

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

BY

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introduction

From the opening verses of the book we learn that Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, the priest, and belonged consequently to the much honored Zadok family. That he knew the nobility of Jerusalem well and was intimate with them may be indirectly learned from the eleventh chapter. Rabbinical tradition makes Buzi (which means "contempt") a son of Jeremiah. There is no evidence for this. Eleven years before the complete ruin of the city and the temple by the King of Babylon, Ezekiel was carried away into the captivity. This deportation is recorded in 2 Kings 24:14. Before Ezekiel with the princes and the mighty men were taken into captivity, others had been removed to Babylon, notably Daniel and his three companions. Ezekiel must have known Daniel personally. His name is found three times in this book (14:14, 20; 38:3).

Ezekiel was not a youth, as generally supposed, when he was deported to Babylon, for the matured character of a priest which appears in his writings and his full and intimate acquaintance with the temple service render such a supposition highly improbable. Jewish tradition declares that he exercised already the prophetic office before he was carried away.

The name Ezekiel means "strengthened by God." It has been stated by some that this is not the original name of the prophet, but his official title, which he adopted on account of his ministry among the people. Very interesting on this controverted point is the statement in a rabbinical comment. The declaration is made that the prophets of God received their significant names,

so closely linked with and expressive of the character of their messages, from above, and not according to the will of their earthly parents. God called them to their work and had them named accordingly before they ever entered upon their offices as prophets. We believe this may be correct, especially in view of Jeremiah 1:5.

Where He Ministered

The place where we find Ezekiel is the river Chebar. This river is now known by the name Kabour. It emptied into the Euphrates north of Babylon and was also called Nar-Kabari, the great canal. Here Nebuchadnezzar had started a colony of captives. In chapter 3:15, the name of the place is given; it was at Tel-abib. In this settlement the prophet seems to have lived. Two passages in the book tell us that he had his own house (3:24, 8:1). We also know that he was married (24:16-18). The death of his wife is the only event he mentions of his personal history, and that would probably have not been recorded if it were not connected with his prophetic office. The prophecies he uttered among the captives are carefully dated. The first date is found in chapter 1:1-2.

Ezekiel and Jeremiah

Ezekiel's great prophetic ministry is closely connected with that of Jeremiah. When Ezekiel had his first great vision on the banks of the river Chebar, Jeremiah had already been a prophet for thirty-five years. Only a few years more remained for this great man of God. That Ezekiel must have been acquainted with Jeremiah and his messages of warning and exhortation is more than likely. Yet it is strange there is not a single reference to Jeremiah in the entire book of Ezekiel. It is strange in view of the fact that the messages of these two men have so much in common. Critics make the assertion that Ezekiel as a prophet was molded by the teaching of Jeremiah. Kuenen claims that Ezekiel must have been for many years the close student of Jeremiah's writings. Before Ezekiel proceeded to write his own prophecies, his mind, it is claimed, had become so saturated with the ideas and language of Jeremiah that every part of his book betrays the influence of his predecessor. This view would make Ezekiel an enthusiastic admirer and copyist of Jeremiah. But in the book of Ezekiel the phrases "Thus saith the Lord God"--"The Word of the Lord came unto me"--occur over and over again. The words he spoke, the mighty messages he delivered, were not produced by the influence of Jeremiah nor by his example, but by the Spirit of God. Other critics have even done greater dishonor to this chosen instrument of the Lord and to the Word he preached. We quote from The New Century Bible: "It would appear that there runs through all the prophet's activities, at least in the earlier period, a strain of mental abnormality--perhaps of

actual malady. By some writers this has been supposed to be a form of catalepsy. Probably Ezekiel was no more a cataleptic than Paul; with equal probability he was what would now be called a 'psychical subject,' and as such liable to trances--and perhaps a clairvoyant." Such are the ridiculous things invented by men, who claim scholarship, and whose aim is to deny the supernatural origin of the words and the visions of the prophets of God.

The fact is that Jeremiah and Ezekiel were called by Jehovah to specific ministries. In their characters and natural temperaments they differed greatly. Jeremiah, assuming, as a very young man, his prophetic office during the reign of Josiah, was called to deliver the messages of the awful judgments which were to come upon Jerusalem and had to witness these in their execution. He was an extremely kind, gentle, and tender-hearted man. Jeremiah is the prophet of a dying nation; the agony of Judah's prolonged death struggle is reproduced with tenfold intensity in the inward conflict which rends the heart of the prophet. Ezekiel was of a different temperament. The deep soul exercise we find so often in Jeremiah, his tender, loving sympathies, are almost entirely absent in Ezekiel. He lacked the emotional character of Jeremiah. He was a man of great energy and vigor; he was stern and had a deep sense of his human responsibility. Both prophets uncover the corrupt conditions of Judah and condemn them. The condemnations in Ezekiel are far more severe than those in Jeremiah. The style of Ezekiel is also different from that employed by his contemporary.

In all this he differs from Jeremiah; and more so in the greater and more complete visions concerning the future.

His Ministry

There is an evident connection between the communication which Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem unto the captives in Babylon and the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry. The letter of Jeremiah is found in chapter 29 of the book of Jeremiah. It is an interesting document. It seems to have been occasioned by a number of false prophets who had appeared among the captives, and who encouraged the rebellious and disobedient spirit which prevailed among the exiles. They prophesied falsely, led the people away, and awakened the delusive hope of an early return from the captivity. While Jeremiah continued to minister to the feeble few and the poor, who were left behind, Ezekiel was engaged among the captives and contended against these false prophets and against the false hopes of the people who gave no evidences of repentance. Inasmuch as Jerusalem had not yet been completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the captives, who had listened to the false prophets, expected a speedy return to their own land. To dispel this false hope Jeremiah had sent them the message,

"For thus saith the LORD, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place" (Jer. 29:10). Ezekiel then labored also to dispel this false hope preached by the prophets, whom the Lord had not sent. By his stern and solemn words, by divinely commanded actions and symbols, he had to deliver the message that there was no hope for Jerusalem. When the catastrophe came at last, his ministry changed. He comforts the disappointed and heartbroken people and delivers his great restoration messages.

This great prophet had to do certain divinely commanded things in the presence of the people who were living in deception after having listened to the false prophets. In chapter 3:24-26 he had to shut himself up, bind himself, and then he was made dumb. Then he was commanded to lie upon his right side and upon his left for 430 days (4:4-8). In chapter 4:9 he had to eat unclean bread. Then he had to shave his head and beard (5:1); to carry a captive's baggage (12:3-7); when his wife died, he was not to mourn (24:15-20); and again he lost his speech (24:27). The key to all this is found in chapter 24:24.

The visions of glory Ezekiel had belong to some of the greatest recorded in the Word of God. Much in the beginning of the book reminds of the last book of the Bible, the Revelation. We mention a few passages to be compared: Ezekiel 1 with Rev. 4 and 5. Ezekiel 3:3 with Rev. 10:10. Ezekiel 8:3 with Rev. 13:14, 15. Ezekiel 9 with Rev. 7. Ezekiel 10 with Rev. 8:1-5. The critics declare upon this striking correspondency that "much of the imagery of Revelation is borrowed from Ezekiel."

The Division of the Book

A careful reading of the book of Ezekiel shows, in the first place, that the prophet received messages and saw visions before the final destruction of Jerusalem, and after that catastrophe had taken place in fulfillment of his inspired predictions, he received other prophecies. The predictions preceding the fall of Jerusalem are the predictions of the judgment to fall upon the city and upon Gentile nations, the enemies of Israel. The predictions Ezekiel received after the city had been destroyed are the predictions of blessing and glory for Israel and Jerusalem in the future. The first part of the book has found a fulfillment in the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar. The second part is awaiting its fulfillment at the close of the times of the Gentiles, when Israel will be regathered, restored and the glory of the Lord returns to another temple, which Ezekiel beheld in a magnificent vision. All will be accomplished when the Lord returns to dwell in the midst of His people, so that the name of the city will be

"Jehovah-Shammah"--"the Lord is there" (48:35). These two main divisions are clearly marked in the book itself In chapter 33:21, after the prophet had received a renewed call as watchman, we read: "And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten." This determines the two parts.

To show the perfect and orderly arrangement of the whole book of Ezekiel we shall give a complete analysis.

I. PREDICTIONS BEFORE THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Section A. judgment Predictions Concerning Jerusalem (1-24)

1. The Vision of the Glory of the Lord and the Call of the Prophet (1-3:14)
2. The judgment Announced, Four Signs and Their Meaning, and the Two Messages. (3:15-7:27)
3. Visions in Relation to Jerusalem (8-11)
4. Signs, Messages, and Parables (12-19)
5. Further and Final Predictions Concerning the Judgment of Jerusalem (20-24)

Section B. Predictions of judgments against the Nations (25-32)

1. Against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistine (25:1-17)
2. Against Tyrus and Zidon (26-28)
3. Against Egypt (29-32)

II. PREDICTIONS AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Section A. The Watchman and the Shepherds (33-34)

1. The Renewed Call of Ezekiel as watchman (33:1-20)
2. Ezekiel's Mouth Opened After Jerusalem's Fall (33:21-33)
3. Message Against the shepherds of Israel (34:1-19)
4. The True Shepherd and restoration Promised (34:20-26)

Section B. judgment Announced Against Mount Seir and Israel's Final Restoration Promised (35-36)

1. The Message Against Seir and Idumea (35:1-15)
2. The Message of Comfort for Israel (36:1-38)

Section C. The Future Blessings of Israel, the Nation Regathered,
Their Enemies Overthrown and the Millennial Temple (37-48)

1. The Vision of the Dry Bones and Judah and Israel Reunited
(37:1-28)
2. The Last Enemies, Gog and Magog, and Their Destruction (38-39)
3. The Millennial Temple, and Its Worship, the Division of the Land
(40-48)

Analysis and Annotations

I. PREDICTIONS BEFORE THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

A. judgment Predictions Concerning Jerusalem (1-24)

CHAPTERS 1:1-3:14

The Vision of Glory and the Call of the Prophet

1. The introduction (1:1-3)
2. The vision of glory (1:4-28)
3. Ezekiel's call and commission (2:1-8)
4. The roll eaten and the repeated commission (2:9-3:14)

Verses 1:1-3. The introductory words give us the time when Ezekiel was among the captives by the river Chebar. Four things are mentioned by Ezekiel, who is evidently the author of this book, for he uses the personal pronoun--the heavens were opened--he saw visions of God--the word of the Lord came unto him--the hand of the Lord was upon him. Ezekiel is the only prophet in the Old Testament of whom it is said that he saw the heavens opened. Four times the New Testament mentions opened heavens (Matt. 3:16; John 1:51; Rev. 4:1; 19:11). He then saw the visions of God concerning His governmental dealings with His people Israel. Then the hand of the Lord was also upon him when the word of the Lord had come unto him. Notice the order: An opened heaven, a vision, the call, and enablement by the power of God. Such is still the order for the servants of the Lord. The phrase, "The hand of the LORD was upon him," or came upon me, is found seven times in Ezekiel, in chapters 1:3, 3:14 and 22, 8:1, 23:22, 37:1, 40:1.

Verses 4-28. Then he had his great and wonderful vision, which is repeatedly mentioned in his book. We find it mentioned again in chapters

10 and 11, where it is seen departing from Jerusalem. Its return is promised in connection with the great millennial temple after the Lord's return (chapter 43). The vision is the vision of the glory of the Lord (11:28). The vision comes from the north, for a storm cloud of divine indignation from the north (Babylon) was to burst over the house of Judah. The whirlwind, the cloud, and the fire Ezekiel beheld are symbols of glory, the divine presence and judgment. (See Psa. 18:8-13; Hab. 3; Jer. 4:12-13). The vision then indicated the presence of the God of Israel and His glory, ready to deal in judgment with His apostate people. The living creatures are the same as mentioned and seen in Rev. 4:6-9. They are the cherubim, not fictitious creatures or symbols, but real beings. Their position is in connection with the throne. But upon the throne there was one who had the likeness as the appearance of a man. And this man was enshrouded in glory, with the rainbow about him. All this shows forth the glory of Him who is God' vision, glory and presence, the Son of God. It anticipates the Lord Jesus Christ, His exaltation upon the throne, government and judgment resting in His hands, who is now the Man in the glory. While the cherubim with their fourfold faces also symbolize the Lord Jesus, here in this vision they are seen in connection with judgment. It is the same in Revelation (Rev. 6; 15:7). And then the wheels and their work. In them was the spirit of these great creatures; the rims of the wheels (not rings) were full of eyes. There was an orderly movement of these wheels. The wheels are on the chariot upon which rested the throne of God. They show forth and symbolize the purposes of God in the execution of His inerrant governmental dealings on earth. God controls it all, and His Spirit directs every movement. Much that is ridiculous has been written on this, and some would-be expositors claim that Ezekiel beheld an airplane.

"Intelligence, strength, stability and swiftness in judgment, and, withal, the movement of the whole course of earthly events, depended on the throne. This living energy animated the whole. The cherubic supporters of the throne, full of eyes themselves, moved by it; the wheels of God's government moved by the same spirit, and went straight forward. All was subservient to the will and purpose of Him who sat on the throne judging right. Majesty, government and providence united to form the throne of His glory. But all the instruments of His glory were below the firmament; He whom they glorified was above" (Synopsis of the Bible).

Verses 2:1-8. We see Ezekiel prostrate upon his face. Then a voice spoke, not the voice of a cherubim; while in Revelation the cherubim speak, in Ezekiel they are silent, Jehovah addressed Ezekiel as son of man; the title which is found exactly one hundred times in this book.

Daniel only besides Ezekiel is called by this name. Our Lord called Himself by that name and used it in connection with His suffering, exaltation, glory, and coming again. Ezekiel, too, passed through much suffering, passing symbolically through sufferings which the nation at large was to undergo. He is, therefore, in a measure a type of the Messiah, who took Israel's sin and shame upon Himself.

The Word which spoke was followed by the Spirit--"and the Spirit entered into me when He spoke unto me." Thus the Word and the Spirit are always connected. Then Ezekiel received his commission. He is sent to an impudent and hard-hearted people. His message is to begin with: "Thus saith Jehovah-God." The sender is the Lord; the message is from Him. Then the sender gives also assurance and encouragement.

Verses 2:9-3:14. Compare the roll here with Zech. 5:1-4; with the one of Rev. 5, which the Lamb receives and opens, and the little roll in Rev. 10:9, 10. These rolls have the same meaning, namely, the Word itself, the message of tribulation and judgment, which is written therein.

The Word must be received and eaten, that is the spiritual lesson. Ezekiel obeyed. It was self surrender and though the message was a hard message, yet it was sweet unto him. Compare with Jer. 15:16. Ezekiel was to speak the words of the Lord unto them; and the sender predicts failure. "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee, for they will not hearken unto Me." It was to make no difference to the prophet. His commission was to speak Jehovah's words. Then cherubim and wheels are in motion. He is lifted up and Jehovah's hand is strong upon him.

CHAPTERS 3:15-7:27

The Judgment Announced, the Four Signs and Their Meaning, and the Two Messages

This section extends from chapter 3:15 to the close of the seventh chapter. The prophet is told of his great responsibility as watchman, and has to enact four signs. Two solemn messages close this section. The first message first predicts that the sword is to come upon the land and disperse them; the second message predicts the end.

1. The new charge and Ezekiel's new experience (3:15-27)
2. The sign of the tile (4:1-3) on (4:4-8)
3. The sign of the prophet's physical position (4:4-8)

4. The sign of the famine and the defiled bread (4:9-17)
5. The sign of the shaving of head and face (5:1-4)
6. The message of denunciation (5:5-17)
7. The first judgment message: I will bring a sword upon you (6:1-14)
8. The second judgment message: The end is at hand (7:1-27)

Verses 3:15-27. He had been transported by the power of God from the river Chebar to Tel-abib, where a number of captives dwelt. He sat for seven days in their presence without opening his lips. (See Job 2:13.) The silence of Ezekiel was broken by the Lord, who spoke to him and gave him a new charge, that of a watchman unto the house of Israel. His duty was to be twofold: First, to hear the word of the Lord from His own lips, and then to give the warning. It is a solemn message and charge, making known to the prophet his great responsibility.

The passage, as well as the corresponding one in chapter 33:1-20, has been often used in the defence of what is termed "falling from grace,"--that a true believer, who is saved by grace, may by sinning become unsaved again and then perish in his sins like the wicked. The words "fallen from grace" are found only once in the Bible, that is in Gal. 5:4. The context shows what they mean. If a believer goes to the law to be justified before God, if he tries by his own works, and by ordinances, to be righteous before God, he abandons the ground of grace. The dispensation in which we live is the dispensation of grace; grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:20). The message delivered by God to Ezekiel is in fullest keeping with the character of the law-covenant, though grace is also manifested in it. Righteousness has not the same meaning here as in the New Testament. We are constituted righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. It is now not the question of doing righteous deeds in order to be saved and live. We are saved by grace through faith. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned as of grace but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him, who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness" (Rom. 4:4). And he who is justified by faith has peace With God. The true believer may sin, but he does not deliberately practice and live in sin, for "he that is born of God doth not commit (practice) sin" (1 John 3:9). If he falls in sin, a gracious provision is made. We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and therefore we can confess our sins; forgiveness and cleansing follow according to the divine promise (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2).

Then he was commanded to go into the plain, where he again beheld the glory of the Lord and fell on his face. After that, he was shut up

in his house; they were to put bands upon him and bind him. He was not to go among the captives, and God made him dumb (verses 25-26). Yet this dumbness was not complete or constant. Finally it ceased altogether. That was after Jerusalem had fallen (33:21-22). The dumbness was a sign to the nation--the sign of God's displeasure and the coming judgment upon Jerusalem (24:27).

Verses 4:1-3. The word tile means "brick." They were used by the Babylonians to preserve their records, and many have been found marked with building plans, etc. The sign of the tile foretells the siege of Jerusalem and Jehovah's opposition against the city.

Verses 4-8. While in the preceding sign Jehovah's action against Jerusalem was pictured, in this new sign a portrayal is given of the punishment which should come upon the inhabitants of the city. In his own person Ezekiel had to experience the great degradation and judgment which was to fall upon all the people. The critical school has invented all kinds of theories to explain, or rather to explain away, the divine command given to the prophet. They say that probably Ezekiel suffered from some form of epilepsy or catalepsy; they also point out the physical impossibility for a man to lie continuously for 390 days on his left side. But it says nowhere that the Prophet should be in that position day and night during these allotted days. The 390 and 40 days are symbolical. They mean years, giving us a total of 430 years. This reminds us of Exodus 12:40-41, where the sojourning of the children of Israel in Egypt is given as 430 years.

But the 390 years apply more specifically to Israel, the period of unfaithfulness of the ten tribes, beginning with Jeroboam. (1 Kings 11:31). The 40 years describe the unfaithfulness of the house of Judah. The captives were reminded by the prophet's position of the shameful history of their long apostasy. But more than that. The Lord said to Ezekiel: "I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity ... so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel." The sign, therefore, pictured the actual punishment which was now to fall upon the nation.

Verses 9-17. Both the sign of the famine and the bread baked in an unclean manner predict the horrors of famine in connection with the siege of Jerusalem, and how the people in the subsequent captivity among the Gentiles should live in defilement.

Verses 5:1-4. The sharp knife is the symbol of the king of Babylon. (See Isa. 7:20.) He was God's instrument in the execution of His wrath; the people are represented by the hair. The third part of the hair

burned with fire pictures the fate of a part of the people during the siege. The pestilence and the famine were also to consume them. Only a few in number, a small remnant, were to be preserved, as indicated when Ezekiel took a few hairs and bound them in his skirt.

Verses 5:5-17. These solemn words should be carefully read. In connection with them there ought to be read Jeremiah's lamentations, for Jeremiah's outburst of sorrow shows the literal fulfillment of this message. (See Verse 10 and compare with Lamentations 4:10.)

Verses 6:1-14. The mountains of Israel are mentioned first, because they were the places where the people practiced idolatry; they were the high places so often mentioned in the historical books. (Read Lev. 26:30-33.) Hundreds of years before, Moses wrote these words; and now they were all to be fulfilled. But the Lord also promised that a remnant should be left. That remnant would acknowledge the evil they had done. "They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." The words "because I am broken with their whorish heart" means literally translated, "When I shall have broken their whorish heart which has departed from Me." No judgment which has ever come upon Israel made a complete end of the nation. A remnant always remained and returned to the Lord. (See Rom. 11:5.) During the greatest and longest judgment which has come upon that nation, their world-wide dispersion during this present age, there is also a remnant still among them. When the Lord resumes His dealings with them during the last seven years of the times of the Gentiles, with which our age closes, a remnant from among them will turn to Him and be saved. That remnant will be carried through the judgments of the great tribulation and receive the promised kingdom.

Verses 7:1-27. This chapter closes the first great message of Ezekiel. This great judgment message is written in beautiful language, which, in the authorized version, is marred by numerous incorrect renderings. The reader will find a reliable metrical translation in our larger commentary on Ezekiel.

First, the end is announced to come upon the entire land; it could no longer be averted.

There is another day coming in which the Lord will deal in fearful judgments with this earth. Now is the day of salvation in which God speaks in love through His Son, When wickedness and apostasy has reached its climax, the day of salvation will end and "the day of vengeance of our God" will begin. Then He will speak in His wrath and vex them in His

sore displeasure (Psa. 2:5). Then will they say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. 6:16-17). God's judgments for the future are as sure as were His judgments in the past. There is a set time, the day of the Lord, when He, to whom the Father has given all judgments, will tread "the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty" (Rev. 19:15).

Then follows a solemn description of the doom of Jerusalem and the reasons why such a judgment is executed.

CHAPTERS 8-11

Visions in Relation to Jerusalem

1. The vision of abomination in the temple (8)
2. The vision of the linen-clothed man with the inkhorn (9)
3. The vision of the coals of fire (10)
4. The vision concerning the leaders: The glory departs (11)

Chapter 8. This vision shows the abomination which prevailed in the temple of Jehovah.

In the visions of God, Ezekiel is brought to the door of the inner gate that looks to the north. Here was the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. Some have taken this and the following visions to be retrospective. It has been said, "It was as if he were translated back to Jerusalem, and to the time when these things were occurring." Such is the view of some critics; however, it is untenable. These visions would lose their meaning if the prophet seemed to be translated back to Jerusalem and to the time when these abominations had happened in Israel's past history. Later we find the names of persons given, whom he saw. They certainly were living persons known to the prophet Ezekiel and his contemporaries. One of them died while Ezekiel prophesied (11:13).

What was the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy? It was an idol. The word is used in Deut. 4:16, where it is translated "graven image." It is also found in 2 Chron. 33:7, 15, where it refers to the idol, which Manasseh had made and put up in the temple.

After Manasseh's idolatry came Josiah's great reformation. After his death, Judah plunged into greater wickedness under the reign of

wicked kings, and a revival of idolatry followed once more. Such a wrath-provoking idol was beheld by the prophet. This image they worshipped. "Son of man, seest thou what they do?" They must have lain prostrate before that idol. And yet the glory of the God of Israel was still there.

That there will be a similar scene enacted in a future temple, during the great tribulation, is well known to all students of prophecy. (See 2 Thess. 2 and Rev. 13.)

The prophet saw creeping things and beasts worshipped; the elders and the people were practising Egyptian idolatry of the most degrading kind. Jaazaniah, the son of Shaphan, is especially mentioned. Shaphan was the scribe, who received from the high priest, Hilkiah, the book of the law, and read it before King Josiah (2 Kings 22:8-11; Jer. 39:14). The son of this God-fearing scribe was the leader of the idolators. And these idol worshippers, each in his chamber of imagery (probably individual cells), said: "This LORD seeth us not; the LORD has forsaken the earth." They denied His omniscience and omnipresence. The apostasy in Christendom is going the same road.

The women wept for Tammuz, the Babylonian "Dumuzi," the god of spring, who dies, and revives each year. It was a vile, obscene cult, for with the worship of Tammuz were connected immoral, licentious ceremonies. Sun-worship was the crown of all these abominations. (See verses 16-18).

Chapter 9. The six men mentioned are angels, into whose hands the city is given. Angels are used in judgments past and future. (See Matt. 13:41; 16:27; 2 Thess. 1:7-8.) Angels are likewise prominently mentioned in the book of Revelation. There is a striking correspondency between this chapter and Revelation 7:1-3. Those who sigh and weep constitute the remnant which have no sympathy with the abominations. They are marked for preservation. Thus a remnant was then kept. Well may we remember that now, in the professing church, in the midst of the apostasy, there is also a faithful remnant who sigh and cry and who have the special promise of the Lord (Rev. 3:10).

The word "mark" in the Hebrew is "Tav," the last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Its literal meaning is "cross." This letter "T" was a cross in the older Hebrew script as well as in the Phoenician and Samaritan. The Egyptians also used a cross in their language, with them it was a sign of life. Ancient Jewish tradition gives the information that the blood sprinkled in Egypt on the doorpost (Exodus 12:23) was in

the form of a cross. All this is interesting. To this we may add that in Gen. 4:15, the mark set upon Cain, an entirely different word is used.

Then the command was literally executed.

Chapter 10. Once more the glory vision appears. The linen clothed man who had done the marking in the previous chapter is now executing judgment. Who is He? Evidently more than an angel. That he is a supernatural being is clear. He held the place of pre-eminence among the other angels (chapter 9:2-4). This angel is the Angel of the Lord, the same who appeared to the patriarchs, to Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, and to others. It is the Son of God in the garb of an angel. In the same form he also appeared to Daniel on the banks of the river Hiddekel. "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude" (Dan. 10:5-6). Here we have a complete description of the same person whom Ezekiel saw taking the coals of fire and scattering them over Jerusalem. Judgment upon the guilty city came from His hands.

When we turn to the book of Revelation, we find a similar scene which has not yet been enacted. A careful comparison of this scene here with Rev. 8:3-5 is suggested. This angel who presents the prayers before the throne and who casts the judgment fires on the earth is the same who received the seven-sealed book (Rev. 5:1). It is the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple; over its portals "Ichabod" (the glory is departed) was now to be written.

Chapter 11. The priests and the leaders of the nation were steeped in wickedness, defied God and the judgments His prophets had announced. They devised mischief (or iniquity) and gave wicked counsel. Their wicked counsel consisted in disobedience against Jehovah and His Word. In regard to the judgment they said, "It is not the time to build houses; this is the cauldron and we are the flesh." They knew of Jeremiah's letter which he had sent to the elders who were carried away captives. In that letter, Jeremiah, believing God's Word concerning the long duration of the captivity, gave the advice, "Build ye houses and dwell in them" (Jer. 29). They ridiculed that divinely given advice. They still thought themselves safe in Jerusalem. The phrase "this is the

cauldron" means the city of Jerusalem; and we are the "flesh" themselves. As the flesh in the cauldron is preserved from the fire by the cauldron itself, so they felt themselves secure in the doomed city. That these wicked leaders were still in the city shows that the judgment in chapter 9 was not a complete judgment. It began at the sanctuary, and the wicked worshippers Ezekiel saw in his vision were smitten first of all, while the man with the inhorn marked the entire remnant for preservation. Then the Spirit fell upon Ezekiel and he uttered Jehovah's message.

The message of judgment is followed by a message of mercy. Verses 14-21 are yet to be fulfilled in that nation. The final departure of the visible glory of the Lord concludes this chapter. It held its ascension from the Mount of Olives. From the same place, He who is the Lord of Glory and reveals the glory of the Lord, went back to the Father. And when He returns "His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives" (Zech. 14). It will be at that blessed time when Israel and Jerusalem will behold the return of the glory, which Ezekiel beheld departing from city and temple.

CHAPTERS 12-19

Signs, Messages, and Parables

1. Signs given through the prophet (12:1-20)
2. The message of speedy judgment (12:21-28)
3. The message against false prophets and prophetesses. (13)
4. The message against the elders (14)
5. The parable of the vine given to the fire (15)
6. The parable of the abandoned child and Israel's whoredom (16)
7. The parable of the riddle of the two eagles and the vine (17)
8. The message of the righteous judgments of God (18)
9. The Lamentations for the Princes of Israel (19)

With the twelfth chapter a new section of this book begins, ending with chapter 19.

Verses 12:1-20. They were a rebellious house and the prophet is told to do something, that they might consider. He was to attire himself like one who goes on a journey with sandals on his feet, a staff in his hand, a burden on his shoulder. He was told to move from place to place. The meaning of all this is explained in verses 8-16. The prince in Jerusalem is Zedekiah. His attempt to flee from Jerusalem, and his fate of having his eyes put out by the king of Babylon, his captivity and

death are here clearly predicted. The following passages must be read and studied in connection with this chapter (Jer. 39:4, 52:10-11; 2 Kings 25:1-7).

Verses 12:21-28. The false prophets had preached a false hope, "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth." God had announced another message. Had they believed what God had spoken, that judgment was imminent, they would have surely repented and turned unto the Lord. Unbelief was responsible for their condition; in this they were sustained by lying prophets. And the Lord answered these false prophets. He changed the lying message and told them "the days are at hand"--the effect of every vision. All false visions, divinations and hopes were to cease. His Word is now to be done.

Chapter 13. And now the Lord speaks through Ezekiel about the false prophets in the midst of His people. They prophesied out of their own hearts; or as it might be rendered, "Who prophesy from their own mind without having seen." Such they were and such are the false teachers of this present age (2 Peter 2:1-2). Of such our Lord warned: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Every man who prophesies out of his own heart, who utters his own mind, whose preaching and teaching is not according to the oracles of God, is a false prophet, a blind leader of the blind. Like false prophets in Israel the false teachers in Christendom are the cause of the spiritual condition of the professing people of God. Of all such it is true what the Lord said through Ezekiel: "They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, 'The Lord saith, and the Lord has not sent them.'" They are self-called and self-sent. Behind them stands the father of lies (1 Kings 22:19-23; 1 Tim. 4:1). Next we find in verses 8-16 their condemnation and punishment. But there were also false women prophets; they practised occultism.

All this is also done in the very midst of Christendom in the twentieth century. Women prophets, the most subtle instruments of Satan, are plentiful in these days. The fact has often been pointed out that the prominent leaders in the evil cults of the last days are women. There has been a strange modern-day revival of occult practices upon Christian ground. Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Christian Science belong to this class. All three started with women. Spiritualism with its mediums, fortune-tellers and necromancers is almost entirely in the hands of women, who claim to be religious leaders. The same is true of theosophy, with its Hindu philosophy, and occultism, surrounded with an air of unholy mysticism. Christian Science is closely related to these two cults. Its founder practiced for a time the calling of a medium.

Significant is the description of their evil testimony as given in verse 22.

Chapter 14. These inquiring elders, with wickedness in their hearts, give another illustration of the depth of degradation in which the people had sunk. He who searches the hearts knew what was in them. They came with pious, religious pretensions. It sounded well to inquire of the Lord and seek the prophet-priest for that purpose. Their hearts were full of evil. While their lips spoke of asking the Lord, their hearts were full of idolatry. They liked idolatry. Their hearts were in it and this stumbling-block of their iniquity they had put before their faces, which means they openly defied the Lord God of Israel by their doings. "Should I be inquired of at all by them?" To seek the Lord and inquire of Him in such a condition reveals a brazen spirit and the deepest depravity. Yet this also belongs to the conditions in which the professing people of God are when judgment overtakes them.

Verses 12-23 contain an additional judgment message. The threatened judgment cannot be averted; it is unavoidable. Famine is to come and the noisome beasts, symbolical of Gentile world powers, as Daniel beheld them in his vision (Dan. 7). The judgment message closes again with a message of mercy and comfort for the remnant.

Chapter 15. This is the first of three parables to demonstrate still further the delusion of their false hope that deliverance would come. The vine is a type of Israel (Psa. 80:8-12; Isa. 5:1-6, and Hosea 10:1). The vine is only good for one thing, which is the bearing of fruit; apart from this it is worthless. The wood cannot be used for anything whatever. It is good for nothing but burning. Nebuchadnezzar carried out this sentence (2 Kings 25:9). It reminds us also of the parable of the vine our Lord spoke, in which, speaking of the unfruitful branch, He said, "Men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). Some apply this also to Israel; it means the professing believer, who professes to be a branch in the true vine.

Chapter 16. This chapter consists of four sections:

1. The parable of the abandoned child.
2. Jerusalem's idolatries and moral degradation (verses 15-34).
3. The doom of Jerusalem and the promise of restoration (verses 35-59).
4. The covenant remembered (verses 60-63).

The parable of the abandoned child, and what the gracious Lord did for the little one is a most beautiful demonstration of what He had done

in His sovereign love and grace for Jerusalem. It must be read first with this in mind. But this sweet parable illustrates also, as few other portions in the Old Testament do, the grace which the Lord bestows upon the believer in the gospel. Thy father an Amorite and thy mother a Hittite reminds us of what is true of all men, so tersely expressed in David's confession, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did MY mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). Like the child pictured in the parable, we are lost, perishing in the field (the world). What could that perishing child do to save itself? Even so we cannot do anything to save ourselves. The Lord passing by had compassion and spoke His Word of power--Live. He came from heaven to this earth, into the field to seek and save what is lost. He found man in the vile and helpless condition so aptly pictured by the miserable child. And more than that, He died to save man. He gave His life so that we might live. The first thing He does for the believing sinner is to give him life. When the spiritual dead hear His voice they live. The washing with water, the anointing with oil (type of the Holy Spirit), the announcement "thou becamest Mine," as well as the clothing, the beautifying and the crowning, all illustrate what His marvelous grace does for the trusting, believing sinner. It is all grace from start to finish, from the impartation of life in the new birth to the crowning in glory.

Upon this beautiful background of Jehovah's love and mercy, there is written next the dark picture of Jerusalem's whoredoms, symbolical of her wicked idolatries. It started all with pride (verse 15). Jerusalem did not acknowledge the giver. Instead of worshipping Him, they established the high places and conformed to all the wicked Canaanitish practices. Verses 15-34 give the depth of Jerusalem's apostasy.

Then the Lord addresseth her whom He loved, and who had turned away from Him as a harlot. Her doom and judgment is announced which once more is followed by the promise of mercy and restoration. The restoration of Sodom and her daughters has puzzled many. It has been used by Universalists, Russellites, Restorationists, teachers of Reconciliationism and other errorists to back up their inventions of a second chance of the wicked dead, or the ultimate salvation of the entire race. The restoration promises have nothing to do with the restoration of the wicked dead. They are promises of national restoration. It is a mistake to look in the Old Testament for any doctrines concerning the future state. Three facts will show this error of making the Old Testament teach the restoration of the wicked.

1. The Old Testament is not that part of the divine revelation where teachings and doctrines about the future state are given.

This is a most important fact. The Old Testament shows man as upon the earth, on this side of death, and not beyond death. The future of Israel on the earth, their supremacy and destiny of glory amidst the nations of the earth, the judgments of God in the earth, as well as the future blessings for the nations inhabiting the earth during the coming age, are all clearly revealed in the Old Testament. The state after death, that which is beyond this life, is shrouded in mystery in the Old Testament Scriptures. That great judgment, the great white throne judgment, is nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament, nor do we read a word there of "the second death." Resurrection of the dead, no doubt, was known to individual saints of Old Testament times; the Spirit of God revealed it to their hearts, but as a doctrine, resurrection is not found in the Old Testament. In Psalm 16 is revealed the hope of resurrection of the body, and there is a prophecy of the resurrection of our Lord.

2. Should we find anything in the Old Testament concerning the future state, the state of the righteous and the unrighteous after death, such a hint or statement can only be rightly understood and interpreted by the great doctrine concerning the future state as revealed in the New Testament.

By this, of course, we do not say that the Old Testament needs correction by the revelation of the New, nor do we say that the Old is inferior to the New; all is the Word of God. However, as the Old Testament does not show man's condition after death, any passage which appears to relate to such a condition must be interpreted by the full light as given in the New Testament.

3. If such passages as Ezekiel 16:53 and Ezekiel 37:1-14, etc., teach the restitution of the wicked by resurrection for another chance, we must then find such a doctrine of the restoration most clearly and fully revealed as one of the great doctrines of the New Testament.

In vain, however, do we look in the New Testament for such a restoration--second probation doctrine. Such a doctrine is not even hinted at in the New. However, the New Testament gives the fullest revelation concerning resurrection and the future state. It tells us that there is indeed a resurrection of the body for every human being. This revelation of resurrection as contained in the New Testament leaves no room whatever for the Sodomites and all the wicked idolatrous Israelites to be raised up for another chance. Our Lord, in John 5:29, reveals a twofold resurrection, a resurrection unto life and a

resurrection unto damnation. The human race, those who have died, are therefore in resurrection divided into two classes; they must come forth either unto life or unto damnation: there is no middle class. Later the New Testament teaches a first resurrection, an out-resurrection from the dead. Only those who have believed and died in Christ will have a share in this resurrection. Both Old and New Testament saints belong to it, but none have a part in it who died in their sins. The rest of the dead, meaning of course, the wicked dead, are not raised up till after the thousand years. This is a second resurrection, and this takes place not when the Lord comes the second time, but after His millennial reign (Rev. 20). The subjects of this second resurrection appear before the great white throne and are cast into the lake of fire. Now, these teachers claim that the return of Sodom and Samaria to their former estate means their resurrection for another chance when the Lord comes. But, as these departed, wicked people are wicked still, how can they have part in the first resurrection when the Lord comes, which is the resurrection of the righteous?

They surely cannot belong to this resurrection. And there is nowhere in the New Testament a word about another special resurrection in which all the wicked are raised from the dead for another chance. After the resurrection of the righteous dead there is but one more resurrection, the resurrection of the wicked unto damnation. In the light of these facts the flimsy theory built upon misapplied texts of the Old Testament, texts which relate to national restoration and blessing, breaks down completely. And now, having seen what the statements in this chapter of Ezekiel do not mean, let us see what is their meaning. While these statements cannot mean the resurrection of individuals, they mean a national restoration. There is promised in many passages of the Old Testament a national restoration of Israel. The ten tribes are to be brought back to their former possessions. Historically they have been lost. But they are not lost to God. He knows where they are. He has kept track of them, and in His own time He will make good the promises of their restoration and will bring back the remnants of the house of Israel, now scattered still among the nations. The Jews will also be restored to their territory. Repeatedly this national restoration of the ancient people is promised under the picture of a resurrection. But to other nations there is also promised such a national restoration in the days to come, when the Lord comes and begins His Kingdom reign over the earth. Such a national revival is beyond a doubt promised for a future day to Moab, Ammon, Assyria, and Egypt. Edom and Babylon, however, are doomed as nations and no revival whatever is promised to them.

We do not know, of course, how God will accomplish these promises of restoration and national revivals, and how He will gather the remnants of these former nations from the great sea of nations. We can leave this and other difficulties with Him who will see to the fulfillment of all these things.

Chapter 17. The great eagle mentioned first is Nebuchadnezzar. (See Jer. 48:40 and 49:22). He came to Lebanon and took the highest branch of the cedar, the symbol of the house of David, which was conquered by this eagle. Nebuchadnezzar made the youngest son of Josiah king over Judah and called him Zedekiah. This action is described in verse 5. The other great eagle is Hophra, the king of Egypt. To him Zedekiah turned for help. The interpretation and application of this parable is given in verses 11-21. The following passages should be read as helpful to the understanding of these verses: 2 Chron. 36:13; Jer. 27:1-2, 37:5-7, 52:11.

Israel's hope and Israel's future come once more into view in verses 22-24. The cedar is the royal house of David. God in His sovereignty promises to take "of its young shoots a tender one and I will plant it upon a high and eminent mountain." This tender one is the Messiah, the Son of David. It is the same promise as given in the book of Isaiah. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1). "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. 53:2). The high and eminent mountain typifies Mount Zion, and the kingdom of Messiah is pictured in the closing verses of the chapter. The high tree which is brought low, the green tree which is dried up, is the symbol of Gentile world-power. The low tree which is exalted and the dry tree which is made to flourish stands for the restoration of the kingdom to Israel when the Son of David, our Lord, comes again. Then the high tree will be cut down and the now flourishing Gentile dominion will dry up; Israel the low tree will be exalted, and the long, dry and barren nation will bring its blessed fruit.

Chapter 18. In verses 1-4, we find the false accusation against God and the divine answer, and this is followed in verses 5-9 by the conditions of life, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (verse 4). But the conditions to have life and to be just cannot be fulfilled by sinful man; nor is in these verses "eternal life" in view; these are not conditions to secure "eternal life," but to escape physical death in the announced judgment. The conditions which bring death are given in verses 10-13. The son does not die for his father's sins, as they thought in their wrong reasonings (verses 14-20). All their accusations that the Lord is unjust are completely answered in the final paragraph of this

message (verses 21-32).

Chapter 19. This lamentation has two sections. The lamentations for the princes come first (1-9), and that is followed by the lamentation for the land of Judah (10-14).

The princes are Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. King Jehoahaz was carried away captive into Egypt (2 Kings 23:33); his fate is lamented in verses 1-4. King Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon and he is lamented in verses 5-9. In the lamentation for the land of Judah the vine is once more mentioned. The vine is burned, the fruit devoured and there is no scepter in Judah.

CHAPTERS 20-24

Further and Final Predictions Concerning the judgment of Jerusalem

1. Jehovah rehearses His mercies bestowed upon Israel (20)
2. The impending judgment announced (21)
3. Jerusalem's sins and whoredom (22-23)
4. The parable of the boiling pot and the last word (24)

Chapter 20. The chapter contains a divine retrospect and an arraignment of the people for their national sins. The following division will greatly assist in an analytical study of this chapter. Verses 1-9 describe the nation's sins in Egypt. Verses 10-17 give the history of the first generation which came out of Egypt. It is a wonderful condensed rehearsal of all they were and what the Lord had done for them. The record of the second generation is contained in verses 18-26. This is followed by a description of their unfaithfulness and sins in the land (verses 27-32). Judgment then is announced and a future restoration promised. Verses 40-44 are yet to be fulfilled. The fire of judgment to sweep over the south field (Judah) is announced in the final paragraph (verses 45-49).

Chapter 21. A solemn message is given to the prophet: "Behold I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked." It was to be a widespread judgment, against all flesh. Ezekiel was commanded to sigh with bitterness before their eyes and was to tell them the cause of his grief (verses 1-7). The sharpening of the sword of judgment is given in verses 8-17. It was hanging over their heads, ready to strike at any moment. The question is asked, "Should we then make mirth?" is this the

time of mirth, worldly pleasures and enjoyment? Not for the faithful in Israel. Nor is the present solemn time a time of mirth for those who know the signs of the times and what God has revealed concerning things to come.

The king of Babylon and his divination is vividly pictured in verses 18-24. The Babylonians used different kinds of enchantments, etc., to ascertain what they should do. The king stands at the cross-roads. Shall he go to Rabbath or against Jerusalem? He used arrows and put on one the name of "Rabbath" of the Ammonites; on the other "Jerusalem." Then he shook them to and fro (correct rendering--"he made his arrows bright"). In verse 22, we see the result of this divination. He has in his hands the arrow with "Jerusalem" on it.

The wicked prince and the Coming One are seen in verses 25-27. Here Christ and Antichrist are contrasted. There can be no question that Zedekiah is first of all in view as the profane wicked prince of Israel. But the prophecy looks far beyond Zedekiah. It is the coming wicked prince, the one who comes in his own name, the final Antichrist, the false messiah, or, as he is also called in Revelation, the false prophet. That verse 25 refers to the time of the end, is seen by the words, "in the time of the iniquity of the end" (correct translation). The same phrase appears in Dan. 11:35-39, "the time of the end," and the person described in that passage is the Antichrist, the wicked prince. It is the time of the future great tribulation "when the transgressors are come to the full" (Dan. 8:23). This false Christ will claim priestly and kingly honors. He is the beast out of the earth, (Rev. 13) having two horns like a lamb, but speaking as a dragon. The two horns represent the priesthood and the kingship he assumes. And this, we learn from verse 26, is the character of the wicked prince of Israel of whom Ezekiel speaks. Again, we must correct the faulty translation of the authorized version: "Remove the mitre and take off the crown"; the word "diadem" is mitre, the head-dress of the high-priest (Exodus 28:4). He wears the mitre of the priest and the crown of the king. He is Satan's final counterfeit (like the pope) of the Priest-King. In verse 27, the overturning times are mentioned. Thrice it is stated, "I will overturn." Even so will it be at the time of the end until He comes whose right it is.

Verses 28-32 give the announcement of judgment upon the Ammonites.

Chapters 22-23. Before the sharpened sword of justice and retribution does its dreadful work, the Lord uncovers the guilt and vileness of the city and lays bare the corruption of her prophets, priests, and princes, as well as of the people. The violence and abomination of Jerusalem are revealed in verses 1-16; the smelting

furnace in verses 17-23 is the symbol of Jehovah's fiery indignation against Jerusalem and its inhabitants. The corruption of the prophets, priests, and princes is fully uncovered in the closing section of chapter 22 (verses 23-31).

In chapter 23 Samaria and Jerusalem are called two sisters, Aholah and Aholibah, in their ungodly relation with Assyria and Chaldea. Aholah means "her tent." Aholibah, "my tent is in her." The latter denotes the fact that the true sanctuary was in Judah. The sins and vileness of both are portrayed throughout this long chapter, as well as the deserved punishment.

Chapter 24. The exact date is given by the prophet. It was the tenth day of the tenth month in the ninth year. What happened also on that date we find recorded in 2 Kings 25:1: "And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came, he and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about." How did Ezekiel know about all this? It was the Lord who gave him this information and led him to record the date. This is the statement of the second verse: "Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this selfsame day, the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day." What does higher criticism have to say to this? We quote a recent commentator: "These verses (2) force on us in the clearest fashion the dilemma--either Ezekiel was a deliberate deceiver or he was possessed of some kind of a second sight!" What about divine revelation? This the "learned" men refuse to think even possible. The boiling pot announced is the symbol of Jerusalem.

Verses 15-18 announce the death of Ezekiel's wife, and he is commanded not to mourn or weep; all the customary signs of grief are forbidden him. While he faithfully delivered the message in the morning, even his wife was taken from his side. Death had dissolved the marriage union and taken from the prophet the beloved wife. Even so the relationship between Jehovah and Jerusalem was now completely to be severed. The question of the people and the answer is found in verses 19-27. Read verses 26-27 and compare with chapter 33:21, 22.

CHAPTERS 25-32

Predictions of Judgments Against the Nations

1. Prophecies concerning Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines (25)

2. Concerning Tyrus (26)
3. The glory of Tyrus and Her Fall (27)
4. The prince of Tyrus (28)
5. Concerning Egypt (29-30)
6. Pharaoh's greatness and his overthrow (31)
7. Lamentations and the great funeral dirge (32)

Chapter 25. The eight chapters as analyzed above are on prophecies concerning nations which were in touch with Israel. These predictions concern seven nations, and these are divided into four and three. The first four were the immediate neighbors of Israel. The first message concerns the Ammonites (verses 1-7). Both Ammon and Moab had a racial connection with Israel and were the incestuous offspring of Lot (Gen. 19:37-38). They were in constant conflict with Israel. Their evil character is revealed in this message. Moab is mentioned next (verses 8-11). We give several passages which may be consulted about Moab and the character of the people (Jer. 48:29; Isa. 16:6). There is promised for both Ammon and Moab a national restoration in the latter days, that is, when the Lord comes (Jer. 48:47, 49:6). Let us remember that these nations were proud in the extreme. And these judgments upon proud, self-exalting, God-forgetting nations, are not confined to the past. They will be repeated in the future when He will judge the nations.

Verses 12-14 concern Edom. The descendants of Esau, Edom, were closer to Israel than Ammon and Moab. Edom's deeds were more prominently against the people of God, more wicked and defiant, than the others. Israel was especially commanded not to abhor an Edomite (Deut. 23:7). Amos shows the sin of Edom (Amos 1:11). So does Obadiah (verses 3-4). The cruel Herods, the types of the man of sin, were Edomites. The judgment upon Edom is to be executed by Israel. This is to take place in a future day. (See Obadiah, verses 17-21 and Amos 9:11-12.) The final paragraph is concerning the Philistines (verses 15-17). The Philistines dwelt on a narrow strip on the seashore and were the long continued enemies of the people Israel. Jeremiah speaks of them (chapter 47). See also Amos 1:6-9, Joel 3:4; Isa. 14:29-32. The vengeance of the Lord fell upon the coast of Palestina, the Philistines, and they experienced the fury of the Lord. He dealt with them who had corrupted His people. And so God will deal in due time with all His enemies.

Chapter 26. A lengthy prophecy concerning Tyrus is found in this and in the chapters which follow. These great predictions have found a startling fulfilment. History confirms all that Ezekiel spoke should come to pass. In verses 1-14 we have the overthrow of the powerful city predicted.

The city of Tyrus (which means rock) was partly built upon an island off the mainland in the Mediterranean Sea. It was an ancient Phoenician city and is mentioned in Scripture for the first time in Joshua 19:29, where it is called "the strong city." It had a wonderful commerce, a description of which in its variety, we find in the twenty-seventh chapter. It was inhabited by seafaring men, and the prophet Isaiah describes this wealthy and influential city as "the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth" (Isa. 23:8). We read in the next chapter how Syria, Persia, Egypt, Spain, Greece and every quarter of the ancient world laid their choicest and most precious things at the feet of Tyre, who sat enthroned on ivory, covered with blue and purple, from the isles of Elishah. Her beauty was perfect (Ezek. 27:11). During the reign of David and Solomon, Tyre came into great prominence, playing an important role in the commercial, political and religious history of Israel. Hiram, King of Tyrus, sent cedar trees to Jerusalem, as well as workmen, who built David a house (2 Sam. 5:11). How Tyrus aided in the construction of the temple and the palace under Solomon's reign, may be learned by consulting the following passages: 1 Kings 5:1-12; 7:13-14; 1 Chron. 14:1, 2 Chron. 2:3, 11. When the ships of Solomon sailed away to Ophir, "Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon, and they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to King Solomon" (1 Kings 9:27-28). She sinned against Jerusalem and the people of God. Joel and Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah mention her and her well-deserved judgment (Joel 3:4-6; Amos 1:9-10; Isa. 23; Jer. 47:4).

In the third verse of our chapter, we read the divine announcement of Tyre's fate: "Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock." It was to become a place for the spreading of nets and a spoil to the nations. This great judgment was not all at once carried out. Nebuchadnezzar came first against her as predicted in verses 7-11. He besieged Tyre on the mainland and after thirteen years took the city; while that part of Tyrus which was built upon the island in the sea, protected by the fleet of Tyrus, escaped. Then came for her seventy years when she was forgotten, as predicted by Isaiah (23:15). After these years had passed Tyrus saw a startling revival. The island city became more powerful and wicked than before; "she committed fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth" (Isa. 23:17). The continental Tyrus, however, remained in ruins.

Centuries passed and it seemed as if Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Tyre's complete overthrow would remain unfulfilled. It was about 240 years after when the literal fulfillment of this prophecy was accomplished. Alexander the Great came against the city built on the island. After seven months the city was taken by means of a mole, by which the forces of Alexander could enter the city. In constructing this mole, Alexander made use of the ruins of the old city. The stones, timber and the very dust of the destroyed city was laid into the sea to erect the causeway which accomplished the utter ruin of the wealthy city. And thus Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled. "And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water." The complete end of Tyrus had come. "And thou shalt be no more, though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again" (verse 21). So completely was the work done by Alexander, depositing the debris of the ruins of Tyrus on the mainland into the sea, that its exact site will remain undeterminable. And Alexander the Great fulfilled still another prophecy. Before he came on his mission, directed by God, to make an end of the proud and wicked city, Zechariah, the great post-exilic prophet, had once more announced the fate of Tyrus. "And Tyrus," said the Lord through Zechariah, "did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the ruin of the streets." This was after Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the Tyrus on the mainland and she became the great island city. "Thus," said Zechariah, "behold, the Lord will cast her out, and He will smite her power in the sea, and she shall be devoured with fire" (Zech. 9:3-4). Alexander did this: he laid proud Tyrus in ashes. What an evidence that all these words are divine!

The effect of the fall of Tyrus and a lamentation over that fall are revealed in verses 15-21. There is a description of the descent of Tyrus into the pit (verses 19-20). The last sentence of verse 20, "And I shall set glory in the land of the living," means the coming glory of the earthly Zion, the glory in store for Israel.

Chapter 27. Verses 1-25 give an interesting description of the world-wide commerce and glory of this proud world city. "Sic transit gloria mundi," thus passeth the glory of the world! Of the proud and wicked mistress of the sea nothing but ruins remain and her very site is no longer known. What her past glory was is made known by the prophet, yet Ezekiel never had been to that city, nor did he have any knowledge of her grandeur, her great wealth and far reaching commerce. God revealed all unto him.

The description of her great commerce reminds us of that coming world-system as described in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation. Babylon the Great will be both an ecclesiastical and commercial world center. Her commerce is just like the commerce of Tyrus (Rev. 18:12-13). The fall of Tyrus is fully given in verses 26-30.

The description of Tyrus as a ship as given in the first part of this chapter is here maintained. Tyrus is to be shipwrecked. The east wind is Nebuchadnezzar, who came against the proud city to accomplish part of her ruin; and Alexander the Great, as we saw in our previous study, completed the work. A comparison with Revelation 18 will bring out the striking correspondency. When finally Babylon the Great falls, that coming religious-commercial world-system, with Rome as a center, her fall and desolation, will surely be greater than the fall of Tyrus. For this all is rapidly preparing.

Chapter 28. The prince of Tyrus, or, as he is also called, the king, was, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, Ithobalus, known in the Phoenician annals as Ithobaal II. He was the consummation of the pride and wealth of Tyrus; the terrible pride of the city headed up in him. His heart was so lifted up that he claimed to be a god and that he occupied the very seat of God. He boasted of greater wisdom than the wisdom of Daniel. He is a type of the final Antichrist, the man of sin. Behind the wicked prince and king, there is seen another power, Satan.

Satan was the power behind the throne of the Tyrian king, as Satan is still the god of this age, who controls the kingdoms of the world. Inasmuch, then, as Tyrus is a type of the commercial glory of the world, its wealth and pride, foreshadowing the final great world-city or world-system, Babylon, the ruler of Tyrus, spoken of as prince, foreshadows the Antichrist; while as king, Satan himself stands behind him as the domineering power. The descriptions given of Satan as an unfallen being show that he was originally a marvelous being, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. From Jude's Epistle, we learn that even Michael still recognized in him the grandeur of his unfallen past, and did not bring a railing accusation against him (Jude verses 8-10). He was in Eden, the garden of God, and every precious stone was his covering. It is a description of Satan's original place and of his great beauty. Furthermore, he was the anointed cherub that covereth; the Lord had set him to be this. As the anointed, divinely chosen cherub he held an exalted position in connection with the government of the throne of God. Everything shows that this majestic creature possessed a place of great dignity, being "upon the holy mountain of God," walking up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, he was ever present and moving

about in the fiery glory of a holy and righteous God. "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created till unrighteousness was found in thee."

In verses 20-26 the judgment upon Zidon, some twenty miles north of Tyrus, is predicted. For some years Zidon was even more prominent than Tyrus. She was burnt after a revolt against Artaxerxes Ochus in 351 B.C., but later rebuilt.

Chapters 29-30. First Egypt's desolation is announced (verses 1-12). The king of Egypt addressed in this prophecy was Pharaoh-Hophra, called in Greek, Apries. He was the grandson of Pharaoh-Necho, who defeated King Josiah at Meggido (2 Chron. 35:20-27). King Zedekiah of Judah expected help and relief from Pharaoh-Hophra, when Jerusalem was besieged. The Egyptian army under Hophra advanced through Phoenicia and forced the Chaldeans to raise the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 37:5-7). But the relief was only temporary, for the Egyptian army had to retire. The prophet Jeremiah announced also the doom of Hophra, associating it with Zedekiah's doom: "Thus saith the LORD, Behold I will give Pharaoh-Hophra, King of Egypt, into the hands of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah, King of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life" (Jer. 44:30).

But have these predictions been fulfilled? Did Egypt pass through a period of forty years' desolation and did a restoration take place after the forty years? Critics claim that these predictions were never literally fulfilled and that Nebuchadnezzar did not invade Egypt during the reign of Hophra. They point to the historical evidence that Amasis followed Hophra as King of Egypt, and under his reign Egypt was in a very flourishing condition. The historian, Herodotus, gives this information, and it is fully confirmed by Egyptian records on monuments. But did the prophet Ezekiel predict that Egypt should be invaded by Nebuchadnezzar during the reign of Pharaoh-Hophra? His predictions of disaster for Israel by trusting in Egypt had been used by the Assyrian officer in addressing Hezekiah: "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, upon Egypt, on which, if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is Pharaoh, King of Egypt, unto all that trust on him" (2 Kings 18:21). And so it was. Egypt gave no help to Israel and only wounded them grievously, as a staff which breaks under the weight of him who leaneth upon it breaks and pierces the hand. Whenever God's people turn to Egypt (the type of the world) for help, and form ungodly alliances, they do so to their own hurt and shame.

Verses 13-16 predict a future restoration of Egypt. Isaiah also shows its future history, both in judgment and in blessing (chapter 19). Yet the prediction of Ezekiel that Egypt after the forty years should be restored and be the basest of all kingdoms and shall have no more rule, but be in a diminished condition, excludes the application of this prophecy to the coming millennium. Egypt had such a period of forty years' devastation, though the exact history of it may not be known to us. Prophecy is not learned by historical events, but history is revealed in prophecy. We believe prophecies, not because history has measured up to them, but we believe them because they are the inerrant Word of God. After Egypt's sorrowful forty years' experience and dispersion, this proud country went into a steady decline, and the Word of God was literally fulfilled when it became the basest of kingdoms, so that Israel put confidence no longer in Egypt. After Nebuchadnezzar's raid, Egypt declined and sank lower still under the Persians and the Ptolemies, until she became the granary of Rome. And this degradation has continued throughout the centuries of this age, so that Egypt is literally the basest of the kingdoms. That she will play her part in the future at the close of our age we learn from Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 11:36-45). Egypt will rise into prominence ere long in connection with the present-day world conflict.

Then follows another prediction, the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon (verses 12-21). This also was literally fulfilled. In chapter 30 we find first a prophecy as to the desolation of Egypt and her allies (verses 1-13).

The prophet's first utterance is concerning the day, "Howl ye! Alas for the day! For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the Gentiles." What day is this? Other prophets mention the day of Jehovah as a day of judgment and wrath when the Lord will deal in His righteousness with the nations of the earth (Isa. 2, 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1, etc). This day in its final meaning is the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ will be visibly revealed from heaven. It is mentioned in the New Testament in 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2 (where "day of Christ" should be rendered "day of the Lord") and 2 Peter 3:10. This day will bring "man's day" to a close and usher in a new age, when righteousness shall reign as grace reigns now. This day of coming judgment of all nations is seen also here in a prophetic perspective. All previous judgments of nations as announced by God's prophet's, nations which sinned against Israel the chosen people, foreshadow the one great day, when the times of the Gentiles end in the revealed manner (Dan. 2:34, 7:10-14). What came upon Egypt in the past

through divine judgment will happen to the Gentile nations in the future at the close of our age, "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:7-8). Ever since the times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar the divinely appointed head (Jer. 27:4-8), this day of the Lord has been drawing near, till now, with the stupendous present-day events, we can see this day rapidly approaching.

Two weeks after the lamentations over Pharaoh, the prophet uttered this solemn and most impressive elegy over the multitude of Egypt and the heathen nations who have gone into sheol. It has been called a weird Dantesque funeral march over the whole heathen world; but it is more than that. We look here into sheol and see the nations gathered there, stripped of their glory, in deepest abasement and shame. Their bodies are in the pit, the grave, and their souls in sheol, the unseen regions. God's patience was exhausted with them, the measure of their wickedness became full; then judgments swept them off the earth and they passed away and descended into sheol. And what irony there is connected with it! "Whom does thou surpass in beauty? Go down and be thou laid with the uncircumcised." And as the king came there with his multitudes, whom did they find there? Asshur, that is Assyria, is mentioned first: "Asshur is there and all her company." She was a cruel, pitiless, destructive power, and now she, who once caused "terror in the land of the living," is helpless, with all her power gone in the unseen world. Elam, Meshech, Tubal, Edom, the princes of the North, and the Zidonians are named as being in existence there. Once great powers, but now cut off, they lie with the uncircumcised in weakness and disgrace. While in chapter 31:16 the dead and gone nations were comforted over Pharaoh who descended into sheol; in this passage Pharaoh, who sees these nations, now is himself comforted as he discovers his former enemies there.

A similar statement about sheol as a place of departed nations, who are nevertheless conscious, is found in the book of Isaiah. There the king of Babylon is seen in his descent into sheol. "Sheol from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, all the chieftains of the earth, it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us? Thy pomps are brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms over thee?" (Is. 14:9-11). Solemn words these are behind which stands the undeniable truth of a conscious and eternal existence of the human race. But only the New Testament Scriptures give the full light upon the future state.

The destruction of the principal cities of Egypt is announced in verses 13-19. All has been literally fulfilled. Noph is Memphis, the seat of the worship of Ptah and Apis. The city "No" is Thebes, the ancient capital of Egypt, called by the Greeks "Diospolis," the city of Jupiter. Her ruins bear witness of the past, indescribable splendor. The great temple of Carnac stood there. The other places mentioned are Sin, which is Pelusium, now completely buried in sand. Aven is Heliopolis, the center once of sun-worship; Pi-beseth is Bubastis, where the sacred cats were mummified, likewise a desolation now. Tehaphnehes or Daphnis also passed through judgment. What a remarkable fulfillment of what the Lord had announced through His prophet! May we here be reminded in our solemn times that the same omniscient Lord, who knows the end from the beginning, has spoken concerning this age, now closing in its predicted apostasy. Nations today steeped in bloodshed; nations filled with covetousness and hatred; an apostate professing Christendom and the indifferent masses have written over against them the judgment-wrath of the coming king. And He who fulfilled the words spoken through Ezekiel will also fulfill every other prediction uttered by His holy prophets and apostles.

The chapter closes with a prophetic description of the work of King Nebuchadnezzar, whom God used to execute His righteous judgments.

Chapter 31. Pharaoh's greatness is described in the first part of the chapter (verses 1-9). He is compared to the Assyrian, once so powerful and proud. The fall and desolation of the proud monarch under the picture of a tree follows in verses 10-14. The overthrow of Egypt and the resulting consternation among the nations is predicted in the last section of this chapter (verses 15-18).

Chapter 32. The lamentation over Pharaoh is contained in verses 1-10, followed by the final announcement of the sword of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, in verses 11-16. The most interesting part in this last chapter of these great predictions of national judgments is the funeral dirge and the unveiling of the unseen world (verses 17-32).

II. PREDICTIONS AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (33-48)

CHAPTERS 33-34

A. The Watchman, the False Shepherds, and the True Shepherd

1. The renewed call of Ezekiel as watchman (33:1-20)
2. Ezekiel's mouth opened after Jerusalem's fall is announced (33:21-33)
3. Message against the shepherds of Israel (34:1-19)
4. The True Shepherd and restoration promised (34:20-26)

Chapter 33:1-20. The commission of Ezekiel as watchman corresponds to the same call in chapter 3:16-21. In verses 10-20 the prophet announces certain principles of divine justice.

The exiles knew that the just wrath of God rested upon them as a nation and that their sins were unforgiven. Therefore they asked, "If our transgressions and sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" They also accused the Lord of inconsistency by saying, "the way of the Lord is not equal" (verse 20; see also 18:25, 29). The answer Jehovah sends them makes known the principles on which He will deal with them individually as a just God. "O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways." Judgment rested upon them as a nation, but the individual still could turn to the Lord in repentance. What a wonderful declaration it is which is recorded in verse 11! "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" What compassion and mercy! As it was a day of judgment which had come upon them, true repentance was the needed thing. A past righteousness could not shield them from the judgment if sin had been committed. "As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness." The wicked confessing and forsaking his sin would find mercy and forgiveness, while those who were impenitent would surely die and not live. "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him; he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live." And this gracious promise was given in anticipation of the work of the cross, the redemption by the blood of Christ, by which God's righteousness is declared in passing thus over sins of Old Testament believers who turned to God (Rom. 3:25). The principles of divine justice are summed up in verses 18 and 19: "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby." Needless to say, all this must be viewed as under the law-covenant. But their complaint that the way of the Lord is not equal was wrong, it was their way which was not equal. They were to be judged each according to what he had done.

Verses 33:21-33. In chapter 24:27, the promise had been given to Ezekiel that when the one who escaped from Jerusalem when it fell, arrived, the prophet should no longer be dumb. This dumbness evidently does not mean that he was continually silent, without uttering a word, for he prophesied what is written in chapters 25-32. He was to be dumb concerning Israel; the intervening chapters, before the messenger came, concern other nations. And now that promised messenger arrived and his mouth was opened again to prophesy about Israel. The first message is one of rebuke, describing their condition.

Verses 34:1-19. The shepherds of Israel were the kings and princes and all who had authority over them. The prophet Jeremiah had received a similar message (Jer. 23:1-2). These shepherds of Israel were responsible for the deplorable condition of the flock. Utterly selfish, they cared not for the sheep of His pasture; they feared not God nor did they have a heart for God's people. The flock was scattered and spoiled.

Such was the sad condition of the people Israel. And when the Lord Jesus appeared in their midst to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He found them as sheep without a shepherd, and He had compassion upon them (Mark 6:34). But they rejected Him and the Shepherd was smitten. Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts. Smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered, and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones" (Zech. 13:7). The false shepherds, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were a curse to the people, and the leaders were against the Shepherd. They delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles. And now for nearly 2,000 years the sheep have been scattered and peeled, wandering among the nations of the earth (Luke 21:24). What is their hope and coming blessing we learn from this great prophecy.

(What is said in this chapter of the false shepherds who ill-treated the flock of God, His ancient people, may also be applied to the false shepherds, the hirelings in the professing church. See Acts 20:28-35 and 1 Peter 5:2-3.)

In verses 7-10, judgment is pronounced upon these false shepherds, and after that the Lord announces the deliverance of His flock (verses 11-19).

"Behold, I myself, even I, will search for My sheep and will seek them out." Jehovah arises in behalf of His scattered sheep. He

will Himself exercise the office of a true shepherd, seeking out His flock. The cloudy and dark day (the times of the Gentiles) is gone and another morning breaks, the morning for which His people have waited so long. What He will do at this time for His scattered sheep is now fully proclaimed. "I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they lie down in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord." And all this has not yet come to pass. Some apply these words to the restoration of a remnant from the Babylonian captivity and see no future fulfillment of these promises. It is evident that the returning remnant did not possess these blessings. Others make a spiritual application and claim that it means the Church and the blessing which Gentiles will receive as the sheep of Christ. This is the common path which most commentators follow. It needs no lengthy refutation, for neither Ezekiel, nor the other prophets know anything of the Church and the "other sheep," Gentiles saved by grace and with believing Jews constituting the one flock (John 10:16; Ephesians 3:1-6). This is unrevealed in the Old Testament. These gracious words of promise have not yet been fulfilled, nor will they be fulfilled as long as the Church, the body of Christ, is being gathered out from all nations. All must wait till God's purpose in this age is accomplished. When the Church is complete as to its elect number, when the Lord has come for His saints and the true Church has passed from earth into glory, then will the Lord turn in mercy to His people Israel and these promises given by Ezekiel will be fulfilled.

Verses 20-26. Some have applied this to Zerubbabel, the head of Judah at the return from, the Babylonish captivity; this is done by those who deny a future restoration of Israel. Others take these words in a strictly literal sense and teach that David the King will become the head of the nation once more, and raised, from the dead, will be the one shepherd over His people. It is not David, but He who is according to the flesh the Son of David and David's Lord as well. The one Shepherd can only be the Messiah. Numerous passages show that David's name is used in a typical sense. Jeremiah announced, "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jer. 30:9). Here David stands typically for Christ, the Messiah of Israel, for He is raised up unto them when Jacob's trouble is ended (verses 1-7). Of Him Jeremiah speaks more

fully in chapter 23:5-6: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." The two, Judah and Israel, will be reunited by the one Shepherd. The Messiah of Israel is also mentioned by Hosea as David: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God and David their King, and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5). Isaiah speaks of the sure mercies of David, and adds, "Behold I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader (prince) and commander to the people." It is therefore not David, raised from the dead, but the Prince of Peace, who was here once to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel and who comes again to save the remnant of His people Israel and to receive the Throne of David (Isa. 9:6-7).

When the Lord is doing all that is promised here and the remnant has accepted the long rejected Messiah-King, a covenant of peace and blessing will follow. "And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. Peace will come to the land and to the whole earth with His coming. The evil beasts, the Gentile world powers (Dan. 7) will no longer devastate the land. All will be peace and safety, so that they can sleep peacefully in the woods. "There shall be showers of blessing" (verse 26). How often a hymn is sung based upon this promise:

There shall be showers of blessing,
This is the promise of love.

But how few who sing it know that the promise belongs first of all to Israel. When the Lord comes, the showers of blessing will be poured forth upon His people and upon all nations. It will be "the times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19).

Verses 27 and 28 give a brief description of the millennial kingdom. Groaning creation will then be delivered and the wild beasts will have their natures changed (compare verse 28 with Isa. 11:6-9 and Rom. 8:19-22). There is no need to speculate on the meaning of "the plant of renown," which will be raised up. It is none other than He, who, as to His humiliation, is described as "a tender plant" and "as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa. 53:2). But now He appears in all His glory, and becomes the plant of renown. Their shame and

suffering will then be over. He will be their God and they will be His people.

CHAPTERS 35-36

Judgment Announced and Israel's Final Restoration Promised

1. The message against Mount Seir and Idumea (35)
2. The message of comfort to Israel (36)

Chapter 35. This is another judgment message, which is closely related to the coming restoration of Israel. When the Lord is merciful to His people and bestows upon them the promised blessings, He will also deal with their enemies in judgment. Edom was the most bitter enemy of Israel, their blood-relation. The judgment threatened here was executed upon Edom; but it has a prophetic meaning of the judgment which is in store for the enemies of God's people when the times of the Gentiles end and God arises in behalf of His suffering and persecuted people.

Then, in verses 14-15, we hear of the time of rejoicing which will come for His people when their enemies are judged (Deut. 32:43).

Chapter 36. With this chapter the great prophetic utterances of Ezekiel begin concerning the future restoration and blessing of Israel. From here on to the end of the book, all is still unfulfilled, nor can it be fulfilled until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again and is enthroned as King. The first seven verses announce once more the future judgment of Israel's enemies. Then comes the promised return to the land (verses 8-15). The mountains of Israel, barren so long, shall be inhabited again. Israel's past sins and chastisement are reviewed in verses 16-20, and then comes that great message of restoration and blessing through grace in that day when their once rejected King returns and they bow before Him. The characteristic words in verses 23-28 are the words "I will do." It is the word of sovereign grace. Eighteen times Jehovah says what He will do. They are the "I wills" of Israel's hope and coming glory.

He will gather them from among the nations and all countries and bring them back to their own land. Only a superficial expositor can speak of a fulfillment when they returned from Babylon. But even if this were so, though it is not, the verses which follow have never been fulfilled in the past. The cleansing of the nation is next

promised: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean." It refers us to the water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer, which was sprinkled with a hyssop on the unclean, typifying the precious blood of Christ in its cleansing power (Heb. 9:13-14, 10:22). Thus, when the people of Israel believe on Him and look upon Him whom they pierced (Zech. 12:10), they will be cleansed. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1). Then follows the promise of the new birth of Israel. "A new heart will I also give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." The stony heart is to be taken away and they will receive a heart of flesh. Our Lord had this passage in mind when He talked with Nicodemus about the new birth. Nicodemus, the teacher in Israel, was ignorant of the fact that this new birth for Israel is necessary in order to be in that coming kingdom and to receive its blessings. Therefore the Lord said to him, "If I have told you earthly things (about Israel and the new birth as the way into the kingdom) and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (the heavenly blessings which follow His sacrificial death).

CHAPTERS 37-48

The Future Blessings of Israel, the Nation Regathered,
Their Enemies Overthrown,
the Millennial Temple, and the Division of the Land

1. The vision of the dry bones and Judah and Israel reunited (37)
2. Gog and Magog and their destruction (38-39)
3. The millennial temple, its worship, and the division of the land (40-48)

Chapter 37. The future restoration of Israel, both nationally and spiritually, is now shown to the prophet in a vision. What these dry bones represent and what their revival mean, is explained by the Lord Himself. It may be used in application in different ways, to illustrate certain truths, but the true and only interpretation is the one which is given by the Lord in verses 11-14. But there is an erroneous interpretation of a serious nature which is widely taught and believed among many Christians. Because "graves" are mentioned, beside the dry bones and their resurrection, it is being taught that the vision means physical resurrection. Systems, like Millennial Dawnism, alias International Bible Student Association and others, which teach the so-called larger hope, a second chance for the

impenitent dead, the restitution of the lost, teach that all the Israelites who have died in their sins will be brought out of their graves and then be saved. They use this vision to confirm this invention. An advocate of this theory declared that all the Christ-hating Pharisees and Sadducees who lived when our Lord was on earth would be raised up when He comes and then believe on Him. Matthew 23:39 was used by him as an argument. These restitution teachers also teach that inasmuch as Israel will have a second chance when they are raised from the dead, the Gentile dead will share also in the same. It needs no argument to refute this. The Word of God teaches a twofold resurrection: A first resurrection and a second resurrection, a resurrection of the just and a resurrection of the unjust (John 5:28-29). According to the above theory, there would have to be a third resurrection, a resurrection for a second chance and ultimate salvation of those who died in their sins. Of such a resurrection the Bible knows nothing.

In this vision of the dry bones, physical resurrection is used as a type of the national restoration of Israel. It is used in the same way in Daniel 12:2. In that passage the sleep in the dust of the earth is symbolical of their national condition. And when their national sleep ends there will be an awakening. When we read here in Ezekiel of graves, it must not be taken to mean literal graves; the graves are symbolical of the nation as being buried among the Gentiles. If these dry bones meant the physical dead of the nation, how could it be explained that they speak and say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost?" The same figure of speech is used in the New Testament. Of the prodigal it is said, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again" (Luke 15:24). Yet he was not physically dead, nor was he made alive physically. Therefore, this vision has nothing whatever to do with a physical resurrection. The late Dr. Bullinger, whose erroneous suggestions have led astray some, also taught that the vision of the dry bones includes resurrection as well as restoration.

Equally bad is that spiritualizing method which takes a vision like this, as well as the hundreds of promises of a coming restoration, and applies it all to the Church, ignoring totally the claims of Israel and their promised future of glory. This is the general trend of commentators.

Verses 15-28 predict the reunion of Judah and Israel with one king over them. That King is our Lord. Then the angelic message given to the Virgin when the coming incarnation was announced will be

fulfilled: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His Father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His Kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

Chapters 38-39. There will be at that time of restoration a great and final invasion of the land of Israel. Gog and Magog will invade the land "that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people." The invaders come "against the mountains of Israel which have always been waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them." In verse 11, the evil purpose of the invader is made known. From all this we learn that the invasion takes place at the time when the Lord has brought back His people and resumed His relationship with the remnant of Israel.

The invasion will happen some time after the beastly empire with its beasthead, the revived Roman empire, in its final ten kingdom form and the clay, with the little horn as leader (Dan. 7; Rev. 13:1-10) and the false prophet, the personal Antichrist (Rev. 13:11, etc.) have been dealt with in judgment (Rev. 19:19-20). The stone out of heaven has then fallen upon the feet of the great dream image of Nebuchadnezzar; and as far as the western confederated world power is concerned, it is now ended. But other nations gather now for an assault. It is a northern confederacy which sweeps southward to invade the land, as Antiochus Epiphanes did in the past, as well as the Assyrian in the days of Isaiah. These final invading hosts, under the leadership of a powerful king, come like a storm, and like a cloud to cover the land.

But who are they?

The leader is the prince of Rosh (not as the authorized version has it "the chief prince") of Meshech and Tubal. This prince is the head of the confederacy and with him allied are Persia, Cush, Phut, Gomer and Togormah. They come out of the north, or, as it is in Hebrew, "out of the uttermost north" (verse 15). Inasmuch as the Prince of Rosh is addressed in verse 3 as Gog, we take it that Gog is the name given to this prince and leader of these nations. His dwelling place is in the land of Magog. We know from Genesis 10:2, that Magog was the second son of Japheth. Gomer, Tubal and Meshech were also sons of Japheth; Togormah was a grandson of Japheth, being the third son of Gomer. Magog's land was located in what is called today the Caucasus and the adjoining steppes. And the three, Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal were called by the ancients Scythians. They roamed as nomads in the country around and north of the Black and the Caspian Seas, and were known as the wildest barbarians. We learn from

this that the invading forces, which fall into Israel's land in the future, when Israel has been regathered, come from a territory north of Palestine which today is in the hands of Russia. And here we call attention to the prince, this northern leader, or king, who is the head of all these nations. He is the prince of Rosh. Careful research has established the fact that the progenitor of Rosh was Tiraz (Gen. 10:2), and that Rosh is Russia. All students of prophecy are agreed that this is the correct meaning of Rosh. The prince of Rosh, means, therefore, the prince or king of the Russian empire. But he also is in control of Meshech and Tubal, which are reproduced in the modern Moscow and Tobolsk. Russia, we may well conclude from this, will furnish the man who will lead this confederacy of nations. We write this at a time when Russia is passing through horrors upon horrors. A revolution changed the autocratic government into a democracy, and that gave way to anarchy, produced by satanic powers. From what is written in this chapter, we learn that Russia will ultimately return to the old regime, and will once more become a monarchy to fulfill her final destiny as made known in this sublime prophecy. Well known it is that Russia has been in the past the most pronounced and bitterest enemy of the Jewish people. What she passes through today is but a fulfillment of what the Lord has spoken: "I will curse them that curse thee." Today, the Jews in Russia may have bright hopes of getting their rights and complete emancipation at last. For a time this may come to pass, but ultimately Russia will turn against them; and, as Pharaoh did, when Israel had left his domain, so this coming king of the north, the prince of Rosh, when Israel is back in the land, will turn against them.

With him come the other nations. Persia, which is even now in part occupied by Russia, will finally be a vassal to this prince of Rosh. Ethiopia and Phut are also in this confederacy. There also is Gomer and all its bands. Gomer, says Delitzsch, "is most probably the tribe of the Cimmerians, who dwell, according to Herodotus, on the Maeotis, in the Taurian Chersonesus, and from whom are descended the Curmi or Cymry in Wales and Britain, whose relation to the Germanic Cimbri is still in obscurity." Valuable information is given in the Talmud; Gomer is there stated to be the Germani, the Germans. That the descendants of the Gomer moved northward and established themselves in parts of Germany seems to be an established fact. All this is of much interest. Germany did not belong to the Roman empire, at least the greater part of Germany was never conquered by Rome. She will therefore not participate in the Western confederacy. Will she then become united to Russia and march under the prince of Rosh into the land of Israel? We cannot be sure about all these things. This,

however, we know, that a powerful confederacy of nations, under the leadership of the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, will come up against Immanuel's land, when Israel has been restored and dwells safely.

The judgment and destruction of the invading hosts are vividly pictured in the thirty-fourth to thirty-ninth chapters as well as their burial. Compare verses 17-20 with Rev. 19:17-18; though the great supper in Revelation and Jehovah's sacrifice here in Ezekiel are not identical, yet both are judgments. The final paragraphs of this chapter (verses 21-29) give the promise of glory.

The last verse contains an important statement. The Lord says that He hides His face no more from them. This in itself shows that all this is not yet here; for still He hides His face from them. The hiding of His face from them will be no more when His Spirit is poured upon them. "I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD." There comes then a time when the house of Israel, the literal descendants of Abraham, will receive an outpouring of the Spirit of God. Such is also the message of Joel, in which restoration and spiritual blessing, through the outpouring of the Spirit are blended together (Joel 2). We call attention to another passage which should be linked with the statement in this chapter. Isaiah 32:13-18 is a very striking prophecy. There is an announcement made first of all concerning the judgment which is to fall upon Israel's land. "Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city," etc. But this is not to last forever. An "until" follows. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." This is the same future outpouring of the Spirit of God. Up to now it has not been. The Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost came to form the body of Christ; but this outpouring in connection with Israel has another significance.

Chapters 40-48. The final nine chapters of this book form the climax of the great prophecies of Ezekiel; they belong to the most difficult in the entire prophetic Word. Once more the hand of the Lord rests upon the seer and in the visions of God he is brought into the land of Israel. In the very beginning of this grand finale we learn therefore that the visions concern the land of Israel. Let us remember, that after the fall of Jerusalem had been announced to Ezekiel (chapter 33:21), his prophetic utterances and visions concern the future when Israel is to be regathered and restored to the land. The previous two chapters dealt with the last invasion of the land of

Israel and the complete overthrow of Gog and its hordes. The vision contained in this last section follows after Israel's final deliverance. So much is clear as to the time when the prophecies of these eight chapters will be accomplished. They have not been fulfilled in the past, certainly not in the remnant which returned under Zerubbabel and Ezra. Nor have these prophecies been fulfilled since then. All is future. Only when the Lord has gathered Judah and Israel, when He has established His glorious Kingdom in their midst and delivered His people and the land from the last invader, will this last vision of Ezekiel become history.

This disposes then at once of the different modes of interpretation employed by so many expositors of this book. These are the following:

1. The theory of interpretation which looks upon the vision of these chapters as fulfilled in the return of the remnant from Babylon. One of the expositors who follows this line stated that these visions are "an ideal representation of the Jewish state about to be restored after the captivity." It does not need much argument to show that this mode of interpretation is erroneous. The temple which the remnant built does in no way whatever correspond with the magnificent structure which Ezekiel beheld in his vision. The fact is, if this temple is a literal building (as it assuredly is) it has never yet been erected. Furthermore, it is distinctly stated that the glory of the Lord returned to the temple and made His dwelling place there, the same glory which Ezekiel had seen departing from the temple and from Jerusalem. But the glory did not return to the second temple. No glory cloud filled that house. And furthermore no high priest is mentioned in the worship of the temple Ezekiel describes, but the Jews after their return from Babylon had high priests again. Nor can the stream of healing waters flowing from the temple as seen by Ezekiel be in any way applied to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity. Expositors who follow this mode of interpretation claim that all has been fulfilled and that there is nothing in store for Israel in the future, It is the most superficial method and totally wrong.

2. Another interpretation claims that the whole vision sprang from the imagination of the prophet. That it is all an ideal description of something which the expositor himself is unable to define. This mode of interpretation needs no further mention and answer.

3. The third interpretation of these chapters is the allegorical,

which spiritualizes everything, and claims that the Christian Church, its earthly glory and blessing, is symbolically described by the prophet. This is the weakest of all and yet the most accepted. But this theory gives no exposition of the text, is vague and abounds in fanciful applications, while the greater part of this vision is left unexplained even in its allegorical meaning, for it evidently has no such meaning at all.

(What strange applications have been made of this vision! We quote from The New Century Bible which says concerning this temple:

"Its details shed a light nowhere else vouchsafed to us upon the ideals of Hebrew art, influenced perhaps, by Babylonian masterpieces, yet entirely national and Puritan; and they embody in material form Ezekiel's sober but intense conception of religion, as completely as the Gothic cathedrals translate into concrete and abiding stone and marble the soaring visions of medieval Christianity.")

The true interpretation is the literal one which looks upon these chapters as a prophecy yet unfulfilled and to be fulfilled when Israel has been restored by the Shepherd and when His glory is once more manifested in the midst of His people. The great building seen in his prophetic vision will then come into existence and all will be accomplished.

But while we are sure of the strictly future fulfillment of this final vision, the many details which abound in these chapters can hardly be fully interpreted as to their meaning. Much is obscure. That all has a deeper meaning we do not doubt; and here and there we shall offer suggestions, but many things we shall have to pass over. Before we turn to the text and open up the contents of these chapters, a telescopic view of the whole section is in order and will be helpful in our further studies.

As it will be impossible to give a detailed explanation of this future temple we give an analysis of these chapters. Our larger work on Ezekiel will be found helpful in a better understanding of this portion of this book.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE TEMPLE (40-47)

CHAPTER 40

1. The introduction (40:1-4)
2. The gate toward the east (40:5-16)
3. The outer court (40:17-27)
4. The inner court (40:28-37)
5. The tables for the offerings and the chambers for the inner court (40:38-47)
6. The porch of the house (40:48-49)

CHAPTER 41

1. The holy place (41:1-2)
2. The most holy (41:3-4)
3. The side chambers (41:5-11)
4. The hinder buildings and the measurement (41:12-14)
5. Description of the interior of the temple (41:15-26)

CHAPTER 42

1. The priest's chambers in the inner court (42:1-14)
2. The final measurements (42:15-20)

II. THE TEMPLE WORSHIP (43-44)

CHAPTER 43

1. The return of the glory of the Lord and filling the house (43:1-9)
2. The address to the nation (43:10-12)
3. The dimensions of the altar (43:13-17)
4. The offerings to be bought (43:18-27)

CHAPTER 44

1. The outward eastern gate for the prince (44:1-3)
2. The charge concerning the strangers and the rebellious tribes (44:4-14)
3. The charge concerning the priests, the sons of Zadok (44:15-27)
4. The inheritance of the priests (44:28-31)

CHAPTER 45

1. The portions of the priests, the Levites, of the whole house of Israel, and the prince (45:1-8)
2. Concerning the prince (45:9-17)
3. The feast of Passover and the feast of tabernacles (45:18-25)

CHAPTER 46

1. The worship of the prince (46:1-8)
2. Further instruction as to worship (46:9-15)
3. Concerning the prince, his sons and his servants (46:16-18)
4. A final description of places in the temple (46:19-24)

III. THE VISION CONCERNING THE LAND (47-48)

CHAPTER 47

1. The waters of healing from the temple (47:1-12)
2. Borders of the land (47:13-21)
3. Concerning the stranger in the land (47:22-23)

CHAPTER 48

1. The portion of the seven tribes (48:1-7)
2. The oblation for the sanctuary, for the city, and for the prince (48:8-20)
3. The gates of the city and its new name (48:30-35)

Without entering into the measurements, the architecture, and other features of this great temple, we point out a few things which are important. First, as to the contents of the interior of this temple. The words "silver and gold" are not mentioned once in Ezekiel 40-48. Silver typifies grace in redemption, being the ransom money. Gold typifies divine righteousness. Both are absent in the millennial temple, for what the silver and gold foreshadows is now realized in His redeemed earthly people. The heavenly Jerusalem has gold in it, but silver is not mentioned in the description of the city in Revelation 21.

The chief ornaments in this temple are cherubim and palm trees; they were along the wall of the temple. So it was in the temple of

Solomon. "And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers within and without" (1 Kings 6:29).

A palm tree was between cherub and cherub. As stated in the previous chapter, palms are the emblems of victory and remind us of the feast of tabernacles. They were seen high above on the posts. Cherubim speak of the presence of the Lord, who enters this house and is worshipped here. But the cherubim here have only two faces and not four as in the opening vision of this book (1:10-12). As often stated, these celestial beings tell out the Lord Jesus Christ in His personal glory. The lion, His kingly glory; the face of a man, His true humanity; the face of an ox, His servant character; and the face of an eagle, His heavenly origin and destiny, Son of God. It is not without meaning that the face of a man and the face of a young lion are seen on these cherubim and each face looks upon a palm tree. Its symbolical meaning is obvious. The Lord Jesus Christ has come again and visited the earth and the temple and appeared as the Glorified Man and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. His is the victory and the glory. When at last this temple stands in Israel's land, and its meaning and measurements, as well as other details, are fully known and understood, it will be known then that His blessed work, victory and person are symbolically seen throughout this house.

In the forty-third chapter we read of the returning glory. The glory will fill this house.

We must notice here especially, that the vision the prophet beheld was "according to the appearance of the vision" he saw before the destruction of the city; "the visions were like the visions," which he saw "by the river Chebar." This points back to the first chapter, when first by the river Chebar the heavens were opened to Ezekiel the priest, and he saw visions of God. At the close of that chapter, we read after the recorded vision, "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD." The same vision of glory appeared again to him when Ezekiel had left the river Chebar and gone into the plain (3:22-23). Then he had witnessed the gradual and solemn departure of the glory of the Lord. "Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight ... They stood at the door of the east gate of the house of the LORD, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above" (10:18-19). Then finally the Shekinah went up and disappeared. "And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side

of the city" (11:23).

The similarity of the departure of the glory of the Lord from the temple before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar and its future return to the temple of Ezekiel's vision is most interesting. It is the same glory which departed, which returns; it is the same Lord, who resumes relationship with His earthly people. The withdrawal of the visible glory of the Lord meant the departure of His gracious presence from among His people, which was followed by judgment. The return of the visible glory means the return of His gracious presence among them, and that the judgment, which has lasted so long, is forever gone. The departure of glory was through the east gate and was finally seen upon the mountain at the east side of the city; the return is from the way of the east, and the glory of the Lord enters through the east gate. But it is not only a visible glory, but the Lord Himself is in the Shekinah, Ezekiel beheld above the firmament and the cherubim, when he saw the glory of the Lord at the river Chebar, he heard His voice. And here also His voice is mentioned "like the sound of many waters." From verses 6 and 7, we learn, that after the glory had entered the house, the Lord addressed the prophet out of the house.

The Lord Himself in all His glory is manifested and enters the temple, the place of His rest and glory. The cherubim will be seen in person, and from the New Testament we learn that angels will be with Him also. His glory will then cover Israel's land and the earth. "His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light; He had bright beams out of His side (marginal reading) and there was the hiding of His power." This is how Habakkuk describes the same manifestation of the glory of the Lord and the coming of the Lord of glory. (See Isa. 40:5, 58:8, 60:1-2, 66:18). Isaiah's great vision may be viewed as foreshadowing this manifestation of His glory. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne and His train filled the temple. The seraphim cried one unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory. And as the prophet was cleansed and his iniquity taken away, and as he became the messenger of the Lord (Isa. 6), so the nation Israel will be cleansed and forgiven and become the messenger of Jehovah. (Such an application seems warranted in view of the message Ezekiel received from the Lord to the people, verses 6-12.)

When the Spirit had transported the prophet into the inner court of the temple, he discovered that the glory of the Lord filled the house. We repeat it, no such thing happened when the returned Jewish remnant had entered the temple. When the old men, who had seen the Solomonic

temple and knew of its glory, beheld the foundation of the second temple, they wept (Ezra 3:12). When the house was dedicated, no glory returned, no cloud was seen, no Shekinah filled the house. Nor is it a spiritual glory, the glory of the church, as so many seem to believe.

But Haggai, who with Zechariah prophesied during the rebuilding of the temple, uttered a significant prophecy while that second house was building--a prophecy which must be linked with Ezekiel's vision of the returning glory: "For thus saith the LORD of Hosts: yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory" (Haggai 2:6- 7). This was not the house they were building. It is a future house, a future temple. That house will be built when the heavens and the earth are being shaken, when all nations shake, and when the desire of all nations, the King of Glory, the Prince of Peace, our Lord comes. Then this house will be filled with glory.

It will be a visible glory. It will be a permanent glory. He will now dwell gloriously in the midst of the children of Israel (verse 7). This visible glory will be seen over Jerusalem, like as it was of old, a cloud by day and a shining, flaming fire by night. "And Jehovah will create over every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and over its convocations a cloud by day and a smoke and the brightness of a flame of fire by night, for over all the glory shall be a covering (Isa. 4:5).

Another acknowledged difficulty is the one concerning the restored sacrifices and ordinances.

But what do these ordinances mean? Here are priests again standing before an altar, bringing bloody sacrifices, burnt offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings. Is this to be taken literally also? Some expositors have stated that all this had a meaning in the past and could only be true in connection with the second temple. Others attempt to read into it a spiritual meaning. All, or nearly all commentators, think it inconceivable that such sacrifices could ever be brought again in a future temple. Those expositors who combat the premillennial coming of the Lord and the literal restoration of Israel, consider the supposed impossibility of a satisfactory explanation of this part of Ezekiel's visions, the collapse of the premillennial argument.

Sacrifices of bulls and goats were brought by Israel in their past history; the Lord commanded His people to do this. Every Christian

knows that these sacrifices foreshadowed the work of Christ, His great sacrifice on the cross. In themselves these sacrifices Israel brought could not take away sins, nor give rest to the conscience, nor could they make the worshipper perfect. The Epistle to the Hebrews demonstrates this fully.

All these sacrifices had a prospective character, looking forward to the work of the cross. And when the Lamb of God died, when His blessed lips uttered the never-to-be-forgotten words, "It is finished," and God's hand rent the veil from top to bottom, the prospective character of these sacrifices was forever ended. The new and living way into God's presence, into the holiest, had been made by His blood. During this age Israel has no temple, and all their Levitical ordinances can no longer be practised by them. As Hosea declared, they are without a sacrifice (Hos. 3:4).

God, during this age, our present age, which began with the rejection of Christ by Israel and ends with His return, is gathering a heavenly people, the Church. The Church has for its worship no earthly place, no temple, but worships in spirit and in truth, in a heavenly sanctuary. There are no sacrifices, priests, altars, in connection with the true Church, the body of Christ. Christ is all. He is the sacrifice, the priest and the altar. That the enemy has produced upon Christian ground a ritualism which is aped after the Jewish system and which denies as such the gospel and Christianity, is well known. They have invented altars, and sacrifices, and priests. This is the Judaizing of the Church, "the other gospel which is not another," upon which the Spirit of God has pronounced the curse of God (Gal. 1). The day is coming when the Lord will deal in judgment with the apostate church which denies His Son and His work, while His true church will be taken to the place which He has prepared.

After the prophecy of the division of the land, comes the majestic ending, the last message this man of God uttered: "And the name of that city from that day shall be 'Jehovah Shammah,' the LORD is there." It is a fitting finale to this great book. In its beginning, we see the glory of the Lord departing. Throughout the pages of the book we read of Israel's rebellion, Jerusalem's judgments, the nation's disobedience and rejection. Then follow the messages of hope--Israel's conversion, the regathering of the twelve tribes, the final conflict, the returning glory of the Lord; and from that day the name of the city will be Jehovah Shammah. Because He has manifested His gracious presence in the midst of His people and established His throne, blessed His people with all the spiritual and national blessings promised by His holy prophets,

destroyed all their enemies, and covered all with His visible glory once more, therefore the city will have the name "Jehovah is there." What a glory it will be for Him. The city through which He once walked with weary feet, the Son of God garbed in servant's form, the city through which He was dragged, when the cross was laid upon His shoulders, the city which cast Him out, the city outside of which He endured the cross and despised the shame--that same city will be made in that day the glory spot of the earth.