

EZEKIEL

PART ONE – PROPHECIES OF JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION (Chapters 1-24)

[2]

I. EZEKIEL’S VISION AND CALL (1:1-3:21)

- A. Historical Setting of the Prophecy (1:1-3) See McGuiggan’s preparatory remarks on Ch. 1, p.19.
1. The time (1:1,2)
- (1,2) Many commentators believe that “the 30th year” refers to Ezekiel’s age when he was commissioned. His description of his visions will be forthcoming. Jehoiachin's captivity - Called also Jeconiah and Coniah; see 2 Ki. 24:12. He was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar; see 2 Ki. 24:14. (ACC)
2. The place – on the banks of the River Chebar in the land of Babylon among the exiles from Judah.
 3. God spoke to Ezekiel (1:3)
- (3) He was filled with God’s power, and with the influence of the prophetic spirit.
- B. His Vision of the Glory of the Lord Coming in Just Judgment (1:4-28)
1. The appearance of the four living creatures (cherubim) (1:4-14) See McGuiggan p.24 for a list of 12 characteristics of the cherubim.
- (4) A tornado appears from the north; the direction of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon. But this was not a normal desert whirlwind as Ezekiel’s further description indicates. The cloud was filled with fire, which enfolded upon itself. “Amber” here refers to a shiny bronze-like metal.
- (5) It is from this shiny area in the fire filled cloud that the living creatures emerge. The beings seem to have the general appearance of a man.
- (6-8) The fact that the face that turned toward the prophet was that of a man, added to the human-like appearance. Note that each creature had four faces and four wings in addition to human hands and feet like calves’. These brass hooves indicate destructive power. (See Rev. 1:15.)
- (9) When their wings were extended, they formed a sort of canopy level with their own heads or shoulders; and on this canopy was the throne, and the "likeness of the man" upon it, Eze. 1:26. (ACC)
- (10) The four faces represented the highest forms of life from among God’s various creatures: man – humanity; lion – king of the wild beasts; bull (ox) – king of the domesticated animals; and eagle – ruler of the flying creatures. The four creatures formed a square so that regardless of which direction it pointed, the human was in front, the ox on the left, the lion on the right and the eagle to the rear.
- (11-14) Covering their bodies with two wings indicates modesty in the presence of the Lord. The beings are not mindless or irrational, but are impelled by “a spirit.” Is this “spirit” the Spirit of God, the wind, their own spirit, or the impulse of God as He directed them from His throne? While the Hebrew will allow any of these meanings, perhaps the last is to be preferred. (Taylor, p. 56.) The fire that envelops them reminds us that they are involved in purging and judgment. They move with the speed of lightning and could easily be seen by the human eye. (Compare Lk. 17:23,24 and Mt. 24:26-28.)
2. The vision of the chariot (1:15-25)
- (15-18) Just how these wheels functioned is hard to discern. No complex wheel has ever been designed by man to move as these wheels’ of God moved. There is much debate among the commentators as to what the “eyes” represent. McGuiggan suggests that their presence represents the omniscience of the

God and reminds us of the saying, “My parents must have eyes in the back of their heads.” (p. 28.) The chariot could proceed in any direction at any moment, able to reach the impenitent and carry out God’s judgment upon them regardless of where they might be found.

- (19-21) The wheels and the creatures worked together as one, where one went the other went. The throne of God is propelled effortlessly whenever He wills it.
- (22-25) There was a space between the chariot and its Holy Rider and a firm platform on which he is carried. The platform appeared to Ezekiel as ice or crystal. The platform hovered over four sets of two wings. “When the whirlwind drove the wheels, the wind rustling among the wings was like the noise of many waters; like a waterfall, or waters dashing continually against the rocks, or rushing down precipices. Like distant thunder; for this is termed the *voice of God*, Ps 18:13; Ex 9:23,28,29; 20:18.” (ACC)

3. The throne of Jehovah’s glory (1:26-28)

- (26-28) Now Ezekiel describes the Holy Rider. But notice the lack of detail as compared to his previous descriptions of the creatures, the wheels, and the throne platform. Taylor suggests that this is in keeping with the Hebrew thinking that God could not be viewed, thus keeping idolatry at bay. Note the instances where Hagar, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, and Manoah met manifestations of God. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Ex. 33:20-23; Jud. 6:22; 13:22; Deut. 5:24. (Taylor, pp. 58,59.) It is no accident that the Holy Rider is seen as fire from the waste down. Compare to the Hebrews writer’s “God as a consuming fire,” and Daniel’s vision of God on a throne of fire as He judges the 4th beast of Dan. 7. “Yet, there is an element of mercy here – the rainbow. “...We have the rainbow, the token of God’s covenant, to show that though there should be a destruction of the city, temple, &c., and sore tribulation among the people, yet there should not be a total ruin; after a long captivity they should be restored. The rainbow is an illustrious token of mercy and love.” (ACC) Ezekiel’s response is appropriate as he falls on his face before the living God. In spite of the fact that Jerusalem is about to go under and God is here to bring judgment on the impenitent, it is very apparent to Ezekiel that God still reigns!

C. Ezekiel’s Call to the Office of Prophet (2:1-7) [3]

See McGuiggan’s preparatory remarks on Chs. 2 and 3, p.33.

Ezekiel is commanded to: Stand and Listen (2:1,2), Go and Speak (2:3-5), Don’t Be Afraid (2:6,7) and Receive the Word Within (2:8-3:3)

1. The Spirit enters Ezekiel (2:1,2)

- (1) The phrase “son of man” is not being used in a Messianic sense here, but refers only to Ezekiel’s station when compared to God Almighty. He told to rise up from the ground and stand on his feet to receive God’s instructions.
- (2) A measure of God’s Holy Spirit is given to Ezekiel here, empowering him to receive and later proclaim God’s message (1 Pet. 1:10,11).

2. The people to whom he must speak God’s message (2:3-7)

- (3) God styles the Israelites as rebellious, transgressors, impudent and stubborn. These exiles (and Israel in general) would not be a fertile field for preacher Ezekiel.
- (4,5) Impudence implies brazenness, even in the presence of God, while stubbornness indicates an unwillingness to acknowledge their wrong and repent (Isa. 48:4). Even though Ezekiel was not to expect repentance from his listeners, they would know that Ezekiel was “speaking as the oracles of God” and that he was a true prophet of God. From the messenger’s point of view his faithful witness

is what is important, not the listener's response. Our responsibility is to plant and water, and let God give the increase.

(6,7) Ezekiel is given no chance to make excuses, God immediately instructs him to have courage. The Israelites will not react kindly to the message, but will make their rebellion against God clear in their actions and countenance.

D. Ezekiel's Consecration to Do This Work (2:8-3:15)

1. He is prepared by eating the little book (2:8-3:3)

(8-10) Ezekiel meets his first test of obedience when he is told to eat the little scroll. Ingesting the Word as spiritual food is made even clearer in the physical act of eating the scroll. It is not clear as to why the scroll was written "within and without." Generally scrolls were only written on the inside. Perhaps God was leaving no room for any of Ezekiel's own amendments. The contents of the scroll would make it appear to not be very tasty – it was filled with lamentations and woes.

(1-3) By eating the little scroll Ezekiel received God's Word. Note the prophet's surrender – he opened his mouth to receive the book; but also consider it was God who caused Ezekiel to eat it. The possession of the Word would give the prophet an inner compulsion to present it (Jer. 20:9; Acts 4:20). Compare the sensation of taste experienced by Ezekiel to those of Jeremiah, the Psalmist, and John (Jer. 15:16; Ps. 19:10; 119:103; Rev. 10:10).

2. He is commissioned to speak regardless of opposition (3:4-11)

(4-9) Ezekiel will not be preaching to foreigners that speak a different language, but to his own people who can understand every word that he utters. Strangely, God indicates that the foreigners would have been more receptive to the Word, than the Israelites! Even though the Jews will understand Ezekiel's words they will not receive them. The prophet is not to take this personally; they are rejecting God, not Ezekiel. God hardening the prophet's head could be a play on his name as Ezekiel can be translated "God hardens." It means that Ezekiel will be given the strength to outlast his adversaries. The word "adamant" (v.9) comes from a Hebrew word that can also be translated "hardness."

(10,11) Now Ezekiel hears that the sphere of his ministry is to include the Babylonian exiles. Their reaction to the Word cannot be allowed to influence his preaching. God allows room here for further revelation, beyond what Ezekiel ingested from the book. If there is further revelation it too will be "thus says the Lord."

3. Ezekiel is transported to the place of his activity (3:12-15)

(12-15) As Ezekiel's vision comes to a close, both he and God are about to take their leave. A voice proclaims the glory of the Lord and the chariot begins to move. Whether this is the cherubim's voice or that of Ezekiel himself is not clear. It has also been translated "as the glory of the Lord arose from that place," which would suggest no spoken voice at all. He is transported (either literally moved there or figuratively as he leaves the vision) to the place where he is to prophesy – Tel Abib by the River Chebar. Note v. 14b: "*I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.*" Clarke translates the verse: "Being filled with indignation at the wickedness and obstinacy of my people, I went, determining to speak the word of God without disguise, and to reprove them sharply for their rebellion; and yet I was greatly distressed because of the heavy message which I was commanded to deliver." (ACC) Once among his people Ezekiel remained astonished (silent?) for seven days.

E. Ezekiel is Reminded He Was a Watchman to the House of Israel (3:16-27)

1. The responsibility of a watchman (3:16-21)

(16-21) The idea of a watchman shows up quite often in the Bible (Isa. 21:11,12; 56:10; 62:6; Jer. 6:17; Ps. 127:1; 130:6; Heb. 13:17). It is the prophet's obligation to watch and warn the guilty as well as the righteous. Ezekiel makes it clear that each individual is held accountable before God. People will die if the watchman is unfaithful. Their blood will be on the prophet's head. Those that refuse to heed the faithful watchman will die (Mt. 27:37-39). The watchman might not warn those that were righteous, but have turned away from their first love. Finally, the righteous might heed the watchman's warning and remain in a covenant relationship with God. God's people have many privileges, but one of them is not the privilege to sin. Our fellowship with the Father depends on setting our minds on obedience (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). His children that disobey will be disciplined (Heb. 12:1-11). Persistent resisting may take the disciples life (Heb. 12:9). There is a sin unto death (1 John 5:16,17). [Wiersbe, p. 24] Stumbling blocks exist in this world; it is the responsibility of the watchman to point them out and for the child of God to choose to avoid them.

2. Ezekiel enters into his ministry (3:22-27)

(22-27) Ezekiel returns to the presence of the Lord for further instructions; this time going out into the plain, instead of beside the River Chebar. The Spirit commands him to go and shut himself up inside his own house. The exiles would prevent Ezekiel from doing his work. Most commentators feel that this is not a literal binding, but a figurative one caused by the rebellious nature of the people. Also they think that his dumbness was self-imposed and lasted about six years. In other words, he could speak, but refused to do so because God had no message for His rebellious people at this time. Clarke interprets it this way: "When it is necessary to address them again, thou shalt sum up what thou hast said in this one speech: Thus saith the Lord, "He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear." Let him who feels obedience to the voice of God his interest, be steadfast. Let him who disregards the Divine monition go in his own way, and abide the consequences." (ACC) Note the similarity between "He who hears, let him hear" and Jesus' famous injunction, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." The saying always indicates that we are responsible for hearing and obeying the Words and Will of God. We can hear it and obey it or ignore it and be condemned. It is a call to full submission of our will to God's. "God being who and what He is and we being who and what we are the only thinkable relation between us is one of full Lordship on His part and a complete submission on ours." (A.W. Tozar)

II. FOUR SYMBOLIC PARABLES PORTRAY JERUSALEM'S FALL (4:1-5:17) [4]

See McGuiggan's preparatory remarks on Ch. 4, p. 49.

Note: Ezekiel was not the only prophet to use symbolic actions to accompany his prophecy. See also: Ahijah, 1 Ki. 11:30; Zedekiah, 1 Ki. 22:11; Elisha, 2 Ki. 13:17; Isaiah, Isa. 20:2-4; Jeremiah, Jer. 13:1-14, 19:1-10; and Agabus, Acts 21:10ff.

A. Sign of the City Besieged (4:1-3)

(1-3) The prophet takes a tile and draws the city of Jerusalem on it and begins to lay siege to his model. He sets an iron pan between himself and the model and begins to advance. So, Ezekiel foretells the end of the city and how the end was to come about. Meanwhile, he maintains his silence as he presents this and three additional "action sermons."

B. Sign of the Prophet Lying On His Side (4:4-8)

- (4) Make no mistake about it, this lying on the side represents the northern kingdom being punished for their sins. Clarke suggests the significance of the various parts of the sign as follows: 1. *the prophet* himself represents the Jews. 2. *His lying*, their state of depression. 3. *His being bound*, their helplessness and captivity. 4. *The days* signify years, a day for a year; during which they were to bear their iniquity, or the temporal punishment due to their sins. 5. *The three hundred and ninety days*, during which he was to lie on his left side, and bear the iniquity of the house of Israel, point out two things: the first, the duration of the siege of Jerusalem. Secondly, the duration of the captivity of the ten tribes, and that of Judah. 6. The prophet lay three hundred and ninety days upon his left side, and forty days upon his right side, in all four hundred and thirty days. (ACC)
- (5,6) The commentators argue as to whether the days ran consecutively or concurrently. While the 1 day = 1 year formula applies here and Number 14:34; we need to be careful not to think of this as a constant rule. We know it's true here because the text says so. The significance of 430 years (390 + 40) could reflect back on the Egyptian captivity (Ex. 12:40,41). The 40 years could have been seen separately as representing the wilderness wanderings. Punishment was coming and it would be commensurate with the sins committed. Judah thought it would never be taken captive regardless of what had already happened to Israel. Ezekiel's display would show them that their thinking was wrong, as the very fact that they were already 700 miles from home should have implied.
- (7,8) It seems that Ezekiel was not bound 24 hours a day, but only during the time he gave his daily demonstration at the tile. God gave Ezekiel strict commands (laid bands on him) to perform these signs. These first two action sermons were designed to show the Jews that the siege of Jerusalem would become a reality and the reasons for it occurring. The next two sermons would indicate the horror of the siege and fall.

C. Sign of Eating Polluted Bread (4:9-17)

- (9-11) In times of scarcity, it is customary in all countries to mix several kinds of coarser grain with the finer, to make it last the longer. This mashlin, which the prophet is commanded to take, of wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and fitches, was intended to show how scarce the necessities of life should be during the siege. (ACC) His diet would be restricted to about 8 ounces of bread and one pint of water per day. These are starvation rations so some commentators feel that this was what he ate during the daily demonstration and probably ate other foods when his demonstration was done.
- (12-14) As a sign of the defilement that would take place during the siege and the fact that the Jews would take on heathen ways during their captivity (Hos. 9:3,4), Ezekiel is instructed to cook his bread over a fire using human excrement as fuel. Ezekiel is horrified by the thought and reminds God that he has never defiled himself by eating or preparing foods that were denied to the Jews (Acts 10:14). Note that God did not make the concession until the point was instilled in the prophet's mind.
- (15-17) The Jews will learn that the sinner's row is a hard one to hoe. In their case it would include the pain of siege, exile, and ceremonial defilement.

D. The Sign of the Prophet's Haircut and Shave (5:1-4)
See McGuiggan's preparatory remarks on Ch. 5, p. 59

- (1) Ezekiel's haircut and shave stand as another of his "action sermons," this one showing what would become of Jerusalem's inhabitants. 1. *The prophet* represents the Jewish nation. 2. *His hair*, the people. 3. *The razor*, the Chaldeans. 4. *The cutting the beard and hair*, the calamities, sorrows, and disgrace coming upon the people. Cutting off the hair was a sign of mourning; (see on Jer. 45:5;

48:37) and also a sign of great disgrace (see 2 Sam. 10:4). 5. He is ordered to *divide the hair* (Eze 5:2) into three equal parts, to intimate the different degrees and kinds of punishment which should fall upon the people. 6. *The balances* (Eze 5:1) were to represent the Divine justice, and the exactness with which God's judgments should be distributed among the offenders. (ACC)

(2) 7. This hair, divided into three parts, is to be disposed of as follows: a. a third part is to be burnt in the midst of the city; to show that so many should perish by famine and pestilence during the siege. b. Another third part he was to cut in small portions about the city, (that figure which he had portrayed upon the brick,) to signify those who should perish in different (attacks), and in defending the walls. c. And the remaining third part he was to scatter in the wind, to point out those who should be driven into captivity. And, d. The sword following them was intended to show that their lives should be at the will of their captors, and that many of them should perish by the sword in their dispersions. (ACC)

(3,4) e. The few hairs which he was to take in his skirts, Eze 5:3, was intended to represent those few Jews that should be left in the land under Gedaliah, after the taking of the city. f. The throwing a part of these last into the fire, Eze 5:4, was intended to show the miseries that these suffered in Judea, in Egypt, and finally in their being also carried away into Babylon on the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar. (ACC) The few hairs tied to his garment must represent the “remnant” that God needed to keep the lineage of the Messiah intact.

E. The Reason for the Severe Judgment (5:5-17)

The sentence passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful; the manner of expression makes it still more so. Who is able to stand in God's sight when he is angry? Those who live and die impenitent will perish forever without pity; there is a day coming when the Lord will not spare. Let not persons or churches, who change the Lord's statutes, expect to escape the doom of Jerusalem. Let us endeavor to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Sooner or later God's word will prove itself true. (MHCC)

(5-7) The Lord shows His sadness and disgust at the fall of His chosen city. They had been given every opportunity to flourish and yet had destroyed everything they had ever been given. If they had been Sodom or Gomorrah, then their actions would have been understandable – but for Jerusalem to behave this way was unbelievable. Israel had failed in its God-given mission: to influence for good and glorify God among the other nations.

(8-11) Unparalleled sin required unparalleled judgment. This would include such consequences as cannibalism (2 Ki. 6:28ff; Jer. 19:9; Lam. 4:10). By causing these atrocities to occur in the sight of all nations, a public example would be made of God's disobedient people and His holiness would be vindicated. (Taylor, p.86.) Ezekiel now makes his first mention of the detestable religious practices that had been ongoing in the Temple. He will have more to say about this beginning in chapter 8. Note verse 11, “...therefore I will also diminish you.” Various translations have this as “I will cut you down,” but the one that seems most fitting is “I will shave you.”

(12) This verse confirms our interpretation of the preceding verses. Burning with fire = death by pestilence and famine during the siege. Take a moment and read the narrative of this event (2 Ki. 25:1-21; 2 Chron. 36:17-21; Jer. 39:1-18).

(13) The Lord will be pacified (comforted) only when His vengeance is completed. We learn here that 1- God does become angry, but 2- he does not remain angry forever. His anger is not an emotionally charged knee-jerk reaction to something He does not like; but instead His anger is based on principle and justice (Heb. 10:31; 12:29).

(14,15) Jerusalem's judgment will not only be public, but come at the hands of its own God. The foreign nations will be amazed and instructed by this judgment. If God will tolerate the wickedness of His own people, then ultimately He will not tolerate the wickedness of any nation.

(16,17) Note the Lord's four forms of judgment: famine, sword, pestilence (death or plague), and wild beasts (Jer. 15:2; Eze. 14:21; 24:25; 33:27; 38:22). The wild beasts represent the desolation of the land.

When man is not present the beasts and the undergrowth return (Isa. 13:20-22). Contrary to what the people were hoping for and the false prophets were saying, Jerusalem was about to be destroyed.

III. THE DEVASTATION OF THE LAND (6:1-7:27) [5]

See McGuiggan's preparatory remarks on Chapters 6 and 7, p. 69.

A. Destruction is Decreed Upon the Land (6:1-7)

"War desolates persons, places, and things esteemed most sacred. God ruins idolatries even by the hands of idolaters. It is just with God to make that a desolation, which we make an idol. The superstitions, to which many trust for safety, often cause their ruin. And the day is at hand, when idols and idolatry will be as thoroughly destroyed from the professedly Christian church as they were from among the Jews." (MHCC)

(1,2) The land of Israel represents the people and the pollution of the land represent the pollution of idols that had affected the minds of the people. When God is through with Israel, the land will be like a lonely widow without children (Isa. 62:4,5). The mountains are particularly addressed here because they were the seat of idol worship in the land. Of all the kings of Judah and Israel only Hezekiah and Josiah were able to destroy the "high places." Unfortunately their work did not hold up under the reign of their successors.

(3) Once the temple was built, the informal places of worship (generally "high places") were to be abandoned. Yet, the people continued to use them for convenience sake and they became places where idol worship was intermixed with Jehovah worship.

(4-7) (See Lev. 26:30; 2 Ki. 23:20; Ps. 53:5; 141:7; and Jer. 8:1ff.) It is interesting that the idols of the Jews would be destroyed by the Chaldeans who were idolaters themselves. Secular history indicates that the conquerors usually spread the bodies of the defeated around the altars of their decimated idols. "The exclusiveness of God is not an easy lesson to learn." (McGuiggan, p. 73.) The idea of One God was not an easy lesson for His own people to learn, much less the idolaters living near Israel.

B. A Remnant Will be Spared (6:8-10)

"A remnant of Israel should be left; at length they should remember the Lord, their obligations to him, and rebellion against him. True penitents see sin to be that abominable thing which the Lord hates... (Sinners) give glory to God by their repentance. Whatever brings men to remember Him, and their sins against Him, should be regarded as a blessing." (MHCC)

(8-10) (See Jer. 44:28; Eze. 12:16; and 14:22.) The remnant refers to those that will choose to learn (and repent) from their mistakes and the punishment and consequences that come along with those mistakes. The word Ezekiel uses for "idols" appears to be a made-up word from the Hebrew that can mean "pellets of dung" in that language. History bears out the fact the Jews have never returned to idolatry since the Babylonian captivity ended.

C. The Punishment is Just (6:11-14)

"It is our duty to be affected, not only with our own sins and sufferings, but to look with compassion upon the miseries wicked people bring upon themselves. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore, stand in awe, and sin not. If we know the worth of souls, and the danger to which unbelievers are exposed, we shall deem every sinner who takes refuge in Jesus from the wrath to come, an abundant recompense for all contempt or opposition we may meet with." (MHCC)

(11-14) This is not a call for Christians to stomp their feet and clap their hands in worship service any more than Ezekiel's previous actions mean for us to lie on our sides or give ourselves a shave and haircut with a sword. It is however an indication of God's triumphant happiness over the destruction of idolatry. Those that follow after idols will meet their demise via famine, sword, or pestilence. Not

only will the idols (and their followers) be destroyed, but the typical places where idol worship took place would also be laid waste. Ezekiel has invoked the phrase “they will know that I am the Lord” four times in this short chapter. It is Ezekiel’s (and the Lord’s) wish that all men would come to understand Jehovah as the one true and living God.

D. The Certainty of the Judgment (7:1-9)

The fact that this message needs to be repeated so often is based on the refusal of the Israelites to believe that Jerusalem could be destroyed. They truly believed that as long as God was God, the Temple was God’s house, and Jerusalem was the city of God’s house, then it could not be destroyed.

- (1-4) “The end has come” (Amos 8:2). The destruction of Jerusalem was necessary if God was to be consistent. He had relented and spared the people time and again, but now “the end had come.” The abominations of the people will stand as the evidence God would use to convict them. God’s judgment will reach to the four corners of the nation and no sinner will be spared.
- (5-9) The coming judgment would be decisive. An evil day of doom would come shortly. This judgment was of their own doing and could not be blamed on other people or nations. (See 2 Ki. 21:12-13; Zep. 1:14-15.)

E. The Desolation Described (7:10-27)

1. Social disruption (7:10-13)

(10,11) The morning will wait no longer. The rod that is to chastise them has blossomed; it is quite ready. Their insolence, obstinacy, and daring opposition to God have brought forth their proper fruits. (ACC)

(12,13) A “good buy” will be a thing of the past. Purchases will be worthless. Not even the Year of Jubilee will guarantee they return of family property as many will still be in captivity in Babylon when it came and others would be dead.

2. Military disruption (7:14-18)

(14) Any defense that the people might have prepared would be futile. Weapons and armies that are in God’s hands will suffer ultimate defeat.

(15-18) The prophet suggests that the people put on their sackcloth and throw their money out into the streets. There will no place to run and no place to hide. Those in the city will starve to death and those outside the city will be slain. Sometimes even true repentance will not avoid the consequences of sins. The remnant will also suffer in these times of calamity. Concerning baldness see: Isa. 3:24; 15:2,3; Jer. 48:37; Amos 8:10.

3. Economic disruption (7:19-22)

(19-22) Their stomachs cannot be filled with silver or gold. True happiness is not to be found in possessions. “Their beautiful temple was their highest ornament, and God made it majestic by his presence. But they have even taken its riches to make their idols, which they have brought into the very courts of the Lord's house; and therefore God hath set it-the temple, from him-given it up to pillage. Some say it means, ‘They took their ornaments, which were their pride, and made them into images to worship.’” (ACC) Not only will those who have disobeyed God be filled with heartache and pain, God will feel the same.

4. Political disruption (7:23-27)

(23-27) “Whoever break the bands of God's law, will find themselves bound and held by the chains of his judgments. Since they encouraged one another to sin, God would dishearten them. All (will) be in trouble, when God comes to judge them according to their deserts. May the Lord enable us to seek that good part which shall not be taken away.” (MHC) See: Micah 3:5-7 for a similar threat. Perhaps the chain represents a long line of beaten people being led away by their Babylonian captors. These captors were not righteous, but the captives were more unrighteous in God’s eyes. “Vision shall perish from the prophet, the law from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. Previously to great national judgments, God restrains the influences of his Spirit. His word is not accompanied with the usual unction; and the wise men of the land, the senators and celebrated statesmen, devise foolish schemes; and thus, in endeavoring to avert it, they hasten on the national ruin. How true is the saying, ‘those whom God designs to destroy, he first infatuates.’” (ACC)

IV. THE GLORY OF THE LORD DEPARTS FROM A DEGRADED TEMPLE AND CITY (8:1-11:25)

A. Idolatry is Seen in the Temple (8:1-18)

[6]

1. Image of jealousy (8:1-6)

The glorious personage Ezekiel beheld in vision, seemed to take hold upon him, and he was conveyed in spirit to Jerusalem. There, in the inner court of the temple, was prepared a place for some base idol. The whole was presented in vision to the prophet. If it should please God to give any man a clear view of his glory and majesty, and of all the abominations committing in any one city, he would then admit the justice of the severest punishments God should inflict thereon. (MHCC)

- (1) Fourteen months pass by and the elders come to Ezekiel, probably seeking consolation or consultation concerning what was happening in Jerusalem.
- (2,3) The prophet again sees the image of chapter 1:27. Ezekiel is now carried away to the Temple in a vision or trance. Outside the court gate he sees an idol described as the “image of jealousy” called thusly because of the righteous jealousy that it provoked in God. (Deut. 32:16,21; Jer. 7:30; 32:34.)
- (4) The terrible cherubim were back. They seemed to be standing, waiting by, waiting on the Lord to give them the signal to destroy the Temple.
- (5,6) Though Manasseh had introduced and removed the Asherah from the Temple (2 Ki. 21:7) and Josiah had to remove and burn it later (2 Ki. 23:6), it seems it had made another appearance in Ezekiel’s time. The north gate was the most honorable of the gates because it was the one used by the King. Notice the emphasis on “north.” Sacrifices were slaughtered on the north side of the altar. The enemy would attack from the north.

2. A secret animal cult (8:7-13)

(7-13) Ezekiel approaches the wall and peers through a hole in it. He is instructed to enlarge the hole so he might enter the Temple and witness the abominations taking place there, behind closed doors. The entire nation is represented by the presence of 70 elders and the son of a nobleman (2 Ki. 22:3; Jer. 26:24). “It is very likely that these images portrayed on the wall were the objects of Egyptian adoration: the ox, the ape, the dog, the crocodile, the ibis, the scarabaeus or beetle, and various other things.” (ACC) These idolaters believed that the Lord had abandoned them and could not see what they were doing.

3. The worshippers of Tammuz (8:14,15)

(14,15) The women were weeping, but not for Judah. They were worshipping the Sumerian god of vegetation, Tammuz, who was thought dead and in the underworld. Part of the worship of this god involved mourning and fertility rites. There may be a connection between this Tammuz and the Greek god Adonis.

4. Sun worship (8:16-18)

(16,17) “These most probably represented the twenty-four courses of the priests, with the high priest for the twenty-fifth. This was the Persian worship, as their turning their faces to the east plainly shows they were worshipping the rising sun.” (ACC) (Deut. 4:19; 2 Ki. 23:5,11.) Taylor (p. 100) believes that a more accurate translation of “branch to their nose” would indicate their idolatry put a stench in God’s nostrils. “It really seems that at this time the Jews had incorporated every species of idolatry in their impure worship, Phoenician, Egyptian, and Persian. I might add that some imagine the image of jealousy to be a personification of idolatry itself.” (ACC)

(18) Imagine what Ezekiel has just witnessed: an idol set up for all to worship, the elders worshipping animals, the woman practicing fertility rites, and finally, even the priests given over to Sun worship. The Lord was through listening to these people that even with the Law of Moses had no concept of how He should be truly approached and worshipped. (Pr. 1:28; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 11:11; 14:12.)

B. The Wicked are Slaughtered While the Righteous are Spared (9:1-11)

(1) Now is the time for confrontation, the time for talk is ended. The comparison between Ezekiel’s vision and later apocalyptic prophecies concerning the final judgment are too obvious to dismiss (Rev. 7:3; 8:2ff).

(2) Six dealers of death from the north are at the door. In their midst stands a seventh man, dressed as a priest and set to bring an element of mercy upon certain individuals (Lev. 16:4). This one is equipped as a scribe and is prepared to mark the faithful remnant to prevent their destruction.

(3,4) The glory of the Lord moves from the chariot to the threshold of the Temple and from there instructs the man clothed in linen and then the six executioners (v. 6). Some have tried to place a particular significance upon the mark – perhaps the Hebrew letter *tau*. This is the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet is basically an “X.” An “X” is a form of a cross, so they want this mark to represent Christ’s people. This is a stretch, to say the least. The mark simply represents those that would be spared. This remnant would be spared because they had God’s attitude toward all that was happening among the Israelites – they were heartsick. (Amos 6:6.)

(5) All unmarked were to be destroyed without compassion by the six standing by the altar of burnt offering.

(6,7) 1 Pet 4:17 indicates that judgment begins at the household of God and so here the slayers start to work at the Temple. In the actual destruction of Jerusalem we know that many righteous died alongside the wicked. But remember, all suffering is not punishment when one dies “in the Lord.” Did any wicked survive the destruction of the city? If so, this vision is a pictorial representation of the truth and an indication of the final judgment. (See McGuigan p.97.)

(8) As Abraham pleaded for Sodom and Amos attempted to intercede for Israel, Ezekiel pleads for a remnant to be spared. Though God had made Ezekiel hard-headed, He had allowed him to remain soft-hearted.

(9-11) The reason God was so angry was that His station as the One True God, had been ignored by His very own people. He had been relegated by them to “just another god.” This just would not do. They would be taught a lesson that they would never forget and as we have already remarked Israel has

never turned to idol worship again. Just when all seemed hopeless to Ezekiel, the linen clothed man returns and reminds the prophet that some mercy was shown to the remnant of faithful Israelites.

C. The Glory of the Lord Departs from the Temple (10:1-22) [7]

1. Coals of fire over Jerusalem (10:1-8)

- (1) It is just here that Ezekiel identifies the “chariot-throne” as being made up of cherubim. On the use of sapphire (royal blue in color) as pavement for the throne see Ex. 24:10.
- (2) Ezekiel indicates that Jerusalem was in for the same treatment as Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24). The servant from chapter 9 is commanded to take burning coals from under the chariot throne. A man of God must be ready (as this servant was) to administer mercy or chastisement, whichever God demands. Coals are sometimes a sign of purification, but here they are sign of punishment.
- (3,4) The chariot-throne was located on the south side of the Temple. The smoke represents the glory of Lord filling up the Temple. Note 1 Ki. 8:10-11.
- (5-8) The sound of the wings of the cherubim was loud like thunder. The man in linen carried out his duties, regardless of their results. A cherub hands the coals to the man in linen. Perhaps even this angelic assistant had to keep some distance between himself and the throne.

2. The throne-chariot of the Lord appears (10:9-17)

“Ezekiel sees the working of Divine providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it. When God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above, and all events below, further his departure. The Spirit of life, the Spirit of God, directs all creatures, in heaven and on earth, so as to make them serve the Divine purpose. God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and, when ready to depart, would return to them, if they were a repenting, praying people. Let this warn sinners to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call on him while he is near, and cause us all to walk humbly and watchfully with our God.” (MHCC)

(9-11) Revisit 1:15-18.

(12,13) Ezekiel revisits the descriptions found here as a matter of emphasis and reminder concerning the power and the glory of the All Mighty.

(14-17) Note that verse 14 substitutes cherub, for “face of an ox.”

3. The departure of the Divine Presence (10:18-22)

(18-22) The glory of the Lord comes out from the Temple and by standing over the cherubim signals that the time of departure for the mountains was near. Here we get a clear sense that the cherubim are the chariot-throne (see also: 1 Chron. 28:18; Ps. 18:10).

D. The Threat of Judgment and a Promise of Mercy (11:1-25)

1. Rebellious rulers are threatened (11:1-13)

“Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as uncertain, he gains his point by persuading them to look upon it as at a distance. These wretched rulers dare to say, we are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, we shall receive no more damage from the besiegers than the caldron does from the fire. When sinners flatter themselves to their own ruin, it is time to tell them they shall have no peace if they go on. None shall remain in possession of the city but those who are buried in it. Those are least safe who are most secure. God is often pleased to single out some sinners for warning to others. Whether Pelatiah died at that time in Jerusalem, or when the fulfillment of the prophecy drew near, is

uncertain. Like Ezekiel, we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, and we should still plead with the Lord to have mercy on those who remain.” (MHCC)

- (1) Now the Spirit carries Ezekiel to the east gate, where he finds 25 leaders of the people that worship the sun. Among these men are two that are prominent and would be known by name. These are probably not the men of the same name mentioned elsewhere.
- (2) The leadership of these men is contrary to God’s will. They had plans, but these plans were not from God. “Carnal security and contempt of God's threatenings prepare the way for wicked counsels and mischievous devices.” (Family Bible Notes.)
- (3,4) These leaders suggest that the words of prophets such as Jeremiah should be ignored, the city would protect the people from harm as a pot protects its contents from burning. Ezekiel is called on to prophesy against these men and their false teaching.
- (5-7) These leaders are rebels and murderers in God’s eyes. God agrees that the city is a caldron, but its contents were the righteous citizens of Jerusalem that had been murdered by these leaders. These leaders did not deserve to die in the city among the innocent. They would pass this life outside the walls of the city.
- (8,9) The shameful epitaph of these men will be “I Rebelled Against God!” Their deaths will be among their enemies, without God, and in the face of eternal torment.
- (10-12) See 2 Kings 25:1-7 for the story of the deaths of the princes that attempted to escape with Zedekiah. Instead of following God’s ordinances, they had set up their own laws based on the laws of the surrounding nations. When comparing this passage with 5:7 and 16:47 we see that they could not even follow the laws copied from the Gentiles properly!
- (13) “Most probably (Pelatiah) was struck dead the very hour in which Ezekiel prophesied against him. His death appears to have resembled that of Ananias and Sapphira, Ac 5:1,” (ACC) At this point Ezekiel fears for the remnant. Will anybody be left?

2. A remnant of Israel shall be gathered out of the nations (11:14-21)

“The pious captives in Babylon were insulted by the Jews who continued in Jerusalem; but God made gracious promises to them. It is promised, that God will give them one heart; a heart firmly fixed for God, and not wavering.” (MHCC)

- (14,15) The false prophets only agreed on one thing: Ezekiel and Jeremiah were both liars. Some of these false teachers believed and taught that those in captivity were the ones being punished and those left behind were righteous in the eyes of the Lord. Ezekiel could see otherwise. It was the captives that represented the whole house of Israel. They were now the true Israel of God.
- (16-18) It is the captives that would be shielded from idolatry and given sanctuary by God. Just as the people of Moses’ time were waiting to return to the land of Promise, so these captives and their offspring should hold a similar hope.
- (19-21) This giving of a one heart and a new spirit reminds the Christian of “putting off the old man of sin” and “putting on the new man” in Christ. By giving themselves over to God, the remnant among the captives could reclaim spiritual Israel and eventually physical Israel as well. (Jer. 31:33; 24:7) “The holiness of their lives shall prove the work of God upon their hearts.” (ACC) Those that refuse to have their hearts and spirits renewed will have the full reward that their idols can give – nothing. The infinite gain of heaven is always countered in the scripture by the irreparable loss of Hell (Deut 11:26; Mt. 7:13ff).

3. The glory of the Lord departs (11:22-25)

“Here is the departure of God's presence from the city and temple. It was from the Mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain. Though

the Lord will not forsake his people, yet he may be driven away from any part of his visible church by their sins, and woe will be upon them when He withdraws his presence, glory, and protection.” (MHCC)

- (22,23) “This vision is no mean proof of the long-suffering of God. He did not abandon this people all at once; he departed by little and little. **FIRST**, he left the temple. **SECONDLY**, he stopped a little at the gate of the city. **THIRDLY**, he departed entirely from the city and went to the Mount of Olives, which lay on the east side of the city. Having tarried there for some time they would repent and turn to him-**FOURTHLY**, he departed to heaven. The vision being now concluded, the prophet is taken away by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, and there announces to the captive Israelites what God had showed him in the preceding visions, and the good that he had spoken concerning them; who at first did not seem to profit much by them, which the prophet severely reproves.” (ACC) The ultimate loss is not physical; it is the loss of communion with God.
- (24) The vision comes to a close as Ezekiel is transported back to Chaldea.
- (25) He now recounts his vision to the elders. Note: 1) He did speak and he did not hold his peace. 2) He spoke only what the Lord told him to speak. 3) He told everything God had revealed to him, not just the pleasant things.

V. THE CERTAINTY OF DESTRUCTION UPON A SINFUL NATION (12:1-19:14)

- A. Two Signs Symbolize the Sureness of Captivity (12:1-20) (See McGuiggan, p. 121.) **[8]**
1. Ezekiel acts out an emigration from Jerusalem (12:1-16)
“By the preparation for removal, and his breaking through the wall of his house at evening, as one desirous to escape from the enemy, the prophet signified the conduct and fate of Zedekiah. When God has delivered us, we must glorify him and edify others, by acknowledging our sins. Those who by afflictions are brought to this, are made to know that God is the Lord, and may help to bring others to know him.” (MHCC)
- (1,2) (Isa. 6:9; 42:20; Jer. 5:21; Mt. 13:13,14.) The prophet is given another reminder of the iniquity of God’s people. This next series of actions and oracles attempts to deal with the objections that will be raised by the people concerning Ezekiel’s prophecies of destruction.
- (3) In this “action sermon” Ezekiel will prepare his belongs as if going into captivity during the day and dig through the wall of his house as if preparing an escape route at night. He was to make an obvious choice of items to take on his “journey,” so that it would be clear that he was miming a journey into exile. Perhaps this activity will cause the people to consider what they have refused to believe so far.
- (4) He was to proceed at a slow pace, with a defeated air and gloomy countenance. He was not out on a stroll.
- (5,6) Here Ezekiel is predicting the manner of Zedekiah’s escape from Jerusalem. In sight of the exiles, Ezekiel is to breach the wall of his house and keep his eyes covered. The walls of his house would represent the walls of Jerusalem.
- (7) Regardless of Ezekiel’s own possible personal feelings about acting out these signs, he completed them as commanded.
- (8,9) God knew what Ezekiel was doing. This is of course is a question asked to elicit an indication of Ezekiel’s understanding.
- (10-16) Now God confirms exactly what the action sermon looks forward to – the escape of Zedekiah from Jerusalem. (Jer. 52:4-11; 2 Ki. 25:1-7.) Because Zedekiah was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar he arrived as a captive in Babylon unable to see the very land in which he would die. The allies of Zedekiah would not go unpunished. They would be killed, beaten or scattered. A number of them would live out their lives in captivity so that they might be witnesses to the truth of God’s prophecies.

2. He eats and drinks with quaking and trembling (12:17-20)
“The prophet must eat and drink in care and fear, with trembling, that he might express the condition of those in Jerusalem during the siege. When ministers speak of the ruin coming upon sinners, they must speak as those that know the terrors of the Lord. Afflictions are happy ones, however grievous to flesh and blood, that improve us in the knowledge of God.”
(MHCC)

(17,18) “Assume the manner of a person who is every moment afraid of his life, who has nothing but a morsel of bread to eat, and a little water to drink. Thus signifying the siege, and the straits to which they should be reduced.” (ACC)

(19,20) Fear will grip the people. Desolation is coming due to their chronic wickedness and violence. Severe punishment is sometimes the only warning a person will understand.

3. Although it was popular to believe otherwise, the judgments of God would soon occur (12:21-28)

(21,22) Ezekiel will now have to contend with two wrong attitudes concerning his (the Lord’s) prophecy: 1) some thought it to be false while, 2) others thought it would be fulfilled in the distant future. The people had a proverb concerning the end of Israel that reflected their opinion: “Time passes, but no vision ever comes to anything” (Moffatt’s translation). See Amos 6:3 and 2 Pet. 3:4.

(23-25) The Lord will put this false proverb to rest once and for all. One of the reasons that true prophecy was being ignored was because of the flattering speech of the false prophets – telling the people what they wanted to hear! Those that were mocking Ezekiel’s prophecy would live to see its results (Lk. 21:32,33).

(26-28) These unbelievers are a little less skeptical. They think the prophecy will come true someday – but not immediately. 2 Pet. 3:3-13 shows a similar problem of skepticism in apostolic times. This skepticism is alive and well in our time. Some think, “Christ has not come back for over 1900 years, so he is probably not coming back today or tomorrow.” In the case of Israel the time of judgment was upon them.

- B. Condemnation Against False Prophets and Prophetesses (13:1-23) (See McGuiggan, p. 133) [9]
1. God’s hand is against the prophets who speak from their own inspiration (13:1-16)

(1,2) It is the teaching of the false prophets that have undermined the true prophecy. The false prophets are in essence making their own religion to use in lieu of God’s religion. Man-made religion is vain (Mt. 15:9), it is in conflict with God (Mt. 15:3,6), and it will be rooted up (Mt. 7:24-27; 15:13).

(3) Sincerity is no substitute or guarantee of truth. Some of these prophets might have been sincere in their thinking, but foolish concerning the will of God. Taylor is less sympathetic, noting that the Hebrew word for foolish is “*nabal*.” This reminds us of the story of Nabal (1 Sam 25 and 2 Sam 13:13). He was rude, arrogant and immoral. (Taylor, p. 120.) See also Jer. 29.

(4-7) “The cunning of the fox in obtaining his prey has been long proverbial. These false prophets are represented as the foxes who, having got their prey by great subtlety, run to the desert to hide both themselves and it. So the false prophets, when the event did not answer to their prediction, got out of the way, that they might not be overwhelmed with the reproaches and indignation of the people.” (ACC) The dangers of false prophecy are obvious: offering hope when there is no hope and making promises in the name of God that God did not make. Those that make the Lord’s commands optional are under the same condemnation as these false prophets.

(8,9) Make no mistake, God is against these false prophets. They will endure a three part punishment: 1) they will lose their place of honor among the assembly (inner council of citizens), 2) their names will

be removed from the civil register (taking away their blood-born citizenship) and 3) they will never be allowed to return to the land of Israel.

- (10) False prophets will cry “peace” when there is none to be had (Jer. 6:14; 8:11). The walls constructed by these false prophets would not withstand the judgment of God. Even though the walls had been whitewashed to take on a visible appearance of strength and beauty, they were weak and ready to fall.
- (11-16) Untempered mortar and bricks may stand for many years in a dry climate, but unseasonable rains can bring their destruction. God will bring such a massive storm against this weak wall that it will crumble to the ground. The storm will wash away the whitewash and expose the naked wall for what it is – a weak and unreliable wall. Its makers and those who trusted in them would die underneath the wall’s destruction. So we have people looking for safety behind the wrong wall, built by the wrong builders, using the wrong materials while building on the wrong foundation! Verse 16 clearly reveals who these false prophets were and what their false prophecies concerned, namely Jerusalem and its downfall. (Mt. 18:7.)

2. God’s hand is also against the false prophetesses who ensnare people like they were birds (13:17-23)

(17-19) “That there were true prophetesses among the Jews is evident enough from such being mentioned in the sacred writings. Miriam, the sister of Moses Ex 15:20; Nu 12:2; Deborah, Jg 4:4; Huldah, 2Ki 22:14; Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, Lu 2:36; the four daughters of Philip the (evangelist), Ac 21:9.” (ACC) Unfortunately for Israel there were also false prophetesses such as those condemned in these verses. It appears these women were practicing some occult powers using various articles of clothing and perhaps amulets of some description. Some commentators feel that they were using their sorcery to obtain food (barley and bread) but others feel that these were ingredients of their magic. Matthew Henry describes five sins of the false prophetesses: 1) They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune, 2) They profaned the name of God by pretending to have received those lies from him, 3) They kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions, 4) They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane, and 5) They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions.

(20-23) God will free the souls that the false prophetesses hunted. They would lose all respect and source of their livelihood. It is the false teacher who uses his ability to make the righteous sad, the wicked to feel secure in their sins, and bring a nation to ruin – all with just words! (Jer. 23:14, Mic. 3:6.)

C. Idols in Their Hearts Made Them Estranged From God (14:1-23) (See McGuiggan, p. 145)

1. False people desire false prophets (14:1-11)

“No outward form or reformation can be acceptable to God, so long as any idol possesses the heart; yet how many prefer their own devices and their own righteousness, to the way of salvation! Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and are of their own setting up; God will let them take their course. Sin renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God; and in his own eyes also, whenever conscience is awakened. Let us seek to be cleansed from the guilt and pollution of sins, in that fountain which the Lord has opened.” (MHCC)

(1,2) These elders came to Ezekiel supposedly to see what the Lord had told him. We shall see that elders were wicked men and their hearts were not pure.

(3) Because of the impurity of their hearts, they had lost their right to enquire of the Lord. They were hypocrites of the first order, claiming to be servants of the one true God, but inwardly believing in the power of idols.

- (4,5) God gives Ezekiel an oracle of judgment to deliver to these elders. “Any man of Israel with an idol in his heart will be treated as idolater!” For the people to return to the Lord, He must first capture their hearts.
- (6) For the people to avert the prophesied calamity they must repent. The sense in the original Hebrew is they must reject their idols and return to the Lord.
- (7,8) Those that would go into exile would want a prophet that would tell them what they wanted to hear. The Lord says that He will bring them the true prophecy. Concerning “set My face against the man,” see Lev. 17:10; 20:3-6; Jer. 44:11.
- (9) The Lord allows the false prophets to compound the unbelief of the Israelites, giving them the opportunity to hear what they wanted to hear. (2 Thess. 2:11) Part of the punishment of unbelievers is that God allows them to believe false teachers and prophets.
- (10,11) The responsibility for believing a false prophecy will be equally shared between the false prophet and his followers. “Thus God's judgments against the wicked are admonitions to the godly to cleave to the Lord and not to defile themselves with the same abominations.” (GBN)
2. The presence of righteous men will not avert judgment (14:12-23)
 “National sins bring national judgments. Though sinners escape one judgment, another is waiting for them. When God's professing people rebel against him, they may justly expect all his judgments. The faith, obedience, and prayers of Noah prevailed to the saving of his house, but not of the old world. Job's sacrifice and prayer in behalf of his friends were accepted, and Daniel had prevailed for the saving his companions and the wise men of Babylon. But a people that had filled the measure of their sins, was not to expect to escape for the sake of any righteous men living among them; not even of the most eminent saints, who could be accepted in their own case only through the sufferings and righteousness of Christ. Yet even when God makes the greatest desolations by his judgments, he saves some to be monuments of his mercy. In firm belief that we shall approve the whole of God's dealings with ourselves, and with all mankind, let us silence all rebellious murmurs and objections.” (MHCC)
- (12,13) The people believe that God will spare Israel on the backs of a few righteous men. These verses are a strong argument against this thinking. Their thinking is that if even Sodom was offered an out based on a few righteous men, surely Jerusalem would get an even better offer. The prophet rejects this notion and asserts that not even the presence of Noah, Daniel, and Job could assure salvation for anyone other than themselves. Persistent unfaithfulness will not be tolerated by either man or nation. Famine will come upon the land of unbelievers.
- (14-16) Jer. 15:1 indicates that the presence of Moses and Samuel would not save the nation either. There are concerns among the liberal commentators that this cannot be the Daniel of the Bible because of their timeline for the writing of the prophets. There seems to be no conservative reason to reject this Daniel as the Bible Daniel. Wild beasts will occupy the land of unbelievers.
- (17-20) Foreign armies and the resulting pestilence will also aid in the destruction of the unbelieving nation and its unbelieving inhabitants. God does not judge a land for no reason. For Him to visit all four of these judgments on Israel means only one thing – they deserved it!
- (21) The fourfold punishment of sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts was one that was universally feared in the ancient near East. As McGuiggan puts it, the case of Israel calls for all “four barrels” of punishment to be fired against their sin.
- (22) While we generally think of the remnant as the righteous few that have been saved, in this instance it fits the context better to think of them as a microcosm of those destroyed in Jerusalem. In other words the first exiles would come to realize the truth of Ezekiel's prophecy when they made contact with the evil people of the second exile.
- (23) But how will the suffering of evil men be a consolation to the exiles? By viewing the unrighteous remnant, the exiles would be able to see the justice of God in the destruction of Jerusalem. “There is

no part of the conduct of God towards man that is not dictated by the purest principles of justice, equity, and truth. He does nothing but what is right; and whatever is right to be done, that ought to be done. In God's justice there is no severity; in God's mercy there is no caprice. He alone doth all things well; for he is the Fountain of justice and mercy.” (ACC)

- D. An Allegory of Israel as a Useless Vine (15:1-8) (See McGuiggan, p. 155) [10]
“If a vine be fruitful, it is valuable. But if not fruitful, it is worthless and useless; it is cast into the fire. Thus man is capable of yielding a precious fruit, in living to God; this is the sole end of his existence; and if he fails in this, he is of no use but to be destroyed. What blindness then attaches to those who live in the total neglect of God and of true religion! This similitude is applied to Jerusalem. Let us beware of an unfruitful profession. Let us come to Christ, and seek to abide in him, and to have his words abide in us.” (MHCC)
- (1,2) Israel’s purpose was to bring forth fruit for God’s use. They had failed. Now they were nothing but a barren vine – good for nothing except fuel for a fire.
- (3-5) Sturdy wood (oak, cedar, spruce, etc.) has its use as building material, but the vine has no additional use. It would not even make a tent peg or wall peg, much less a wall, mast, bow or arrow. Once it has been thrown in the fire it would not be retrieved as it was serving its only purpose. Note that no part of Israel would be spared from this searing experience.
- (6) Ezekiel applies the parable to Jerusalem. It is Jerusalem and her people that are the fruitless useless vine. “The design of this parable is to abate the pride of the Jews; to show them that, in their best estate, they had nothing but what they had received, and therefore deserved nothing; and now, having fallen from all righteousness, they can have no expectation of any thing but judgment unmixed with mercy.” (ACC)
- (7,8) The Babylonian fire had already scorched them twice. Captives had been taken in 605 BC (Daniel) and again in 597 (Ezekiel). Judah had been burned but not consumed. Now the fire would reach out and bring Jerusalem to total desolation.
- E. An Allegory of Israel as an Unfaithful Wife (16:1-63) (See McGuiggan, p. 163)
In this chapter God's dealings with the Jewish nation, and their conduct towards him, are described, and their punishment through the surrounding nations, even those they most trusted in. This is done under the parable of an exposed infant rescued from death, educated, espoused, and richly provided for, but afterwards guilty of the most abandoned conduct, and punished for it; yet at last received into favor, and ashamed of her base conduct. (MHCC)
1. Jerusalem was found while unclean, miserable, and unwanted (16:1-7)
- (1,2) These opening verses make the point of the chapter clear – Jerusalem is very very wicked!
- (3) While Abraham and Sarah were indeed born of idolatry, they followed the Lord when called. These sinners did not deserve to claim them as their parents, instead they were the spiritual offspring Amorites and Hittites. (Jn. 8:39,44.)
- (4,5) The Jews were a people that no one cared for – like a baby abandoned in a ditch. It was a custom in some barbarous cultures to abandon deformed or unwanted children to die.
- (6,7) The Lord finds the baby struggling and kicking in blood and saves the child. As the child grows to maidenhood it still is poor and without physical possessions.

2. The Lord entered into a covenant with her (16:8-14)

- (8,9) Upon finding her at a marriageable age, the traveler takes her as his wife and once again cares for her needs. We must be careful not to try to take this parable too far. To ascribe an exact period in Israel's history to any particular verse of this parable is dicey at best.
- (10) This skin is the same kind used to cover the tabernacle.
- (11,12) Here the groom supplies the appropriate jewelry for his bride.
- (13) See also Deut. 32:13f and Hos. 2:8 for descriptions of rich fare.
- (14) Though Israel had not deserved God's graciousness, it was given to them in abundance (Rom. 8:32; Eph. 2:3-8).

3. Israel turned from God like an unfaithful wife (16:15-34)

Henry suggests four reasons why scripture uses the idea of harlotry when referring to Israel's idolatry: 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debauches the conscience, sears and hardens it; and those who by their idolatries dishonor the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reprobate mind, to dishonor the human nature with vile affections, Ro 1:23, &c. It is a besotting, bewitching sin; and, when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful scandalous sin for those that have joined themselves to the Lord to join themselves to an idol. (MHC)

- (15) See Gen. 38:14ff; Jer. 3:2; Isa. 57:8; Hos. 1:2. Note that gifts God had given Israel became the means of her apostasy. Here the gifts are represented by: her beauty, her garments, her jewelry, her food, and even her children.
- (16-19) From 2 Ki. 23:7 we see that these multi-colored hangings were for idolatrous purposes: including such things as feasting, fornicating, and child sacrifice.
- (20-22) To offer a child to Molech involved killing the child then burning it. Kings Ahaz and Manasseh were guilty of this abomination (2 Ki. 16:3; 21:6). See also Lev. 18:21; 2 Ki. 23:10; Jer. 32:35 and especially Mic. 6:6-8.
- (23-25) The Canaanite cults practiced ritual harlotry as fertility rites and it appears that some Israelites had embraced it for religious purposes as well.
- (26-29) Harlotries with the Egyptians, Philistines, Assyrians, and Babylonians go beyond religious infidelity to political alliances forbidden by God. Because of these political and religious prostitutions God would diminish Judah as He already done to Israel. Part of the problem of Judah aligning herself with these more powerful countries was that she would eventually come under the influence of their false religions.
- (30-34) But even the trade of the common prostitute is perverted by Judah. She sought out her men and bribed them to lie with her. She paid them! (Hos. 8:9,10.) Israel does not have the excuse of the adulteress (blind love) or the prostitute (stark necessity).

4. Her punishment will correspond to her sin (16:35-43)

- (35-43) "Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime. This notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, Eze. 16:35. The prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, O harlot! Hear the word of the Lord. Our Savior preached to harlots, for their conversion, to bring them into the

kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, an apostate church is a harlot. Jerusalem is so if she becomes idolatrous. How has the faithful city become a harlot! Rome is so represented in the Revelation, when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here. Re 17:1, Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore. Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.” (MHC) Note that the punishment for her crime will be dealt out by the very ones with whom she had committed her sins.

5. Jerusalem is worse than her sisters Samaria and Sodom (16:44-59)

“The prophet here further shows Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them, and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good if we are but as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst.” (MHC)

(44-48) The tendency in this family was to always reject the Lord (Father and Husband). Judah was willing to sin beyond Sodom! Judah is named in this family of Canaan because she had adopted herself to them, practiced their ways and taken their sins to a new level.

(49,50) The traditional condemnation of Sodom for their sexual perversions is set aside here as God goes to the root of the problem – a life of ease, pride, full of food, and neglect of the needy.

(51,52) The sins of the ten tribes (Samaria) were not as great as those of Judah. If God destroyed Sodom and allowed Samaria to be taken captive, how can Judah escape punishment? (Compare Mt. 11:23ff.)

(53-55) Those that take these prophecies as literal predictions of the end-times must have quite a bit of trouble here. Sodom and Samaria will be restored alongside Judah! The real point is to make Judah feel guilty of her sins. To raise her up in her sins would call for Sodom and the northern kingdom to also be restored, if God is fair and just. We know from Eze. 37:22 that the ten tribes would never be restored. Some do understand that Sodom represents Gentiles who will follow Christ, this may have some merit.

(56-59) Judah in her self-righteousness held herself so far above Sodom and Samaria that she could not see her own comparable sins.

6. God would remember His covenant in the days of her youth (16:60-63)

“After a full warning of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved. These closing verses are a precious promise, in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but to have fuller accomplishment in gospel times. The Divine mercy should be powerful to melt our hearts into godly sorrow for sin. Nor will God ever leave the sinner to perish, who is humbled for his sins, and comes to trust in His mercy and grace through Jesus Christ; but will keep him by his power, through faith unto salvation.” (MHCC)

(60,61) Nevertheless! It is hard to believe after the first 59 verses that God would have a single word of encouragement at this point, but He does. He will remember the covenant that He made with Abraham and confirmed in David (Jer. 21:13ff.). A covenant will be established in which Israel can welcome her sisters back into the family of God. Salvation of the entire world will be available through this covenant that will be established through the offspring of Judah – Jesus Christ.

(62,63) While God has obligated Himself to forgive and forget our sins, we will remember them forever as a warning and reminder against taking them up again. Note Paul in 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13. “Even a justified sinner should not forget that he has a past of which he is right to be ashamed.” (Taylor, p.142.)

1. The parable stated (17:1-10)

Mighty conquerors are aptly likened to birds or beasts of prey, but their destructive passions are overruled to forward God's designs. Those who depart from God, only vary their crimes by changing one carnal confidence for another, and never will prosper. (MHCC)

(1-4) For additional background see Jer. 21, 37, 39, and 52. Three possible reasons exist for why God chose to use a riddle here: 1)- riddles can reach the heart and convict it before the heart knows what hits it (David and Nathan), 2)- riddles often make the truth more vivid, and 3)- riddles sometimes make the truth easier to grasp and remember longer. The first eagle represents Babylon, Lebanon represents Israel, and the second eagle represents Egypt. The cedar stands for the remnant of Israel (Judah) and the top of the cedar is the royal house. Babylon would crop the top of the tree (Jehoiachin, 2 Ki. 24:12) and carry it into captivity in their land.

(5,6) The eagle planted the seed of the land (Zedekiah) in fruitful soil. Zedekiah had every opportunity to grow and prosper. This seed grew up as a willow instead of an oak. Instead of strength in the face of Nebuchadnezzar, the vine would bend and stoop, but obtain sustenance from Him.

(7,8) Zedekiah turns to Egypt (the second, weaker eagle) and thus begins the end of his power. If Zedekiah would have been content, then Nebuchadnezzar would have left Judah alone.

(9,10) By ignoring Jeremiah and listening to his pro-Egyptian advisors, Zedekiah had ruined his chances of continuing as king of Judah.

2. The parable explained and applied (17:11-21)

The parable is explained, and the particulars of the history of the Jewish nation at that time may be traced. Zedekiah had been ungrateful to his benefactor, which is a sin against God. In every solemn oath, God is appealed to as a witness of the sincerity of him that swears. Truth is a debt owing to all men. If the professors of the true religion deal treacherously with those of a false religion, their profession makes their sin the worse; and God will the more surely and severely punish it. The Lord will not hold those guiltless who take his name in vain; and no man shall escape the righteous judgment of God who dies under unrepented guilt. (MHCC)

(11,12) The explanation of the parable is straightforward enough. Nebuchadnezzar would remove Zedekiah and his kin from power. (2 Ki. 24:11-20.)

(13,14) Zedekiah had taken an oath before God to be loyal to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. 36:13.) It appears that Babylon fully intended for Judah to prosper under this arrangement of vassalage.

(15) Zedekiah must have sent his ambassadors into Egypt, between the sixth month of his sixth year, and the fifth month of his seventh year. Compare Eze. 8:1, with Eze. 20:1. (ACC) He has broken his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, which he swore before God. In this act of faithlessness Zedekiah brings on the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the wrath of Babylon which ultimately represents the wrath of God.

(16-21) See Jer. 37:5-15; 52:4. When the Egyptians came, the siege of Jerusalem was temporarily broken. However, the Egyptians were repelled and the siege was intensified. By breaking his oath with Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah showed the Lord that oaths made in His name meant nothing. Zedekiah had sealed not only his own fate, but the fate of all Judah.

3. The promise of a goodly cedar planted by the Lord (17:22-24)

The unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect. The parable of a tree, used in the threatening, is here presented in the promise. It appears only applicable to Jesus, the Son of David, the Messiah of God. The kingdom of Satan, which has borne so long, so large a sway, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, which was looked upon with

contempt, shall be established. Blessed be God, our Redeemer is seen even by the ends of the earth. We may find refuge from the wrath to come, and from every enemy and danger, under his shadow; and believers are fruitful in him. (MHCC)

- (22) I will raise up another monarchy, which shall come in the line of David, namely, the Messiah; who shall appear as a tender plant, as to his incarnation; but he shall be high and eminent; his Church, the royal city, the highest and purest ever seen on the face of the earth. (ACC) See also: Isa. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; Zec. 3:8.
- (23) Through the Messiah the Davidic house will once again flourish. No government that arose in Judah between Zedekiah and Christ fulfilled these prophecies.
- (24) What God wants to happen – will happen. He accomplishes His goals in spite of man standing in His way or their unbelief. The expected order (Babylon and Egypt) would eventually wither and fade and the low and dry (the Messianic kingdom) would take its place. (Lk. 1:51-53)

G. Individual Responsibility Before God (18:1-32) (See McGuiggan, p. 185)

The soul that sinneth it shall die. As to eternity, every man was, is, and will be dealt with, as his conduct shows him to have been under the old covenant of works, or the new covenant of grace. Whatever outward sufferings come upon men through the sins of others, they deserve for their own sins all they suffer; and the Lord overrules every event for the eternal good of believers. All souls are in the hand of the great Creator: he will deal with them in justice or mercy; [none] will...perish for the sins of another, who is not in some sense worthy of death for his own. We all have sinned, and our souls must be lost, if God deal with us according to his holy law; but we are invited to come to Christ. If a man who had shown his faith by his works, had a wicked son, whose character and conduct were the reverse of his parent's, could it be expected he should escape the Divine vengeance on account of his father's piety? Surely not. And should a wicked man have a son who walked before God as righteous, this man would not perish for his father's sins. If the son was not free from evils in this life, still he should be partaker of salvation. The question here is not about the meritorious ground of justification, but about the Lord's dealings with the righteous and the wicked. (MHCC)

1. A popular proverb in Israel put all the blame on their fathers (18:1-4)

- (1,2) Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah had to deal with this false parable, namely, that the sons would be punished for the sins of the father. (Jer. 31:29.) It is not unreasonable that the Jews had come to believe this parable as it reflects back to their understanding of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5:9; See also Lam. 5:7). Even Ezekiel's own teaching placed much of the blame for Judah's current situation on the previous generation's dalliance with idolatry and unrighteousness. The teaching of the Law implied that only the children that followed the sins of their fathers would receive punishment for those sins.
- (3,4) Ezekiel's teaching on this subject was not new; Moses had already clarified it in the Law (Deut. 24:16). Ezekiel calls for the people to desist from using the parable anymore. Bottom line: the one that commits the sin will be held responsible for it.

2. God deals with each one according to his own works (18:5-20)

- (5-9) Here we see the characteristics of the truly righteous man. He does what is right and avoids that which is wrong. Note the list of things that he does and does not do; all found in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The truly righteous man lives for God and will in the end live with God!

- (10-13) What if the righteous man has an evil son? The evil son will answer for his own sins. It really is that simple. The Bible teaches us here and elsewhere that godly parents can have rebellious children and still stand blameless in the sight of God. "Environment is not omnipotent!" (McGuiggan, p.189.)
- (14-18) Now we come to the grandchild. Regardless of the goodness of his grandfather or the unrighteousness of his father, this man will be judged by his own doings.
- (19,20) God has never ridden anyone into either heaven or hell on the coattails of another person. (Rom. 2:6,9). Please compare the lives of these three men to the lives of Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah.

3. Each man can change his ways, and God will deal accordingly (18:21-32)
 "The wicked man would be saved, if he turned from his evil ways. The true penitent is a true believer. None of his former transgressions shall be mentioned unto him, but in the righteousness which he has done, as the fruit of faith and the effect of conversion, he shall surely live. The question is not whether the truly righteous ever become apostates. It is certain that many who for a time were thought to be righteous, do so, while verses 26,27 speaks the fullness of pardoning mercy: when sin is forgiven, it is blotted out, it is remembered no more. In their righteousness they shall live; not for their righteousness, as if that were an atonement for their sins, but in their righteousness, which is one of the blessings purchased by the Mediator. What encouragement a repenting, returning sinner has to hope for pardon and life according to this promise! In verse 28 is the beginning and progress of repentance. True believers watch and pray, and continue to the end, and they are saved. In all our disputes with God, he is in the right, and we are in the wrong." (MHCC)

- (21-23) A man does not live under the shadow of his father's sin and neither does he need to live under the shadow of his own sin. He can repent. It is God's will and longing that all men repent and live (2 Pet. 3:9). God is just when He forgives the penitent. Here we see that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination was not in force under the Old Law. "And if God can have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, he cannot have made a decree to abandon him to the evil of his nature, and then damn him for what he could not avoid: for as God can do nothing with which he is not pleased, so he can decree nothing with which he is not pleased. But he is "not pleased with the death of a sinner," therefore he cannot have made a decree to bring him to this death." (ACC)
- (24) A righteous man can fall from grace. Another Calvinistic belief bites the dust! A previously godly man can choose to *repent* of his righteousness and follow a lifestyle of evil.
- (25-29) God's ways are fair and just. It is Israel that wishes for injustice and unfairness. God's law of individual responsibility is supremely just.
- (30-32) "The Lord will judge each of the Israelites according to his ways. On this is grounded an exhortation to repent, and to make them a new heart and a new spirit. God does not command what cannot be done, but admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for what is not. Ordinances and means are appointed; directions and promises are given, that those who desire this change may seek it from God." (MHCC) God calls for individual activity and effort in order to affect repentance and enable a spiritual reformation to take place. The fatalistic view that we inherit our father's sins and therefore have no recourse but to bear their consequences, leads to our own condemnation. To live by the proverb of v. 2 is to capitulate and die! (Paraphrased from Taylor, p. 152)

H. A Lamentation for the Princes of Israel (19:1-14) (See McGuiggan, p. 201)

1. A dirge over Judah's kings who were captured and exiled (19:1-9)
 Ezekiel is to compare the kingdom of Judah to a lioness. He must compare the kings of Judah to a lion's whelps; they were cruel and oppressive to their own subjects. The righteousness of

God is to be acknowledged, when those who have terrified and enslaved others, are themselves terrified and enslaved. When professors of religion form connections with ungodly persons, their children usually grow up following after the maxims and fashions of a wicked world. Advancement to authority discovers the ambition and selfishness of men's hearts; and those who spend their lives in mischief, generally end them by violence. (MHCC)

- (1) Some commentators suggest that the two whelps of this story represent Jehoahaz (2 Ki. 23:31-35) and Jehoiachin (2 Ki. 24:8-16). McGuiggan reminds us that the second whelp could not be Jehoiakim due to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer. 22:18) forbidding lamentations on his behalf.
- (2-4) King Jehoahaz (Shallum) only reigned for three months before he was carried off to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho. The attributes assigned to Jehoahaz only reflect his potential because he was carried off to Egypt within 3 months. The lioness probably represents the nation of Judah as opposed to Jehoahaz's real mother or perhaps the royal family in particular.
- (5-9) Ezekiel skips over Jehoiakim and continues the tale with his son Jehoiachin. Similar liberty has been taken with Jehoiachin's record for the purpose of the story, as he also reigned only for three months before being taken into captivity. The word for "cage" here has come to mean "dog collar" in Hebrew.

2. A dirge over the fall of Judah (19:10-14)

Jerusalem was a vine, flourishing and fruitful. This vine is now destroyed, though not plucked up by the roots. She has by wickedness made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel to burn her. Blessed be God, one Branch of the vine here alluded to, is not only become a strong rod for the scepter of those that rule, but is Himself the true and living Vine. This shall be for a rejoicing to all the chosen people of God throughout all generations. (MHCC)

- (10) See Gen 49:9-12 for the first instance in the Bible of the imagery of lions, scepters and vines. Here the scepters represent the succession of rulers of Israel sent out by the vine (royal family). When the vine is transplanted to the desert its chief branch (Zedekiah) destroys the fruit and foliage of the vine.
- (11) The mighty "rods" of Israel included such men as David, Jehoshaphat, Solomon, Uzziah, and Hezekiah.
- (12,13) The royal vine would be uprooted and carried away to Babylon, the end of a long line of setbacks to the royal family.
- (14) The responsibility for the plight of the royal family is the royal family itself! There would be relief via Zedekiah as he was part of the problem.

VI. PREDICTION OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM (20:1-24:27) [12]

A. Israel's History of Rebellion (20:1-29) (See McGuiggan, p. 209)

1. Resistance to God in Egypt (20:1-9)

"Those hearts are wretchedly hardened which ask God leave to go on in sin, and that even when suffering for it; see v. 32. God is justly angry with those who are resolved to go on still in their trespasses. Cause the people to know the evil deeds of their fathers, that they may see how righteous it was with God to cut them off." (MHCC)

- (1) Note three recurring themes in this chapter of real history: a) Israel's rebellion against God, despite of His continued mercy; b) the wilderness wanderings represented as a state of Israel's collective mind; and c) God's concern for His name. The pious acting elders once again approach Ezekiel looking for some comforting words concerning their plight. The year is 590 BC.

(2-4) " The whole chapter is a consecutive history of the unfaithfulness ingratitude, rebellion, and idolatry of the Jews, from the earliest times to that day; and vindicates the sentence which God had pronounced against them, and which he was about to execute more fully in delivering them and the city into the hands of the Chaldeans." (ACC) They did not come to hear the truth, just some comforting words. The Lord styles them as models of their unrighteous forefathers.

(5-9) Israel's history technically begins not with Abraham, but Moses at the "burning bush." But even before Moses, the children of Israel were dabbling with Egyptian idolatry. See that it was God who elected Israel, revealed His will for them to them through Moses, and provided for them as they escaped from Egypt. God through Moses took measures to protect His name and bring Israel back to an understanding of one true God. Note commandment number one.

2. Resistance to God in the wilderness (20:10-26)

"The history of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament as well as in the Old, for warning. God did great things for them. He gave them the law, and revived the ancient keeping of the Sabbath day. Sabbaths are privileges; they are signs of our being his people. If we do the duty of the day, we shall find, to our comfort, it is the Lord that makes us holy, that is, truly happy, here; and prepares us to be happy, that is, perfectly holy, hereafter. The Israelites rebelled, and were left to the judgments they brought upon themselves. God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, yet he is not the Author of sin: there needs no more to make men miserable, than to give them up to their own evil desires and passions." (MHCC)

(10-17) God must force Israel out of Egypt and into the freedom of the wilderness. He institutes the Sabbath as a sign of His deliverance. He gave them a Law of honor, which they continually refused to keep throughout their history. Because of their unfaithfulness, the majority of those that left Egypt were banned from entering the Promised Land (Num. 14:29; Ps. 95:8-10). Note the repeated pattern of grace, rebellion and wrath withheld. Salvation (then as now) is predicated on doing the will of the Father.

(18-26) Despite the Lord's pleadings while they were in the wilderness, the people continued to rebel and sin willfully. This disobedience occurred generation after generation. Jehovah was willing to let His people "go to the gutter" so that they might see that He is God. Nothing can be right if God is left out of the picture (Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24; 2 Thess. 2:11).

3. Resistance to God in Canaan (20:27-29)

"The Jews persisted in rebellion after they settled in the land of Canaan. And these elders seem to have thought of uniting with the heathen. We make nothing by our profession if it be but a profession. There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead." (MHCC)

(27-29) Through God's mercy the remnant of Israel finally enters the land of Canaan and immediately takes over the heathen high places for their own idolatry.

B. The Future Restoration of Israel (20:30-44)

1. God would not allow the present generation to inquire of Him (20:30-32)

(30-32) Now the word comes to the Israel of Ezekiel's day. If it was up to the Israelites, they would have become absorbed into the nations that surrounded them. God makes it clear that this would not happen in their generation. God refuses to be inquired of by such a wicked people.

2. God would purify Israel among the heathen (20:33-39)
“The wicked Israelites, notwithstanding they follow the sinful ways of other nations, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity, but shall be separated from them for destruction. There is no shaking off God's dominion; and those who will not yield to the power of his grace, shall sink under the power of his wrath. But not one of God's jewels shall be lost in the lumber of this world. He will bring the Jews to the land of Israel again; and will give them true repentance. They will be overcome with his kindness: the more we know of God's holiness, the more we see the hateful nature of sin. Those who remain unaffected amidst means of grace, and would live without Christ, like the world around them, may be sure it is the way to destruction.” (MHCC)

(33-39) The Babylonian captivity will serve as another wilderness experience for Israel. This one will finally purge the idolatry from among them. Those that want to continue to sin are welcome to make that choice, but God wants His name left out of their doings.

3. God will ultimately gather Israel and bless the land (20:40-44)

(40-42) Finally, the true Israel will come to spiritual Zion and worship God in a manner that He deserves. Some commentators feel that this is reference to the return led by Ezra and Nehemiah, but all (that I consulted) agree that these verses have Messianic overtones.

(43) “These promises may, in a certain limited sense, be applied to the restoration from the Babylonian captivity; but they must have their proper fulfillment when the Jews shall accept Jesus as their Savior, and in consequence be brought back from all their dispersions to their own land.” (ACC)

(44) In contrast to these “inquiring minds” the members of true Israel will have a repentant spirit and will know that God is the Lord. They will realize that God has been lenient with their nation. The remnant will be restored, penitent, accepted and instructed.

C. Judgment is Soon to Come Against Jerusalem (20:45-21:27) (See McGuiggan, p. 219)

1. Parable of a burning forest kindled by the Lord (20:45-49)
“Judah and Jerusalem had been full of people, as a forest of trees, but empty of fruit. God's word prophesies against those who bring not forth the fruits of righteousness. When He will ruin a nation, who or what can save it? The plainest truths were as parables to the people. It is common for those who will not be wrought upon by the word, to blame it.” (MHCC)

(45-49) This prophecy is towards the forests of the south. Imagine Ezekiel standing in Babylon and looking towards Judea. In Old Testament times Palestine was a forested land and not the tree poor land of modern times. A forest fire is coming that will sweep through the land. No one will be able to fight it and everyone will see it and its results. There will be no doubt that the fire came from the Lord. Ezekiel presupposes that his listeners will label him a “riddler of riddles” and asks the Lord for a plainer vision.

2. The sword of the Lord is coming (21:1-7) [13]
“Here is an explanation of the parable in the last chapter. It is declared that the Lord was about to cut off Jerusalem and the whole land, that all might know it was his decree against a wicked and rebellious people. It behooves those who denounce the awful wrath of God against sinners, to show that they do not desire the woeful day. The example of Christ teaches us to lament over those whose ruin we declare. Whatever instruments God uses in executing his judgments, he will strengthen them according to the service they are employed in. The sword glitters to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It is a sword to others, a rod to

the people of the Lord. God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence, and the prophet must show himself in earnest in publishing it.” (MHCC)

(1-7) The plain language begins. The word of the Lord is against Judea, Jerusalem, and the Temple. The wicked would be punished (not by fire as in the parable) but literally by the sword. Unfortunately, as in any war, even the innocent would feel some suffering via captivity. Losing their righteous remnant will be the “straw that breaks the camel’s back.” Isa. 57:1 indicates that sometimes the righteous die to spare them from facing evil. (See also 2 Ki. 22:20, concerning righteous King Josiah.) The sword of the Lord would stay out of its sheath until the job was done. Ezekiel gives another of his action sermons by giving an outward display of anguish. The object here is to provoke appropriate questions from the people. Note the unifying theme of the “sword” in the oracles of this chapter.

3. The sword is prepared for impartial justice (21:8-17)

(8-11) The Sword of the Lord is polished and sharpened and ready for slaughter. What kind of fool would mock such a sword in the face of imminent danger? The Sword is impartial and finds and destroys evil wherever it may be, whether in foreign lands or in David’s own kingdom. Even the royal line itself will not withstand the Sword.

(12-17) Ezekiel is to clap his hands and strike his thigh as if in either horror or glee. If in horror, it is a response to the dreadful nature of the punishment coming against his people. If in glee, then he is representing himself as a spectator “enjoying the show.” The reference to “doubling” and “three times” probably represents the three captivities and the deposing of the final three kings. The same sword that is sent to kill Zedekiah (“deadly wounded wicked one”) will kill princes and commoners alike. Ezekiel seems to be acting out the part of the master swordsman as he prophesies; he most likely was brandishing a sword as he gave this action sermon. The Lord claps his hands together as if calling for the festivities to cease.

4. The sword of Nebuchadnezzar will come against Jerusalem (21:18-24)
“By the Spirit of prophecy Ezekiel foresaw Nebuchadnezzar's march from Babylon, which he would determine by divination. The Lord would overturn the government of Judah, till the coming of Him whose right it is. This seems to foretell the overturnings of the Jewish nation to the present day, and the troubles of states and kingdoms, which shall make way for establishing the Messiah's kingdom throughout the earth. The Lord secretly leads all to adopt his wise designs. And in the midst of the most tremendous warnings of wrath, we still hear of mercy, and some mention of Him through whom mercy is shown to sinful men.” (MHCC)

(18,19) The prophet is to lay down a road from Babylon that has two forks. One fork would go towards Jerusalem and the other towards Ammon. He will set a signpost at the fork clearly marking the way to each town.

(20) Jerusalem is noted as being fortified. Even though the false prophets did not think that war was coming, they were prepared (or so they thought) because they aligned themselves with Egypt.

(21,22) Here we see the Babylonian practices of divination: shaking the arrows, consulting the images and looking into the liver of a dead animal. The arrows would be marked and tossed to determine which way to go, much like our coin toss. The liver was universally thought to be the chief organ by the ancients. The medium would examine the liver of a sacrifice and especially pay attention to its lower end. What the Babylonians did not realize was that God had rigged their divinations, causing Jerusalem’s arrow and a good liver to come into play.

(23) “To Zedekiah and his ministers, who had bound themselves by the oath of the Lord to be faithful to the Chaldeans, and to pay them the promised tribute. The oaths may refer, farther, to the alliances

formed with the Egyptians, Ammonites, and others. They will not believe that Nebuchadnezzar shall succeed against them, while they expect the powerful assistance of the Egyptians.” (ACC)

- (24) God will not forget the open iniquity of the princes, prophets, and priests. The very ones that should understand that God should not be withstood to the face are the ones withstanding God to the face!

5. Zedekiah’s fall is prophesied (21:25-27)

- (25-27) There was no hope for Israel as long as people like Zedekiah were in charge. The turban here represents the priesthood which will also be brought down because of their corruption. Chaos will reign until the new Master comes. The Christ will be given the right to represent God to man and man to God. Regardless of where the people believe their real hope lies, only God can guide them to it (Hos. 2:15; Josh 7:26).

D. The Ammonites Also Will Be Slain by the Sword (21:28-32)

“The diviners of the Ammonites made false prophecies of victory. They would never recover their power, but in time would be wholly forgotten. Let us be thankful to be employed as instruments of mercy; let us use our understandings in doing good; and let us stand aloof from men who are only skilful to destroy.” (MHCC)

- (28) See Zep 2:8-10. Ammon will not get off lightly. Their day is also coming. “They had reproached and insulted Judea in its low estate, see Eze. 25:3,6. This prophecy against them was fulfilled about five years after the taking of Jerusalem.” (ACC) it appears that even though Ammon originally allied itself with Judah against Babylon, they eventually changed sides and brought the sword against Jerusalem.

- (29-32) After destroying Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar would give the land of Palestine a rest. But he would eventually return and the Ammonites would not be spared. Their ultimate fate would be more devastating than that of Israel or Egypt; there will come a time when they would be remembered no more. “No prospect of restoration, no continuance in succeeding generations, no memorial, not even a memory. Oblivion.” (Taylor, p. 165.)

E. The Sins of Jerusalem and Israel (22:1-31) (See McGuigan, p. 233)

1. Jerusalem is guilty of shedding blood and must be judged (22:1-16)

“The prophet is to judge the bloody city; the city of bloods. Jerusalem is so called, because of her crimes. The sins which Jerusalem stands charged with are exceeding sinful. Murder, idolatry, disobedience to parents, oppression and extortion, profanation of the Sabbath and holy things, seventh commandment sins, lewdness and adultery. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness. Sinners provoke God because they forget him. Jerusalem has filled the measure of her sins. Those who give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts will justly be given up to be portioned by them. Those who resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other happiness than their own hands can furnish; and a miserable portion it will prove.” (MHCC)

- (1,2) As in 20:4, God sets Ezekiel up as the prosecutor in His court. The court has already rendered a guilty verdict and is now in the penalty phase. Ezekiel is to list their shortcomings in no uncertain terms.
- (3-12) Note the list: murder, idolatry, lack of parental respect, orphans starved and raped by the courts, Sabbaths despised, sexual crimes (including incest) and lying. Compare this list to the Ten Commandments and the so-called Holiness Code of Lev. 17-26. They had broken every statute God had given them.

- (13) “The curse of God rests upon wealth gained by sinful practices. It brings upon its owners trouble and misery instead of profit in this life, and exposes them to his wrath in the life to come.” (FBN) To dabble in sin is danger, the results are spiritually deadly.
- (14) On the judgment day there will be no defiance from man – just fear.
- (15,16) Israel would learn that sin brings the ultimate humiliation, it creates loneliness and homelessness, and it abuses and mistreats its victims. This is a terrifying description of a nation whose end was near.
2. Jerusalem will be refined as in a smelting furnace (22:17-22)
 “Israel, compared with other nations, had been as the gold and silver compared with baser metals. But they were now as the refuse that is consumed in the furnace, or thrown away when the silver is refined. Sinners, especially backsliding professors, are, in God's account, useless and fit for nothing. When God brings his own people into the furnace, he sits by them as the refiner by his gold, to see that they are not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful. The dross shall be wholly separated, and the good metal purified. Let those who suffer pains, or lingering sickness, and find that their hearts can scarcely bear these light and momentary afflictions, take warning to flee from the wrath to come; for if these trials are not sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the cleansing their hearts and hands from sin, far worse things will come upon them.” (MHCC)
- (17-22) “They are all like base metal-brass, tin, iron, and lead alloyed together with silver. Ye must be put in the furnace, and subjected to the most intense fire, till your impurities are consumed away. No ordinary means will avail any thing; the most violent must be resorted to.” (ACC) Here God is not speaking of a refining process, it is not about the pure gold that remains, but about the dross that is destroyed in the process.
3. Destruction is coming because the whole land is corrupt (22:23-31)
 “All orders and degrees of men had helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt. The people that had any power abused it, and even the buyers and sellers find some way to oppress one another. It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained. Let all who fear God, unite to promote his truth and righteousness; as wicked men of every rank and profession plot together to run them down.” (MHCC)
- (23-25) Though already suffering, Judah has not fully paid for her sins. The drought of destruction is not over, it has barely begun. The prophets are conspiring against the people (and thus the Lord). The religious leaders are spiritually sick and therefore the entire nation is infected.
- (26) “Even they whose lips should preserve knowledge, have not instructed the people: they have violated my law, not only in their private conduct, but in their careless and corrupt manner of serving in my temple.” (ACC) Contrast these false priests to Ezra (Ezr. 7:10). If the spiritual leaders will not or cannot lead, how can the people follow?
- (27,28) The leaders of the political nation were no better. They used their influence to manipulate the prophets and priests and oppress the people. Can honest men work in the upper levels of government? See Dan. 1, 3, 5, and 6. “Even those who profess themselves to be my prophets, have been unfaithful in the discharge of their office; have soothed the people in their sins, and pretended to have oracles of peace and safety when I had not spoken to them.” (ACC)
- (29) Anyone with enough power or authority to “lord it over” someone else – would! The corrupt church and government did not bother the corrupt citizens; they used both to their own advantage.
- (30) “I sought for a man... that would faithfully exhort, reprove and counsel, with all long-suffering and doctrine. But none was to be found!” (ACC) Of course this is figurative language because we know Jeremiah and others were still on God's side in Jerusalem. The nation as a whole however was virtually entirely corrupt.

- (31) Because no one could be found that would live under God's authority, the nation was doomed. Sin is nothing less than ultimate self-doom. "Considering the above, has there not been sufficient reason why I should abandon such a people, and pour out upon them such a destructive storm of calamities?" (ACC)

F. A Parable of Two Immoral Sisters (23:1-49) (See McGuiggan, p. 247) [14]
In this parable, Samaria and Israel bear the name Aholah, "her own tabernacle;" because the places of worship those kingdoms had, were of their own devising. Jerusalem and Judah bear the name of Aholibah, "my tabernacle is in her," because their temple was the place which God himself had chosen, to put his name there. The language and figures are according to those times. Will not such humbling representations of nature keep open perpetual repentance and sorrow in the soul, hiding pride from our eyes, and taking us from self-righteousness? Will it not also prompt the soul to look to God continually for grace, that by his Holy Spirit we may mortify the deeds of the body, and live in holy conversation and godliness? (MHCC)

1. Their wickedness began in Egypt (23:1-4)

- (1,2) "All the Hebrews were derived from one source, Abraham and Sarah; and, till the schism under Rehoboam, formed but one people: but as these ten tribes and a half separated from Judah and Benjamin, they became two distinct people under different kings; called the kingdom of Judah, and the kingdom of Israel. They are called here, because of their consanguinity (close connection or relationship, cd), *two sisters*. The elder, Samaria, (for there was the seat of government for the kingdom of Israel,) was called Aholah, "a tent." The younger, Judah, was called Aholibah, "my tent is in her," because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the seat of the government of the kingdom of Judah." (ACC) These verses cannot be taken too literally as the split in the kingdom was not evident in Egyptian captivity. They do point to what would become the frame of mind of both kingdoms after the split did occur.
- (3) The "sisters" began their evil practices as young girls while under Egyptian bondage. They not only allowed the Egyptians to ravage them, they encouraged it. These passages refer to Israel's idolatry, but more to the point of this chapter, Israel's willingness to be politically embraced by whatever nation seemed to be the best ally for the time being.
- (4) As noted above in the Clarke quote, the names are given a reference based on each kingdom's relationship with God. Samaria had already abandoned God's "tent," while Judah remained faithful for a time.

2. The harlotry of Samaria and her just punishment (23:5-10)

- (5-8) Regardless of the fact that Samaria was the "wife" of God; she chose to lust after Assyria's leaders and her riches. Even if the Assyrians were not available, Samaria was ready to leave God for somebody – anybody that she thought would fulfill her desires.
- (9,10) 2 Ki. 17:3-6, 23; 18:9-11. God let Samaria have what she lusted for and Assyria took her, used her, abused her and left her!

3. The harlotry of Jerusalem (23:11-21)

- (11-21) Judah refused to learn from the mistakes of Samaria and began to make exactly the same mistakes with "lovers" of her own, including the Assyrians. But the Assyrians did not slake her lusts so she went after the Babylonians as well. Upon receiving what she lusted for, she becomes repulsed by it

and seeks even other “lovers.” Her continued bad behavior made it impossible for God to forget her prior sins (all the way back to Egypt).

4. The punishment of Jerusalem (23:22-35)

(22-35) Note the four oracles: 1)- vv. 22-27: Judah will come under the judgment of her foreign lovers (at God’s direction). 2)- vv.28-31: Judah will come to hate her former lover (Babylon) because of the results of the hostile invasion that will come down upon from the north. 3)- vv. 31-34: This oracle is in the form of a poem introduced in verse 31. For a literal rendering of the poem see Taylor, p. 175. 4)- v. 35: This oracle repeats the verdict of 22:12, showing that their punishment is based on their inability to remember the Lord. Israel did not find God to be a compatible or satisfying partner, so she sought new lovers. These new lovers were even less satisfying than God. But Israel would still not return to God and thus must be punished.

5. A further indictment of the sins of the two sisters (23:36-49)

“After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters had in effect become one again; and therefore, in these verses, the prophet takes those to task jointly who were thus conjoined...” (MHC)

(36-44) God calls on Ezekiel to state a verdict. The case is summarized: Sabbath breaking, child slaying, idolatry and hypocritical worship. Would supposed children of God really do these things? Sin all week and show up at worship services and act as if all is right with the world and God!

(45-49) The punishment is as much for the survivors as it is for the punished. The key for us is that we realize that we are the survivors and that we must avoid the pitfalls of Samaria and Judah in our own lives.

G. The Boiling Pot and Death of Ezekiel’s Wife Portray the Fall of Jerusalem (24:1-27) (See McGuiggan, p. 257)

1. The parable of the cooking pot (24:1-14)

“The pot on the fire represented Jerusalem besieged by the Chaldeans: all orders and ranks were within the walls, prepared as a prey for the enemy. They ought to have put away their transgressions, as the scum, which rises by the heat of the fire, is taken from the top of the pot. But they grew worse, and their miseries increased. Jerusalem was to be leveled with the ground. The time appointed for the punishment of wicked men may seem to come slowly, but it will come surely. It is sad to think how many there are, on whom ordinances and providences are all lost.” (MHCC)

(1,2) January 15, 588 BC, see also 2 Ki. 24:1-2; 25:1; Jer. 52:4; and Zech. 8:19. While the liberal commentators take Ezekiel’s knowledge of this date as “proof” that he must have been in Palestine; conservatives counter that this is “proof” that he was a true prophet and spoke under the direct influence of God. It has been a little over three and one-half years since Ezekiel began to preach and now the day had finally arrived.

(3-5) (Jer. 1:13.) Taylor believes these verses are from a house-hold cooking song that Ezekiel is using to make his point. The caldron is Jerusalem; the fire represents the siege; and the pieces of flesh are the inhabitants. (Taylor, p. 178.) McGuiggan believes this is another of Ezekiel’s action sermons.

(6-14) The old scummy pot will yield up its contents randomly, with no regard as to whether the meat is of a choice cut or not. The blood spilled in the process would not be handled properly and would be used against Jerusalem as Abel’s blood was used against Cain. (Nah. 3:1; Hab. 2:12.) Not only will the

stew be consumed in the boiling pot, but eventually the pot itself will be consumed. If Jerusalem had been amenable to God's wishes much earlier they would have avoided this suffering, punishment, and exile. (Heb. 5:8,9; Mt. 16:21-23.)

2. Ezekiel's reaction to the death of his wife serves as a sign (24:15-27)

“Though mourning for the dead is a duty, yet it must be kept under by religion and right reason: we must not sorrow as men that have no hope. Believers must not copy the language and expressions of those who know not God. The people asked the meaning of the sign. God takes from them all that was dearest to them. And as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. Blessed be God, we need not pine away under our afflictions; for should all comforts fail, and all sorrows be united, yet the broken heart and the mourner's prayer are always acceptable before God.” (MHCC)

(15,16) Ezekiel would lose his loving wife during the very day it was revealed. While this would send any loving spouse into mourning, he was to refrain from open sorrow and continue with his work.

(17) The usual Jewish signs of grief were to be closely avoided. (Jer. 16:5-13)

(18) “The prophet's wife was a type of the city, which was to him exceedingly dear. The death of his wife represented the destruction of the city by the Chaldeans; see Eze 24:21, where the temple is represented to be the desire of his eyes, as his wife was, Eze 24:16.” (ACC) Do not think less of Ezekiel for his actions here. He is not disrespecting the memory of his beloved wife, but following the instructions of his Beloved Lord.

(19-24) In these verses Ezekiel makes the explanation and application of all that had just happened and been said. Just as Ezekiel had lost his dearest object, the nation was about to lose theirs – the Temple. Some commentators feel that mourning would be out of place in the face of such a complete disaster. McGuiggan tends toward something like, “now take your medicine, you have it coming.”

(25-27) This brings us to a turning point in Ezekiel's ministry. His God-imposed “dumbness” is lifted and he is now free to speak when and as he wishes (of course under God's direction). The people will begin to receive him as a true prophet once the report from Jerusalem comes to Babylon. Ezekiel had himself become a sign to the exiles. “Thus he was not only a prophet to foretell such things, but he was also a sign or portent, shadowing them out by circumstances in his own person and family; and thus the prediction, agreeing so perfectly with the event, proved that the previous information was from the Lord.” (ACC)