

# Ezekiel Study Guide

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**Why study Ezekiel?** Some students simply find this book fascinating. The prophet describes massive visions of God’s spiritual forces in action behind the scenes and blueprints for the future. He engages in startling symbolic activities to teach God’s people. He illustrates lasting principles in sweeping surveys of past, present, and future. But our study must not miss the aspect in which the book is unique. Only Ezekiel saw God’s glory depart as He closed His former kingdom over Israel. Only he described in detail a future reinstatement of a kingdom core (that is, a temple and parts closely related to it). Surely God designed this book to give us divine perspective about God’s earthly kingdom the whole Bible talks about.

**Why use this study guide?** It may help you focus on what Ezekiel says, the first step in understanding any Bible book. For each chapter it provides key questions for you to answer—and answers to check yours. It also suggests probable meanings by its outline, introductions to questions, frequent notes, and appendixes. Its approach is premillennial, which interprets literally (that is, normally) whenever possible. Especially important to help interpret Ezekiel 40-48 is Appendix B.

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## Instructions

**How to Use This Guide.** Skip nothing. Follow instructions as you go along. Read all the notes. Read each Bible paragraph or section as directed and answer the questions, then check your answers against those provided. My titles and observations also suggest interpretations. Each page header usually indicates whatever chapter of Ezekiel begins to be studied on that page.

**Bible Versions and Terms.** Except as noted, everything here is based on the New American Standard Bible, 1971. NIV stands for New International Version, 1984. KJV is King James Version. *The LORD* (with ORD as small capital letters) stands for *Yahweh*, the name of the true God. For the use of *Messiah* (= *Christ*) as the title for the ultimate Ruler, see Appendix B.

## Historical Background for Ezekiel

**A Crucial Year.** The prophet Ezekiel ministered before and after the decisive events of 586 B.C. That year saw **the end of God’s kingdom on earth**, which had begun at the Exodus. The beginning of the kingdom was clearly marked in Scriptures, such as Psalm 114:1–2: “When Israel went forth from Egypt...Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion.” Just as clearly was its destruction foreseen, as early as Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

**The Fall of the Northern Tribes (Israel).** The process of destruction began right after Saul, David, and Solomon had reigned over all the tribes. In 931 B.C. God’s kingdom broke into two parts: the ten tribes of “Israel” to the north and Judah to the south. Later, Isaiah and other prophets predicted the downfall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria. That happened—and many went into exile—by 722 B.C. However, Judah, including Jerusalem with God’s temple and the throne of David, survived about 136 years more.

**The Fall of Judah and the Kingdom.** Prophets like Habakkuk and Jeremiah predicted that God would finish bringing His kingdom to an end by means of revived Babylon. That country began to rule the world in 605 B.C. In the same year its king Nebuchadnezzar took the first group of Jews captive from Jerusalem to Babylonia. Daniel was one of them. The final doom for Judah had begun. A much larger group of exiles, Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin among them, went to Babylonia in 597 B.C. The end took place in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. To see the main deportations listed, study Chart A, which follows.

**Ezekiel and Jeremiah.** The prophet Ezekiel began his ministry in Babylonia in 593 B.C., a few years before the end. His main subject for years was the breakup of God’s kingdom, which he was experiencing in person. The prophet Jeremiah remained in Jerusalem until 586 B.C., during all the terrible judgments ending that era. Most of what he wrote in his books of Jeremiah and Lamentations dealt with it. No one can properly appreciate such books without understanding God’s kingdom. We must pay close attention to God’s reasons for terminating it, also the many predictions of its future restoration.

CHART A <b>Three Deportations from Judah to Babylonia</b> Ordered by King Nebuchadnezzar <i>These completed the breakup of the LORD's earthly kingdom.</i>			
Date & Reference	Davidic King in Jerusalem	Who Were Taken into Exile	Comments
<b>605 B.C.</b> Daniel 1	Jehoiakim	Mostly Daniel and other gifted youth, especially of royal and noble families—chosen to be trained in order to help make Babylon great.	Also taken: vessels from the LORD's temple.
<b>597 B.C.</b> 2 Kings 24:14–16	Jehoiachin	About 10,000 including King Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, warriors, and many craftsmen to help in Babylonian building projects.	Jehoiachin was the last Davidic generation to rule.
<b>586 B.C.</b> 2 Kings 25:4–21	Zedekiah	King Zedekiah and nearly all the Jews remaining (many died in and after the long siege, Ezek. 24:1–2).	Also destroyed: God's capital city and temple.

## Outline of Ezekiel

### I. Ezekiel's Ministry to Israel until the Kingdom Ended (chs. 1–24)

(that is, until the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.)

- A. Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision (chs. 1–3)
- B. Prophecies of Full Destruction for Judah and Jerusalem (chs. 4–7)
- C. A Vision of the End of the Lord's Earthly Kingdom (chs. 8–11)
- D. The Futility of False Optimism (chs. 12–19)
- E. The History of Judah's Corruption (chs. 20–24)

### II. Ezekiel's Oracles against Nearby Nations (chs. 25–32)

- A. The Nearest Nations (ch. 25)
- B. Tyre (chs. 26–28)
- C. Egypt (chs. 29–32)

### III. Ezekiel's Ministry of Comfort Pointing to a Restored Kingdom (chs. 33–48)

- A. Aspects Preparing for a Restored Kingdom (chs. 33–39)
- B. Description of a Restored Kingdom (chs. 40–48)
  - 1. Detailed Plans for the Temple and Its Inauguration (chs. 40–43)
  - 2. Aspects of the Worship to Be Done in the Temple (chs. 44–46)
  - 3. The Life-giving River that Will Flow from the Temple (47:1–12)
  - 4. Divisions of the Land with respect to the Temple (47:13—48:35)

## STUDY QUESTIONS

**Part I. Ezekiel's Ministry to Israel until the Kingdom Ended (chs. 1–24)**

(that is, until the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in 586 B.C.)

**A. Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision (chs. 1–3)****Chapter 1**

Read 1:1–3, the introduction to Ezekiel's first recorded vision. After you read all three verses, answer the questions. As always, check your answers in the Answers section (pp. 27ff).

1. a. Where was Ezekiel when he saw this first vision?  
NOTE: Ezekiel 3:15 shows that the prophet lived at Tel-abib in Babylonia. In Hebrew this name was spelled the same as modern Tel Aviv (meaning "hill of grain") in Israel. However, the NIV says the meaning of Ezekiel's city was different: "mound of the flood [that is, of destruction]."
- b. In what year? (two answers)  
NOTE: This is the first of thirteen dates in Ezekiel, nearly all in chronological order. The Bible monthly/yearly calendar was different from ours in two ways:
  - There was both a *religious new year* and a *civil new year*. The former (as in Ezek. 1) began with the month of *Nisan*, near the spring equinox. The second began with the month of *Tishri*, six months later, near the fall equinox.
  - The Bible year was solar, like ours, lasting the 365 days in which the earth orbits the sun. The months, however, were lunar, averaging 29 ½ days each (either 29 or 30 days from one new moon until the next). Since twelve lunar months have a total of 354 days, there is a shortage of eleven days to fit the solar year. Therefore, an extra month is added as needed, just before the new year.<sup>1</sup>
2. What title did Ezekiel give himself? (This showed what occupation he was qualified to follow by birth.)

Ezekiel's first vision began with a great flashing storm cloud coming from the north. Read 1:4–14, which emphasizes the four living beings from within the cloud.

NOTE: In Scripture the number four often relates to God's material creation in its many aspects. For example, "the four winds of the earth" (Rev. 7:1) stand for all winds; "the four corners of the land" (Ezek. 7:2) stand for all its parts.

3. What four faces did each living being have?

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<sup>1</sup> The Muslim calendar does not make up for the discrepancy between the lunar year and the solar year. Therefore, their important celebrations (such as, the month of fasting, Ramadan) keep shifting their times of the year.

4. Where did they hold their four wings?
5. What was remarkable about their direction of travel and speed of travel?  
NOTE: These awesome creatures were later identified as “cherubim” (10:15, 20). The ending “im” is plural in Hebrew; the singular form is “cherub” (9:3; 10:4, 7, 9). After mankind’s fall, cherubim had been stationed to guard “the way to the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). In the Book of Revelation (4:6–8, et al.) John saw four of them around the heavenly throne. Although they are creatures, they also represent God’s attributes. For example, their number, speed, and ability to move without turning, point to God’s omnipresence and omnipotence.

Read 1:15–21, about the four wheels associated with the living beings.

6. When Ezekiel first saw the wheels, in what position were they?
7. He saw what looked like “one wheel within another” (1:16). Apparently this made possible a remarkable feature when they moved. What feature?
8. They had lofty and awesome rims full of what?
9. What made them move in perfect harmony with the living beings? (1:19, 21)

Read 1:22–28, about the glory of God.

10. Where was the glory of God when Ezekiel first saw it? (The answer has three parts.)  
NOTE: The “expanse” in Ezekiel 1 was “over the heads of the living beings” (1:22), to serve as a platform.<sup>2</sup>
11. Ezekiel described the one seated on the throne above the expanse. Around Him was a radiance like a rainbow (1:27–28; cf. Rev. 4:3). What did God Himself look like?
12. Ezekiel summarized what he saw in this vision as “the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD” (1:28b). What was his immediate response to this vision?  
NOTE: God’s glory also included the cloud. When it filled the original tabernacle, it appeared as a “cloud of light” (Exod. 40:34–35). It will be restored in the future kingdom (cf. Ezek. 43:2). In a sense, it is already in all the earth (Isa. 6:3).

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<sup>2</sup> This “expanse” was not just a space but something material, as seen in the use of the same Hebrew word in Genesis 1. The first expanse mentioned there was made to separate the waters below it from the waters above it (Gen. 1:6–8). Later the sun and moon were placed as “lights in the expanse of the heavens” (1:14, 15, 17). Birds were also created to “fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens” (1:20). The same expanse is compared to a tent curtain in Ps. 104:2 and Isa. 40:22. Such references show that the Hebrew word refers to something material but not necessarily solid. However, the Greek version’s translation of it (*stereoma*) wrongly implies that it is always solid and firm. So does the Latin word *firmamentum*, from which we get the misleading *firmament* in the King James Version.

**Chapter 2**

Read 2:1–10, which describes Ezekiel’s call.

1. God addressed Ezekiel with a title He called him often in this book. What title?
2. To whom did God send him? How did God describe them?
3. God told Ezekiel not to fear the sons of Israel or their words (2:6) but to be faithful to his calling (2:7-8). To help him in these aspects, He gave Ezekiel something to eat. What?

**Chapter 3**

Probably it would have been better to start this chapter right after 2:7.

Read 3:1–15, which describes Ezekiel’s commission.

1. When Ezekiel ate the scroll God gave him, how did it taste?
2. What did God again emphasize about Ezekiel’s target audience?  
NOTE: “Go to the exiles, the sons of your people” (3:11). Neither the LORD nor Ezekiel could get pleasure from announcing judgment. But the message would help preserve a precious remnant within the audience. Through them the LORD would pass Abraham’s blessing to the world (Gen. 12:3). By knowing beforehand the severity and limits of judgment, the remnant would not despair when it came.
3. When the commissioning was finished, what was Ezekiel’s emotional reaction?

Read 3:16–21, an additional instruction to Ezekiel.

4. What was the obligation of a watchman?  
NOTE: His commission as a watchman would be (a) explained in more detail in chapter 18 and (b) repeated under different circumstances in chapter 33.

Read 3:22–27, another vision of the LORD’s glory.

5. What two limitations would Ezekiel have in his ministry?

**B. Prophecies of Full Destruction for Judah and Jerusalem (chapters 4–7)****Chapter 4**

Read 4:1–8, in which God told Ezekiel to portray the coming siege of Jerusalem.

1. How was he to use the brick and the iron plate to portray the siege?
2. How many days was he to lie on each side to “bear the iniquity” of Israel? of Judah?

Read 4:9–17, in which God told Ezekiel to portray the coming famine in Jerusalem.

3. How was he to use special bread and water to portray the famine?
4. What concession did he get from God?

### Chapter 5

Read 5:1–4, in which God told Ezekiel to portray some results of the siege.

1. Ezekiel was to cut off his hair and beard with a sword, then divide it with scales. How was he to dispose of it? NOTE: The meaning of this is given in 5:12, 16–17.

Read 5:5–17, in which God explained why He would judge so severely.

2.
  - a. Why would God show no pity? (What had they done to anger Him?)
  - b. There is a refrain in verses 13, 15, and 17 that is used 65 times in Ezekiel. It shows an important result of God's judging severely, just as He had announced. What result?

### Chapter 6

Read chapter 6, the LORD's prophecy against the mountains of Israel.

1. What was the LORD's objection against the mountains of Israel?
2. One great result of this judgment is repeated four times in this chapter—and often in the rest of the book. What result (seven words)?

### Chapter 7

Read chapter 7, which announced the major disaster about to take place for Israel. As you read, mark repeated words and phrases.

1. Repeated words and phrases show the emphases of this chapter.
  - a. What word is used five times in verses 2, 3, and 6?
  - b. How is verse 3 much like verse 8?
  - c. What eight-word phrase is nearly identical in verses 7 and 12?
  - d. What adjective (showing how many would be judged) is used six times in verses 14–18?

### C. A Vision of the End of the Lord's Earthly Kingdom (chs. 8–11)

#### Chapter 8

Read chapter 8, in which Ezekiel saw abominations in the temple. As you read, start marking every verse that mentions the glory of God/the LORD.

1. Since nearly every date in Ezekiel is counted from the second deportation in 597 B.C., in what year did this vision probably take place (8:1)?

2. Where was Ezekiel taken to see this vision?
3. Ezekiel was shown “abominations” in the temple, first in verse 5, then three “greater abominations” (8:6b, 13, 15). Here is a list of the four places where he saw them, with references. Tell what he saw at each one.
  - (a) at the north of the altar gate, 8:5
  - (b) inside the wall at the entrance to the court, 8:10–11
  - (c) at the entrance of the gate toward the north, 8:14
  - (d) between the porch and the altar, at the entrance to the inner court, 8:16

### Chapter 9

Read chapter 9, in which God began to judge Jerusalem because of the abominations. Continue marking every verse that mentions the glory of God/the LORD.

1. The executioners were “six men,” including one “clothed in linen with a writing case at his loins” (9:2).
  - a. Whom did the man clothed in linen mark?
  - b. Whom did the others kill?

### Chapter 10

Read chapter 10, in which the glory of God/the LORD began to leave the temple. Continue marking every verse that mentions that glory (four times in this chapter).

1.
  - a. What was the man clothed in linen to get from between the whirling wheels?
  - b. What was he told to do with it?
2. Twice in this chapter the glory of God/the LORD changed its location. Where did it go in verse 4? in verses 18–19?

### Chapter 11

Read chapter 11, in which the glory of God/the LORD abandoned the temple and Jerusalem.

1. Where is the last place Ezekiel saw the LORD’s glory in this vision?
2. To their messages of doom the prophets often added flashes of hope, such as Ezekiel 11:16–21. Though God had removed Israel from their land, He was their sanctuary in exile (11:16). List at least four things He would do for them in the future.

### D. The Futility of False Optimism (chs. 12–19)

#### Chapter 12

Read 12:1–7, in which Ezekiel portrayed the exile.

1. What were four steps in his portrayal? (12:3, 4, 5, 6)



Read 12:8–16 for the explanation Ezekiel was to give to the Israelites.

2. What person did the night part of his portrayal especially refer to?

Read 12:17–28, which gives three more messages through Ezekiel to Israel: (1) verses 17–20, (2) verses 21–25, and (3) verses 26–28. Each of these begins with “the word of the LORD came to me saying” (vv. 17, 21, 26).

3. Two of these messages quote mistaken sayings of the people about Ezekiel’s prophetic visions. In one sentence for both, summarize the LORD’s answers to these mistakes.

### Chapter 13

Read 13:1–16, which pronounces the LORD’s judgment against false prophets in Israel, in this case, the male ones.

NOTE: Ezekiel 13:10–16 says the prophets plastered a weak wall with whitewash. This made it look better but no stronger. The weak wall probably meant sinful Judah, as in 22:28, which uses the same verb (cf. 13:22b). The LORD would bring a storm to tear it down—and them too.

1. These prophets had followed their own spirits but had seen no visions from God (13:3, 6–9). What, in general, had their prophecies promised to Jerusalem?

Read 13:17–23, which pronounces the LORD’s judgment against the female false prophets.

2. These women had hunted down God’s people like wild animals—and had perverted justice. What motivated them to do so?

### Chapter 14

Read 14:1–11, about people with “idols in their hearts.”

1. Those with idols in their hearts were “some elders of Israel” who came to consult the LORD through Ezekiel (14:1–3).

NOTE: Here as in 20:1, these were the same as the “elders of Judah” in 8:1.

- a. What message did the LORD send them?

NOTE: Anyone who refused to respond to the LORD had no right to inquire of Him (14:3, 7; see 1 Sam. 28:6). If a prophet answered him anyhow, it was because the LORD had “prevailed upon that prophet” to answer falsely. The word translated “prevail” is elsewhere translated “seduce” (Exod. 22:16). This shows that the LORD Himself would make the false prophet err (see 1 Kings 22:19–23).

- b. What was the LORD’s ultimate purpose in judging severely?

Read 14:12–22, which declares that national judgment was inescapable.

2. a. What were the “four severe judgments” the LORD was sending?

- b. In these conditions even godly men like Noah, Daniel, and Job could not save them. To what would those three be limited?

### Chapter 15

Read chapter 15, which compares the people of Jerusalem to a vine.

NOTE: Verse 3 in the NIV reads, “Is wood ever taken from it to make anything useful? Do they make pegs from it to hang things on?” In verse 7 “They have come out of the fire” refers to the deportation in 597 B.C., of which Ezekiel was a part.

1. They probably considered this comparison a compliment (cf. Psa. 80:8–11). But it was no compliment in this case. Why not?

### Chapter 16

Read chapter 16, a long allegory about unfaithful Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> You will notice that Jerusalem was not cared for at birth (vv. 4–5); she was “thrown out into the open field” to die. But she was rescued and reared by the LORD (vv. 6–7). He then married her and gave her splendor (vv. 8–14). “I spread my skirt over you” (v. 8; cf. Ruth 3:9) symbolized His promise to protect her by marriage. Her “beautiful crown” (v. 12) was a wedding crown. But she used her beauty and splendor to be a prostitute instead (vv. 15–19)—and even sacrificed her children to idols (vv. 20–22). The rest of the chapter describes her unfaithfulness in more detail. “Samaria” in verses 46ff had been the capital of the Northern Kingdom, already in captivity.

1.
  - a. How was Jerusalem more perverse than other prostitutes?
  - b. How did the LORD describe her punishment?
  - c. Her two sisters were bad but not as bad as she. Who were they?
 NOTE: It is fascinating that both of them will be restored (vv. 53, 55).

### Chapter 17

Read chapter 17, another allegory about Judah and God’s kingdom. As you read, use Chart B, which follows. Fill in the missing references in column 3.

NOTE: Verses 16, 18, and 19 show that breaking an oath and treaty taken in the LORD’s name was a sin against the LORD.

NOTE: Although Ezekiel does not interpret 17:22–24 further at this point, the meaning should be obvious. It is a Messianic promise of the coming kingdom of God, in which another Descendant of David (Jesus) will reign. No doubt Jesus’ disciples understood when He used this figure of speech from Ezekiel to describe His future kingdom (Mark 4:30–32).

1. What three missing references did you supply for column 3?

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<sup>3</sup> An allegory is an extended metaphor, therefore, a story in which nearly everything has a meaning beyond what is obvious.

CHART B Ezekiel 17: An Allegory about Eagles & Cedars			
Reference for Item	Item	Reference for Meaning	Meaning
vv. 3–4	A great eagle plucked off the very top of a cedar in Lebanon and replanted it in a city of traders.	v. <u>12</u>	The king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) took the king (Jehoiachin) and princes from Jerusalem to Babylon.
vv. 5–6	The eagle planted a seed that became a low, spreading vine.	vv. _____	The Babylonian king made a covenant with one of the royal family (Zedekiah).
vv. 7–8	Though planted in a good place, this vine sought water from another great eagle instead.	vv. _____	The one under covenant rebelled and sought military help from Egypt.
vv. 9–10	This perverse vine would be pulled up and would wither from the east wind.	vv. _____	This rebellious king would die in Babylon, and his soldiers be killed, with no help from Egypt.
vv. 22–24	The LORD will take the very top of a cedar and plant it on a high mountain. It will bear fruit and give shelter to birds.	NONE	NOT GIVEN

## Chapter 18

For this chapter certain comments are adapted from the NIV Study Bible.

Read 18:1–20, which shows that a person can break the chain of guilt inherited from his ancestors. As you read, study Chart C, which follows, completing columns 5 and 6. It shows that there are three generations in this section: (a) a man, (b) his son, and (c) his grandson.<sup>4</sup>

NOTE: In 18:4 “souls...soul...soul...soul” all translate the Hebrew word *nephesh* (the first one plural). Here, as usual, this word does not refer to a part of a person but to the whole person.

<sup>4</sup> “He has a son” (18:14) means “this son has a son” (NIV).

CHART C					
<b>Ezekiel 18:1–20</b>					
<b>The Chain of Inherited Guilt Can Be Broken.</b>					
Generation	Reference	Person	Reference for Commandments	His Response	The LORD's Judgment
a	18:5	a man	18:6–9	He obeys.	He will live.
b	18:10	the man's son	18:11–13	_____	_____
c	18:14	the son's son	18:15–17	_____	_____

- Ezekiel 18:2–4 and Jeremiah 31:29–30 both speak against the same proverb. It was based on the teaching of Exodus 20:5 and 34:7 but wrongly made that teaching absolute. What was the proverb?
- Ezekiel 18:5–20 presents three generations (a, b, c in the table) that respond differently to the LORD's commandments<sup>5</sup> and are judged differently. (Did you complete columns 5 and 6?)
  - How does each respond to these commandments?
  - What is the LORD's judgment in each case?

NOTE: Twice the people responded, "The way of the LORD is not right" (vv. 25, 29). Apparently they considered He was unjustly judging them for their fathers' sins, as the proverb implied. Instead, it was for their own sins, which they would not admit. Sons will be judged in the same way as their fathers only if they respond the same (see Lam. 5:16).

Read 18:21–32, which shows that (a) the power of accumulated guilt within a person can be broken, and (b) how Israel should respond. As in chapter 14, the key word is "turn" (18:21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30). Mark forms of that word as you read.

- How could Israel break the power of sin within them?

## Chapter 19

Read chapter 19, an allegorical funeral song for two princes.

<sup>5</sup> Basically the same list is repeated for each generation. One commandment in 18:8, 13, 17 (and 22:12) prohibits earning interest on loans. This was designed to avoid profiting from the needy. (There was generally no loss from inflation, which hardly existed.) It was acceptable, however, to charge foreigners interest (Deut. 23:20) and to profit from investments.

NOTE: This song was designed for repeated use: “This is a lament and is to be used as a lament” (19:14c, NIV). There is some doubt in identifying one of the princes. And it is not clear whether the “mother” is Israel (19:1), Judah (8:1, 17), or Jerusalem (5:5).

1. a. What metaphor is used for the “mother” in verses 1–9?
- b. Each of her descendants was captured by the nations and taken captive into exile. To where?
2. a. What metaphor is used for the “mother” in verses 10–14?
- b. What happens to her in verses 10–11?
- c. What happens to her in verses 12–14?

### E. The History of Judah’s Corruption (chs. 20–24)

#### Chapter 20

Read 20:1–29, which surveys the nation’s rebellion. The NIV points out that there are at least three, maybe four, acts in this section (see below).<sup>6</sup> Mark them before you read. As you read, mark words and phrases that are repeated.

- Act 1, in Egypt (vv. 5–9)
- Act 2, in the desert with the first generation (vv. 10–17)
- Act 3, in the desert with the next generation (vv. 18–26)
- Possibly Act 4, in the Promised Land (vv. 28–29)

NOTE: Verses 6 and 15 call the Promised Land “the glory [most beautiful] of all lands.” Though small, that land has great variety—and used to have many more trees and crops. Its greatest beauty was the fact that the LORD chose it. Verse 25 says, “I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live.” This refers to the times when He disciplined Israel by letting other nations—with their bad laws—oppress them.

1. This chapter begins with the third date in the book. Since Jehoiachin’s deportation was in 597 B.C., in what year was this third date?
2. List—with references—at least two of the words or phrases that are repeated.

Read 20:30–49, which promises both judgment and restoration. Verses 45–49 probably go better with chapter 21, which they begin in the Hebrew text.

3. This section seems to indicate stages in Israel’s restoration. When the LORD again acts as king over them and brings them from the peoples,
  - a. where will He first take them?
  - b. to do what? (Give four statements.)

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<sup>6</sup> The NIV also points out that each of the first three acts has four parts: revelation, rebellion, wrath, and reconsideration.

**Chapter 21**

Read chapter 21, which says a lot about the “sword of the LORD.” In verses 1–7 it is drawn for use. In verses 8–17 it is sharpened and told to smite. As you read, mark each occurrence of the word *sword*.

1.
  - a. How many times did you find the word *sword* in this chapter?
  - b. Earthly kings use the LORD’s sword. Who does so in this chapter?  
NOTE: After the rebellion of Jerusalem, Tyre, and Ammon against him, this king is seen consulting his idols in 21:18–23. The answer comes for him to choose the road to Jerusalem.
2. In 21:25–27 there is a prophecy against the “prince of Israel, whose day has come.” His rule would be taken away until who would come?

**Chapter 22**

Ezekiel 22 relates three messages from the LORD about Israel’s sin and punishment. These begin at verses 1, 17, and 23. Read the first message, verses 1–16, which emphasizes bloodshed and related sins. As you read, mark every occurrence of “blood(shed)” or its equivalent.

1. How many times did you find “blood(shed)” or its equivalent in 22:1–16?

Read the second message, 22:17–22, about the purifying furnace. As you read, find and mark repeated words or phrases.

2. List at least three repeated words or phrases in 22:17–22.

Read the third message, 22:23–31, about the recipients of judgment. As you read, find and mark five groups to be judged. Make two changes to agree with the NIV: (a) In verse 25 change “prophets” to “princes” (as the Greek *Septuagint* does, referring to Davidic rulers). (b) In verse 27 change “princes” to “officials.”

3. List five groups to be judged, according to 22:23–31. (Use the recommended changes.)

**Chapter 23**

This chapter is a long allegory about two unfaithful sisters. They were harlots as youths in Egypt—and later as the LORD’s wives. Read 23:1–21, describing them.

1. Give their names and identify them.
2.
  - a. The first sister lusted after some lovers who later punished her. Who were they? (23:5–10)
  - b. The second sister was worse than the first. She lusted after the same lovers, then what others?

Read 23:22–49 about the punishment of these sisters, especially the second one.

3. They would be punished as guilty of adultery and what else?

## Chapter 24

This chapter ends the first major division of Ezekiel's book. The history of Judah's corruption would result in the end of the LORD's earthly kingdom over Israel. Read 24:1–14, about the cooking pot.

1. This prophecy was given when the king of Babylonia laid siege to Jerusalem (vv. 1–2, also 2 Kings 25:1). What year was that in our calendar?
2. This is the second time Ezekiel uses the figure of the cooking pot (see 11:3–12). This time, every piece of meat is destroyed (vv. 6, 10). What is the pot?

Read 24:15–27, about two tragic announcements.

3. a. Each announcement was that “the desire [NIV, delight] of your eyes” would be taken away. Find each case and its meaning.  
b. Ezekiel was to respond in his own loss as the people would in theirs. How?
4. After a “fugitive” arrived from Jerusalem, how would Ezekiel's ministry change?<sup>7</sup>

## Part II. Ezekiel's Oracles against Nearby Nations (chs. 25–32)

### A. The Nearest Nations (ch. 25)

#### Chapter 25

Read chapter 25, which predicts judgments on the nations nearest to Judah: Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia.<sup>8</sup> For each nation mark the related words “because” and “therefore” (at vv. 3 and 4; 6 and 7; 8 and 9; 12 and 13; 15 and 16). Also in each case notice the following refrain or its equivalent, “[You] will know that I am the LORD” (vv. 5 and 7, 11, 14, 17).

1. In each case the nation was guilty in regard to Judah. In what ways?

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<sup>7</sup> Apparently this “fugitive” was one of the first exiles after the temple was burned (vv. 25–26).

<sup>8</sup> The first three were in the area of modern Jordan, east of the Jordan River and the valley (called the Arabah) that continued south of the Dead Sea. The nation of Ammon was around the area of the modern city Amman, which then was Rabbah (v. 5). Moab was south of Ammon and just east of the Dead Sea. Edom was due south of Moab. Philistia was along the Mediterranean coast in the area of modern Gaza and north of it.

**B. Tyre (chs. 26–28)**

Chapters 26–28 all have to do with Tyre, the main city of Phoenicia (now Lebanon). South of Sidon, ancient Tyre was primarily an island and port close to the Mediterranean coast. With a great fleet of “ships of Tarshish,” it was “the marketplace of nations” (Isa. 23:3, NIV). That trade and wealth produced great political power; Tyre was “the bestower of crowns” (Isa. 23:8). There are other predictions about Tyre in Isaiah 23; Jeremiah 25:22; 47:4; Joel 3:4–5; Amos 1:9–10; and Zechariah 9:2–4.

**Chapter 26**

Read chapter 26, which predicts Tyre’s destruction. Like the nations of chapter 25, Tyre also rejoiced at the downfall of Jerusalem (v. 2). Being “mighty on the sea” (v. 17), it considered itself invincible. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar (v. 7) besieged it thirteen or more years without success.<sup>9</sup> Alexander the Great later conquered it by building a causeway to it in the water (332 B.C.).

1. What would Tyre become? (two answers in vv. 4–5 and 14)

**Chapter 27**

Ezekiel 27 is a lamentation over Tyre. Read verses 1–9, in which Tyre is pictured as one of its many elegant ships. Everything about it was the finest. Its sail, for example, was made of “fine embroidered linen from Egypt” (v. 7).

1.
  - a. What woods were used in this ship’s planks (timbers)? mast? oars? deck?
  - b. What is Tyre called in verse 3?

Read 27:10–36, which describes Tyre’s worldwide sea trade (vv. 12–25), then shipwreck (vv. 26–36). Tyre’s trade extended to the farthest known ports and countries. “Tarshish,” for example (vv. 12, 25), was possibly on the coast of southern Spain. As you read, mark repeated words and phrases, such as, “your wares,” relating to Tyre’s business.

2. List at least three other repeated words and phrases in this section.
3. How would all of Tyre’s customers respond to its destruction?

**Chapter 28**

Read 28:1–10, against the “leader [king?] of Tyre.” He was “a man” (vv. 2, 9).

1. What was this leader’s opinion of himself? (Verse 3 is sarcastic, accepting that opinion.)

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<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 26:7 says that Nebuchadnezzar would come from the north. Invaders from the east, as he was, first went up the Euphrates River valley, then south toward the Mediterranean coast.



Read 28:11–19, a lament for “the king of Tyre.” It exalts this king with images taken from the creation and the fall. Read it considering the following opinion of Charles C. Ryrie (who agrees with many other interpreters):

This section (vv. 11–19), with its superhuman references, apparently describes someone other than the human ruler of Tyre; namely, Satan. If so, Satan’s unique privileges before his fall are described in verses 12–15 and the judgment on him in verses 16–19. (*The Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1268)

Ryrie’s opinion seems doubtful. In a footnote I will quote my arguments against his same view of Isaiah 14:12–15.<sup>10</sup> It was not unusual to describe oriental kings in extravagant language. For example, the description of this king’s beauty in 28:12, 17 is like that of Tyre in 27:3, 11. Even his being “in Eden” (v. 13) was poetic. In Ezekiel Eden figures in other purely earthly descriptions. For example, chapter 31 says that the trees in Eden “were jealous” of Assyria (31:8, 9, 16, and 18).

2. What are two things said of this king that were not true of Satan?

Read 28:20–26, about Sidon (about twenty miles north of Tyre). Mark the four occurrences of “then they will know that I am the LORD.”

3. Besides the phrase you just marked, what other reason did the LORD give for judging Sidon? (v. 24)

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<sup>10</sup> Further support for my view on 14:12-15 is in

- John A. Martin, “Isaiah,” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, Inc., 1985), 1061.
- G. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), I:217. Also referred to as TWOT.
- *The NIV Study Bible*, footnote on p. 1037.
- My own study course on Isaiah. For example:

Pope Gregory the Great (a.d. 540-604) popularized a view first presented by Tertullian (a.d. 160-230), that the “king of Babylon” in Isaiah 14 is Satan. Many good commentators now hold this view. In fact, the poetic name *Lucifer* (Latin for “morning star”) given to the king in verse 12 has now become—rightly or wrongly—a name for Satan. Here are three of the reasons for this view: (1) the king’s boasts in verses 13-14; (2) Jesus’ statement that He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18, partly similar to Isa. 14:12); (3) Satan apparently did fall from an exalted original position (possibly referred to in Ezek. 28:11-19; cf. Rev. 12:3-4; 2 Pet. 2:4).

However, this author is not convinced that the “king of Babylon” (Lucifer) is Satan. The first three arguments that follow respond to the reasons given for the Satan view. (1) The boasts in verses 13-14 were not unusual for ancient kings (as seen in Isa. 37:21-29). In the following verses of Isaiah 14, this king of Babylon is still called a ‘man’ (v. 16), is killed but unburied (vv. 19-20), and has children (v. 21). (2) In Luke 10:18 Jesus was referring to what was happening in His own day through His disciples, not to the distant past. (3) A desire to know more about Satan does not justify applying language to him just because it seems to fit. Furthermore, we know no evidence that (4) Satan ever was or will be king over one nation or that (5) Jesus or any Bible passage apply Isaiah 14 and ‘Lucifer’ to Satan.”

**C. Egypt (chs. 29–32)**

Chapters 29–32 give seven oracles against Egypt. Number them in the margin of your Bible. They start at 29:1, 17; 30:1, 20; 31:1; and 32:1, 17. All but 30:1 are dated.

**Chapter 29**

1. Look at the beginning of each of the seven oracles (as listed above). What words are repeated in each case?

Read 29:1–16, the first oracle against Egypt. In it Pharaoh was a “great monster” who said, “The Nile is mine, and I myself have made it” (vv. 3, 9). His carcass would be food for the beasts and the birds (v. 5).

2. After being uninhabited forty years, Egypt would be restored (vv. 10–13). But what would never happen?

Read 29:17–21, the second oracle against Egypt. The date for this oracle is the latest in the book, 571 B.C. This was after Nebuchadnezzar had unsuccessfully besieged Tyre for thirteen years (v. 18), from 585 to 572 B.C.

3. Though Nebuchadnezzar had gained no wages for his soldiers in Tyre, what would the LORD give him?

**Chapter 30**

Read 30:1–19, the third oracle against Egypt. This is one case where “the day of the LORD” (vv. 2–3) did not refer to the last days but to a near judgment.

1. This oracle has four parts, each beginning “Thus says the LORD.” Which part names several cities of Egypt?

Read 30:20–26, the fourth oracle against Egypt.

2. Six times this section speaks of “arm(s).” Whose arms? (two answers)

**Chapter 31**

Read chapter 31, the fifth oracle against Egypt. Pharaoh and Egypt were like Assyria in being great but about to fall (vv. 2–3). Apparently, the description of Assyria’s long greatness and recent fall occupies all of verses 3–17. Then verse 18 returns to “Pharaoh and all his hordes”: “Yet, you, too, will be brought down” (NIV).

1. What were Assyria and Pharaoh/Egypt both compared to in this oracle?

**Chapter 32**

Read 32:1–16, the sixth oracle against Egypt. Pharaoh was again pictured as a dangerous and disorderly monster (v. 2) to be fed to birds and beasts (vv. 3–4). His destruction would make other nations fear (vv. 9–10).

1. Who would accomplish this predicted destruction?  
NOTE: It is interesting and instructive to notice the poetic description of the heavens, sun, and moon being darkened (vv. 7–8). There is no evidence that this happened literally.

Read 32:17–32, the seventh oracle against Egypt. In it various nations welcomed Egypt into Sheol, the place of the dead (vv. 21, 27).

2. In verses 20–32 nearly every verse repeats the same four-word phrase. What is it?

### **Part III. Ezekiel’s Ministry of Comfort Pointing to the Restored Kingdom (chs. 33–48)**

#### **A. Aspects Preparing for the Restored Kingdom (chs. 33-39)**

**Chapter 33**

Read 33:1–20, in which the LORD referred to His appointing Ezekiel as “a watchman for the house of Israel” (v. 7). He had so appointed him at the beginning (3:16–21; see 18:21–29). Now, however, the emphasis of his ministry would be to comfort those who listened. For the first time in the book, Israelites spoke of their own sin (vv. 10–11). God was now willing to respond to them. In regard to “statutes which ensure life” (v. 15), compare 20:13, 21.

1. Heeding the LORD’s watchman was a matter of life or death. “Life” did not mean just survival but meaningful and enjoyable existence.<sup>11</sup> What did Ezekiel say was the way to make sure of life?

Read 33:21–33, which emphasizes the fact that Ezekiel’s ministry was changing. “The refugees [NIV, a man who had escaped] from Jerusalem” arrived five months after the temple was burned (v. 21). Just before they (he) arrived, Ezekiel’s “mouth was opened” and he “was no longer speechless” (v. 22). Only a few ungodly people had been left in the ruins of Jerusalem and Judah (vv. 24, 27)—and they would also be destroyed (v. 27).

2.
  - a. Most of Ezekiel’s audience in exile had not taken him seriously (vv. 30–32). How did they consider him?
  - b. What would change their minds?

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<sup>11</sup> TWOT (*Theological Wordbook...op. cit.*) discusses the Hebrew words for life and to live. “Life,” it says, “is the ability to exercise all one’s vital power to the fullest; death is the opposite” (I:280).

### Chapter 34

Read chapter 34, about the shepherds and sheep of Israel. Although some of this is about judgment, its main purpose is to comfort. The same themes are dealt with in Jeremiah 23:1–6. Rulers were often called “shepherds” in the Ancient East.<sup>12</sup> Elders in the New Testament are once called by the same title (“pastors,” Eph. 4:11) and are told to feed the sheep (Acts 20:28–31; 1 Peter 5:1–4).

1. Verses 1–10 talk about the unfaithful “shepherds” of Israel, whom the LORD God was replacing. What was the task of these shepherds, which they had not fulfilled? (vv. 2, 3, 8, 10)
2. Verses 11–16 show that the LORD Himself would act as Shepherd (as in Gen. 48:15; Psa. 23:1). What are some things He would do for the sheep?
3. Verses 17–27 show that the LORD would also remove unruly sheep, who oppress others. Who will be the ruler to implement the LORD’s justice?  
NOTE: A future “prince” is described in 45:22; 46:2, 16–18. If Ezekiel 40–48 were to be fulfilled literally, this prince could be neither David nor Messiah. (See Appendix B.)
4. Verses 25–31 picture a new arrangement for the flock. There will be no dangerous beasts but plenty of rain and food, also God’s presence. What is this new arrangement called in verse 25 (and 37:26)?

### Chapter 35

Read chapter 35, another prophecy against Edom.<sup>13</sup> This prophecy may seem out of place, because there were prophecies against Edom and other nations in chapters 25–32. Here, however, it serves to emphasize the promise in 34:28 that Israel “will no longer be a prey to the nations.” The Edomites were close kin to the Israelites, having descended from Jacob’s twin brother Esau.<sup>14</sup> However, they “had everlasting enmity” against the Israelites (v. 5; see Gen. 27:41; Num. 20:14–21; et al.). Prophecies (such as Isa. 34; 63:1–6) often treated them as representatives of all Israel’s enemies.

1. What noun is repeated six times (vv. 3, 4, 7, 9, 14, 15) that shows how Edom would become? (The NIV translates as an adjective.)

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<sup>12</sup> “Hammurabi and many other rulers of ancient western Asia are called ‘shepherd’ or described as ‘pasturing’ their subjects.” (TWOT, p. 853)

<sup>13</sup> Edom was often called by the name of the mountain range (Mount Seir) where that nation lived. This range ran south from the Dead Sea, east of the Wadi Arabah.

<sup>14</sup> Esau was also called Edom (Gen. 25:30). Both names are related to the Hebrew word for “red.”

**Chapter 36**

Read 36:1–15, about the mountains of Israel. Verses 1–7 promise punishment for those who wrongfully took over the mountains. Verses 8–15 promise a restoration.

1. Whose inheritance would the mountains become?

Read 36:16–38, which speaks in some detail about Israel’s restoration. Twice (vv. 22, 32) the LORD said He would do this “not for your sake.” This means, “not because Israel deserved it.” Instead, it would demonstrate His own holiness (v. 23), which refers to all His perfection in contrast to man.

2. In verse 24 the LORD promised to “take you [Israel] from the nations, gather you...and bring you into your own land.” In other words, He would reestablish His kingdom over them. From verses 24–38 list at least four other things He would do for Israel at that time. In Answers see the note that shows how this whole passage relates to John 3.

**Chapter 37**

This chapter again looks at the coming kingdom. It shows Israel being restored as one nation under Messiah (or David). Read 37:1–14, which pictures Israel’s dry bones coming to life. This would happen through the word of the LORD, as Ezekiel demonstrated. Twice, at the LORD’s command, he prophesied.

1.
  - a. What happened after Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones (v. 7)?
  - b. What happened after Ezekiel prophesied to the “breath” (vv. 9–10)?  
NOTE: The Hebrew word for “breath” can also mean “wind” or “spirit.”
  - c. What did this all mean? (vv. 11–14) When you check your answer against mine, be sure to read my important note there.

Read 37:15–28, which pictures Israel becoming one nation under one king. Notice that twice the passage speaks of “My sanctuary [temple] in their midst” (vv. 26, 28). That topic will occupy Ezekiel 40–43.

2.
  - a. Ezekiel was told to write on two sticks that one was for Judah (v. 16) and the other for Joseph (that is, the ten tribes called “Israel,” vv. 16 and 19). Then what was he to do?
  - b. What did the LORD say this meant?
  - c. Who would be their ruler?

**Chapters 38–39 The LORD Defeats Gog and His Allies.**

This is another oracle of comfort in this section. It describes a great end-times invasion of the LORD’s land by Gog and many allied nations, then the LORD’s even greater victory.<sup>15</sup> Near the

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<sup>15</sup> Lamar E. Cooper, Sr. designates this passage “a prophetic-apocalyptic view of the cataclysmic initiation of the age of peace to come.” (*The New American Commentary on Ezekiel*, p. 330)

end of this study guide, Appendix A discusses this oracle. As always, however, study the facts in Scripture before you read such helps.

### Chapter 38

This section began in chapter 33. In it Ezekiel has spoken/prophesied to or against the shepherds of Israel (34:2), the LORD's flock (34:17, 20), Mount Seir (35:2, 3), the mountains of Israel (36:1, 3, 4, 6), the house of Israel (36:22), the dry bones (37:4–5, 7), the breath (wind, spirit) (37:9, 10), the whole house of Israel (37:11–12), and "your people" (37:18–19).

1. To/against whom does Ezekiel prophesy in 38:2–3, 14; 39:1?

Now, read 38:1–16, which tells about Gog and his plans. He is a "prince" (38:2), a common word for a ruler.<sup>16</sup> List everything it says about Gog, such as, his land, the countries he rules, who his allies are, and his plans against Israel. Take into account the following note.

NOTE: *Rosh*, used often in Ezekiel 38–39, is the usual word for head or chief. Here, however, the NASB takes it as the name of one country Gog rules over. This is possible grammatically. But if so, it would be the only country in this list not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament. (Isaiah 66:19 is no exception when translated correctly.) Therefore, most versions give *Rosh* its usual meaning here: "*chief* prince of Meshech and Tubal" (NIV).

2. You have noticed that Gog with his allies attacks the LORD's people Israel, expecting to carry away lots of plunder.
  - a. What countries does Gog rule?
  - b. List five allies that are named.
  - c. What is the situation of Israel before he attacks? (Give three or more facts.)
  - d. In what period of time will all this take place? (vv. 8, 16)
  - e. Why does God allow Gog to do this? (vv. 16, 23)

Read 38:17–23, which emphasizes the outcome the LORD has determined. In wrath and a great earthquake, He will demolish Gog and his allies.

3. Was Gog or his attack predicted by former prophets?

### Chapter 39

Read chapter 39, which shows how Israel and the LORD Himself will benefit from Gog's attack. Keep listing everything said about Gog. After you read, compare verses 17–20 to Revelation 19:17–18, 21. In both passages birds are invited to a banquet God has prepared for them. It consists of the flesh and blood of kings and armies slaughtered by God after they oppose Him.

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<sup>16</sup> The word for "prince" in 38:2 is used 128 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. It refers to various leaders, such as, those over the tribes (Num. 1:16, also called "heads" there); "a ruler of your people" (Exod. 22:28); rulers over Ishmael (Gen. 17:20); Solomon (1 Kings 11:34); the future "David" (Messiah? Ezek. 34:24; 37:25); and the leader of the kingdom described in chapters 40–48 (45:22; 46:16, 18).

1.
  - a. How will Israel use Gog's weapons?
  - b. What benefit will come to the LORD?
2. If necessary, revise or complete your list of all that these chapters say about Gog.

### **B. Description of a Restored Kingdom (chs. 40-48)**

These chapters picture a restoration of the core of the LORD's earthly kingdom. They all center on a new temple and show the LORD adopting it as the place for His earthly throne:

- detailed plans for the temple and its dedication (chs. 40–43)
- aspects of the worship to be done in it (chs. 44–46)
- the life-giving river that will flow from it (47:1–12)
- divisions of the land with respect to the temple (47:13—48:35)

NOTE: While observing what Ezekiel 40-48 says, we will treat it all as a literal description of something still future. There are other ways of understanding it, however, discussed in Appendix B. When you finish reading the book and answering the questions, study that appendix.

### **1. Detailed Plans for the Temple and Its Inauguration (chs. 40–43)**

#### **Chapter 40**

Read 40:1–4, which introduces the entire last vision. Ezekiel was to “declare to the house of Israel all that” he saw (v. 4). He had had two earlier visions beginning in chapters 1 and 8. Each vision had included elements that, though true, were not literal. The temple in this vision has never existed; and the post-exilic books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai do not allude to it.

1.
  - a. In this vision Ezekiel was taken to the land of Israel. To what sort of geographical feature?
  - b. Ezekiel was brought to “a man [with] the appearance of bronze” (v. 3). What did the man have in his hand?

Read 40:5–49, in which the man (a) measured the temple's surrounding wall and three identical gates leading to the outer court (40:5–27), then (b) began measuring the inner court, including the sanctuary (40:28—41:26). Notice the gates, tables, hooks, and chambers.

2.
  - a. On which sides of the temple area were the three gates?
  - b. What were the tables for?

#### **Chapter 41**

Read chapter 41, which continues measurements for the sanctuary and related areas. The chambers in three levels on both sides of the sanctuary (vv. 5–11) were for storage.

1. The sanctuary itself had two rooms. The first room was called “the nave” (v. 1; “the outer sanctuary” in NIV). What was the second room?
2. What were carved on the wood paneling as decorations?

**Chapter 42**

Read chapter 42, which finishes the measurements. It includes various chambers for the priests. Verses 15–20 give measurements for the four sides (the wall) of the holy temple area. NASB, following the Hebrew, gives these in “reeds.” However, that results in a far larger holy area than in 45:2. Therefore, in 42:15–20 many versions (such as, NIV and ESV) follow the Greek *Septuagint*, which uses “cubits.”

1. Which verses mention holy things for the priests to eat and holy garments they wear?
2. According to the Greek version (see above), how big is the holy temple area?

**Chapter 43**

Read 43:1–11, which describes the return of God’s glory to the temple and challenges Israel. Notice that verses 10–11 challenge Israel to repent and let the whole design be effected.

1.
  - a. As Ezekiel watched, from what direction did the glory return?
  - b. What two words in verse 7 show that this is a restoration of God’s kingdom?

Read 43:12–27, which measures the altar and specifies the sacrifices with which to cleanse/consecrate/inaugurate it.

2.
  - a. From which family line of Levites are these priests who are authorized to minister?
  - b. For each of seven days, what kind of offering must be made?

**2. Aspects of the Worship to Be Done in the Temple (chs. 44–46)****Chapter 44**

Chapter 44 primarily speaks of the holiness of priests in the restored temple. Read 44:1–14. Notice that no one, not even the prince, is allowed to use the outer east gate where the LORD has entered (vv. 1–2).

1. Verses 6–9 warn not to repeat the mistake of allowing foreigners into the temple. What phrase of seven words is twice used to describe them?
2. Verses 10–14 discuss Levites “who went astray from [God] after their idols.” From what service will they be excluded in the new temple?

Read 44:15–31, which gives rules for the Zadokite priests, those who minister at the altar. As you read, mark or list the rules and functions mentioned for these priests. They are the same as in the old covenant. For example, they are to receive the people’s first fruits (v. 30) as in Numbers 18:12.

3. What is the general rule for these priests when anyone dies?



**Chapter 45**

Read 45:1–8, listing the places or people provided holy areas in the land.

1. List four or more places or people whose areas are especially holy.

Read 45:9–25, which deals with just standards (vv. 9–12) and with sacrifices provided for or by the prince (vv. 13–25). Notice that he is distinguished from the priest (v. 19; also 46:2).

2. In verses 15, 17, and 20 the purpose of these sacrifices is stated with language identical to that in Leviticus 1:4 and 6:30. What is that purpose?

**Chapter 46**

Read chapter 46, which concludes discussion of the worship to be made in the temple. The last item speaks of kitchens for priests and people to cook sacrificial meals (vv. 19–24).

1. What are some occasions requiring special sacrifices? (vv. 4–5, 6–7, 9, 11, 13–15)
2. Which gate to the inner court will stay closed except for the prince on Sabbaths (or on other special occasions)?
3. The prince can give gifts (of land) to his sons for a permanent possession (vv. 16–18). Where can he get such gifts?

**C. The Life-giving River that Will Flow from the Temple (47:1–12)****Chapter 47**

Read 47:1–12, about this marvelous river. Then read Revelation 22:1–2.

1. Tell about the river in Ezekiel:
  - a. where in the temple it begins
  - b. how its depth is unusual
  - c. what grow on its banks
  - d. how it affects the Dead Sea

**D. Divisions of the Land with respect to the Temple (47:13—48:35)**

Read 47:13–23, which gives the general boundaries for the land divisions. Possibly these cover only the areas for residences, since the Lord promised even more to Abraham (Gen. 15:18).

2. How are these boundaries related to the Jordan River?

**Chapter 48**

Read 48:1–22, which lists tribal portions to the north (vv. 1–7), then again discusses “the holy allotment” (vv. 8–22; see 45:1–8). The latter includes the temple and the portion for the tribe of Levi.

1. List in order the seven tribes from the north to “the holy allotment.”

Read 48:23–35, which lists the rest of the tribal portions (vv. 23–29), and concludes by listing the gates of the city and giving its name (vv. 30–35). When you finish, read Revelation 21:9–21.

2. List in order the five tribes from “the holy allotment” to the south.
3.
  - a. How many gates does the city have?
  - b. What is the name of the city?

NOTE: Ezekiel 40-48 has described the core of a restored kingdom of God centered in Jerusalem and honored by God’s presence. Will this literally happen with all features just as described? There is strong New Testament evidence that it cannot, which you should now study in Appendix B. There I will sketch three different views of what kingdom it describes:

1. The promised kingdom in a temporary form (the literal view).
2. The promised kingdom described in old covenant language but to be fulfilled otherwise (the “spiritualizing” view).
3. A proffered form of the kingdom that *could have come* if Israel could have responded.

## Answers

### Chapter 1

1. a. in the land of the Chaldeans (Babylonians) by the Chebar River (1:3)  
NOTE: This was the Grand Canal that left the Euphrates River north of Babylon and reentered it far south.
- b. in the thirtieth year (of his life?), the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's exile  
NOTE: Like Ezekiel, Jehoiachin was exiled in 597 B.C. Therefore, this year was apparently 593 B.C. (in our June/July).
2. priest (1:3)
3. man, lion, bull, eagle (1:10)
4. two were spread out above, touching another "being" (1:11)  
two covered their bodies (1:11)
5. direction—They always went straight forward without turning (1:9, 12).  
speed—like bolts of lightning (1:14)
6. on the earth beside the living beings (1:15)
7. They moved in any of the four directions without turning. (1:17)  
NOTE: This means that each wheel was double, two wheels intersecting each other at right angles.
8. eyes (1:18)  
NOTE: Ezekiel later noticed that the living beings also had many eyes: "their whole body, their backs, their hands, their wings, and the wheels were full of eyes all around" (10:12). Their eyes remind us of God's omniscience.
9. the fact that the spirit of the living beings was in them (1:20, 21; also 10:17)
10. on a throne (1:26) above the expanse (1:25, 26) over the heads of the living beings (1:22, 26)
11. like fire, which from the loins up seemed to be from glowing metal (1:27)
12. He fell on his face. (1:28)

### Chapter 2

1. Son of man NOTE: God used this title for Ezekiel 93 times in this book.
2. to "the sons of Israel," whom He described as rebellious and stubborn (2:3–8)  
NOTE: He called them rebellious eight times in chapters 2–3.
3. a scroll with lamentations, mourning, and woe written on front and back (2:8–10)

### Chapter 3

1. sweet as honey (3:3)
2. their stubbornness (3:7)
3. bitterness and rage (3:14)  
NOTE: Apparently he had truly understood what God had written on the scroll about Israel's rebellion. Compare a similar situation in Revelation 10:10.
4. to warn both the wicked and the righteous not to sin (3:18–21)

5. “Ropes” would keep him from going out of his house (3:25). He could speak only when the LORD revealed something to say (3:26–27).  
NOTE: The latter restriction was lifted in 33:22.

#### Chapter 4

1. inscribe Jerusalem on the brick, set it before himself, and lay siege to it (4:2–3)  
NOTE: “Besiege it,” the LORD told him (4:3). Apparently Ezekiel represented the LORD, who ordered the siege. Therefore, the iron plate he set up as barrier between him and the city represented the LORD’s unwillingness to intervene (4:3).
2. 390 days for Israel, 40 days for Judah (4:4–6)  
NOTE: Lying on his left side put his body north of besieged Jerusalem (the ten tribes had been to the north). Lying on his right would be to the south (where Judah was). Suggestions as to the meaning of 390 and 40 have not been convincing.
3. make the bread himself, then bake and eat it in small amounts, also drink water by measure (4:9–12)
4. to cook the bread over cow’s dung instead of human dung (4:14–15)

#### Chapter 5

1. burn 1/3 in the fire, strike 1/3 all around the city, scatter 1/3 to the wind, bind a few in his robe, then take some of those and burn them
2. a. because they were more wicked than other nations (5:6) and defiled His sanctuary (5:11)  
b. “[They will know that] I the LORD have spoken.”

#### Chapter 6

1. the idolatry practiced there. Note “altars” and “idols” in 6:3–6, 9, 13.
2. “will know that I am the LORD” (6:7, 10, 13, 14)

#### Chapter 7

1. a. “end”  
b. Each verse mentions God’s (a) sending His anger/wrath on the land of Israel, (b) judging them according to their ways, and (c) bringing their abominations on them.  
c. “The time has come, the day is near.”  
d. “all”

#### Chapter 8

1. probably 592 B.C.  
NOTE: Most of the sixth year would be in 592, the end of it in 591. The NIV gives this date as September 17, 592 B.C.
2. to Jerusalem (8:3)
3. (a) at the north of the altar gate, an idol of jealousy

- NOTE: This was probably an image of Asherah, the goddess of fertility. Manasseh had set up such an image (2 Kings 21:7), which Josiah had destroyed (2 Kings 23:6).
- (b) inside the wall at the entrance to the court, idols carved on the wall and seventy elders offering incense
  - (c) at the entrance of the gate toward the north, women weeping for Tammuz  
NOTE: This has been identified as Dumuzi, the ancient Sumerian god of spring vegetation. Women led in weeping for him after he died each summer. This led to an orgiastic celebration.
  - (d) between the porch and the altar at the entrance to the inner court, about twenty-five men prostrating themselves, worshiping the sun  
NOTE: These were probably the twenty-four heads of priestly orders, plus the high priest. Thus, Ezekiel saw that idolatry extended from the common people (“the idol of jealousy”) to the elders (idols on the wall) to the women (Tammuz) to the priests (the sun)—all in connection with the LORD’s temple!

### Chapter 9

- 1. a. those who sighed and groaned over all the abominations (9:4)
- b. everyone who was not marked (9:5–6)  
NOTE: This slaughter began with the elders who had been seen in 8:11–12.

### Chapter 10

- 1. a. coals of fire (10:2, 6)
- b. scatter them over the city (10:2)  
NOTE: Not only were people to die; the city was also to be burned.
- 2. v. 4, to the threshold of the temple  
vv. 18–19, over the cherubim, who took it to the entrance of the east gate of the LORD’s house

### Chapter 11

- 1. “over the mountain which is east of the city” (11:23)  
NOTE: This is the Mount of Olives.
- 2. (a) gather them from the peoples (v. 17)
- (b) give them the land of Israel (v. 17)
- (c) give them a new heart and spirit (v. 19)
- (d) make them His people, with Him their God (v. 20)
- (e) punish the idolaters (v. 21)

### Chapter 12

- 1. (a) He packed his baggage (belongings; 12:3).
- (b) By day he went “into exile...to another place” (12:4).
- (c) In the evening he dug a hole in the wall (12:5).

- (d) He loaded the baggage on his shoulder and—with his face covered—took it out through the hole (12:5–6).
- 2. the prince (that is, king Zedekiah, 12:12)  
NOTE: The prince would go to Babylonia, yet not see it (12:13). This was fulfilled, as 2 Kings 25:7 shows, by his being blinded.
- 3. What the LORD had been predicting (about judgment) would no longer be delayed (12:25, 28).

### Chapter 13

- 1. peace, when there was no peace (13:16)
- 2. the expectation of small amounts of food (13:19)

### Chapter 14

- 1. a. to repent—turn from their idols and abominations (NIV, detestable practices, 14:6)  
NOTE: The Hebrew words translated “repent” and “turn away” are different forms of the same verb (*shub*), used also in 18:30. The first form is found twice in 33:11. If they did not repent, the LORD would cut them off (14:7–8).
- b. to cleanse them and restore their relationship to Him (14:11)
- 2. a. sword, famine, wild beasts, plague (14:21)
- b. They could save themselves but no one else (14:14, 16, 18, 20).

### Chapter 15

- 1. because vine wood is useless for most purposes, especially when off the vine and already partly burned. In their case, the LORD would burn the rest of them.

### Chapter 16

- 1. a. She disdained money as payment for her favors (16:31), even paid her lovers (16:33–34).
- b. He would strip her (16:37) and hand her over to ruthless lovers (16:39–41).
- c. Samaria and Sodom (16:46)

### Chapter 17

- 1. The missing references for meaning are 17:13–14; 17:15; and 17:16–21. Ezekiel provides no meaning for the Messianic promise of 17:22–24, but see the note.

### Chapter 18

- 1. “The fathers eat the sour grapes, but the children’s teeth are set on edge” (18:2).  
NOTE: The proverb was partly true (see Lam. 5:7) but misleading.
- 2. a. Generations a and c keep the commandments, but b does not.
- b. Generations a and c will live (18:9, 17), but b will die (18:13, 18).
- 3. by turning from their sins (to the LORD) (especially 18:30–32)

NOTE: It was by turning that they would get a new heart (18:31). In 11:19 the LORD had promised to give such a heart; here they are commanded to get it. Notice that the alternative—punishment—would give the LORD no pleasure (18:23, 32).

### Chapter 19

1. a. a lioness (with cubs)
- b. the first one, to Egypt (v. 4); the other one, to Babylonia (v. 9)  
NOTE: Of the last four kings, only Jehoahaz went to Egypt. Therefore, he was the first cub. But both Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were exiled to Babylonia. Since Jehoiachin ruled only three months, he hardly had opportunity to do all verse 7 says. Therefore, the other cub was probably Zedekiah.
2. a. a vine
- b. She produces lots of fruit.
- c. She is plucked up and burned—with no more “scepter to rule.”

### Chapter 20

1. NIV says 591 B.C. (August 14).
2. You should have noticed some of these:
  - “inquire [of the LORD]”—vv. 1, 3a, 3b (also 31a, 31b; cf. 14:3, 7; 1 Sam. 28:6)
  - “I swore”—vv. 5a, 5b, 15, 23 (also 42)
  - “for the sake of My name”—vv. 9, 14, 22 (also 44; cf. 39)
  - “My Sabbaths”—vv. 12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24  
NOTE: Some of these verses, like others, emphasize that the Sabbath was a sign between Israel and the LORD (Exod. 31:13–17; Jer. 17:14–27). The Sabbath looked back to the LORD’s completed first creation and forward to His promised new creation.
3. a. “into the wilderness of the peoples” (v. 35)
- b. “to enter into judgment” (v. 35)  
make them “pass under the rod”  
and bring them “into the bond of the covenant” (v. 37)  
“purge from [them] the rebels” before they “enter the land of Israel” (v. 38)

### Chapter 21

1. a. fifteen times
- b. the king of Babylon (vv. 19, 20)
2. “until he comes whose right it is” (v. 27)  
NOTE: The same Hebrew expression is used in Genesis 49:10, in Jacob’s prophecy about the tribe of Judah. There it is translated “until he comes to whom it [the ruler’s sceptre] belongs” (NIV). This refers to Messiah, the king from that tribe. Jesus’ “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem claimed this right (Matt. 21:1–11; Zech. 9:9).

**Chapter 22**

1. You probably found seven occurrences: in vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, and 13.
2. Some of the repeated words and phrases are “dross” (three times), “gather” (three times), “furnace” (three times), “melt[ed]” (five times), “My wrath” (three times).
3. “princes” (v. 25), “priests” (v. 26), “officials” (v. 27), “prophets” (v. 28), and “people” (v. 29)

**Chapter 23**

1. Oholah=Samaria (capital of the ten tribes)  
Oholibah=Jerusalem (capital of Judah)
2. a. the Assyrians (vv. 5, 9)  
b. the Chaldeans/Babylonians (vv. 14–17)
3. murder (bloodshed, vv. 37, 45)

**Chapter 24**

1. 588 B.C. (The NIV note says January 15.)
2. Jerusalem (v. 6)
3. a. In vv. 16–18 it meant Ezekiel’s wife. In vv. 21 and 25 it meant the LORD’s sanctuary (the temple).  
NOTE: The NIV note says that Ezekiel’s wife died the same day the temple was burned.
- b. by not mourning outwardly (vv. 16–17)
4. He would be able to speak (v. 27).  
NOTE: Apparently Ezekiel had been able to pass God’s messages to the people but not speak otherwise.

**Chapter 25**

1. They were pleased with Judah’s destruction and/or took revenge (vv. 3, 8, 12, 15).

**Chapter 26**

1. “a bare rock” (vv. 4–5, 14)  
“a place for the spreading of nets” (vv. 5, 14)  
NOTE: “You will never be found again” (v. 21). As pointed out in the introduction to chapters 26–28, the fulfillment of this was in stages. In fact, Isaiah 23:17–18 shows that after the seventy years for Babylonia, Tyre would return to its commerce. The benefit, however, would go to the LORD.

**Chapter 27**

1. a. fir planks (NIV, pine), cedar mast, oak oars, boxwood deck (NIV, cypress)  
b. “merchant of the peoples to many coastlands [= faraway nations]”



2. Some of them are “your customer(s),” “your traders,” “your merchandise,” “your market,” “your payment,” and “traded with you.”
3. They would all lament. Some would also fear (v. 35).

**Chapter 28**

1. that he was a god (vv. 2, 9), as wise as a god (vv. 2–4)
2. (a) He was a trader (vv. 16, 18; true of the leader in verse 5).  
(b) He had “sanctuaries” (v. 18).
3. so that there would “be no more for the house of Israel a prickling brier or a painful thorn from any round about them”

**Chapter 29**

1. “The word of the LORD came to me saying”
2. Egypt would never “rule over the nations” (v. 15). NOTE: This has been the case.
3. the wealth of Egypt (vv. 19–20)

**Chapter 30**

1. the last part, vv. 13–19
2. the arms of Pharaoh, to be broken (vv. 21, 22, 24, 25)  
the arms of the king of Babylon, to be strengthened (vv. 24, 25)

**Chapter 31**

1. “a cedar in Lebanon” (v. 3)

**Chapter 32**

1. Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 11–16)
2. “slain by the sword”

**Chapter 33**

1. turn from wicked ways (vv. 8, 9, 11) and do what is just and right (vv. 14, 16, 19)  
NOTE: The unrepentant wicked man would “die in his iniquity” (vv. 8, 9). Even a “righteous man” who “so trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity...in that same iniquity...will die” (v. 13). In contrast, when a wicked man “turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness...he will surely live” (vv. 14–15, 19). In each case they were responding to the LORD’s word, either in obedience or disobedience. (His personal warnings were not absolute predictions.) Similarly, the gospel of grace must produce obedience (Rom. 1:5; 8:1–4; 15:18; 1 John 2:3).
2. a. “like a sensual song by one who has [NIV, one who sings love songs with] a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument” (v. 32)  
b. the fulfillment of all his prophecies (v. 33, “when all this comes true—and it surely will,” NIV)

**Chapter 34**

1. to feed (take care of) the flock  
NOTE: This was primarily the duty of the ruler, as seen in the description of King David in 2 Samuel 5:2.
2. search for them, deliver them back to their own land, give them good feed and rest, etc.
3. David (vv. 23–24; also 37:24–25)  
NOTE: This may refer to David’s Descendant, Jesus the Messiah. In accordance with God’s eternal covenant with David (Psa. 89:19–29), his successor was often called “David” (as in 1 Kings 12:16). Jesus’ claim to be the good Shepherd (John 10:2, 11, 14, and especially 16) seems to refer to His being this king.
4. “covenant of peace”  
NOTE: “‘Peace’ (Hebrew *shalom*) is more than absence of hostility; it is fullness of life enjoyed in complete security” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1275).

**Chapter 35**

1. desolation NOTE: Verse 9 says “everlasting desolation.” Compare Isaiah 34:8–17.

**Chapter 36**

1. the LORD’s “people Israel” (v. 12)
2. Other promises include
  - (a) “sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean” (v. 25)
  - (b) “give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you” (v. 26)
  - (c) “put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes” (v. 27)
  - (d) “call for the grain and multiply it” (vv. 29–30)
  - (e) “increase their men like a flock” (vv. 37–38)NOTE: Some of these, such as, the water, the Spirit, and the new heart (= new birth) are the things Jesus referred to when talking to Nicodemus (John 3). That teacher of Israel (v. 10) should have known that no one can enter the kingdom without such a new birth.

**Chapter 37**

1.
  - a. With a noise they came together, with sinews, flesh, and skin.
  - b. The breath came into them, and they came to life and stood up.
  - c. The dry bones referred to the nation being punished. The living exiles said, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished” (v. 11). But the LORD would open their graves and make them come out (putting His Spirit in them), and bring them into their land.  
NOTE: This prophecy probably refers to national, not physical, resurrection. If so, its first stage may have been fulfilled in 1948, when modern Israel began. George

- N.H. Peters,<sup>17</sup> however, argues strongly that it teaches a premillennial physical resurrection. He claims that the Jews (2 *Esdras* 2, 16, 23, 31) and the early church (Irenaeus, *Fifth Book against Heresies*; and others) held that view. His first argument is that God's own explanation in verses 11-14 requires for people to leave their graves. He cites various prophecies (e.g., Isa. 25:6-8; 26:19; Dan. 12:2, 13; 1 Sam. 2:6) predicting resurrection.
2. a. "join them...into one stick" (v. 17)
  - b. that the LORD would "make them one nation in the land" (v. 22)
  - c. "David" (vv. 24, 25) That may mean Messiah. See the note for answer 3 on chapter 34.

### Chapter 38

1. Gog, of the land of Magog
2. a. Meshech and Tubal (See the note explaining that Rosh is probably not a country.)
- b. Persia, Ethiopia (which then included the area of modern Sudan), Put (Libya), Gomer, Beth-togarmah (vv. 5-6)
- c. (1) They "have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel" (v. 8).
- (2) They "are living securely, all of them" (v. 8).
- (3) They "are at rest...live securely...without walls, and having no bars or gates" (v. 11).
- (4) They "have acquired cattle and goods" (v. 12).
- d. "in the latter years" (v. 8) "in the last days" (v. 16)  
NOTE: Only in this part does Ezekiel use this eschatological language (referring to the end times).
- e. "in order that the nations may know [Him]" when He defeats Gog  
NOTE: This is the same result He will achieve when He brings Israel back from all the lands (Ezek. 36:23-24).
3. probably yes. Verse 17 asks if Gog is the one (and his invasion) of whom the LORD spoke through the prophets. NIV assumes that the answer is yes.  
NOTE: Ezekiel 39:8 seems to justify the NIV assumption: "That is the day of which I have spoken." Various passages, such as Isaiah 29:1-8 and Joel 3:1-2, 9-13 had earlier described future attacks on the Holy Land and/or Jerusalem. It would seem that Ezekiel has now identified the leader in such attacks as Gog.

### Chapter 39

1. a. to make fires (vv. 9-10)
- b. It will set His "glory among the nations" when He judges them, also showing that He had good reason to judge Israel (vv. 21-24). They will know that He is "the LORD, the Holy One in Israel" (v. 7).

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<sup>17</sup> George N.H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, As Covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented in the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1957), II:244-256.

2. You should have included all or most of these facts about Gog:
  - of the land of Magog (38:2; 39:6)
  - chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (38:2, 3; 39:1)
  - has a mighty army with horses and full armor (38:4, 15–16)
  - has many allies (38:9) who come with him from “the remote parts of the north”: Persia, Ethiopia, Put (Libya), Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah (38:5–6, 15, 22)

NOTE: Magog was north of the Caucasus Mountains that run between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah were all in the area of modern Turkey. The word translated “Ethiopia” (Hebrew *Cush*) included much of modern Sudan. “Put” is Libya. In their zeal to modernize this prophecy, some have relied on flimsy evidence. Various interpreters have identified Gomer as ancestor to Germany, Rosh as Russia, even Meshech as Moscow and Tubal as Tobolsk.

### Chapter 40

1.
  - a. to “a very high mountain” (v. 2)
  - b. “a line of flax and a measuring rod”
 

NOTE: The line was also for measuring. The unit was a special cubit, 20–21 inches. Having six such cubits, the rod measured about ten feet, four inches.
2.
  - a. On the east, north, and south (vv. 6, 20, 28)
  - b. as places for slaughtering animals for sacrifice (vv. 39, 41; see also 43:18–27)

### Chapter 41

1. “the most holy place” (v. 4)
2. cherubim and palm trees (vv. 18, 20, 25)

### Chapter 42

1. v. 13, holy things that priests eat  
v. 14, holy garments they wear
2. 500 cubits on each side

### Chapter 43

1.
  - a. from the east (vv. 2, 4) NOTE: Ezekiel had seen it depart from there (11:23).
  - b. My throne
2.
  - a. “the offspring of Zadok” (v. 19)
  - b. sin offering

### Chapter 44

1. “uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh” (vv. 7 and 9)
2. service as priests (offering sacrifices, vv. 13, 15)
3. not to defile themselves (by contact with the dead body) unless it is a near relative (v. 25; cf. Lev. 21:1–4)

NOTE: Did you notice that these priests, as usual under the old covenant, were to teach (v. 23) and even judge (v. 24)?

### Chapter 45

1. the sanctuary and the priests, vv. 1–4  
the Levites, v. 5  
the city, v. 6  
the prince, v. 7
2. to make atonement

### Chapter 46

1. the sabbath day (vv. 4–5)  
the day of the new moon (vv. 6–7)  
the appointed feasts (vv. 9, 11)  
each morning (vv. 13–15)
2. the gate facing east (vv. 2, 8, 12)  
NOTE: Distinguish this from the east gate of the outer court, which should never open (44:1–2).
3. only from his own possession, not the people's (v. 18)

### Chapter 47

1. a. “from south of the altar” (v. 1)  
b. In thousand cubit distances it grows from a trickle (v. 2) to ankle deep (v. 3) to loin deep (v. 4) to an unfordable river (v. 5).  
c. many trees for food and healing (vv. 7, 12)  
d. It makes it fresh, with many fish (vv. 8–10).  
NOTE: Located in the deep valley east of Judea, the Dead Sea has no outlet and loses water only through evaporation. Therefore, it has always been extremely salty and rich in minerals, but with no fish.
2. It is the east boundary (v. 18).  
NOTE: Throughout the Old Testament kingdom, some tribes lived east of the Jordan River. But that area is not included in the Ezekiel boundaries.

### Chapter 48

1. Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, Judah.
2. Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad
3. a. twelve gates  
NOTE: These are for the twelve tribes, as are those in Revelation. Though Levi is included, the total remains at twelve because Joseph gets only one gate (instead of counting his sons Manasseh and Ephraim as two tribes).  
b. “The LORD is there” (v. 35).

## Appendix A

### Gog and His Invasion, Ezekiel 38–39

For many years Bible students have puzzled over Ezekiel 38–39, which predicts an invasion of the Holy Land “in the last days.” In relation to other prophecies, it is not easy to identify the wicked leader or the time of the attack. We will list the main facts of the prediction, then consider both questions.

- The general time for this event is “the latter years” (38:8) and “the last days” (38:16).
- The wicked leader is “Gog of the land of Magog” (38:2).
- Gog’s country and allies are in Turkey and just northeast of it, Persia (Iran), and North Africa (38:2–6; see question 1 below).
- He and his allies “will come from [their] place out of the remote parts of the north...against [the LORD’s] people Israel like a cloud to cover the land” (38:15–16).
- When they attack, the nation Israel will be in “the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations...and...are living securely, all of them” (38:8). None of them will have walls, bars, or gates (38:11).
- The invaders expect “to capture spoil and to seize plunder” (38:12).
- Instead, the LORD will see that Gog and his allies all “fall on the mountains of Israel” (39:4).
- That defeat will leave the enemies’ weapons for Israel to burn as firewood for seven years (39:9–10) and their bodies to bury for seven months (39:11–16).
- The Lord GOD will invite the birds and beasts to eat this sacrifice of His—flesh and blood on the mountains of Israel (39:17–20).
- As a result of this event, the LORD will be magnified and known by the nations and by Israel (38:23; 39:21–22).

**1. Who will Gog be?** Identifying Gog’s land and his allies should help decide who he is. In Ezekiel’s time Gog’s land, Magog, was just north of the Caucasus Mountains that lie between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Several of Gog’s countries and allies—namely, Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth-Togarmah—were in the area of modern Turkey. Another ally was Persia, located east of Mesopotamia, where it is now. Two allies were in North Africa: “Ethiopia” (Hebrew *Cush*), which also included much of modern Sudan; and “Put,” which was Libya. Historically we can find no Old Testament Gog and no alliance matching his. But there are two common suggestions for the identity of Gog of the last days.

A. Will he be ruler of Russia? Look at three common arguments for that view, with counter-arguments.

- Some Bible versions say that Gog is also “the prince of Rosh” (38:2, NASB). If so, *Rosh* may refer to Russia. **Counter:** *Rosh* is a common Hebrew word meaning “head” or

“chief,” as it is usually translated in Ezekiel 38. But there is no evidence, either in Ezekiel or elsewhere in the Bible, that it refers to Russia or to any other country.<sup>18</sup>

- Gog’s land, Magog, in ancient times was in the southern extremity of modern Russia (see above). **Counter:** That does not prove that it stood for modern Russia or part of Russia.
- Gog will be from “the remote parts of the north” (38:6, 15), and Moscow is due north and far north from Jerusalem. **Counter:** Exactly the same expression is used for historic Babylon, which, though east, invaded Judah from the north (Jer. 6:22). The expression was also more than geographical; it was used figuratively for the sacred mount where the pagan gods supposedly lived (Isa. 14:13). For this reason, even Jerusalem and Mount Zion were said to be in the far north (Psa. 48:2; compare vv. 11–13). They were supernatural.<sup>19</sup>

#### B. Will he be the Antichrist (and his country Magog the final “Babylon”)?

- Jewish “Rabbinic writers” seem to support this view. They “identify Gog and Magog as the **final** enemy who will attack Israel in the messianic age.”<sup>20</sup>
- This view solves the problem about Ezekiel’s apparent silence in regard to Babylon. As seen in chapters like Isaiah 13–14, 46–47, Jeremiah 50–51, and Revelation 17–19, Babylon is extremely important. Why then does Ezekiel prophesy about other nations (chaps. 25–32) but not Babylon? This view answers that Babylon is really the theme of chapters 38–39.
- This view agrees with Ezekiel that the LORD had spoken through earlier prophets about Gog and his future attack on the Holy Land.<sup>21</sup> There are examples of such earlier prophecies in Isaiah 29:1–8 and Joel 3:1–2, 9–13. They had all foreseen the **same final** attack on Israel before the kingdom begins, not different attacks. Ezekiel had now identified the leader as Gog.
- This view may explain the reference to “Gog and Magog” at the end of the first millennium of Jesus’ kingdom (Rev. 20:7–8). It identifies the final Satan-driven political power opposed to God (called “Babylon” in Rev. 17–19) as that of Gog.<sup>22</sup> Although that power

<sup>18</sup> If *Rosh* were a country in Ezekiel 38:2–6, it would be the only country in this list not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament. (Isaiah 66:19 is no exception when translated correctly.)

<sup>19</sup> This may be the reason why Gog’s allies were also said to come with him from “the remote parts of the north” (38:15). Yet, some of them were from the east (Persia) and the south (Cush and Put, in Africa).

<sup>20</sup> Lamar E. Cooper, Sr., *The New American Commentary on Ezekiel*, p. 333, emphasis added. “Gog was a symbol of the forces of Antichrist foreseen by Ezekiel” (p. 332). Cooper also suggests that Gog’s name could be from the Sumerian *gug*, meaning “darkness.”

<sup>21</sup> “Are you not the one I spoke of in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel? At that time they prophesied for years that I would bring you against them” (38:17, NIV). The form of the question in Hebrew in 17a normally expects a No answer (1 Chron. 17:4). However, NIV’s assumption of a Yes answer agrees with 17b, also with 39:8b: “That is the day of which I have spoken.”

<sup>22</sup> Since its beginning under Nimrod (Gen. 10:8–10; 11:1–9), Babylon has been both a political system and a religious system. The political aspect is presented as the first beast of Revelation 13, who is the same as the “little horn” of Daniel 7—the Antichrist. In Revelation 17 he destroys the religious aspect (who “sits” on him).

will be destroyed and replaced, Satan will be allowed to resume his attack once more after a millennium. That will not be the original “Gog and Magog” but a new one after Israel will have long been faithful (Rev. 20:7–8).

**2. When will Gog’s attack take place?** Here are two suggestions depending on who Gog is.

- A. Suppose Gog is Antichrist and the attack was predicted in earlier Scriptures. In that case (1) it will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation in Israel’s “seventieth week” (Dan. 9:27), and (2) it will lead to the immediate conversion of Israel and the beginning of Messiah’s kingdom (Zech. 12–14). The great sacrifice God will prepare for the birds and beasts (39:17–20) will be identical to “the great supper of God” in Revelation 19:17–18, 21. There He invites the birds to feast on kings and armies who will oppose the returning Messiah. Two objections to this timing are (1) Israel will not feel secure during the Great Tribulation. (2) Neither seven months nor seven years of cleanup seem necessary to begin the kingdom.
- B. Suppose Gog is the leader of future Russia. In that case the attack will take place in the first part of Israel’s “seventieth week.” At that time Israel will be in its land and apparently safe because of the covenant secured by the Antichrist (Daniel 9:26). One objection to this view is based on the results of the LORD’s victory: Ezekiel announces that the LORD will be magnified and known by the nations and by Israel (38:23; 39:21–24). Other prophecies, even in Ezekiel (36:23), show that such results will not happen early in the “seventieth week” but at its end (Daniel 9:24; Zech. 12–14).

Probably Gog will be the Antichrist rather than a leader of Russia. Thus, the time of the attack on Israel will be just before Messiah’s second coming rather than years earlier. But both identifications, and both times, have difficulties. The subject is worthy of much more study.



## **Appendix B**

### **Ezekiel 40–48 and New Testament Teaching**

*Often used in the following discussion is the title Messiah, the exact equivalent of Christ (for Greek Cristos, see John 1:41). It means the One “anointed” to rule over God’s promised kingdom. He must be a descendant of David (shown as fulfilled in Matthew 1:1, 17). The constant message of the early church was that “Jesus is the Christ” (that is, Messiah, Acts 5:42).*

**The glory returns.** Chapters 40–48 are the grand finale to Ezekiel’s book, building far greater what had been torn down. For years Ezekiel’s words and deeds centered on the LORD’s dissolving His kingdom on earth. Like many earlier prophets, he kept warning that the LORD would judge Israel and remove His kingdom. Then Ezekiel saw it happen, saw the LORD’s glory depart as He abandoned His throne in the earthly temple. In chapters 40–48, however, Ezekiel saw that same glory return to a future restored Jerusalem and fill a restored temple.<sup>23</sup> He described that renewed temple and worship, the life-giving river flowing from Jerusalem, and the allocation of the restored tribes. Thus, the LORD would rebuild His kingdom on earth and live “among them forever” (Ezek. 43:1–9).

**Does Ezekiel 40-48 really describe the kingdom?** Except for length Ezekiel’s picture is not rare. Many prophecies show how the LORD will fulfill His covenants with Israel and the royal house of King David. There will be one worldwide kingdom, always described by the same Spirit. So the many partial descriptions cannot in essence contradict—but only complement—each other.<sup>24</sup> Since He wants us to “believe the prophets” (Acts 26:27), we would expect Him to usually speak in a normal (mostly literal) way. To enlighten us, not befuddle us. But Ezekiel 40–48 is perplexing. As I will show below, it seems to clash with New Testament teaching, especially the Book of Hebrews. Does it really describe the coming kingdom? Before answering that question, consider how the Bible speaks about Israel and the church in relation to the kingdom.

**Israel in the Old Testament.** The term “Israel” was first used for Abraham’s grandson Jacob, then for Jacob’s descendants (the “twelve tribes”). It referred to

1. **Jacob**, as his new name after his famous wrestling match. It was given, he was told, “because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome” (Gen. 32:28).
2. **The whole nation** physically descended from Jacob/Israel. As such, it sometimes simply referred to them as a nation (ethnic use); sometimes, as God’s kingdom (royal use), which it

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<sup>23</sup> No other prophet but Ezekiel saw the LORD’s glory depart, then return in glory to fill the temple.

<sup>24</sup> For descriptions of the promised kingdom, read the following examples and look up cross-references: Psalms 2 and 93–99; Isaiah 2:1–4; 11:1–10; 25:6 to 26:6; 35:1–10; 60:1–21; 65:17–25; Jeremiah 31:11–12, 27–37; Daniel 2:31–35, 44–45; 7:26–27; Amos 9:11–15; Zechariah 2:10–12; 14:5b–21.

became at the Exodus. It often meant the whole nation even after the kingdom divided into two parts.

3. **The ten northern tribes**, distinguishing them from (mostly) Judah in the south. This meaning, which started during David’s reign (2 Sam. 2:9, 10, 17), was valid at the same time as meaning 2.
4. **A true Israel** within ethnic Israel. This was an infrequent usage by the prophet Isaiah (e.g., Isa. 49:3, 5).

Whether explicitly or implicitly, all the prophets featured ethnic Israel (meanings 2 and 3). Recall, for instance, its key importance in Ezekiel. That prophet constantly spoke God’s Word to “the house of Israel” (Ezek. 3:4, 5, 7; et al.), for whom he was “a watchman” (3:17; 33:7). He sometimes distinguished Israel from Judah (meaning 3). For example, he had to “bear the sin of the house of Israel” (4:4, 5, meaning the ten northern tribes already in exile) separately from the “house of Judah” (4:6; cf. chapter 23). But his many prophecies of punishment for their sins and idolatries usually looked at them as one kingdom (e.g., 7:2; 8:10, 11, 12). Even his prophecies against foreign nations were based on how those nations mistreated God’s people (25:3, 6; 26:2). As Israel’s watchman he spoke about their shepherds, their victory over enemy nations, their being restored to their mountains, their dead bones being brought to life and united under one Ruler, their deliverance from final invaders. Their spiritual restoration was the main subject of entire chapters, such as, 34, 36, and 37. Many such prophecies defined Israel’s hope as participating in the new world of peace God will create (Zech. 9:9-10).

***Nearly every kingdom prophecy in the Old Testament  
says or implies that ethnic Israel will be central!***

**Israel in the New Testament.** The term is used there sixty-seven times. What happens to its meaning? Nothing. It always refers to that same nation descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (meaning 2 above). Some wrongly interpret Galatians 6:16 to mean that it now includes Gentiles.<sup>25</sup> But they cannot find another verse that so uses it. For example, the apostle discusses Israel in Romans 9-11, mentioning that name eleven times, all in the ethnic sense. He calls them “my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons...the

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<sup>25</sup> I will quote from my refutation of Walke’s amillennialism (in [www.kingdominbible.com](http://www.kingdominbible.com)):

Galatians 6:16. This is the only verse some cite to prove that “Israel” supposedly means the church. In the NIV it says, “Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even [Greek *kai*] to the Israel of God.” By translating *kai* as “even” (appositional), it equates “the Israel of God” with “all who follow this rule,” seeing them as one group. But that translation is doubtful. The apostle Paul always uses *kai* as a connective (“and”), not in apposition. Here he shows he is talking about distinct groups by using “upon” (*epi*) with each one. The NASB has it right: “And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” Who are these two groups? The first (“those who will walk by this rule”) is or includes believing Gentiles. The second (“the Israel of God”) is the converted Jewish remnant, including Paul. (The first group may refer to all believers and the second group be a subset of the first.) This meaning meshes with the preceding verse (15), which also mentions two groups: the “circumcision” and the “uncircumcision,” both now in the “new creation.”

divine glory...the covenants...the promises...the patriarchs...the human ancestry of Messiah” (Rom. 9:3-5). He approaches his climax by denying that God has rejected “his people” Israel (11:1-2). His climax begins with “all Israel will be saved, as it is written” (11:26). In conclusion, “Israel” never means the church. Yet, it will become a part of the church.

**The church, Messiah’s “body.”** The entire New Testament was written for the church after it began its existence at Pentecost. In the Gospels the Greek word translated “church” (*ekklesia*) is used only twice: Matthew 16:18 and 18:17. But in Acts and most of the Epistles, it is used fairly often. In Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians it is also called the *body* of Messiah, for which He is the head. What is this body? *Ekklesia* means His “assembly” for His coming kingdom. Here is strong evidence for that meaning, tied to the occasion when Jesus promised that He would build it (Matt. 16:18).

- The occasion was the disciples’ great confession that Jesus is the Messiah, that is, the king who will rule in the promised kingdom (Matt. 16:16).
- The disciples no doubt knew the Greek term (and Hebrew equivalent) as a common designation for God’s kingdom assembly in the Old Testament (e.g., Deut. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1–3; 31:30; 2 Chron. 7:8; 20:5, 14; Acts 7:38).
- They probably knew that the Greek Old Testament had also used *ekklesia* for the *future* kingdom assembly. See how Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22, both with *ekklesia*.
- Jesus immediately spoke of “the keys of the kingdom,” which means authority in it (Matt. 16:18).

As already stated, Israel is spoken of separately from the church but will become a part of it. When “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26), those Jewish believers will become members of His body. How do we know that? Because Jesus will baptize them in/with the Spirit as He does each believer now, with the same result. When John the Baptist first promised that “he will baptize *you* with the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 3:11), he was speaking only to Israel (3:5-10). He was merely restating Old Testament prophecies about Israel, such as, Ezekiel 36:27 (“put my Spirit in you”; cf. Acts 2:38). Commenting on Jesus’ fulfillment of that promise, the apostle Paul says, “we were all baptized in/with one Spirit into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13, literal). So by baptizing believers in the Spirit, Messiah builds the church, His body. He adds each new believer to it. In the same way He will baptize converted Israel and make it part of the church. As such, Israel will inherit its promises in the coming kingdom.

**When will the kingdom begin?** Our Lord assured us that when He “comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory” (Matt. 25:31). That is when He will inaugurate His kingdom with acts of judgment (25:32-46; 13:30). He told us to pray for that kingdom to come (6:10). Years later the apostles warned new believers, “We must go through many hardships *to enter the kingdom*” (Acts 14:22). Even in his final exhortations the apostle Paul said to do everything “in view of his [the Lord’s] *appearing and his kingdom*” (2 Tim. 4:1).

“The Lord will rescue me...and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom” (4:18; cf. 2 Peter 1:11). “Heavenly” in character and origin but earthly in location.

Such promises of the coming kingdom were given long after the Lord’s ascension. It was still future. Nevertheless, some argue that it already began in a spiritual form far different from what the prophecies had described. I disagree. Where is a single passage that clearly says it began? Or a passage that suggests *both* a present form plus the future form? There is none.<sup>26</sup>

**The New World.** A number of prophecies refer to the kingdom as “*the renewal of all things*, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne” (Matt. 19:28). “He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God *to restore everything*, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets” (Acts 3:20–21). Such verses show that the new world will begin as soon as Messiah comes, not a thousand years later. Peter says the same thing again in his last chapter: “*According to His promise* we are looking for new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet. 3:11–14). According to what promise? *The only previous promise using that language* was made to Israel in Isaiah 65-66 and described millennial (not perfect) conditions. In other words, we who “are looking for new heavens and a new earth” will find them in the millennium. It will be introductory, imperfect, and transitional, but nevertheless the eternal kingdom.

**Does Ezekiel 40-48 describe that kingdom?** Sidlow Baxter, a well-known conservative writer, strongly premillennial, says yes it does, but not literally! We can interpret most kingdom prophecies normally, says Baxter, but not this one.

We believe it to be a sound principle of exegesis in general that unless there is some serious objection to the literal interpretation of a passage, this should be given first preference. Are there, then, serious objections to our taking Ezekiel’s description literally? There are. Certain of its main features are such that a literal fulfilment of them is surely unthinkable.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In [www.kingdominbible.com](http://www.kingdominbible.com) I deal with kingdom issues in many writings, issues such as: (a) its many partial descriptions in agreement with solemn covenants God made; (b) its identity as a restoration of “the former dominion” (Micah 4:8); (c) its drawing near in the Gospels (with no redefinition), as proved by Jesus’ mighty works that belong to it (Heb. 6:5); (d) its postponement and subsequent promises for the Second Coming; (e) its designation as our coming eternal inheritance (Matt. 25:34; James 2:5; Eph. 5:5); (f) the occasional designation of the church as the kingdom *de jure*, its not-yet-born embryo (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:6).

<sup>27</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book: A Basic and Broadly Interpretative Course of Bible Study from Genesis to Revelation*, in six volumes (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd, 1951), IV:31.

Some of Baxter’s objections are based on an apparently faulty Hebrew text. For example, Ezekiel 42:15–20 measures a temple and sacred area way too big to fit into the Holy Land. That result, however, is based on the Hebrew (followed by NASB), which measures in reeds over 10 feet each. But in this passage the Greek *Septuagint* is more likely (followed by many versions, such as, NIV and ESV). It measures in special cubits of 20–21 inches each.

Others of Baxter’s objections are not affected by textual differences. On IV:33, for example, he argues that the waters from the temple could not (a) flow east to the Dead Sea, because the temple will still be west of the watershed; (b) remove the saltiness of the Dead Sea, since it will still have no outlet; nor (c) grow in volume without a perpetual miracle.

So Baxter considers a normal interpretation “unthinkable” for much of Ezekiel 40-48. His objection about sacrifices is reflected in some of the questions I will ask. Before you read more of my discussion, be sure you have read all nine chapters (Ezek. 40-48) of this marvelous prophecy.

### Questions Objecting to the Literal Interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48

My questions about the literal interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48 are expressed below under four categories, A to D. Each category begins with a summary statement of some aspect of Ezekiel’s teaching. Look at Category A, which deals with barriers Ezekiel pictures. Under A are three specific examples (1, 2, 3) of that aspect in question form, each citing New Teaching teaching. Look up and read all Scripture references, which, unless specified, are to Ezekiel.

#### A. Ezekiel pictures barriers in place that have been demolished.<sup>28</sup>

1. Why would God reestablish in the temple barriers to accessing Himself, such as, thick gates (40:5, 6), guards (40:7), and areas for priests only (42:14; 44:13–19)?

**Instead,** He emphasizes, in several epistles, the right of every believer to approach Him (e.g., Rom. 5:1–2; Heb. 4:16; 10:19–22).

2. Why would God rebuild barriers between Israel and the nations (44:7–9)?

**Instead,** He tore those barriers down (Acts 10:28; Gal. 2:11–18).

3. Why would God revert to distinctions between clean and unclean foods (44:23)?

**Instead,** He made all foods clean (Mark 7:19; Acts 10:14–16).

#### B. Ezekiel pictures only unglorified participants, whereas only glorified people can inherit the kingdom.

Glorified people will be all those with incorruptible, eternal bodies obtained in the resurrection of the just.

4. Why would God ordain unglorified people to rule in this restored kingdom, implying that their subjects will also be unglorified? For examples, (a) even the prince would marry and have children (44:16–18, 22) and (b) those in priestly families would die (44:25–27).

**Instead,** God will give glorified bodies to all who will actually “inherit the kingdom” (1 Cor. 15:50–54).<sup>29</sup> To “receive the promised eternal inheritance,” those under the “first

<sup>28</sup> The interpreter should consider whether some of the barriers could serve symbolic purposes only. In other words, could they be mere reminders rather than obstacles?

<sup>29</sup> Messiah will raise many from the dead in such bodies. He will transform others without their dying (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

covenant” must pass under the “new covenant” (Heb. 9:15). Their inheritance, as Jesus declared, will become available when He inaugurates the kingdom at His Second Coming:

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, then He will sit on His glorious throne ... Then the King will say to those on His right, “Come, you who are blessed of My Father, **inherit the kingdom** prepared for you...” And the righteous [will go] into **eternal life**. (Matt. 25:31, 34, 46, emphasis added; cf. Rev. 11:18)

Having suffered with Him, they will now rule with Him (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:11–12). Since glorified people will neither marry nor die (Luke 20:34–36), they cannot be the rulers described in Ezekiel 44. In fact, Ezekiel’s picture leaves no room for such heirs.<sup>30</sup>

5. Why would God ordain as “prince” an unglorified person rather than Messiah? As seen before, the prince will have children. Not a priest himself, he will also require sin offerings made by others (45:22–23).

**Instead**, God has already designated as Ruler Jesus the Messiah. Jesus’ very title (*Christ* = *Messiah*) means that. Being Priest as well as King (Heb. 7:1), He needs no one to offer for Him.<sup>31</sup> But there is no hint of Him in Ezekiel 40–48.

### C. Ezekiel pictures worship led by Levitical priests and including animal sacrifices, both of which have been superseded.

6. Why would God return to the Levitical priesthood (40:46; 43:19; 44:15–16; 48:11)?<sup>32</sup>

**Instead** God has named Messiah to be priest (Heb. 5:5–10). Though not Levitical, He is the far better priest of the new order. Hebrews 7:11–28 explains this in detail, verse 12 saying that “the priesthood is changed.” Why change back?

<sup>30</sup> Notice that this question addresses the problem of *unglorified* people during the kingdom Ezekiel describes, not *unsaved* people. Ezekiel 44:9 does seem to allude to unsaved people: “No foreigner, *uncircumcised in heart* and uncircumcised in flesh... shall enter My sanctuary.” When Revelation 20 pictures the first stage of His kingdom, it also pictures unconverted people, who will bear unconverted—and even rebellious—children (Rev. 20:7–9). In that case, Messiah will not abolish death itself—perfecting the kingdom—until the millennium is finished (1 Cor. 15:25–26). But the problem in Ezekiel 40–48 is more basic: It gives no evidence at all of glorified people, the only possible heirs. Where are those heirs?

<sup>31</sup> Rather than needing sacrifices, Messiah “offered Himself without blemish to God” (Heb. 9:14). It is true that through suffering He was “made perfect forever” (Heb. 5:7–9; 7:28). But that refers not to sins but to qualifications as Priest. Like Melchizedek He will be both Priest and King (Heb. 5 and 7). As King, according to His promise, He will rule over all the earth (Matt. 25:31–34; Rev. 1:5; 11:15; 19:15; cf. Isa. 2:1–4). He will reign from the throne of David (Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–10; Luke 1:32–33). Assuming that Ezekiel cannot describe a different and rival kingdom on the same earth, why is Messiah missing?

<sup>32</sup> Ezekiel describes the same arrangement as in the earlier, discontinued form of the kingdom. Although Israel was a “kingdom of priests” (Exod. 19:6), most of them could not approach even God’s altar. That honor was reserved for descendants of Aaron, from the tribe of Levi (Exod. 28:1; Num. 16:5, 10–11, 40; 17:5, 8; Heb. 7:13–14). Several passages seem to guarantee eternal priesthood for Levites; see, for examples, Jeremiah 33:17–22 and Isaiah 66:21. The same objections apply as in Ezekiel.

7. Why would God again require animal sacrifices for sin (43:19, 27; 45:15, 17, 20)? Ezekiel 45:15, 17, 20 say their purpose will be “to make atonement.” This is the same language expressing the same purpose as in the former kingdom (Lev. 1:4; 4:20, 26, 31; 6:30).<sup>33</sup>

**Instead**, God has accepted Messiah’s perfect sacrifice, and “there is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb. 10:18).<sup>34</sup> Can the purpose-language in Ezekiel refer merely to memorials of Messiah’s sacrifice? If so, how would they relate to the current memorial in the Lord’s Supper, given “until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26)?

8. Why would God require that special days, such as, the first day of the year, be observed (45:18–20)?<sup>35</sup>

**Instead**, God labeled such days as “weak and miserable principles,” mere shadows of the reality in Messiah (Gal. 4:9–11; Col. 2:16–17). If in the kingdom they will become reminders of spiritual truth, why not now? Why did the apostle Paul fear for the Galatians when they observed them?

**D. Ezekiel apparently pictures the capital city as earthly Jerusalem (48:30–35) rather than “the Jerusalem that is above [which] is our mother” (Gal. 4:26).<sup>36</sup>**

9. Why would earthly Jerusalem be the eternal (or even temporary) capital<sup>37</sup>?

**Instead**, God has prepared “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb. 12:22). Though superficially similar to the earthly city, this “New Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:2, 10) is far more impressive.<sup>38</sup> It was clearly Abraham’s goal: “He was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10). It is our goal, too: “Here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come” (Heb. 13:14).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Of course, animal sacrifices could not really take away sins (Heb. 10:4, 11). Nevertheless, repentant Israelites were obligated to offer them. No longer is that required. Why go back to it?

<sup>34</sup> Baxter (IV:34) says it is now “unthinkable” to re-institute animal sacrifices.

<sup>35</sup> Ezekiel 45:21–24 indicates that the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread will also be celebrated. Verse 25 adds the Feast of Booths (as does Zech. 14:16–19, with a penalty for nations that do not take part). Ezekiel 46:17 adds the year of Jubilee.

<sup>36</sup> A related objection is that the tribal allocations in Ezekiel do not include all that God promised to Abraham. They omit land east of the Jordan and Dead Sea.

<sup>37</sup> It will be called “from that time on...The LORD is there” (48:35).

<sup>38</sup> Each city has the names of tribes of Israel on the gates (48:35, Rev. 21:13), also a river flowing from it and watering life-giving trees (47:1–12; Rev. 22:21). Yet, Ezekiel’s city measures only about a mile and one-half per side, contrasted to 1,400 miles for the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:16).

<sup>39</sup> Hebrews 13:14 shows that our eternal city is still future, still “to come.” In what sense, then, can Hebrews 12:22 say, “You **have come**...to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”? We have come to it—as to everything else in the passage—only by faith (11:1).

## Views of the Kingdom Described in Ezekiel 40–48

What do we make of the kingdom Ezekiel pictures in his last chapters? We will consider three distinct views of what it is, plus problems for each view:

1. The promised kingdom in a temporary form.
2. The promised kingdom described in old covenant language but to be fulfilled otherwise.
3. A proffered form of the kingdom that will never be fulfilled.

**View 1. Ezekiel 40-48 describes a temporary form of the promised kingdom.** Many or most dispensationalists hold this view. It expects literal fulfillment of all aspects of this prophecy right after Jesus returns in glory and Israel gets converted. Since it has temporary aspects to fulfill Israel’s promises, it will last only a thousand years. The church, which is not mentioned, will be kept distinct from Israel and rule with Messiah as His bride. After the thousand years, then eternal conditions (new heavens and new earth) will come for all believers.

**Problems.** The kingdom described here cannot come literally. Several of the reasons were just illustrated under “Questions Objecting....”

- It would have old covenant aspects that have forever passed away (Gal. 3:19, 24–25; Heb. 7:12; 8:13), such as
  - Barriers to God and between nations.
  - Rule by unglorified participants, including the main ruler, who as described would never qualify to inherit the kingdom.
  - Levitical priests leading worship, even sacrificing animals for sin.
  - Earthly Jerusalem, rather than heavenly Jerusalem, serving as capital.
- It would lack essential elements required by the new covenant (Heb. 7:18–19), such as, a glorified Messiah and resurrected/glorified co-rulers and citizens.
- It would make the goal for Israel different from the goal for the church.<sup>40</sup> Instead, consider what Jesus promised the apostles who later became the “foundation” of the church (Eph. 2:20). At “the renewal of all things” they will “sit on twelve thrones judging [ruling] the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28; cf. Acts 3:20-1).

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<sup>40</sup> As a dispensationalist I considered the kingdom an *earthly* hope for Israel in contrast to the church’s *heavenly* hope with Christ. Instead, His coming rule *on earth* will be a “heavenly kingdom” for us all (2 Tim. 4:18). All believers pray, “Our Father...your kingdom come” (Matt. 6:9–10; 25:34, 46; Acts 14:22; James 2:5; Heb. 2:5–10; 11:16).



- If fulfilled as described in Ezekiel, the kingdom could only be temporary. In contrast, the real kingdom is eternal.<sup>41</sup> Once started, it “will never end” (Luke 1:33). It will be eternal heaven on earth under the eternal new covenant and ruled by the eternal Messiah. With Him His servants “will reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 22:5).

**View 2. Ezekiel 40-48 describes the promised kingdom in old covenant language that must be interpreted “spiritually.”** Amillennialists hold this view. It says that this picture of the kingdom must be transformed to a later, new covenant, version.<sup>42</sup> As I have shown, Ezekiel’s picture includes elements that the New Testament shows to be Old Testament “types” that have been updated.<sup>43</sup> Such prophecies describe the coming world as though it were just like the past. For example, Israel used horses instead of tanks, suffered from national enemies that have since disappeared, and counted on first-covenant priests and their sacrifices. This second view modifies Ezekiel’s whole picture to fit the supposed meaning of New Testament teachings and prophecies.

**Problems.** Indeed, there is scriptural authorization to transform some prophetic elements. But features supported by God’s covenants and statements of purpose, will remain the same. When “spiritual” interpretation of prophecies has no clear guidelines, it produces disparate explanations. Some, for example, try to eliminate ethnic Israel. Or move the kingdom to heaven!<sup>44</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> At least some dispensationalists recognize that the kingdom will last forever. I doubt that many of them really believe that the eternal state (new heavens and earth) is essentially the same as the millennial kingdom.

<sup>42</sup> For a typical example of the amillennial view, I will quote from Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 843-844. An outstanding scholar of the Old Testament, Waltke comments on Ezekiel 33ff. as follows:

With the announcement that his oracles of reproach and judgment have been fulfilled, Ezekiel is filled with glorious visions of Israel’s salvation. He likens the Return to a return to Eden (34:25-30). For him, Israel’s restoration is assured, because *I AM*’s name must be upheld among the nations...The reassembled nation will be purified in heart and spirit and united in one flock under I AM as their shepherd (36:16-38; 37:24)....

Next, Waltke admits that “in the book of Ezekiel, *I AM*, city, and temple are restored in the Land...” But he calls chapters 40-48 “the last of Ezekiel’s ‘visions of God,’ probably a proto-apocalyptic idiom...Ezekiel’s visions represent spiritual realities, not physical geography...” This leads to Waltke’s non-physical (and non-Israel) conclusion:

In its canonical context, this idealized, visionary temple symbolizes the spiritual temple that begins with Christ’s body and is now being built up as a spiritual temple in his church....

<sup>43</sup> Though certain of its elements were types, the Old Testament kingdom was no type. In other words, things such as the priesthood, animal sacrifices, and tabernacle/temple arrangement pointed to better things. But the kingdom on earth, with God as Ruler and including Israel as His people, will itself will be restored.

<sup>44</sup> Predicted kingdom features supported by God’s covenants and statements of purpose, will by no means fail. For example:

- The locale for God’s eternal kingdom will be earth, not heaven. Genesis 1, reflected in Psalm 8, Hebrews 2, and in many other prophecies, makes God’s design obvious. So transferring Ezekiel’s picture to heaven would contradict His plan.

result is confusion, loss of confidence, and ignorance of God’s purposes. Even if there must be changes, they should be based on Scriptures and not on the interpreter’s ingenuity.<sup>45</sup>

**View 3. Ezekiel 40-48 describes a proffered form of the kingdom that will never be fulfilled.** It was described as an offer made at the prophet’s time, so was not a definite prediction. This view fits the fact that Ezekiel’s generation was apparently invited to secure what he described:

Let them consider the plan, and if they are ashamed of all they have done, make known to them...its whole design and all its regulations and laws....Write these down before them so that they may be faithful to its design and follow all its regulations. (Ezek. 43:10d–11)

So Ezekiel’s generation was challenged to “be faithful to [that plan’s] design.” If they had been faithful, the whole plan—with all its old covenant features—would have been enacted. But it was a proffer contingent on a response Israel could not make. God knew that Israel was incapable and would refuse. He knew the kingdom would never become a reality in that form. This view of Ezekiel 40-48 seems to be the best.

**Problems.** Here are some objections to view 3, and rebuttals.

- Why would God go into so much detail to describe an unreal kingdom, which some have called “a holy fiction”? Would that be a proper ending for Ezekiel? Since God’s glory really departed early in the book, shouldn’t it really return forever at the end? George Peters answers that this passage fills out “what otherwise would prove a *blank* in Jewish history.” It “fully answers the question, *what* the state of the Jewish nation *would have been* provided it had on its restoration been obedient to God.”<sup>46</sup>
- Would God indeed make a proffer that He knows will be rejected? Yes, He has done so various times. Consider an example in Jeremiah. God had repeatedly announced the imminent end of His kingdom over Israel and destruction of His temple. He had ordered Jeremiah to quit praying for them (Jer. 7:16) and warned him that they would not

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- God will fulfill His promises for ethnic Israel. Such promises are obvious in repetitions of the Abrahamic covenant and in many other prophecies (including Romans 11). So we are not free to reinterpret kingdom prophecies so as to exclude that nation.

<sup>45</sup> Here are some rules for literal fulfillment:

- The following must be fulfilled literally: (a) Essential elements of unconditional covenants (e.g., the physical descendants of Abraham and the Promised Land); (b) Other elements often predicted in either the Old Testament or the New Testament (e.g., Messiah on the throne of David).
- The following will be fulfilled non-literally: (a) Elements stated only in figurative terms (e.g., the unquenchable fire for Edom, Isa. 34:9-10); (b) Elements now irretrievably gone (e.g., the ancient enemies of Israel); (c) Elements now clearly canceled, not just by inference (e.g., the Levitical priesthood, animal sacrifices).

<sup>46</sup> George N.H. Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, III:86. See his entire Proposition 172 (III:83-91).

listen (7:27). Nevertheless, He kept offering them a reprieve. In 17:19-26, for example, He said they could avoid the predicted destruction by keeping the Sabbath holy. If they did, conditions would continue as before: rulers on the Davidic throne, occupants in Jerusalem, worship in the temple. This was a proffer He knew would be rejected. An even greater proffer took place in the Gospels. God offered the promised and hoped-for kingdom to Israel while knowing that He would “postpone” it.<sup>47</sup>

- Would this view of Ezekiel 40-48 mean that some other Old Testament prophecies were contingent too?

Possibly so, under the same conditions. Citing Jeremiah 18:7-9, Peters states a rule, that underneath predictions which related to the *moral* condition of man there is involved a moral principle of government which God, in justice to His own character and attributes, and also in behalf of the good of man, necessarily cherishes, viz.: that the good or evil predicted of any person or people is dependent upon their moral action....[It is thus] conditioned as to personal freedom and unconditioned as to God’s ultimate purpose.<sup>48</sup>

***Therefore, do not throw away your confidence  
which has a great reward.  
For you have need of endurance,  
so that when you have done the will of God,  
you may receive what was promised.  
For yet in a very little while,  
He who is coming will come, and will not delay.  
But My righteous one shall live by faith.  
(Hebrews 10:35-38a)***

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<sup>47</sup> The kingdom offered and postponed in the Gospels will certainly come. In contrast, this “proffer” view of Ezekiel 40-48 denies that the kingdom described there will ever come *in the form described*.

<sup>48</sup> Peters, *Theocratic Kingdom*, I:176-177.