of the book of Esther and see how they may line up with Ezekiel chapters 38-39

Have the students briefly review the events of the book of Esther:

Chapter 1 – King Ahasuerus (probably Darius) of Persia holds a feast. His wife, Vashti, refuses to come when summoned and so is deposed as queen.

Chapter 2 – A Jewish girl, Esther, cousin to Mordecai, becomes queen in Vashti’s place. Mordecai foils a plot by two of the king’s eunuchs to try and murder Ahasuerus.

Chapter 3 – Mordecai refuses to bow before Haman, the Agagite, second in command to Ahasuerus, and Haman convinces Ahasuerus to issue a decree calling for the destruction of all of the Jews throughout the Persian Empire.

Chapter 4 – Mordecai learns of this decree and tells Esther to go to Ahasuerus to intercede for the Jews

Chapter 5 – Esther holds a banquet for Ahasuerus and Haman but makes no request of the king; She invites them to a second banquet; Haman builds a gallows to hang Mordecai on

Chapter 6 – King Ahasuerus honors Mordecai for saving his life by having Haman parade him through the city streets on the king’s horse.

Chapter 7 – At Esther’s second banquet she reveals that she is a Jew and appeals to Ahasuerus to stop Haman’s murder decree against the Jews which Ahasuerus signed. Haman is hanged on the gallows he made for Mordecai.

Chapter 8 – Esther speaks to Ahasuerus and he writes a decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves when attacked and to plunder their possessions.

Chapter 9 – The Jews defeat their attackers throughout the Persian Empire, but did not take the plunder. The feast of Purim is established to commemorate the victory.

Chapter 10 – Mordecai assumes Haman’s position as second to Ahasuerus in Persia

What are some possible connections between Ezekiel 38-39 and the book of Esther?

We will begin in the book of Zechariah, which is set in the same time period as the latter parts of Ezekiel.

1) Zechariah sees the kingdom of God in the form of a grove of myrtle trees (Zechariah 1:8). Esther’s original Hebrew name, Hadassah, is the word for “myrtle” (Esther 2:7)

2) Zechariah 2:8 states that, after the glory of God had moved back into the Temple, the nations would seek to plunder Israel. Zechariah 2:8 (NKJV) 8 For thus says the Lord of hosts: “He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.

Much of the book of Esther is taken up with Haman’s plot to kill the Jews and plunder their possessions (Esther 3:13), a plot that was to be carried out throughout the Persian Empire. (Esther 3:8-15).

3) Zechariah 2:9 then says that this plot to kill and plunder the Jews would not succeed. Instead, the Jews would kill and plunder their enemies: “For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me.” In Esther 9, the Jews defeat their enemies but refuse to take the plunder they might otherwise have.

Now we will turn to Ezekiel 38 and see more connections with the book of Esther:

Verses 1-17 – The conspiracy of Gog and his allies against Israel

Chapter 38 begins with Yahweh commanding Ezekiel to “set (his) face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh Meshech, and Tubal and prophesy against him” .

The Lord immediately says that He is against Gog and that Gog and that those allied with him will be defeated (verse 4). The rest of this section talks of the conspiracy of Gog and his allies to attack and destroy the Jews.

This account in Ezekiel lines up nicely with the book of Esther:

- 1) Gog, the prince of Magog corresponds to Hamon, the foremost prince in Persia, second only to Ahasuerus himself. It is he who instigates the other nations against the Jews. (See chapter 39 for other connections between Gog and Hamon)
- 2) The many nations allied with Gog, prince of Magog (verses 2,3, 5, 13) correspond to the far-flung nations from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1, 8:9) under the control of Persia at the time of the book of Esther. They were all were under the decree, put forth by Haman, to kill the Jews and take their plunder.
- 3) Verse 11 says that these nations will go up against the Jews who are peaceful people living in unwallled villages. At the time of Esther, the Jews were unarmed and living under the rule of the Persians who had brought peace to the entire civilized world.
- 4) Verses 12 and 13 says that these nations, allied with Gog, will seek to plunder the people as we also saw in Esther 3:13.

Verses 18-23 – The Judgment on Gog

These verses tell of Yahweh’s judgment against Gog (and his allies). They will be utterly defeated. At the time of the book of Esther, Ahasuerus, king of Persia was used of the Lord to protect the Jews. He commissions Mordecai to dictate to his scribes the terms of the decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves (Esther 8:7-12) and it is this “judgment” that is sent throughout the entire Persian Empire.

In the book of Esther, though the Jews wage only a two day battle against those who are attacking them, the result was that Mordecai took Haman’s place as second to Ahasuerus in the Persian Empire.

Chapter 39 – The Defeat and Burial of Gog / Triumphant Festival / Israel Restored

Verses 1-10 – The Defeat of Gog

These verses tell of the great defeat of Gog and those allied with him against the people of God. Yahweh himself will fight for Israel and defeat her enemies. In the book of Esther, through a series of God-ordained events Haman is ultimately hanged on the gallows he had prepared to hang Mordecai on (Esther 7:10). The Jews, under the new decree by Ahasuerus, are allowed to arm and defend themselves (Esther 8) and they defeat all of their enemies throughout the empire (Esther 9).

Thus, the victory that Yahweh wins will cause both Israel and the nations who attacked her to revere the name of the Lord (verses 7). Similarly, in the book of Esther, Mordecai is

given Haman's place as a prince of Persia, second only to Ahasuerus himself, to the glory of Yahweh and the delight of the Jews (Esther 10)

Verses 11-16 – The Burial of Gog

It is interesting that the burial place for Gog in Ezekiel 39:11,15 is the Valley **Hamon-Gog**, and the name of the nearby city in verse 16 will be **Hamonah**, both very similar words in the Hebrew to the name **Hamon** in the book of Esther.

Verses 17-20 – Triumphal Festival

These verses tell of a great celebration that will take place when Gog and his allies are defeated. The birds and beasts will feast on the flesh of the defeated enemies of the Jews. In Esther 9, the **Feast of Purim** is established to commemorate the great victory of the Jews over their enemies who were attacking them throughout the Persian Empire

Verses 21-19 – Israel Restored

Chapter 39 ends with the Yahweh stating, "I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them.". The Lord through Mordecai and Esther was indeed glorified in the defeat of Haman and those throughout the Persian Kingdom who attacked the Jews.

This victory will be a testimony to all nations that, though Yahweh has punished Israel for her sin, He will now fully bring them back to the Promised Land and restore them to His favor.

This begins a New Sabbath (times of rest) for God's people and reminds us of Day 7 of the Creation Week. This New Sabbath will be brought to completion during the times of Nehemiah, and Ezekiel 40-48 seems to be connected to the book of Nehemiah as we shall see in our last two lessons!

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 40-45 and the book of Nehemiah; Read the article by Peter Leithart entitled "The Holy City Revisited". Work on memory materials

❖ **Prayer / Prep for Worship**

Biblical Horizons Newsletter

No. 59: The Holy City Revisited

byPeter J. Leithart

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In response to my article, "The Holy City" (in Biblical Horizons 55) James B. Jordan has made several suggestions about how I might expand on the ideas presented there. Several other readers have also contributed their insights. Below, I trace a few sketchy lines of thought.

1. The expansion of the concept of the "house" of God to include the entire city of Jerusalem is paralleled by the expansion of the concept of the "throne of the Lord."

The original throne of God is, of course, the heavenly one (cf. Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Is. 66:1; etc.). Throughout the Old Testament, however, the Lord also established a number of earthly thrones as focal points of His presence and reign among His people. Being places where God is present in glory, these were particularly holy places (cf. Ps. 47:8).

The first of the Lord's earthly thrones was the ark of the covenant. Though the ark is never explicitly called the throne of the Lord, the Lord is several times said to be enthroned "above the cherubim" (Ps. 80:1; 99:1). Some of these references might, in isolation, be taken to refer to the Lord's enthronement above the living cherubim in the heavenly glory, but 1 Samuel 4:4 indicates that the cherubim in question are those above the ark: the people of Shiloh "carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim." The ark and its cherubim throne, where the glory of the Lord sat, was clearly the central and most holy object in the tabernacle complex. When the Philistines invaded the land and conquered Israel for a time, they took the ark into exile with them; after the Lord devastated the Philistines with Egyptian plagues, they wisely returned it (1 Sam. 4-6).

During the restoration period, the ark was replaced as the Lord's throne. Jeremiah, prophesying of the restoration, said, "'And it shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,' declares the Lord, 'they shall say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. At that time they shall call Jerusalem "The Throne of the Lord," and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord'" (Jer. 3:16-17). In the restoration period, the entire city became the holy throne of the Lord, the gathering place for the nations.

In 1 Samuel, the Lord judged Israel's sin by allowing the ark-throne of the Lord to be removed by the Philistines. After the restoration, when the throne encompassed the city, we would expect judgment to come upon the entire city-throne. This is exactly what happened in ad 70, in what we, more precisely than we might realize, call the "destruction of Jerusalem." The accent in prophecies of ad 70 is on the attack on and fall of the city (Dan. 9:26; Lk. 21:20-22; Rev. 17-18). The fall of the city was not, however, primarily a political event; it involved the transferral of the throne of the Lord to a new people (cf. Mt. 21:33-46).

Between these two endpoints, the ark-throne gradually became less and less central in Israel's worship and life. Solomon built the temple to provide a permanent place for the ark to rest (1 Ki. 8:21), and the procession of the ark was clearly the climax of the temple-building project (cf. 2 Chron. 5:2-14). In Kings, however, there is no mention of the ark after it was placed in Solomon's temple (1 Ki. 8:21). In Chronicles, we are informed that one of Josiah's reforms was to relieve the Levites of the burden of carrying the ark (2 Chron. 35:3), who, according to J. Barton Payne's interpretation, removed it from the temple for protection during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon ("1-2 Chronicles," The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed. [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988], vol. 4, p. 552). Otherwise, the ark is never mentioned after the time of Solomon.

What was the Lord's throne during the time of the kings? The best clue we have comes at the end of the period. Nebuchadnezzar did not, like the Philistines, carry the ark into captivity; in fact, the ark is not even mentioned among the items that he removed from the temple. Instead, Nebuchadnezzar took all the temple furnishings into exile (2 Ki. 25:13-17); like the ark, these too were the cause of plagues among the Babylonians (Dan. 5). This suggests that the throne had expanded to include everything in the temple. Taking Jeremiah 3 into consideration, we seem justified in conclusion that after the building of Solomon's temple, the temple itself functioned as the Lord's throne.

We thus have these three stages in the development of the Lord's throne: ark, temple, city. The New Covenant fulfillment is the church. All the Old Testament thrones symbolized the reality that has now come in fullness: the Lord is enthroned on the praises of His people.

2. The fact that the holiness of the temple expanded to encompass the whole city may help explain the "abomination of desolation . . . standing in the holy place" (Mt. 24:15). The phrase "holy place" itself (Gr. *hagios topos*) is used in the LXX to describe the first room of the tabernacle (e.g., Ex. 29:31; Lev. 6:26). If the entire city has become in some sense a "holy place," however, the abomination of desolation need not be understood as being in the temple proper; whatever the desolating abomination was, it could have been anywhere in the holy city. This insight eases the problem of harmonizing Matthew 24:15 ("abomination of desolation . . . standing in the holy place") with the Lukan parallel (21:20: "Jerusalem surrounded by armies").

3. Ezekiel's visionary temple seems to be clearer if it is understood as a vision of the entire "house" of the Lord; that is, Ezekiel described a visionary Jerusalem. It is true that Ezekiel distinguishes between the city and the temple area (Ezk. 48:8-20). But for all that, it is also clear that the city is holy, albeit not as holy as the temple itself. This is indicated both by the fact that the city is included in the "oblation" set apart as the Lord's own portion of the land (48:9, 15-18), and by the fact that the city is laid out as a holy square (48:16). The final verses of Ezekiel describe the gates of the city, and give Jerusalem a new name, *Yahweh-shammah*, "the Lord is there" (48:35). Fairbairn dismisses the obvious import of this name when he states that "it was in the temple, rather than in the city, that the Lord was represented as having his dwelling-place" (Commentary on Ezekiel [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989], p. 508). It is far preferable to take the name at face value, as confirmation that the city has become a holy city, indwelt by the Lord. The Lord's presence is no longer confined to the temple proper; He inhabits the entire city. Altogether, it seems most accurate to say that the city in Ezekiel's vision is the forecourt of the temple.

If the above is accurate, Ezekiel's attention to the elaborate gates of the Lord's house begins to make sense (Ezk. 40:20-37). The gates of the visionary "house" are symbolically equivalent to the gates of the city. Nehemiah thus directly, perhaps even self-consciously, fulfilled Ezekiel's vision in his rebuilding of Jerusalem's gates and walls.

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People
Lesson 18 – Day 7 – A New Sabbath for God’s People – Part 1
Chapter 40:1-45:12 – Ezekiel’s Temple

Objective – To help the students understand that God’s plan for Israel, the world, and them does not depend on men.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verses – QUIZ NEXT WEEK!**

Ezekiel 36:24-28 - For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

❖ **Review**

- What is the main message of Ezekiel? (God is going to judge Judah and the nations around her and then return Judah to the Promised Land)
- How does this message relate to the creation account of Genesis? (It shows a de-creation and re-creation of the nation of Israel, and of the whole world!)

The times of the kings of Israel has drawn to a close. Though David was a man after God’s own heart, he fell into sin not long after he came into power. Solomon too failed to lead Israel in true holiness through his marrying of many foreign women. This resulted in his leading Israel into idolatry. The Kingdom of Israel was divided under Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, and both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah continued on their path of idolatry and other sin until both were sent into exile by Yahweh.

As James Jordan says, “In time, the fabric of the Davidic covenant began to wear thin. It was no good trying to put a patch on it; a new garment was needed. The new garment consisted of a World Imperial order with Israel under the protection of (or at the mercy of) a world emperor.”

The priests and Levites of Israel also failed to lead Israel into proper worship and holy living and, as part of God’s judgment on Israel, the Temple was raided by the Babylonians and, eventually, was completely destroyed. Thus the entire social, political, and religious system of Israel was broken down. Additionally, Israel failed to lead the nations around her into the true worship of Yahweh and into the resulting righteous living. When the judgment of Yahweh fell on Israel, it also fell on these nations, as we saw in Ezekiel chapters 24-33a.

However, as we have seen in the last three lessons, Yahweh’s plan for the salvation for Israel, and for the entire world cannot be thwarted. After 70 years of captivity, Cyrus, the Persian emperor, will issue a decree commanding that the Jews return to the Promised Land, and to rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. This time of return and rebuilding for the Jews is known as the **Restoration Period**. As we introduced in our last lesson, the latter chapters of Ezekiel, which speak of this restoration / re-creation of Israel, seem to line up historically with three other books in the Old Testament:.

Briefly go through this table with the students:

Historical Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decree of Cyrus - Return of exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua - Ezra returns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attack on the Jews by the nations of the Persian Empire - Jews triumph - Feast of Purim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rebuilding of the Temple - Nehemiah returns - Rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem - Rededication of the people to holiness
Ezekiel Chapters	<p>34-37</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - False/true shepherds - Judgment on Edom - Renewed blessings on Israel - Dry bones live 	<p>38-39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gog and allies attack Israel - Judgment on Gog - Gog is destroyed - Triumphant festival 	<p>40-48</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ezekiel’s Temple - Re-division of the Promised Land - City of Jerusalem
Old Testament Book	Ezra	Esther	Ezra & Nehemiah

Last week we saw the correlation between Ezekiel 34-37 and the initial return of the Jews to the Promised Land under Zerubbabel and Joshua, the High Priest. We also saw the battle of Gog in Ezekiel 38-39 as likely corresponding to the events in the book of Esther. In the final chapters of Ezekiel, we will see Ezekiel’s Temple, the re-division of the Promised Land, and the city of Jerusalem featured. These chapters seem to correlate with the historical events of the books of both Ezra and Nehemiah. More than this, they depict the spiritual realities of the **Restoration Covenant** that are even more glorious than the

outward appearance of the rebuilt Temple and city of Jerusalem! There is a sense in which the entire city of Jerusalem becomes the holy dwelling place (the throne) of God during the times of the Restoration! These chapters in Ezekiel also point forward to the coming of Jesus and the New Covenant!

❖ Lesson – Chapters 40:1-45:12 – Ezekiel’s Temple

We have now come to the seventh and last section of the book of Ezekiel. **Ask the students, “What happened on Day 7 of Creation?”** Genesis 2:2-3 tells us that “...on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

Though the Jews are in exile, the Lord will send them hope of the glorious future that awaits them through Ezekiel’s visions in these last chapters. After 70 years of exile, the Lord will bring His people into their Sabbath rest!

This seventh section of Ezekiel can be outlined in a seven-fold fashion, with some connections, to the seven days of Creation as follows:

40:1-3 – Day 1 - Ezekiel taken to Mountain to be Shown City

40:4-43:12 – Day 2 - The Firmament Chamber; Temple Complex

43:13-27 – Day 3 - The Altar-Mountain and its Consecration Offerings

44:1-45:12 – Day 4 - The Rulers

45:13-46:24 – Day 5 - The Offerings

47:1-48:29 – Day 6 – The Land

48:30-35 – Day 7 - The City

Chapter 40:1-3 – Day 1 - Ezekiel taken to Mountain to be Shown City

This seventh section of Ezekiel begins with another time marker. **Have a student read Ezekiel 40:1.** It has been 25 years since Ezekiel and some of his countrymen were taken captive and fourteen years since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The Jews still have many years of captivity ahead of them and are no doubt in a state of discouragement. Recall that Moses also was led by Yahweh to a mountain where he received the Law and the blueprint for the building of the Tabernacle. So too, David had been given instructions by God for the Temple, built by Solomon. In like manner, here in Ezekiel 40, Ezekiel is taken in a vision back to a mountain where he is shown a picture of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. This vision will bring light to the darkness of the Jews in captivity and reminds us of Day 1 of Creation in which God created light.

After the 70 year exile, Cyrus, the Persian ruler, issued a decree commanding the Jews to return to the Promised Land and to rebuild the Temple (see Ezra 1:1-4). Under Zerubbabel and Joshua, the High Priest, the Jews returned as commanded, and began to rebuild the Temple. The account of this is found in Ezra 3-6. Not much detail is given as to the size or specific features of this Temple. **Have a student read Ezra 3:12-13 and Haggai 2:1-3.** Apparently, the new Temple was more modest in appearance than Solomon’s Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed.

However, in Ezekiel 40-43, Ezekiel sees a vision of a huge, elaborate Temple with walls over 10 feet high, 10 feet thick (40:5) and perhaps a mile long (43:15-20) as we shall see! It is also likely that the Temple which Ezekiel sees is not even in the city of Jerusalem, but rather is north of the city near Shechem (see chapter 45:1-5)? **How are we to understand the differences in size, location, and grandeur between the Temple described in Ezra and the one in Ezekiel 40-43?**

It seems likely that the Temple described in Ezekiel is indeed referring to the same one that was built in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, though not literally in terms of dimensions and features. One specific evidence for this is that a revival of the sacrificial system is associated with the temple in Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 40:41-43, 44:11,30, 46:24) and this indeed did take place during the Restoration Period (see Ezra 6:17, 9:4-5, Nehemiah 12:43). The sacrificial system ended with the destruction of Herod's Temple in 70 A.D. and its re-establishment is not discussed anywhere in the New Testament. This also points to the times of Ezra and Nehemiah as the initial fulfillment of Ezekiel 40-48. However, the particular dimensions and features described in Ezekiel are likely visionary and symbolic of the great spiritual realities that surround the Temple, Jerusalem, the Promised Land, and the people themselves during this Restoration Period. We will discuss these as we proceed through chapters 40-48.

In verse 3, Ezekiel meets “a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze” who has a measuring “tape” and rod in his hand (verse 3). Some say this “man” is an angel, and others say that this may have been the pre-incarnate Jesus himself (c.f. Daniel 10:4-6). The measuring tape and rod are both literal (in that they are used to measure the dimensions of the temple and city) and they can also be seen as representing the Word of God, which is the measure of any godly society, including its worship. He will use his measuring tools to show Ezekiel the dimensions of this visionary Temple making use of two units of measure:

- 1) The sanctuary cubit – about 22 inches long
- 2) The rod – Six sanctuary cubits (about 11 feet) long

Chapter 40:4-43:12 – Day 2 - The Firmament Chamber; Temple Complex

Chapter 40:4-49 – Walls, gateways, gateposts, and chambers

Walls

Have a student read verse 4. Ezekiel is told to see, hear, and remember everything Yahweh is about to show him and also to tell everything he learns to those in captivity. His message to the people, given in great detail, will be a huge encouragement to them in their discouraged state of exile. Ezekiel is then shown a vision of the Temple to be rebuilt in the Promised Land after the exile is over. The Temple itself is a place of communion between God and His people and the first portion of the Temple described is the wall (40:5) which, in a sense, separates God and His people from those outside of His covenant. **This reminds us of the firmament created on Day 2 of the Creation week, which was a place of separation and communion between Heaven (God) and Earth (men).**

These walls are as thick as they are high! These walls represent the Word of God, which is to confine and hedge in the thoughts, words, deeds and of God's people.

(See diagram of Ezekiel's Temple and note that this is not drawn to scale, as the walls are much longer than depicted). **KEEP IN MIND THAT THE TEMPLE DESCRIBED HERE WAS NEVER INTENDED TO ACTUALLY BE BUILT, BUT IS A VISIONARY TEMPLE SEEN BY EZEKIEL DEPICTING THE SPIRITUAL REALITIES WHICH YAHWEH WAS BRINGING TO PASS IN THIS RESTORATION PERIOD!**

Gateways

In Ezekiel 40, the gateways, gateposts, courts and stairways are described. The word "**gateway**" is repeated 35 times in Ezekiel 40. Recall that, in the Tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple there was only **one** gateway, on the east side. Here in Ezekiel's visionary Temple there are **three gateways**; On the east (verses 6-16), north (20-23), and south (24-27) sides. This tells us that, in the Restoration Covenant, access to Yahweh was now going to be even more open, not only to the Jews, but to the Gentile nations as well! Verses 17-19 describe the outer court. There are also **three gateways** that lead from the outer court to the inner court (verses 28-37), showing us that those in the Restoration Covenant with Yahweh will be allowed to draw nearer to Yahweh than ever before!

Gateposts

Notice also the repetition of the word "**gatepost(s)**" throughout chapter 40. In Solomon's Temple there were only two gateposts (2 Chronicles 3:17) called Joachin and Boaz, representing the king and the priest as guardians of Israel. In Ezekiel's Temple there are three chambers (gateposts) for guards within each gate. The increase in the number of gateposts in Ezekiel's Temple are pictures of the increased "**guarding**" of God's Law by the leaders of Israel, resulting in **increased holiness** for all in the Restoration Covenant.

Chambers

There are also many rooms and even living quarters within the outer walls (verse 17, c.f. 42:1-13) the inner walls (verses 44-49) and those leaning on the Temple itself (41:5-7). This is yet another picture of Yahweh allowing His people to draw even nearer to Him. The chambers described here are for the Levitical singers and priests.

In summary, in the Restoration Period, there will be greater openness (gateways) to all peoples to come into covenant with Yahweh, greater holiness (walls and gateposts) and greater nearness to Yahweh (chambers) than ever before for all His people!

Verses 38-43 describe the areas of the Temple where the offerings would take place in the restored sacrificial system.

Chapter 41 – The Sanctuary

Verses 1-11 - In this chapter, the sanctuary area of the Temple (the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place/Holy of Holies) and its surrounding walls are described (see diagram of the Temple). Two pillars “guard” the entrance to the sanctuary whose measurements are given (verses 1-4) and there are three storied chambers built into these inner walls (verses 5-11). These chambers **rested** (leaned) on the sanctuary walls, a picture of God’s people resting and leaning on Him. They were used as living quarters for the priests who served in the sanctuary on a rotating basis. The entire sanctuary area is elevated (see verse 8) so that the Temple is built like a **mountain**, going up to heaven, yet another picture of God’s heavenly presence coming to earth.

Verse 12 describes the building at the west end of the sanctuary, the purpose of which is not stated though some commentators speculate it may have been used as a storehouse of tithes, offerings, and temple articles of gold and silver.

Verses 13-26 give us the dimensions of this building and the dimensions and features of the sanctuary. Lining the walls of the sanctuary are carvings of palm trees alternating with cherubim, each of which have two faces. **Ask the students, “Which two of the four faces of the cherubim in Ezekiel 1 are mentioned?”** (lion and man). Verse 22 is a description of the altar of incense.

Chapter 42:1-20 – Side chambers and buildings in courts

This chapter describes the chambers in the outer court which were attached to the inner court. Verses 13 and 14 tell us that in these chambers, the priests who were serving in the sanctuary would come and eat their portion of the sacrifices. They would also leave their holy garments in these chambers and change into common garments when their time of service in the sanctuary.

Chapter 43:1-5 – Yahweh enters!

The greatest tragedy to come upon Israel was not the destruction of Jerusalem, nor even of the Temple but rather was the fact that the sin of Israel (abominations) had caused Yahweh to leave (desolate) the Temple and the city. In His mercy, Yahweh did not abandon His people, but rather went with them into exile as we saw in Ezekiel 1. Here in Ezekiel 43, we see Yahweh return to the Temple through the east gate, the gate facing the sunrise (new creation), and the very same gate through which He had previously left. Once again His glory fills the Temple!

Chapter 43:6-12 – Yahweh Speaks to Ezekiel

What a beautiful picture this chapter is of the mercy of Yahweh as he declares to Ezekiel what a blessing He is bringing to Israel. He will once again dwell with His people and they will no longer defile His name (verse 7). Though the sin of the people had caused Yahweh to desolate the Temple, if they will put aside their sin, he will once again dwell in their midst FOREVER! (verses 8-9). Though Solomon’s palace was next to the Temple he had built, there will be no more kings in Israel, and even the carcasses of those who ruled

before will be kept far from Yahweh in this new Temple (verse 9). Ezekiel is to describe the new Temple to them and exhort them to obedience!

Chapter 43:13-27 – Day 3 - The Altar-Mountain and its Consecration Offerings

On Day Three, “God filled the land with first fruits of plant and tree”. In these verses the sacrificial “mountain of the Lord”, the altar, is prominent

Verses 13-17 describe the altar for the sacrifices, found in the inner court which is the shape of a mountain. In the fact, the phrase “altar hearth” in verses 15 and 16 literally means “mountain of God”!

Verses 18-27 describe a seven day consecration ceremony for the altar, through the blood of the sacrifices applied to it, “cleansing” it (v. 20,22,23), making it holy and fit for use in the Temple.

Chapter 44:1-45:12 – Day 4 - The Rulers

On Day 4, “God made ruling lights, sun, moon and stars, where the rockets soar.” Now that Yahweh has returned to the Temple, He sets up His earthly rulers and establishes laws governing the access to the Temple of these rulers (the prince and priests) as well as those under their governance.

1) The Prince – 44:1-3 - Ezekiel is once again brought to the east gate of the outer court of the Temple and finds it shut. The Lord tells him that no one may enter the Temple by this gate because it was through this gate that Yahweh reentered the Temple, in all His glory. The prince (ruler) of Israel, as a representative of Yahweh to the people, may eat in this gate and enter the temple through a small vestibule (door) in this area. Like the Peace offerings in Leviticus, this is a picture of the prince dining on behalf of the people, in fellowship with Yahweh at His house. We see in Zechariah 6:9-15 that it was Joshua, the High Priest, who was also given the crown of rule as prince in Israel at the time of the Restoration. He will perform both priestly and kingly duties in the newly restored Temple and city.

2) The People – 44:6-9 – Though the east gate is closed, all of the other gates to the Temple are open for the faithful people to enter therein! Ezekiel enters by the north gate and finds that the glory of the Lord has filled the Temple! God has graciously consented to dwell among His people once again, to draw near to and to dwell with all who put their faith in Him. However, Ezekiel is told by the Lord that no unbelieving person, whether Jew or Gentile, may enter the Temple, for it was these, even among the priests and Levites, who had previously caused Israel to sin and be taken into captivity!

3) The Priests / Levites - 44:10-31 – Many of the priests and Levites had led Israel into idolatry and other abominations as we saw in Ezekiel 8. The Lord tells Ezekiel that those religious rulers in Israel (and their descendants) who went astray will “bear their iniquity” and not be allowed to come near to God to minister in the sanctuary (the Holy Place and Holy of Holies). Instead, they will guard the gates and slay the sacrifices in the outer

court. The descendants of Zadok, who were faithful to Yahweh, will be allowed to minister in the sanctuary according to the regulations laid out in verses 17-31:

- 1) They are to wear linen garments so that they do not sweat (a sign of the original curse of Adam) when they minister before the Lord – verses 17-19
- 2) They must not shave their heads (like the pagan Gentile priests) nor allow their hair to grow very long (like women or Nazirites) – verse 20
- 3) They must not drink wine (a sign of rest) when they are working before the Lord – verse 21
- 4) They must take virgins for wives as a picture of Yahweh betrothing a pure bride to Himself – verse 22
- 5) They shall keep and teach the Law of God and serve as judges for the people – verses 23-24
- 6) They shall not make themselves unclean by touching dead bodies (a picture of sin/death) other than those of close relatives. In these cases, they must wait 7 days and then make a sin offering for themselves - verses 25-27

Verses 28-31 tell us that there is no land inheritance in Israel for the priests and Levites but that God Himself is their inheritance, and they shall receive their living from the offerings brought to the Temple.

45:1-8 – The Holy District – These verses lay out the division of the land among the Temple and the priests (verses 1-4), the Levites (verse 5), the city of Jerusalem (verse 6), and the prince (verses 7-8) (see map). These are large tracts of land, marked off by “rods” (11 feet!), not in “cubits” (22 inches) as seen in some modern translations. By these measurements, the Temple, found within the district of the priests, is not actually in the city of Jerusalem as it was in the days of the kings of Israel, but is near or in the city of Shechem, some 25 miles north of Jerusalem. This of course is not where the Temple was actually built but, in Ezekiel’s vision, may be symbolic of the end of the Kingly Period where the palace of the king was right next to the Temple.

45:9-12 – Laws Governing the Prince – The political rulers in Israel are to rule righteously as representatives of Yahweh. Verses 9-12 gives us Yahweh’s four-fold command concerning them. They are to:

- 1) Remove violence and plundering
- 2) Execute justice and righteousness
- 3) Stop dispossessing God’s people, i.e. refrain from taking their land away from them.
- 4) They are to ensure that honest money, weights and measures are used by government and business at all times.

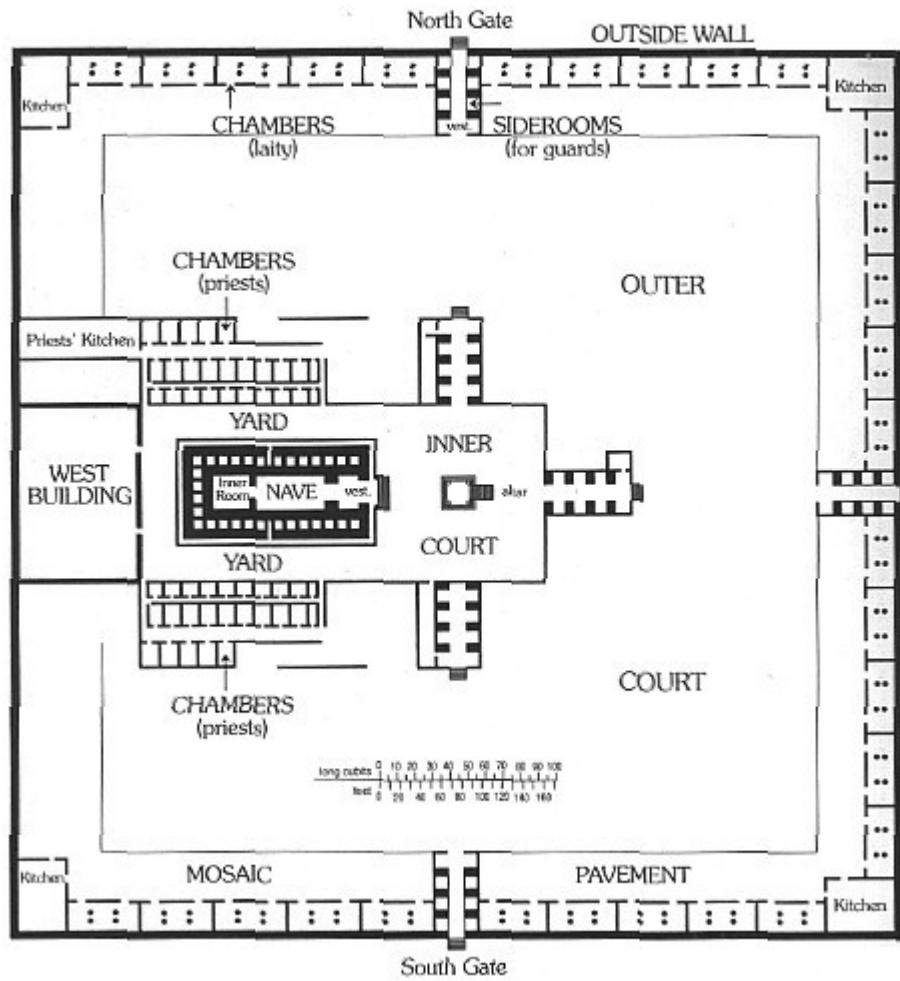
It is glorious to see how fully the Lord intends to restore His people to life and worship in the Promised Land. He is drawing them closer to Himself than ever before, and this carries with it a greater obligation of the part of the people to faithfulness and obedience in covenant with Him. Through Jesus, we have been given the privilege to draw even closer

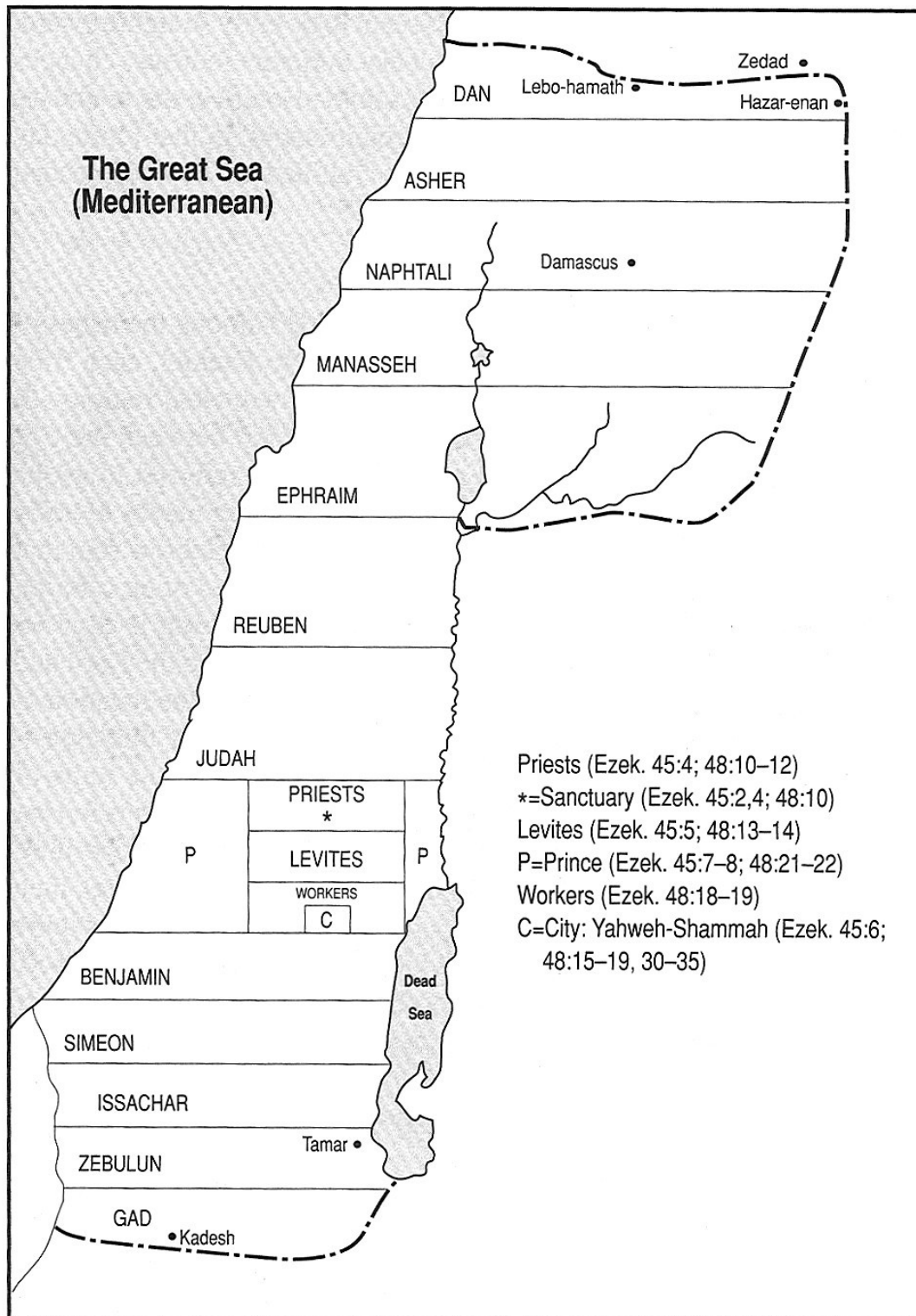
to Yahweh than the Jews of the Restoration Period. How much more should we walk in faithful obedience to God who loves us!

❖ **Homework** – Read Ezekiel 45-48; Work on memorization of outline and verses

❖ **Pray / Prep for Worship**

EZEKIEL'S TEMPLE, COURTS, WALLS. AND GATES





Map of Israel in the Kingdom

--John Schmitt

Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 19 – Day 7 – A New Sabbath for God’s People – Part 2

Chapter 45:13-48:35 – The Offerings, the Land and the City

Objective – To help the students to see the great mercy and love of God for them as they see it demonstrated in Yahweh’s forgiveness of Israel and her restoration to the Promised Land.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Memory Verses** – **Hand out pieces of paper and have the students write out these verses:**

Ezekiel 36:24-28 - For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

❖ **Outline of Ezekiel – Briefly review with the students**

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
4. Ezekiel 20-23 – Day 4 - Climax – Rulers, City and Land to be Destroyed
5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God’s People

- ❖ **Review** - In our last lesson, Ezekiel was taken by the Lord in a vision to a high mountain where he saw the newly rebuilt Temple and city of Jerusalem. The priests and Levites have been restored to their duties and Israel will now be ruled by a prince who is both High Priest and civil ruler over the land. In the second half of chapter 45 and all of 46, we see the sacrificial system restored.

❖ **Lesson – Chapters 45:13-48:35 - The Offerings, the Land, and the City**

Chapter 45:13-46:24 – Day 5 - The Offerings and Feasts

Offerings - 45:13-17 - Notice in verses 13-17 that the normal four main offerings seen in Leviticus 1-4 are reestablished:

- 1) The Purification (Sin) Offering (see Leviticus 4)
- 2) The Ascension (Whole Burnt) Offering (see Leviticus 1)
- 3) The Tribute (Grain) Offering (see Leviticus 2)
- 4) The Peace Offering (see Leviticus 3)

Recall that these four offerings form the basis of our Lord's Day Worship Service at RCC. Notice too that these offerings are offered in the Restoration Period by the prince (High Priest/Ruler), something that would have been prohibited in the days of the Tabernacle or Solomon's Temple. During this time, the offices of ruler and priest are combined in one man. This may be a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, who will be the great High Priest who will offer up Himself as the perfect sacrifice, and who will be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords as well!

Feasts - 45:18-25 – In these verses the feasts of Israel are reestablished. The two feasts spoken of in this section are:

- 1) Feast of Passover - verses 21-24
- 2) Feast of Tabernacles - verse 25

Prior to this, purification offerings are to be made to cleanse the sanctuary (verses 18-19) and the people (verse 20).

Notice again how the prince is intimately involved in these sacrifices.

Access - 46:1-15 – These verses give the details of who may have access to the sanctuary (Holy Place) on the Sabbaths and New Moon feasts. Notice that the east gate to the inner court, like the east gate to the outer court, is closed except on the Sabbaths and New Moon feasts. At these times:

- 1) The prince was to enter the Temple by way of the east vestibule and stand at the east entrance of the sanctuary (Holy Place and Holy of Holies) but not enter into it. There he will prepare offerings (verse 2b, 4-7) and worship. He will then exit the Temple by way of the same east vestibule
- 2) The people are to come into the outer court by way of either the north or south entrances and would stand outside of the east entrance of the sanctuary. There they will observe the offerings of the prince and worship. Verse 9 tells us that the people must exit the Temple by way of the opposite gate (north or south) that they entered by. This is a picture of the transformation of the people from sinful people before the Restoration, to the new, cleansed people of God. They are not to leave the same way they came!

Verses 11-15 give details of other offerings the prince and priests are supposed to make

46:16-18 – Regulations regarding inheritances given by the prince. Notice that the sons of the prince have a permanent inheritance, whereas his servants have to return theirs in the Year of Jubilee. However, the prince was not allowed to take any land from the people to give to his sons.

46:19-24 – How the offerings of the priests were to be prepared is detailed here.

Chapter 47:1-48:29 – Day 6 – The Land

On Day Six of the Creation Week, the land animals and man were created. Here in this section of Ezekiel, the people of God are reestablished in the Promised Land!

The River - 47:1-12 – In chapter 47, Ezekiel sees a river flowing from the laver under the Temple floor and out of the east gate. As this river flows out, it gets deeper and deeper (see verses 3-5). It then joins up with the Jordan River and flows to the Dead Sea where it “heals” the salty waters and makes them fresh again! In the Scripture, water is often a symbol of cleansing, both of people (from sin), and of the land (from the effects of man’s sin), and of new life in covenant with God. Before the Fall of Adam and Eve, four rivers flowed out of Eden to bless the world (see Genesis 2:10-14). After Adam’s sin, men were, in a sense, cut off from this cleansing and life in covenant with Yahweh. However, as we see God’s plan for the salvation unfold in Scripture, we also see an increasing amount of water coming from God and His people. **Ask the students, “Where in the Old Testament do we see water as a prominent feature?”**:

- 1) **The Flood of Noah** cleansed the earth of sinful man and the land from his effects
- 2) **Tabernacle** - The patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) came into covenant with Yahweh and were called on by God to minister to the world. They dug wells and set up oasis-sanctuaries. Thus, the water (forgiveness and blessing of God) was way down in the ground and it had to be brought up for their converts
- 3) In the days of Moses and the Tabernacle, the laver of cleansing is present. Thus, the water is above ground now for the cleansing of the sins of the Israelites and the Gentile God-fearers.
- 3) **Temple** - In Solomon’s Temple there was even more water! There is a huge bronze ocean and ten water chariots, symbolizing even more power and influence of the Kingdom. As Jordan has said, “During the periods of the patriarchs, of the Tabernacle, and of the Temple, God had his people placed at the center of the world...The water (forgiveness and blessings of Yahweh) stayed in the land, in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple, and the nations came to it.

By the time we come to the Restoration Temple in Ezekiel, there is no laver, bronze ocean, or water chariots, but rather there is an ever-deepening river flowing out from the Temple to the edge of the Gentile nations, symbolized by the Dead Sea becoming fresh water again! In the New Testament, Jesus said, “...If anyone thirsts, let Him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will **flow rivers of living water**.” (John 7:37-38). The Church (and believers individually) is now Eden, from which flow out the four rivers, flowing out to the four corners of the earth, bringing the salvation to every tribe, tongue, people, and nation!

47:13-23 – The borders of the reestablished Promised Land are detailed in these verses. The specific portions given to each tribe are given in chapter 48.

48:1-29 – These verses give the details for the division of the Promised Land which was first mentioned in 45:1-8 (see map). The description flows from north to south:

- 1) Verses 1-7 – The portions allotted to Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah
- 2) Verses 8-22 – The “holy section” in the center, set apart for the priests, Levites, and the prince. As James Jordan has pointed out, “There would be no more Levitical cities in the Restoration, and so the Levites would need a place to live. In reality, they would live among the people in the land, but Ezekiel shows the spiritual reality, that they would live around the Temple.”
- 3) Verses 23-29 – The portions allotted to Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, and Gad
Notice on the map that these divisions are geometric (rectangles and squares) and symbolic in character and not intended to map out how the land was actually to be apportioned. It shows how God’s people are once again gathered around His Temple and His city (Jerusalem) in fellowship with Him.

Chapter 48:30-35 – Day 7 - The City

When Israel was traveling through the wilderness, the tribes would arrange themselves around the tabernacle in a particular order when they made camp and rested (see Numbers 2,3). Now Yahweh is once again giving the Jews rest (**Sabbath – Day 7**) from their exile in Babylon. This is represented by the names and arrangements of the gates of Jerusalem. On each side of the city of Jerusalem there are three gates, named for the each of the twelve tribes of Israel:

North Side – Reubin, Judah, and Levi – verse 31

East Side – Joseph, Benjamin, Dan – verse 32

South Side – Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun – verse 33

West Side – Gad, Asher, Naphtali – verse 34

This numbering of the twelve tribes includes Levi, and keeps Joseph as one tribe instead of dividing it into Ephraim and Manasseh (Joseph’s two sons) as was done in the land allotments.

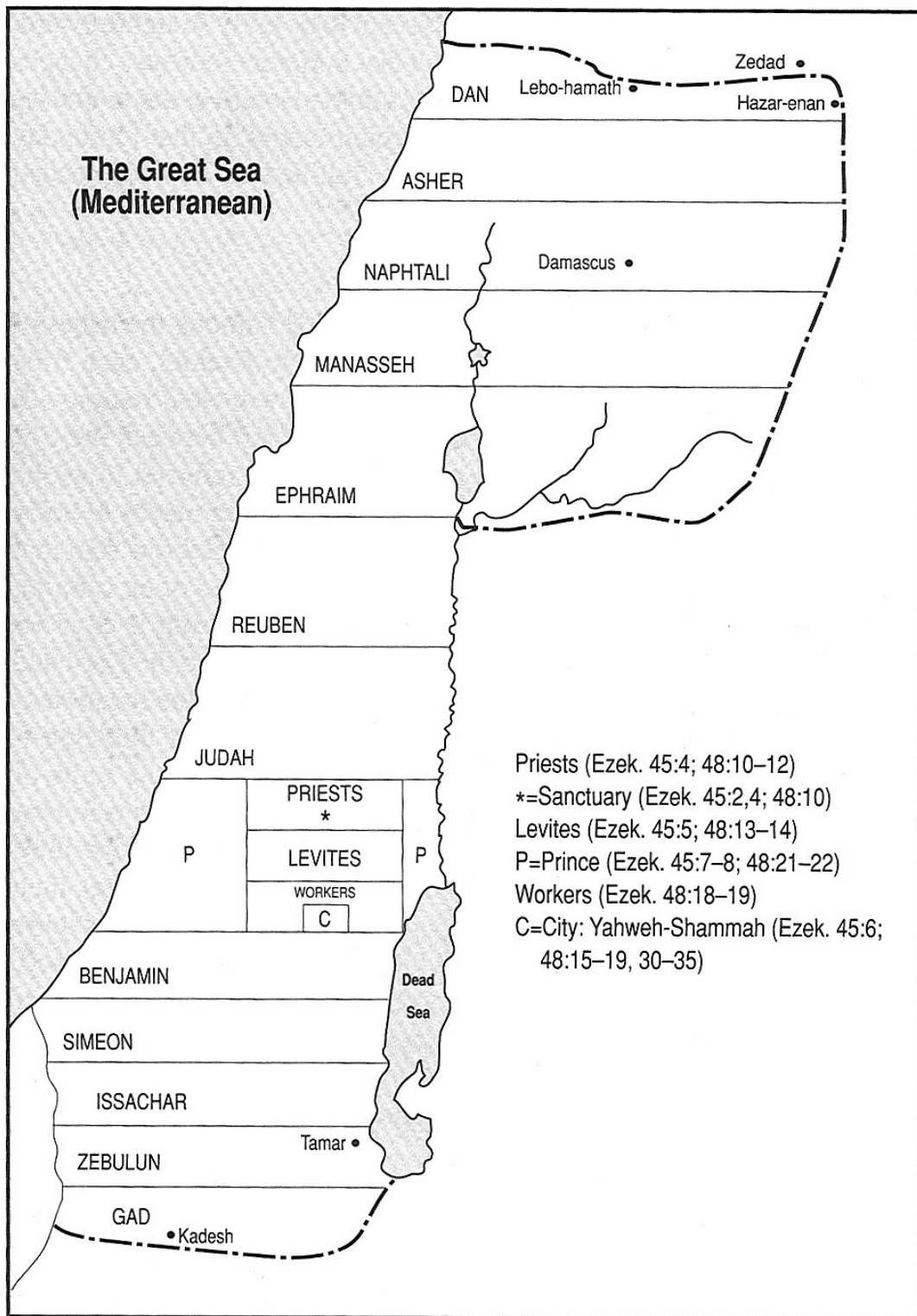
God’s people are gathered around him, both in terms of the entire Promised Land (48:1-29), and in terms of the city of Jerusalem (48:30-35)

The book of Ezekiel began with the captives by the River Chebar in Babylon wondering if God had abandoned them. But God was with them as seen both in the presence of the chariot throne, and in the presence of Ezekiel, God’s priest and prophet. Though the Lord desolated (left) the Temple and Jerusalem, He joined the captives in exile. Though He used Nebuchadnezzar and his armies to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, Yahweh did not abandon His people, but led them every step of the way to this Restoration Period. As the book ends, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple have been rebuilt, the worship of Yahweh has been renewed, and the people of God have been restored to their land. Yahweh has once again taken up residence in the Temple and His glory fills the place. Even the name of the city of Jerusalem has been changed to Yahweh Shammah, “The Lord is There”! (verse 35). And the rivers of the gospel now flow out to all the nations!

Review – Pass out the review question sheets which contain the questions which will be on the Student Evaluation to be taken next week. The students will be allowed to take their completed sheets home to study from.

❖ **Homework – Study the review sheet in preparation for the Student Evaluation**

❖ **Prayer / Prep for Worship**



Map of Israel in the Kingdom

--John Schmitt

Ezekiel – Review Sheet

1-7) Write the outline of the book of Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
2. Ezekiel 8-13 – Day 2 – Firmament - Rulers of Israel to be Judged
3. Ezekiel 14-19 – Day 3 - Plants, Trees and the Coming Judgment
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5. Ezekiel 24-33a – Day 5 - Swarms of Nations Fall
6. Ezekiel 33b-39 – Day 6 – A New Adam and a New Eden
7. Ezekiel 40-48 – Day 7 - A New Sabbath for God's People

8) Write out Ezekiel 36:24-28

“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

9) Who wrote the book of Ezekiel? _____

10) At what time in Israel's history does the book of Ezekiel take place?

- a. At the time of the conquest of the Promised Land
- b. During the time of David
- c. During the time of the exile of Judah in Babylon
- d. During the time of the apostles

11) Where is Ezekiel during this time?

- a. Jerusalem
- b. With the early exiles in Babylon
- c. Egypt
- d. Omaha

12) What does Ezekiel's name mean? _____

13) Ezekiel was a

- a. priest
- b. prophet
- c. Both a. and b.

15) What name or title is Ezekiel called over 90 times in the book of Ezekiel? _____ of _____.

16) What is the main message of Ezekiel?

17) This seven-fold message shows a _____ and _____ of the nation of _____ and of the whole _____ and reminds us of the seven _____ of _____.

18) While with the exiles by the river Chebar, Ezekiel sees a vision of

- a) The chariot throne of God
- b) A large statue of a metal man
- c) A ladder coming down from heaven
- d) Four horses and riders

19) Name the four faces of the cherubim seen in this vision

20) How is the coming of God to Babylon both good news and bad news for the exiles?

Good News –

Bad News –

- 21) True or False – God commands Ezekiel to speak to the people of their sin and the judgment to come even if they won't listen to him.
- 22) What happens to Ezekiel to demonstrate God's judgment that is coming to Israel?
 a) He is tied up with ropes c) He cuts off and destroys his hair
 b) He lays on his side for 430 days d) a) b) and c)
- 23) Israel committed wicked sins that caused God to leave the Temple, the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. This is called the _____ of _____.
- 24) True or False – Though Ezekiel gives harsh words from God to the exiles about the coming judgment on Israel, he also gives them words of hope for their future restoration.
- 25) True or False - God says that Israel's sin is not as bad as the sin of Sodom
- 26) True or False – Israel acted like an unfaithful wife towards Yahweh
- 27) In chapter 23, God compares the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah to two unfaithful sisters. He calls Israel, _____, which means "her own tent" since they rejected the true worship of Yahweh. He calls Judah, _____ which means "woman of the tent" since the true Temple of the worship of Yahweh was in Jerusalem (in Judah).
- 28) What severe trial did God make Ezekiel endure as part of his role as priest and prophet to Israel?
 a) The death of his parents c) The death of his children
 b) The death of his wife d) The death of his pet turtle
- 29) Name the seven Gentile nations who also received judgments from God.
 1. _____ 5. _____
 2. _____ 6. _____
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- 30) In what year did Nebuchadnezzar destroy the city of Jerusalem and the Temple? _____
- 31) Since Israel's shepherds (priests, Levites, elders) were unfaithful to Yahweh, who would be their True Shepherd when they were restored to the Promised Land? _____
- 32) After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, what Persian ruler ordered the exiles to return to the Promised Land? _____
- 33) In what two books of the Bible do we see the restoration of Israel to the Promised Land _____ and _____.
- 34) The restoration of Israel to covenant with Yahweh and to the Promised Land is given in Ezekiel's vision of the _____ coming to life.
- 35) The battle of Gog in the land of Magog against Israel is likely a prophecy that was fulfilled in the book of _____.
- 36) Match the following features of Ezekiel's Temple with their possible spiritual significance
 _____ Many gates a. Covenant with Yahweh open to all believers
 _____ Many gateposts and guards b. God's people draw near to Him
 _____ Many chambers c. Increased holiness

37) In Ezekiel 43, _____ enters the Temple through the east gate and his glory fills the Temple.

38) Who is likely “the prince” spoken of in Ezekiel 45-48

- a. Joshua the High Priest c. Ezra
- b. Zerubbabel d. Nehemiah

39) One of the great features of Ezekiel’s Temple is the _____ which flows out of the Temple, which shows the forgiveness and blessings of God going out to all the nations.

40) At the end of the book of Ezekiel, the name of the city of Jerusalem is changed to “Yahweh Shammah” which means “_____”!

Ezekiel – Review Sheet – Answer Key

1-7) Write the outline of the book of Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel 1-7 – Day 1 - God Takes the World in Hand
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9) Who wrote the book of Ezekiel? Ezekiel

10) At what time in Israel's history does the book of Ezekiel take place?

- a. At the time of the conquest of the Promised Land **c. During the time of the exile of Judah in Babylon**
- b. During the time of David
- d. During the time of the apostles

11) Where is Ezekiel during this time?

- a. Jerusalem **b. With the early exiles in Babylon**
- c. Egypt
- d. Omaha

12) What does Ezekiel's name mean? God is strong, God strengthens, or God makes hard

13) Ezekiel was a

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- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
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- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| a. Many gates | a. Covenant with Yahweh open to all believers |
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Ezekiel – A New Sabbath for God’s People

Lesson 20 – Student Evaluation

Objective – To allow the students to demonstrate their understanding of the general flow, themes, and message of the book of Ezekiel.

- ❖ **Greetings** – Pray with the students for the Lord’s blessing on their class
- ❖ **Attendance and Accountability** – Ask the students, “Did you get a good night’s sleep, bring your Bible, bring a writing utensil, and do your homework assignment?”
- ❖ **Westminster Shorter Catechism** – If used, briefly go over the question(s) and answer(s) for this quarter.
- ❖ **Lesson – Student Evaluation** – Pass out copies of the Student Evaluation to each student and have them fill them out and pass them in.

Name _____

Ezekiel – Student Evaluation

1-7) Write the outline of the book of Ezekiel

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8) Write out Ezekiel 36:24-28

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13) Ezekiel was a

- a. priest b. prophet c. Both a. and b.

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- | | |
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- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
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| 2. <u>Moab</u> | 6. <u>Sidon</u> |
| 3. <u>Edom</u> | 7. <u>Egypt</u> |
| 4. <u>Philistia</u> | |

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Ezra and **Nehemiah**

34) The restoration of Israel to covenant with Yahweh and to the Promised Land is given in Ezekiel's vision of the **dry bones** coming to life.

35) The battle of Gog in the land of Magog against Israel is likely a prophecy that was fulfilled in the book of **Esther**.

36) Match the following features of Ezekiel's Temple with their possible spiritual significance

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| a. Many gates | a. Covenant with Yahweh open to all believers |
| c. Many gateposts and guards | b. God's people draw near to Him |
| b. Many chambers | c. Increased holiness |

37) In Ezekiel 43, **Yahweh / God** enters the Temple through the east gate and his glory fills the Temple.

38) Who is likely "the prince" spoken of in Ezekiel 45-48

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
| <u>a. Joshua the High Priest</u> | c. Ezra |
| b. Zerubbabel | d. Nehemiah |

39) One of the great features of Ezekiel's Temple is the **River** which flows out of the Temple, which shows the forgiveness and blessings of God going out to all the nations.

40) At the end of the book of Ezekiel, the name of the city of Jerusalem is changed to "Yahweh Shammah" which means "**The Lord is there**"!