**Ezekiel Commentary**

**Ezekiel Chapter 1**

Eze 1:1

**“in the thirtieth year.”** This is Ezekiel’s age. Although that fact is not plainly stated and has been challenged, that the 30 years refers to Ezekiel’s age has been generally accepted since the time of the Church Father Origin. It is unlikely it refers to an unstated and unknown event. According to Num. 4:3, a descendant of Aaron, and thus a priest, entered priestly ministry at age 30, and Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek. 1:3). Thus, it is appropriate that his prophetic visions started when he was 30.

Moses had set that descendants of Kohath, which included the priests, were to start their service at 30 (Num. 4:3). But David changed the age to 20 years old (1 Chron. 23:27), although it seems from 20 to 30 the priests were just assistants and apprentices (note 1 Chron. 23:3). So Ezekiel was taken captive before he could begin his full priestly service, and then when Nebuchadnezzar burned the Temple, there was no way Ezekiel could ever serve as a priest in the way his ancestors had.

**“in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month.”** Edwin Thiele[[1]](#footnote-17034) has proposed that this date, in the fifth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin (Ezek. 1:2), is July 31, 593 BC, and that date has been accepted by many scholars. Ezekiel is the most exactly dated of all the prophetic books.

**“I was among the captives.”** Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek. 1:3) and was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar’s army when Jehoiachin, who only reigned three months, was king of Judah (2 Kings 24:14-16). He was taken to the area of Nippur, about 600 miles (950 km) east of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was taken captive to Babylon when he was 26 years old and when Jehoiachin was king of Judah (Ezek. 1:2; 33:21; 40:1; 2 Kings 24:14-16), and the Babylonians settled him in the area of the Chebar canal close to the city of Nippur. It is worth noting that Ezekiel the priest was taken captive to Babylon, while Jeremiah the priest (Jer. 1:1) was left in Judah and had many interactions with King Zedekiah there. Ezekiel was a priest from a line of priests (Ezek. 1:3) and was in the fifth year of his captivity when God appeared to him (Ezek. 1:2). He had just turned 30 when God appeared to him (Ezek. 1:1) which meant that he was not yet considered in the fullness of his priestly service in Jerusalem when he was taken captive (cf. Num. 4:3-47), although he likely had started working as priest when he was 20 (1 Chron. 23:24-25).

**“Chebar canal.”** Of this canal that is mentioned in Ezekiel 1:1, Daniel Block writes: “Located in the vicinity of Nippur, the Chebar conduit was but one of many branches of an elaborate canal system that distributed water from the Tigris and the Euphrates throughout the city and its environs.”[[2]](#footnote-25906)

Because Ezekiel says he was among the captives located by the canal, we do not know if Ezekiel was personally near the canal at the time of the vision. Nippur is around 70 miles southeast of the city of Babylon, which would have been a good two-day journey at that time, so Ezekiel was far enough from the captive royalty of Judah that he would not have been influenced much by them.

**“I saw visions of God.”** The opening chapters of Ezekiel are an amazing introduction to Ezekiel’s calling and experience with God. It gives us a view of God and how He moves in the spirit world and among humans that does not occur anywhere else in the Bible. The opening chapters of Ezekiel, especially chapter 1, have been hard to translate and understand because they present spiritual realities that are difficult to describe. Added to that is the fact that some Christian traditions make it hard to understand Ezekiel chapter 1. For example, the Christian tradition that people cannot see God makes chapter 1 very difficult to understand because God appears bodily to Ezekiel. Also, that God portrays Himself riding on a chariot-throne is not expected or understood by most Christians, which adds to the difficulty in understanding Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 1:1-3 gives us the date and place that God called Ezekiel to ministry. Then, starting with Ezekiel 1:4, Ezekiel describes God’s chariot-throne, and quite specifically describes the cherubim who power it (Ezek. 1:5-14). God and His chariot-throne first appear to Ezekiel like a cloud of fire moving toward him from the north (Ezek. 1:4). Then, Ezekiel describes the cherubim that he saw powering the chariot-throne—they were the “engine” of the chariot-throne. The cherubim were basically humanoid in form (Ezek. 1:5), but they also had many distinct differences. For example, each of the cherubim had four faces that were facing in four different directions, the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Also, each of the cherubim had four wings with which they flew (Ezek. 1:6. This fits with 2 Sam. 22:11 and Ps. 18:10, that God rode on a cherub and flew). The cherubim took God’s chariot-throne wherever God, “the Spirit,” wanted to go (Ezek. 1:12), and when the cherubim moved, their wings made a loud sound (Ezek. 1:24).

Ezekiel then tells us that God’s chariot-throne had wheels but describes them in a way that is challenging to understand and translate (Ezek. 1:15-21). In any case, we learn that when God’s chariot-throne was on the ground it rolled on the wheels, but verses 19-21 tell us that when God wanted to fly, His chariot-throne lifted off the earth and the wheels traveled right along with the chariot-throne, much like an airplane has wheels that it uses when it’s on the ground but does not use them when flying.

Then, from Ezekiel 1:22-26, we learn that the cherubim supported a platform. The platform was above the cherubim, and on the platform was the throne of God, with God sitting on the throne. The throne had the appearance of lapis lazuli, and God appeared in the form of a man sitting on the throne with shining brightness like fire all around Him. God would speak to the cherubim and they would stop or go at His command (Ezek. 1:25).

So, Ezekiel chapter 1 describes God riding a chariot-throne. It was powered by cherubim with wings and it had wheels on which it rolled when it was on the ground. It had a platform above the cherubim on which was God’s throne, and God, in the form of a man, was sitting on the throne. In response to this unexpected and powerful revelation, Ezekiel fell on his face before God, and God spoke with him (Ezek. 1:28).

At this point, Ezekiel chapter 2 begins. After Ezekiel fell on his face, God told him to get up (Ezek. 2:1), and then God told Ezekiel that He was sending him to speak to the people of Israel, that “nation of rebels” (Ezek. 2:3). God’s first commissioning of Ezekiel and His first set of commands is recorded in Ezekiel 2:1-3:11. Then God moved Ezekiel to a place where Israelites lived so that he could speak to them. Those particular Israelites had been taken captive by Babylon and moved to a site in Babylon named Tel Aviv, which was relatively close to where Ezekiel lived by the Chebar canal (Ezek. 3:12-15; see commentary on Ezekiel 3:15, “Tel Aviv”). Then the ministry and revelations of Ezekiel continue and are recorded in the rest of Ezekiel.

God called and chose Ezekiel and, as we learn when we read the book, involved him in an honorable and amazing mission, but one fraught with difficulties and dangers. Ezekiel’s calling was not guesswork on the part of the prophet, nor was it a subtle revelation to him. God shows us by Ezekiel’s example how personal He can be.

Ezekiel was justifiably angry and bitter about his situation as a captive (Ezek. 3:14) because throughout his early years he no doubt looked forward to being a priest and getting to serve God, only to have that—and his homeland and even likely his family—taken from him due to the sin of the leaders of Judah who had consistently ignored the warnings of the prophets, Jeremiah being one of them.

We need to see Ezekiel 1 for what it really is: not just a confusing description of what some people think is a spaceship, but rather a loving and righteous God, angry over the sin of His people, who came to call a young man into His service. God called Ezekiel to a very serious and difficult ministry, in very difficult times, and He showed up in person to do it. He came to Ezekiel in all the power and majesty of His holy position as God, riding on his chariot-throne, complete with glittering colors, fire, flashing lightning, and the sound like the commotion of a coming army. Yahweh’s coming to Ezekiel demanded his attention. At some point in the future, Jesus will come in person, accompanied by angels and great glory, and that fact demands the attention of believers today so we are prepared for his coming.

[For more information on God coming into concretion in the form of a man, see commentaries on Gen. 18:1 and Acts 7:55.]

Eze 1:2

**“the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity.”** Ezekiel is the most exactly dated of all the prophetic books, and the dates reckoned from the captivity of King Jehoiachin of Judah (2 Kings 24:8-17; 2 Chron. 36:9-10).

There are 15 dated visions in Ezekiel, and many undated revelations, for example, Ezekiel 12 has five undated revelations from Yahweh (cf. Ezek. 12:1, 8, 17, 21, 26). Ezekiel 1:1-2 is the first dated vision, and it occurred in the fifth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity, the fourth month, the fifth day, which scholars have pinpointed as July 31, 593 BC.

Ezekiel was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in the second major wave of the deportations of the Israelites to Babylon. The first had come in the “first year” of Nebuchadnezzar (which in Babylonian biblical counting was his accession year, but in non-accession counting was his first actual year). This was the third year of Jehoiakim according to Babylonian counting (Dan. 1:1) and the fourth year of Jehoiakim according to Judean dating (Jer. 25:1; cf. Jer. 46:2). Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon in the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, which was nine years before Ezekiel was carried to Babylon. Jeremiah was prophesying at the same time as Ezekiel and Daniel, but remained in Judah, eventually going to Egypt (Jer. 43:6-7).

Eze 1:4

**“a stormy wind came out of the north.”** It is certainly no accident that God appeared to Ezekiel coming out of a storm cloud. Nippur was one of the most ancient Sumerian cities, and the name “Nippur” comes from ancient Sumerian and means “Lord wind.” In Sumerian mythology, Nippur, the city close to where Ezekiel was located, was the home of Enlil, the Sumerian storm god and creator of mankind. In fact, the ancient mythology was that Enlil actually created mankind at Nippur. Through the centuries and conquests of nations, Enlil lost his powerful position to the Babylonian god Marduk, but Enlil remained as one of the powerful Mesopotamian gods and the god who carried out the decrees of the council of gods that met at Nippur. The sanctuary of Enlil at Nippur was considered sacred by all the various dynasties that ruled Mesopotamia.

Understanding the religious context of the area where Ezekiel was located helps us understand why Yahweh showed Himself to Ezekiel in the way He did. Yahweh showed Himself to Ezekiel not only as the true God and thus the creator of mankind, but as the “real” storm God as well, approaching Ezekiel like a powerful storm on His chariot-throne, complete with wind, clouds, and lightning. Yahweh is rightfully called, “the Most High God” because He rules over all other gods and lords (cf. Gen. 14:18; Ps. 7:17; Isa. 14:14; Dan. 4:2; Mark 5:7; Acts 16:17. This is often abbreviated to simply “Most High”).

**“a great cloud with fire flashing back and forth.”** Although this is described as if Ezekiel is seeing an actual storm coming, we learn as we read that this “storm” is Yahweh approaching, and what Ezekiel is seeing is part of a grand vision in which Yahweh appears to him. The “cloud” surrounding God was the cloud of glory around him. The “glory of God” (or “glory of Yahweh”) is the phrase that is sometimes used to describe God’s presence veiled in a brilliant cloud surrounding Him; the cloud of glory prevented people from seeing God.

Sometimes when Yahweh comes in person the brightness around Him is described as a cloud. This is what happened at the dedications of Moses’ Tent of Meeting and Solomon’s Temple. The cloud of light that filled Moses’ Tent and Solomon’s Temple was so bright that the priests could not minister there (Exod. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-3). The glory of Yahweh is quite commonly described as a bright cloud. For example, 2 Chronicles describes the glory of God as a cloud (2 Chron. 5:13-14. Also, Ezekiel 10:3-4, and God said he would appear in a cloud on the mercy seat between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16:2; cf. Num. 7:89). Also, if we compare the descriptions of what happened at Solomon’s dedication of the Temple, we can see that the brilliant light that surrounded Yahweh was sometimes described as a “cloud” and sometimes as God’s “glory” (cf. 1 Kings 8:10-11 with 2 Chron. 7:1-3). We can understand why the brightness around God is sometimes described as a “cloud” because His brightness was localized and thus was much like a bright cloud in the sky with the sun shining through it such that it can only be squinted at. A brilliant cloud also appeared at the Transfiguration and indicated the presence of God, and God spoke from the cloud and said, “This is my beloved Son…” (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34).

The appearance of the cloud around God could change, depending on the situation. Although it was usually a brilliant light, sometimes it was dark. Furthermore, sometimes it had lightning or both thunder and lightning, and sometimes it had some of the other colors of the rainbow around God as well, or the colors of fire. When God came down on Mount Sinai at the time of the Exodus, there was a thick dark cloud, thunder and lightning, smoke, and the appearance of a consuming fire (Exod. 19:16-18; 24:16-17). When God first showed Himself to Ezekiel, he saw a cloud flashing with fire and there was a brilliance around the cloud and a glow in the middle of it that had the deep yellow-orange color of amber (Ezek. 1:4).

[For more information about the “glory of Yahweh” and the bright cloud that surrounds God, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28.]

**“And out of the center of it *gleamed* something like *the glow of* gleaming amber.”** As Yahweh’s chariot-throne approached, surrounded by clouds and flashing like lightning, it makes sense that the inside would gleam and glow like amber, for Yahweh Himself was on the throne of His chariot. As for the gleaming “amber,” the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain, and it is only used in Ezekiel 1:4, 27; and 8:2. We know that God’s presence caused a gleam or glow, but the exact nature of it is unknown, although amber is a likely candidate. The fact that Ezekiel describes the gleam from the presence of God in rare and uncertain terms shows us that it was a rare and hard-to-describe sight.

The word “gleam,” which in some versions is “the color of” (CJB, JPS, KJV) is the same Hebrew word as many versions translate as “eye” in Ezekiel 1:18.

Eze 1:5

**“four living creatures.”** These “living creatures” are not said to be cherubim until Ezekiel 10:15 and 10:20. The Hebrew word translated “living creature” is from the Hebrew word “living” (alive) and generally refers to living animals, although most English versions render that as “living creatures,” and some as “living beings.” It is completely understandable why the prophet Ezekiel would call them “living creatures.” He had never seen a cherub before his own description in Ezekiel 1 and 10, so he didn’t really know what they looked like. Although there are cherubim over the ark of the covenant, they are not described in any kind of detail in the Bible, and it seems like the way they are portrayed over the ark was different than the more exact description that Ezekiel saw.

For example, the cherubim over the ark seem to have only one face instead of four, one set of wings instead of two, and are not described as having arms with hands at all. Furthermore, the cherubim that are portrayed in the Millennial Temple only have two faces, not four; a human face and a lion face (Ezek. 41:18-19). It is possible that the sculpture, carvings, and weavings of the cherubim in the Temple are not fully accurate representations of them, but are more general representations. However, it is also possible that “cherub” is a general description of a category of spirit beings rather than a specific spirit being in the same way that “beetle” loosely describes a category of insects and not a specific insect such as a “rhinoceros beetle” or a “ladybug.” If that were the case, we could see how the descriptions of the cherubim differed, yet each being would still be a cherub. That also opens the door for the six-winged creatures in Revelation 4:6-8 to be cherubim.

The book of Ezekiel does not tell us when or how Ezekiel came to the realization that the “living beings” were cherubim, but we learn from Ezekiel 10:15 and 10:20, that they were indeed cherubim.

We were first introduced to cherubim in Genesis 3:24 when God employed them to guard the way into the Garden of Eden and the tree of life, but they were not described other than they were obviously powerful and could wield a flaming sword. The next times we saw the cherubim in the Bible they were associated with the ark of the covenant in both Moses’ Tent of Meeting and Solomon’s Temple, and likely symbolize that cherubim guard the ark of the covenant just as they guarded the Garden of Eden (cf. Exod. 25:20; 37:9; 1 Kings 6:27; 2 Chron. 3:11, 13). In Exodus, we learned that cherubim have wings, but we do not learn that they each had four wings until Ezekiel 1 and 10. We learn that God used cherubim to move from one place to another in Samuel and Psalms (2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10), but those verses made it seem like God rode on them like one rides on a horse. However, since Ezekiel tells us they have the general form of a human, that is unlikely. God’s riding a cherub is likely an abbreviated way of saying what is described in much more detail in Ezekiel, that the cherubim power God’s chariot-throne. Finally, here in Ezekiel 1 and 10, we are given a much more complete picture of cherubim.

Like angels, they are alive; they are said to be living creatures. They are basically humanoid in shape (Ezek. 1:5), but have some very significant differences. On their head, each one of them has four different faces that each face in a different direction; the face of a human, the face of a lion, the face of an ox, and the face of an eagle, so they keep watch in every direction at once (Ezek. 1:10; 10:21). They each have four wings (Ezek. 1:6, 11; 10:21), so they fly, and can fly quick as lightning, and when they fly with God’s chariot-throne, they make a sound like a coming army (Ezek. 1:24). When they are not flying, one set of wings is stretched outward and one set is down and covers their body (Ezek. 1:11). Also, they have arms and hands like human hands under their wings (Ezek. 1:5; 10:21). The arms and hands allow them to grasp things as a human would, which is why the cherubim in Genesis could wield a flaming sword (Gen. 3:24). Also, although their basic form was human, including their upper leg, their “feet,” which included the area up to about the knee, were like those of a calf (Ezek. 1:7). Although the exact purpose for that is not given, it no doubt enables them to run on rocky soil and perhaps also they can be used as weapons.

[For more on the cherubim and their purpose, see commentary on Ezek. 1:10.]

**“they had human form.”** This refers to their basic shape. Obviously, humans do not have wings and four different faces.

Eze 1:7

**“legs.”** The Hebrew word is actually “feet,” but in the Hebrew culture the “foot” can also refer to the lower leg, which apparently it does here. Similarly, the “hand” can refer to the lower arm almost to the elbow, which is why the Bible says the nails were driven into Jesus’ “hands,” but we know from Roman custom it was actually the wrist.

**“soles.”** The Hebrew is a collective singular, literally “sole.”

**“gleamed.”** The Hebrew word also can be translated “shined” or “sparkled” so exactly how the feet looked is unclear, other than that they were glorious.

Eze 1:8

**“They had human hands under their wings.”** The Hebrew is unclear as to how many arms with hands the cherubim had. The ancient exegetes said four sets of arms with hands, but modern scholars tend to believe the Hebrew text should be understood to mean two arms with hands, as a human has. Ezekiel 10:7 and 10:8 also mention the hands of the cherubim, and in Genesis 3:24 the cherubim held a sword.

Eze 1:10

**“of a man *in front*.”** It seems that the way Ezekiel was looking, the face he was looking at was a human face. The four living creatures formed a hollow square, and the platform with God’s throne was somehow supported above them, but how it was supported is not given in the text. As the living creatures were assembled and moved, all their faces aligned the same: the human face faced straight ahead, the lion faces to the right (from the perspective of the human face looking forward), the ox faces to the left, and the eagle faces to the back. When the cherubim-throne moved, whichever way it moved all the same faces would be looking in that direction.

The four specific faces of the cherubim are no accident. The lion, eagle, and ox are often portrayed in the art and architecture of the ancient Near East, and all three animals were known for their respective strength: the lion in the fight, the eagle as the most powerful of birds, and the ox in plowing and hauling. Their strength made them formidable guards. Beyond pure strength, the lion was also known for courage and ferocity, as well as serving as a royal symbol (note the lions on each side of Solomon’s throne: 1 Kings 10:19-20). The eagle was thought to be the fastest and most noble bird, and the ox was also a symbol of fertility and divinity (note Jeroboam’s golden calves: 1 Kings 12:28; 2 Chron. 13:8). Mankind is the pinnacle of God’s creation and the wisest of all the creatures, so the human face was fitting as well.

The function of the cherubim is not specifically described, but it is at least in part to guard and protect God and the things of God, and perhaps to worship as well. The derivation of the word “cherub” is not known, although it could have a meaning related to “strength, mighty” and to “bless, praise” (cf. BDB). *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* says that a good possible derivation is from the Aramaic for “great, strong,” and it references Philo and Gesenius. God placed cherubim with flaming swords to guard the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24). The book of Enoch, widely read and believed among the Jews, says the cherubim do not sleep, and guard God’s throne and glory (Enoch; LXXI:7). Ezekiel’s cherubim are closely related to the “living creatures” in Revelation 4:6-8, and we can see in Revelation that the living creatures stand in a guarding position between God and the spirit beings who are around Him.

That the cherubim were involved in guarding God and the things of God has been widely recognized. *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* mentions them being guardians of the covenant and avengers of its breach.[[3]](#footnote-32325) *Hasting’s Bible Dictionar*y also sees a connection between cherubim and guardianship of the divine. The fact that there were cherubim above the ark of the covenant, and also cherubim on the curtains of Moses’ Tent of Meeting (Exod. 26:1), including the curtains that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Exod. 26:31-35), and also on the walls of the Temple (1 Kings 6:29) reinforces the connection between cherubim and guarding God and His holy place.

Although it may seem strange to us that God would have guards, it makes perfect sense when we see how God works hard to be close to His creation. God spent time with Adam and Eve in the Garden (cf. Gen. 3:8) and He will live among His people in the everlasting future (Rev. 21:3-4). Between the Fall and Revelation 21, God sometimes appears to people in human form (see commentary on Gen. 18:1). Similarly, God sits among his spirit beings and deals personally with them (see commentary on Gen. 1:26). But there is a potential problem that is created when God works closely to His creation: evil spirits such as Satan may try to directly intervene and overthrow Him. While we know that would be impossible due to God’s great power, it is a scene that God no doubt wants to avoid, and the way to avoid it is to have a contingent of powerful and ever-vigilant guards around Him, and the “living beings” known as cherubim serve that purpose and guard Him as well as worship Him.

The Second Commandment says not to make an image of anything in heaven or on earth. Yet there were sculptured cherubim in the Tent of Meeting and the Temple, and also woven and carved bas-relief cherubim in those holy places. This shows that the cherub motif was not borrowed from the mythology or experience of any other Eastern culture, but they were actual creatures of God, and their presence in the Tent of Meeting and Temple was not just for decoration but communicated a deep truth: they were representing the spirit creatures that guarded God and the things of God.

Furthermore, the fact that many eastern cultures, including the Egyptian, Phoenician, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian, have powerful winged creatures, for example, the winged bulls that guard Assyrian palaces, testifies to the reality of the cherubim. The Devil is a copycat and deceiver, and no doubt his demons appeared to ancient people in forms that in some ways mimicked the creatures of God and confused people. Of course, the most egregious misrepresentation of cherubs is the transformation of these powerful guardian creatures into chubby babies with tiny wings, as has been done in Western art and religion. The Devil cannot defeat God’s powerful cherub bodyguards, so he mocks them.

Eze 1:11

**“two wings that touched the wing of another.”** It does not seem that the wings of the cherubim were in constant contact, but rather they were large enough that the wing of one cherub could reach and touch the wing of another. This indicates that the cherubim did not have a huge distance between them.

**“and two *wings* covering its body.”** Each cherub had four wings (Ezek. 1:6). The NLT is a paraphrased translation, but it gives the picture very clearly: “Each [cherub] had two pairs of outstretched wings—one pair stretched out to touch the wings of the living beings on either side of it, and the other pair covered its body.” This was while the chariot-throne was at rest. It seems clear that each cherub used all four wings when in flight, and let their body wings down when stopped (Ezek. 1:24).

Eze 1:12

**“the Spirit.”** In Ezekiel chapter 1, “The Spirit” occurs here in Ezekiel 1:12, and later in Ezekiel 1:20. We later learn that “the Spirit” is Yahweh (see commentary on Ezek. 8:2). God appears as “the Spirit” in Ezekiel 1:12, 20; 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24).

[For more on the uses of “spirit,” see Word Study: “Pneuma.”]

As many commentators point out, “the Spirit” (or “the spirit”) here in Ezekiel 1:12 has been interpreted many ways, including the wind, the Spirit of God, the spirit within the living creatures themselves, and the vital energy or impulse by which God, from His throne, acted upon them. However, since these cherubim carry God upon His throne, they would never go where they wanted to, they would always go where God wanted them to. Therefore we must understand “the Spirit” to be a reference to God here, and that is borne out in many other references in Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 1:12, 20; 3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; and see commentary on Ezek. 8:3).

“The Spirit” is not a reference to the preincarnate Christ or to a third member of the Trinity referred to as the Holy Spirit. Putting the whole multi-chapter vision that Ezekiel had together makes it very clear that the Spirit is Yahweh Himself.

[For more on why this Spirit could not be a preincarnate Christ, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son,” and for more on why it could not be a third member of the Trinity referred to as “the Holy Spirit,” see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

**“They did not turn when they went.”** They did not veer from their course; they traveled straight ahead (cf. Ezek. 1:17; 10:11).

Eze 1:13

**“their appearance was like burning coals of fire.”** This description is confusing, and we are confronted with the fact that describing God’s chariot-throne which was glorious in the extreme, is exceedingly difficult. This would be one occasion when we could genuinely say, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” but even a photo would likely not capture the greatness of this vision, a video would do much better.

**“The fire moved back and forth.”** The Hebrew text simply has “it” moved, but that is unclear in English, so most versions nuance this in some way for clarity.

Eze 1:14

**“moved backward and forward *as quickly* *as*.”** The text seems to be emphasizing how fast these cherubim could move, not how they were moving, as if they were constantly darting around. That would hardly seem appropriate considering the throne of God was on the platform they were carrying. From the vision we see that power and majesty of God, that when He wanted to, He could move like a flash of lightning, but He did not just keep darting back and forth.

Eze 1:15

**“I saw one wheel on the ground beside the living creatures.”** We now get a more complete picture of God’s cherubim chariot-throne. It is an awesome sight. Four cherubim somehow have a platform above them on which was placed God’s throne, and we are told it can move quick as lightning, being carried through the air by cherubim with powerful wings. But here in Ezekiel 1:15, we see the chariot-throne is equally as capable when moving on the ground, being equipped with four gleaming wheels. The wheels are mentioned again in Ezekiel 10:2 and 10:9, and apparently in Daniel 7:9. We have seen God fly on cherubim in other verses (2 Sam. 22:11), but this is the first time we see God’s throne with wheels. The wheels seem to be on the outside of the cherubim (cf. Ezek. 10:2).

Eze 1:16

**“gleam.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 1:18, “their rims gleamed all the way around.” Ezekiel 10:12 also mentions the gleam.

**“beryl.”** The stone has also been proposed to be yellow topaz. There is really no way to be sure. This same color is mentioned in Ezekiel 10:9.

**“as if one wheel was inside another wheel.”** This is impossible to fully understand because we have not been given enough information. Many interpretations are possible and many have been given.

It seems quite likely that each wheel was composed of two wheels that were placed at 90-degree angles. If that is the case, then each wheel was similar to the cherub beside it in that it could move straight ahead in four directions without turning. Just as each cherub had four faces and each face was looking in a different direction so that the cherub could move straight forward in different directions, a wheel composed of two wheels at 90-degree angles would allow God’s cherubim chariot to roll straight forward in four different directions.

Another possible interpretation is that the “wheel in a wheel” description could mean that each wheel had an inner hub and outer rim, and that gave the picture of a wheel inside a wheel. That kind of wheel construction was common in the ancient world and is a standard way of constructing wheels. However, it seems that the common nature of wheel construction using a hub, spokes, and rim argues against that being what Ezekiel saw, because he would likely then have said that he saw wheels next to the cherubim.

Eze 1:17

**“they did not turn when they went.”** The wheels rotated when they moved, but they did not veer from their direction. Like the cherubim, they went straight ahead.

Eze 1:18

**“they were high and awe-inspiring.**” The translation “awe-inspiring” may be the meaning, but the Hebrew word is more actually “dread,” than awe. Although many English versions have “awe-inspiring” or “awesome,” others have “terrifying” (NIrV); and “frightening” (HCSB, NLT). The wheels were no doubt awesome, but their power and size would also seem to be somewhat frightening.

**“their rims … gleamed all the way around.”** Although most Bibles translate the Hebrew word *`ayin* (#05869 עַיִן) as “eyes,” and say the wheels are full of “eyes” all around, that does not fit with the idea of a chariot, nor does it fit the way that `ayin is used in Ezekiel. The word *`ayin* is used in Ezek. 1:4, 7, 16, 18, 22, and 1:27, although it is plural here in verse 18 (cf. the NJB: “and the rims of all four sparkled all the way around.”

It does not seem that the wheels themselves were alive and could see, and in fact, that is highly unlikely. The Hebrew word “eye” was used of many things, including things that sparkled or gleamed, like eyes are said to gleam. Also, in the Babylonian world, “eye” was used to refer to a nail or pebble that looked like an eye or had the shape of an eye. It is possible that the text is simply saying these wheels sparkled all around, or that they were decorated with sparkling gems or rivets like eyes. There are many examples of the Hebrew word not referring to an eye, many in Ezekiel itself. For example, the word “eye” is used for “gleam” in Ezekiel 1:4, 16; 10:9, and “glittering” in Ezekiel 1:22. Also, it is used of wine which “sparkles” (gives its eye) in the cup (Prov. 23:31), and many other uses could be cited.

Eze 1:19

**“When the living creatures moved, the wheels went beside them.”** This same idea is expressed in Ezekiel 10:16.

Eze 1:20

**“the Spirit.”** “The Spirit” occurs in Ezekiel 1, here in Ezekiel 1:12, and later in Ezekiel 1:20. We later learn that the Spirit is Yahweh (Ezek. 8:2). God appears as “the Spirit” in Ezekiel 1:12, 20; 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 24). See commentary on Ezekiel 1:12 and 8:3.

**“for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.”** What the phrase means is unclear. Scholars mostly agree that the phrase serves to show that the whole chariot-throne system works and moves together in concert. This same truth is expressed in Ezekiel 10:17.

Eze 1:21

**“*cherubim*.”** The word “cherubim” has been added to the text for clarity. In the Hebrew text of Ezekiel, the “living creatures” of Ezekiel 1:5-14 are not identified as cherubim until Ezekiel 10:15 and 10:20.

**“for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.”** What the phrase means is unclear. Scholars do mostly agree that the phrase serves to show that the whole chariot-throne system works together and moves together in concert (cf. Ezek. 10:17).

Eze 1:22

**“platform.”** Although the Hebrew word *raqiva* (#07549 רָקִיעַ) is usually rendered “firmament,” “dome,” or “expanse,” there are good lexical and contextual reasons to translate it as “platform” here; a platform with Yahweh’s throne set on it.[[4]](#footnote-15562)

The *TWOT* says that the basic concept of the Hebrew root of *raqiva* is “stamping, as with the foot, and what results.”[[5]](#footnote-19784) Thus, *raqiva* referred to broad plates, beaten out. We certainly see this when the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translated *raqiva* as *stereōma*, a solid supporting structure. The BDB gives one of the two definitions of *raqiva* as “the vault of heaven, or ‘firmament,’ regarded by the Hebrews as solid, and supporting ‘waters’ above it.”[[6]](#footnote-19162) Holladay says that *raqiva* refers to a beaten metal “plate, firmament (i.e., vault of heaven, understood as a solid dome).”[[7]](#footnote-16490)

The Latin Vulgate translated *raqiva* as *firmamentum*, referring to something which strengthens or supports, thus a firm structure, and that came into English as “firmament,” which lexically means the same as the Latin, something firm that strengthens or supports. However, because of its use in Genesis and a lack of understanding of Hebrew cosmology, the “firmament” lost its attachment to something firm, and was thought to refer to an expanse, the expanse of heaven. Many people today think it refers to the expanse of heaven, but we must keep in mind that the ancients thought of the “expanse of heaven” as a kind of hard dome over them, an expanse that had some solidness to it. The concept of “infinite space” was not a cosmological concept in the ancient Near East.

The important point for understanding Ezekiel is that the *raqiva*, the “firmament,” was not thought to be an empty expanse of air like we moderns might imagine. Even as an “expanse,” it was a hard surface that extended out into the distance. Ezekiel used *raqiva* as a hard surface, but as the hard platform that was above the cherubim and upon which God’s throne was placed.

It has been traditionally thought by many (and with good reason) that above the cherubim was an “expanse” like described in Genesis, the expanse of heaven, and God’s throne was above it. But while that seemed logical, it makes Ezekiel’s vision impossible to understand. If God is in heaven on His throne, what is the point of the cherubim with four wings and the wheels beside them coming to Ezekiel? This vision makes sense to us once we realize that the cherubim and wheels are part of God’s chariot-throne and God’s throne is on a platform above the cherubim.

It seems that the cherubim were such a vital part of God’s chariot-throne that when the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat and cherubim are being described as a centerpiece of Solomon’s Temple, the cherubim are even called, “the chariot” (cf. 1 Chron. 28:18).

**“glittering.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 1:18, “their rims gleamed all the way around.”

**“like crystal.”** The Hebrew word *qerach* (#07140 קֶרַח), which often refers to ice and could refer to that here, also can refer to crystal, hence the different English translations. Both ice and crystal can glitter and shine awesomely in the sunlight. Also, both crystal and ice are clear enough that Yahweh could see the cherubim and wheels, and anything else beneath Him, and the cherubim could watch Him.

Eze 1:24

**“When they went, I heard the sound of their wings.”** It seems clear that when the cherubim flew, they used all four wings, but when they stopped they let down the wings that covered their bodies. The Bible does not say why, but it may have been a gesture of modesty to draw attention away from themselves so God got the glory.

**“like the sound of mighty waters, like the voice of *El* Shaddai.”** When the cherubim flew, the sound of their wings was quite loud, described here three different ways: the sound of mighty waters, the sound of the voice of El Shaddai, and the sound of an army. Ezekiel 10:5 also describes the sound the cherubim made when they flew as the sound of the voice of El Shaddai.

Eze 1:25

**“Then a voice came from above the platform.”** Although it is not explicitly stated, we can see that this is Yahweh, directing his chariot-throne.

**“platform.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 1:22.

Eze 1:26

**“Above the platform.”** Ezekiel 1:26 is similar to Ezekiel 10:1. God, riding on His chariot-throne, appeared to Ezekiel here and later, in Ezekiel 10, and the descriptions are very similar.

**“over their heads.”** That is, over the heads of the cherubim, as the context shows.

**“lalpis lazuli.”** The deep blue color of lapis lazuli was often associated with God and his throne (Exod. 24:10; Job. 28:16; Isa. 54:11; Ezek. 1:26; 10:1), and it was used in the breastplate of the High Priest (Exod. 28:18; 39:11). Although the Hebrew word often gets translated as “sapphire” in English versions, this is quite unlikely because the stone that we know as “sapphire” was rarely known—if known at all—in the ancient Near East.[[8]](#footnote-27788) Sapphires are found in the Roman Empire, presumably due to Roman trade with Central Asia.[[9]](#footnote-17795) It is very unlikely that the High Priest would have an actual sapphire in his breastplate because of its being rare if available at all, and due to the fact that it would be difficult to inscribe. In contrast, lapis lazuli was a deep blue, quite easily workable, and was “one of the most precious stones known to the ancients.”[[10]](#footnote-24760) It was well-known and sought after in Egypt. Also, when the High Priest’s breastplate was made for Aaron, the Israelites had just come from Egypt, where lapis was well-known, so lapis would have been available for the Israelites to use. “Lapis, one of the most sought-after and prized stones of ancient times, was used for personal adornment, seals, ornaments, and inlaying.”[[11]](#footnote-10101) Part of the tribute that Pharaohs received from Babylonia included amounts of lapis lazuli, and various objects and animals were carved from lapis lazuli and used on necklaces or as pendants, including goddesses, hearts, a cat, crocodiles, scarabs, eyes, and also part of the Egyptian Book of the Dead was inscribed on a lapis tablet.[[12]](#footnote-26518) The fact that lapis lazuli was easily workable is likely the explanation for its use in Lamentations 4:7.

Lapis lazuli, or “lapis” for short, is a semi-precious stone that has been prized since antiquity for its intense blue color. The term “lapis lazuli” originated from the Persian word for “gem.” Lapis lazuli artifacts have been found at the oldest site of the Indus Valley civilization and a testimony to the value and appeal of lapis lazuli is that it was used as a gem in the funeral mask of the Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun.[[13]](#footnote-15299) In contrast to lapis lazuli, sapphire, if it was present at all in the early ancient Near East, would have been extremely rare, and almost impossible to fashion into gems and figurines. Sapphire is composed of corundum, and corundum is the second-hardest mineral known, second only to diamond. It is highly unlikely that many people in ancient times would have known what a sapphire was, but rulers and wealthy people would have worn lapis lazuli and it would have been well-known and recognized.

There are two very likely reasons that “sapphire” is the preferred reading in many English Bibles in spite of the fact that most historians and archaeologists know that “sapphire” is likely not correct. One reason is that the reading “sapphire” is traditional. The older English versions that predate archaeology, such as the King James Version (1611) and Geneva Bible (1599), assumed that the valuable blue stone was a sapphire, and “sapphire” became the traditional reading. Today, most translators try to preserve traditional readings if they can, even if they believe those readings are probably wrong. Secondly, however, at the time the Bible was written, lapis lazuli was a very prized gem, and highly valued. Today, however, lapis is not highly valued and a lot of people do not even know what it is or looks like, whereas sapphire is highly valued and well-known. Thus, to many translators, the term “sapphire” carries the blue color and value of the stone even if it is not actually the correct stone. The REV and some other modern versions (e.g., CEB, CSB, NASB, NIV, NLT) have the reading “lapis lazuli” because it is almost certainly the stone the writer had in mind.

**“the form of a man.”** This is God, Yahweh, appearing in the form of a man, as is clear from the context.

The book of Ezekiel gives us a lot of information about God and His chariot-throne, which He traveled on when He came to speak with Ezekiel. The chariot-throne travels lightning-fast through the air (Ezek. 1:14), powered by four four-winged cherubim (Ezek. 1:11), and when it lands, it has wheels and can roll (Ezek. 1:16-17). It is quite compact, and thus can park between the south side of the Temple and the Temple enclosure wall (Ezek. 10:3). The cherubim are close enough together that their wings can touch (Ezek. 1:9). Above the cherubim and the wheels is a platform that glistens like crystal and is likely somewhat transparent, allowing God to see the cherubim, wheels, and ground below Him (Ezek. 1:22). Upon the platform is a sapphire-blue throne, and upon the throne, God sits in the form of a human (Ezek. 1:26). The cherubim are living creatures, and go wherever and whenever God instructs them to (Ezek. 1:20), and when they move they make a great noise like the noise of an army (Ezek. 1:24).

Given the human shape of the cherubim and their four faces looking in four different directions (Ezek. 1:5-6, 10), it is likely that when God traveled on His cherubim-powered chariot-throne it is sometimes expressed simply as “God rode on a cherub” (2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:10). It is unlikely that God would ride piggyback style on a cherub. Also, that God rides on a cherubim-powered chariot-throne explains why cherubim are referred to as God’s “chariot” in 1 Chronicles 28:18.

[For more on Yahweh appearing in human form, see commentary on Acts 7:55 and Gen. 18:1; cf. Ezek. 8:2.]

Eze 1:27

**“And there was brightness *all* around him.”** This brightness is the “glory” of the LORD, the glory of Yahweh. See commentary on Ezekiel 1:28.

Eze 1:28

**“the rainbow.”** The colors of the rainbow are also associated with God’s throne in Revelation 4:3. God loves brilliant colors, and we see them associated with God in different places, particularly here and Revelation 4, and, of course, in God’s world around us.

**“This was the appearance of the form of the glory of Yahweh**.” This translation in the REV is quite literal. The sense of the sentence is picked up in several versions that are slightly less literal but catch the sense well. For example, “This was how the appearance of the glory of *ADONAI* looked” (CJB). Or “This is what the glory of the LORD looked like to me” (NLT).

Here in Ezekiel 1:28 and most other places, the “glory of Yahweh” is the brilliant light that surrounds Yahweh, and He is in the center of the brilliant light. Sometimes, such as in Ezekiel 1:28 and Revelation 4:3, the light surrounding God is multi-colored. Ezekiel saw both the brilliant light that surrounded Yahweh and Yahweh Himself in a human form (Ezek. 1:26-28). Historically it has sometimes been thought that the “glory” was the divine presence itself, but the Bible describes the brilliant glory as being around God, not God Himself appearing as a brilliant light. Thus, the *Hastings Bible Dictionary* has: “It [“glory”] is also frequently used…to denote a particular physical appearance indicating the divine presence.”[[14]](#footnote-11205)

As we will see below, Yahweh appeared in different ways. There are times when He appeared to people without His glory being visible, such as when He visited Abraham (Gen. 18:1). At other times He appeared in a cloud of brilliant light, and people could see the light but not Yahweh Himself. Sometimes, like here in Ezekiel, Yahweh appeared in His “glory,” the brilliant light that surrounded Him, but Yahweh Himself could also be seen in the light (Ezek. 1:26-28).

Since the phrase “the glory of Yahweh” is a way of describing the brilliant light that surrounds Yahweh with Him in the center, sometimes the Bible focuses on the glorious brilliance around Yahweh and sometimes on Yahweh Himself. This in large part explains why, when Yahweh appears in a given record, the Bible sometimes says “Yahweh” while at other times it says “the glory of Yahweh.” For example, “the glory of Yahweh” stood in front of Ezekiel on a plain near Nippur, but it was Yahweh Himself who spoke to Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:22-24). Similarly, Ezekiel 3:12 says that “the glory of Yahweh rose from its place,” but it is clear in the context that Yahweh’s chariot-throne was lifting off and moving with Yahweh Himself in the center of the glory that surrounded Him. Also, in Ezekiel 9:3, “the glory of God” moved to the threshold of the Temple, but “He” (Yahweh) spoke to Ezekiel. Also, because of the sin of the religious and political leaders of Judah, “the glory of Yahweh” left the Temple (Ezek. 10:4, 18; 11:23), but it was Yahweh who left; and He returns in Ezekiel 43:1-6, which is still future. But the Bible says “the glory of Yahweh” left because Yahweh in all His glory left the Temple.

When Stephen was being stoned, he looked up and saw “the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,” but he described it saying, “I see…the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55-56). Stephen saw “the glory of God,” i.e., the brilliant light that surrounded God, but he described it to the people there as “God” because he and his audience all knew that the “glory of God” was there because God was present in the center of the brilliant glory. Furthermore, to Stephen, “God” was the important focus, not the light around Him.

There are many times in the Bible when “the glory of Yahweh” is said to be present but Yahweh Himself was apparently not seen. The “glory of Yahweh” is not separate from Yahweh as if Yahweh Himself could be in one place and the “glory of Yahweh,” the brilliant light around Him, could be in another place. When the people saw the glory of Yahweh, they knew that the reason for the brilliant light was that God was in the center of it, and often when Yahweh appeared, He only allowed people to see the glorious light that surrounded Him, but not He Himself (cf. Exod. 16:7, 10; 24:16-18; Lev. 9:23-24; Num. 14:10; 16:19, 42; 20:6; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-3). God said “I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover,” so again we see God appearing in a cloud of bright light (Lev. 16:2).

A good example of people seeing the light around God but apparently not God in person was when “the glory of Yahweh” filled Moses’ Tent of Meeting and Solomon’s Temple. The brilliant light revealed that God was present there in a special way, dwelling above the mercy seat and between the cherubim (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89; 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; Ps. 80:1, 99:1; Isa. 37:16). When “the glory of the Lord” shined around the shepherds at the birth of Christ, it almost assuredly indicated that a very proud Father God was personally present there at the announcement of the birth of His only begotten Son, but the shepherds did not see Yahweh Himself (Luke 2:9).

God is in control of when and how He appears to people, so it should not surprise us that when God shows up in person, He shows up in different ways, each appropriate to the circumstance. Sometimes He is surrounded by brilliant light, which can be multi-colored as it is in Ezekiel 1:27-28 and Revelation 4:3-5. The brilliant light around God is the unapproachable light of 1 Timothy 6:16. Sometimes when God shows up in the form of a human as He did to Ezekiel, His body is described as being like fire (Ezek. 1:27). This may refer to the yellow, orange, red, blue and even green colors of fire, but also it likely describes the fact that, like fire, God Himself is glowing and the light shining from Him is moving and changing. God does not have to show up in a dull human form, but can reveal Himself in an amazing form that apparently shines, glows, and flashes like fire. However, when God showed up in Daniel’s vision of the end-times judgment, it was a regal indeed, with God in snow white clothing and with the white hair of age and wisdom, sitting on a fiery throne of judgment (Dan. 7:9-10).

Sometimes when Yahweh comes in person the brightness around Him is described as a cloud. This is what happened at the dedications of Moses’ Tent of Meeting and Solomon’s Temple. The cloud of light that filled Moses’ Tent and Solomon’s Temple was so bright that the priests could not minister there (Exod. 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; 7:1-3). The glory of Yahweh is also described as a bright cloud in Ezekiel 10:3-4, and God said he would appear in a cloud on the mercy seat between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16:2). We can understand why the brightness around God is sometimes described as a “cloud” because His brightness was localized and thus was much like a bright cloud in the sky with the sun shining through it such that it can only be squinted at. A brilliant cloud also appeared at the Transfiguration and indicated the presence of God, and God spoke from the cloud and said, “This is my beloved Son…” (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34).

The appearance of the cloud around God could change, depending on the situation. Although it was usually a brilliant light, sometimes it was dark. Furthermore, sometimes it had lightning or both thunder and lightning, and sometimes it had some of the other colors of the rainbow around God as well, or the colors of fire. When God came down on Mount Sinai at the time of the Exodus, there was a thick dark cloud, thunder and lightning, smoke, and the appearance of a consuming fire (Exod. 19:16-18; 24:16-17). When God first showed Himself to Ezekiel, he saw a cloud flashing with fire and there was a brilliance around the cloud and a glow in the middle of it that had the deep yellow-orange color of amber (Ezek. 1:4).

It is important to recognize that there are a couple of times when “the glory of Yahweh” does not seem to refer to His personal presence. In the phrase, “the glory of Yahweh,” the Hebrew word “glory” is *kabod* (#03519 כָּבוֹד), and *kabod* has a broad range of meanings. The Hebrew word *kabod* can mean glory, splendor, honor, distinction, reputation, importance, essence, power, and even heaviness or burden, depending on the context.

When the Bible speaks of the “glory” of Yahweh as the brilliant light that surrounds Him, it is using “glory” with the meaning of something that is awe-inspiring and of great splendor and wonder. As we have seen above, that brilliant awe-inspiring and wonderous light indicates the presence of God.[[15]](#footnote-16013) There are times, however, when the word “glory” refers to God’s majesty, power, or His praise and honor. For example, in Isaiah 35:2 when the wilderness and desert will see the “glory of God” and be transformed into fertile land, the word “glory” most likely refers to His awe-inspiring power that elicits praise. A similar use is in Habakkuk 2:14 when the whole world is filled with the knowledge of the “glory of Yahweh,” most likely meaning His power and majesty.

In contrast to the “glory of Yahweh,” which occurs quite often in the Old Testament and almost always refers to the personal presence of Yahweh, the phrase “glory of God” occurs very rarely in the Old Testament and never refers to His personal presence. In the Old Testament, the phrase “the glory of God” refers to the power and majesty of God (cf. Ps. 19:1, Prov. 25:2). However, the phrase “the glory of the God of Israel” refers to the glorious brilliance around Yahweh, and it only occurs five times, all in Ezekiel (Ezek. 8:4; 9:3; 10:19; 11:22; 43:2).

In the New Testament, the phrase “glory of the Lord” is rare, occurring three times, and it can refer to God’s personal presence (Luke 2:9), to praise and honor (2 Cor. 8:19), or in one case it refers to the glory of the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18). The phrase “the glory of God” in the New Testament almost always refers to the power and majesty of God or something that elicits the praise and honor of God (cf. John 11:4, 40; Rom. 3:23; 15:7; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:14). Only a few times does the “glory of God” refer to the brilliant light that surrounds God (Acts 7:55; Rev. 15:8; 21:23, and perhaps Rev. 21:11).

God desires a special and personal relationship with people, so it is not unusual that He would manifest His presence among humans at various critical times in history, and often He is surrounded by glorious light, “the glory of Yahweh.”

[For more on the movement of the glory of Yahweh out and back into Jerusalem and the Temple, see commentary on Ezek. 9:3. For more on Yahweh appearing in human form, see commentary on Gen. 18:1 and Acts 7:55.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 2**

Eze 2:1

**“son of man.”** The phrase “son of man” is a Semitic idiom for a human being (see commentary on Dan. 7:13). Because of that, most commentators say that the reason that God refers to Ezekiel as “son of man,” which He does over 90 times, “distinguishes the prophet from the nonhuman beings that are present in the world of his vision” (text note: NET Bible). However, while the phrase “son of man” distinguishes the human prophet from the divine visions he sees, it almost certainly does more than that. Many prophets had profound visions of the divine realm, including Isaiah, who saw Yahweh on his throne (Isa. 6:1-13), and Daniel, who had angelic visitations and very complex visions of the future. Amos had a vision of Yahweh, but Yahweh just called him “Amos,” not “son of man” (Amos 7:7-8). No prophet except Ezekiel is called “son of man,” so there have to be deeper reasons for that besides just that Ezekiel was human.

Ezekiel and Daniel were contemporaries, and it was Daniel who saw the vision of “one like a son of man,” the Messiah, coming in the clouds of heaven and getting everlasting dominion of the earth from “the Ancient of Days,” that is, God. Thus, it was in the time of Ezekiel and Daniel that “son of man” became a messianic title as well as an idiom meaning “human being,” and Jesus referred to himself as “the son of man” on many occasions.

One reason that God called Ezekiel “son of man,” a title Jesus regularly used of himself, was to establish the typological relationship between Ezekiel and Christ. Many of the Old Testament figures were types of Jesus Christ in one way or another. Joseph was a type of Christ who went from a lowly person in Egypt to second-in-command under Pharaoh himself. Joshua was a type of Christ who took charge of the army of God and conquered the Promised Land. David was a type of Christ who ruled Israel in a time of great prosperity. The list goes on and on.

One profound way that Ezekiel was a type of Christ was they were both priests who could not perform their priestly function in their earthly life but would in their next life. Ezekiel was a priest in exile in Babylon and removed from the Temple by some 600 miles. Similarly, Jesus was not only a priest, but God’s High Priest, but due to the circumstances of his life he could not function as a priest in his first life. But of all the prophets in Israel, it was to Ezekiel that God showed the revelation of the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 40-48), and in the Millennium both Jesus and Ezekiel will minister in that Temple as priests.

Another way that Ezekiel was a type of Christ concerned the consistent contact the two of them had with God. Jesus was in consistent contact with God, so much so that John 3:34 says that Jesus spoke the words of God because God “continues to give *to him* the spirit without measure.” God consistently gave revelation to Jesus Christ. Although Ezekiel did not have the consistency of contact with God that Jesus did, you might not know that from a quick read of the book of Ezekiel. Of the 48 chapters of Ezekiel, all but two, chapters 14 and 20, open with God speaking to Ezekiel, or God’s hand being upon him, or him seeing a vision from God, or God or His angel somehow directing him; and the two chapters that don’t have that contact in the opening verse have it in the second verse. No other prophet seems to have had the constant contact with God that Ezekiel did. Based on what he saw in Ezekiel, Jesus Christ could be confident that God would be in regular contact with him.

Ezekiel, the prophet that God called “son of man,” was not just called that because he was human and not divine, Ezekiel was an important type of Christ.

Eze 2:3

**“I am sending you to the children of Israel.”** This is some important information. For one thing, “the children of Israel” that Ezekiel was commissioned to speak to were not in Israel, they were in captivity in Babylon, as was Ezekiel himself. The Judeans back in Judah were being addressed by prophets there, such as Jeremiah. Also, Ezekiel is sent to “the children of Israel,” not “the children of Judah,” although sometimes people of Judah are singled out. Although Nebuchadnezzar had deported the Judeans, the Assyrians had deported the ten northern tribes of Israel about 125 years earlier (Samaria had been breached and captured in 722 BC, and the people were carried away into exile). So apparently there were both people from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah that were addressed by Ezekiel, and the people from both Israel and Judah had rebelled against God.

**Ezekiel Chapter 3**

Eze 3:3

**“Then I ate it, and it was as sweet as honey.”** This is a similar experience to what John experienced in Revelation 10:9, except after John ate the scroll it became bitter in his stomach.

Eze 3:12

**“the glory of Yahweh.”** In this context, the “glory of Yahweh” is Yahweh in the midst of His glory. It is not as if the glory of Yahweh was in one place and Yahweh was in another. We have already seen how glorious Yahweh is, shining and glowing like fire and glowing metal, and surrounded by a brightness that has the colors of the rainbow (Ezek. 1:26-28).

[For more on the phrase “the glory of Yahweh” referring to Yahweh’s presence surrounded by a cloud of brilliant light, see commentary on Ezek. 1:4 and Ezek. 1:28.]

“**rose from its place**.” The REV translation follows the textual change suggested in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*,[[16]](#footnote-23129) that the Hebrew word *brum* (בְּרוּם) should be in the text instead of *barukh* (בָּרוּךְ). The NET text note says, “The letters *mem* (ם) and *kaph* (ך) were easily confused in the old script while ) בָּרוּךְ‘blessed be’( both implies a quotation which is out of place here and also does not fit the later phrase, ‘from its place,’ which requires a verb of motion.” The BBE, NET, NAB, NIV, and NRSV translations also adopt the emendation.

It is important to pay attention to the fact that the glory of the Lord is moving in this initial section of Ezekiel, because due to sin it moves away from the Temple, and then in the prophecy of the Millennial Temple it moves back into the Temple again (Ezek. 43:4).

Eze 3:14

**“the Spirit.”** This is Yahweh, just as it is in Ezekiel 37:1. Some commentators take this use of *ruach* (“spirit; wind”) to refer to the wind caused by God’s chariot-throne moving, but there is no reason to believe that a wind from God’s chariot would take Ezekiel to a specific place and not just blow him around and even be potentially harmful.[[17]](#footnote-28185)

**“took me away.”** That is, took Ezekiel away from where he was by the Chebar canal to the area of Tel Aviv where other exiles lived, as we learn from Ezekiel 3:15. Ezekiel was supposed to speak to them, but he sat overwhelmed for seven days until Yahweh spoke to him again.

**“and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit.”** This is a rare look at the internal emotion of a prophet. But we could say that Ezekiel had good reason to be wrestling with bitterness and anger. He was a captive priest in exile in Babylonia, far from the Temple in which he should have been serving, because of the sin and ungodliness of the priests, Levites, and leaders of the country. And those leaders had had plenty of warning about the consequences that their sin could bring upon them. They had been told by prophet after prophet, and they had the clear example of the destruction of the ten northern tribes and the country of Israel. Yet they remained obstinate and Ezekiel was in exile because of it, and was wrestling with bitterness and anger.

Eze 3:15

**at Tel Aviv.”** This is not the modern city of Tel Aviv in Israel, which was founded in 1909, but an area in the vicinity of the Chebar canal near Nippur in Babylonia. Daniel Block writes: “While the name Tel Abib translates literally, ‘mound of spring produce,’ as a Mesopotamian toponym, it is derived from *til abubi,* ‘mound of the flood [debris].’ The phrase denotes a ruin-hill, popularly conceived as having been destroyed by the primeval deluge. This name may have been applied to the present site in the aftermath of the Chaldean destruction of the region around Nippur, prior to the arrival of the Judeans.”[[18]](#footnote-31803)

**“I sat there among them...overwhelmed for seven days.”** God had called Ezekiel to speak to the children of Israel there in captivity with him, but Ezekiel was so stunned by the revelation he received, and overwhelmed, and perhaps not knowing exactly where to start, that he sat for seven days without saying anything. God had told Ezekiel to speak (Ezek. 3:4, 11), but after seven days Ezekiel had said nothing. God’s patience with Ezekiel wore out and He gave Ezekiel another revelation (Ezek. 3:16), and this one was a stern warning that God made Ezekiel a watchman, and if he did not speak the message that God had for the children of Israel then God would hold Ezekiel accountable for their blood (Ezek. 3:16-19). We tend to think of prophets as ready and willing to speak the words of the Lord no matter what the cost, but that kind of spiritual maturity and warrior-mindedness took growing up in the things of God, it did not come right away. God had to get angry at Moses before he would stop making excuses instead of obeying God (Exod. 4:13-17).

Eze 3:16

**“at the end of seven days.”** This is the second dated vision of Ezekiel, and it is seven days after Ezekiel’s first vision, so it occurred in the fifth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity, in the fourth month. This is likely the 24th of July 593 BC. But if Ezekiel is using inclusive counting, it is the 25th of July, 593 BC. To understand how this prophecy is “later” in Ezekiel’s life but “earlier” in our BC dating, we must keep in mind that Ezekiel lived before Christ, so “later” to him meant closer to 1 BC. Ezekiel’s first vision and commission had overwhelmed him, and he had been silent for seven days, thus God’s second revelation (see commentary on Ezek. 3:15).

Eze 3:17

**“Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel.”** The message that God gave Ezekiel here in Ezekiel 3:17-21 is the same basic message that God gave in Ezekiel 18:21-24 and Ezekiel 33:7-16. Ezekiel 3:17-21 includes the responsibility of the person called to be a watchman to tell others about the disaster that will come upon those who disobey God, and it includes a warning to people not to believe that past righteousness will cover for current sin, and the encouragement that sin in one’s past will not keep a person from being considered righteous in God’s sight if they repent of their sin and live righteously.

Eze 3:18

**“but his blood I will require at your hand.”** Although this is a specific revelation to Ezekiel, it has general application to every believer. The unsaved and ignorant do not know that people who are not saved will be destroyed in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15), while people who are saved but live rebellious and disobedient lives will not have any rewards in the future Millennial Kingdom (1 Cor. 3:14-15; also, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10). It is the responsibility of people who are saved to do their best to warn the unsaved and disobedient about their upcoming fate and how to avoid it and have a wonderful everlasting future.

Jesus said to go preach the Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20) and called his disciples to be fishers for people (Mark 1:17). 2 Corinthians 5:20 says Christians are ambassadors for Christ. If believers warn unbelievers about the future but are ignored, the believers are not held accountable for the disobedience of others and in fact are rewarded for their evangelical efforts. If, on the other hand, believers stand idly by while unbelievers die in ignorance, God holds the believers accountable to some degree for not at least trying to save their fellow humans from everlasting death.

[For more on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.” For more on the future Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 3:20

**“A righteousness man.”** In this context, “righteousness” is doing what is right and just to other people and in the sight of God (see commentary on Matt. 5:6).

Eze 3:22

**“and he said to me.”** The “he” in this verse is Yahweh, as is made clear in the context.

**“*broad* valley.”** The Hebrew word *biqah* (#01237 בִּקְעָה) refers to a broad valley or a plain. Apparently, it was a broad valley, and it is mentioned again as “the valley” in Ezekiel 37:1, and when God showed it to Ezekiel then it was full of dry bones.

There were many times when God revealed Himself to Ezekiel and other prophets right where they were, but there are times when it is important to be alone, and this was one of them. Ezekiel’s commission was important for Israel and His prophecies important for the people then and for future generations, and God took Ezekiel alone into the valley and spoke clearly to him about his mission and ministry. For the other great event that took place in this valley between Ezekiel and God, see Ezekiel 37 and commentary on those verses.

Eze 3:23

**“like the vision that I had seen in the plain.”** The vision Ezekiel had on the plain is the vision he had in Ezekiel chapter 1.

Some English translations read “valley,” and in Hebrew, a “valley” can in fact refer to something we would call a “plain.” For example, the “Jezreel Valley” is many miles wide, and we Westerners would call it a “plain.” It does have hills on both sides, but they are many miles apart. The land that Ezekiel was on would have been more like a plain in our minds than our common idea of a “valley.”

**“The glory of Yahweh stood there.”** In this case, what Ezekiel saw was the brilliant cloud that surrounds Yahweh, with Yahweh in the middle of the cloud, just like Ezekiel had seen in Ezekiel 1:27-28. The text could have just said “Yahweh” because Yahweh was personally present in the cloud of glory, but it says “the glory of Yahweh” because that is what Ezekiel saw.

The *Tanakh* version by the Jewish Publication Society clearly understands that the “glory of Yahweh” surrounds Yahweh and thus indicates His presence, because they translate Ezekiel 3:23 as: “I arose and went out to the valley, and there stood the Presence of the LORD, like the Presence that I had seen at the Chebar Canal….”

[For more on the glory of God, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28.]

**“and I fell on my face.”** This is a very appropriate response to being in the presence of Yahweh.

Eze 3:24

**“and he spoke with me.”** The “he” in this verse is Yahweh, as is made clear in the context.

**Ezekiel Chapter 4**

Eze 4:10

**“20 shekels.”** 20 shekels is roughly eight ounces, half a pound (226.8 grams). A shekel was roughly .4 ounces (11 or 11.5 grams). See commentary on Genesis 24:22, “shekel.” Half a pound of food per day is not a lot of food.

**“from time to time.”** Ezekiel was not to eat the eight ounces all at once, but spread out through the day.

Eze 4:15

**“cow’s dung for human dung.”** This record in Ezekiel 4:1-17 is one of the places where God has a prophet not only speak a prophecy, but act it out. God had originally told Ezekiel to bake his food over human dung (Ezek. 4:12), but Ezekiel protested, so out of respect for him, God changed what He required (even though then it would sometimes not accurately represent what the people in Jerusalem would have to endure).

The Babylonians were about to attack Jerusalem and lay siege to it, and things were about to get so bad inside the city that people would cook what little food they had using dried human poop for fuel. People would only do that in the most dire of circumstances. God had mercy on Ezekiel and honored his request not to cook on human dung, and instead allowed Ezekiel to use dried cow manure (often referred to as “cow pies” in American slang) for fuel. Cooking over dried animal dung was quite common in the biblical world. Wood was often unavailable or at a premium, and dried cow and camel dung burned slowly and hot enough to cook over, although it smelled terrible (at least to most modern noses).

Cooking over dried animal dung was one of the multitude of biblical customs that did not change in the East over the centuries. In 1889, Gottlieb Schumacher wrote about his experiences in Jordan: “…owing to the great need of fuel during the rainy season…the nomad Bedawin and the villagers tear up every young tree before it has time to grow. …The villagers and Bedawin for their fuel as a rule make use of dried dung.[[19]](#footnote-32579)

When God gave a prophetic word to a prophet, that word was often called a “burden,” and when we see what God required of His servants, we can see that the prophecies God gave could truly be burdensome.

[For more on a prophecy being a burden, see commentary on Mal. 1:1.]

Eze 4:16

**“staff of bread.”** “Bread” was a common idiom for food. “Bread” came to be used by metonymy for food in general because bread was the main food in the culture and a staple of life. Bread was called “the staff” or “the staff of life” because the people leaned on it for their staple food (cf. Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16; Ezek. 5:16).

**Ezekiel Chapter 5**

Eze 5:1

**“balances for weighing.”** For more on the biblical balance used in trade, see commentary on Proverbs 11:1.

Eze 5:2

**“the city.”** That is, Jerusalem. The words “the city” are supplied for clarity in many English versions such as the REV; the Hebrew text reads “it.”

Eze 5:7

**“arrogant.”** The NET text note has a good explanation. It notes that the Hebrew word “is likely derived from ) מָנוֹן*manon*(, meaning ‘disdain’ )see L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel* ]WBC[, 1:52(. A derivative from this root is used in Prov. 29:21 of a rebellious servant. See *HALOT* 600 s.v. מָנוֹן.” The word “arrogant” fits the context and the attitude of the people of Jerusalem.

**“*even* acted according to the ordinances of the nations.”** The pagan nations were more godly than Judah and Jerusalem!

Eze 5:10

**“fathers will eat their sons...and sons will eat their fathers.”** This refers to the cannibalism that was the result of the severe famine in Jerusalem due to the Babylonian siege of the city. Lamentations, almost certainly written by Jeremiah, who lived in Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege of the city, also mentions the cannibalism that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem (Lam. 2:20; 4:10, see commentary on Lam. 2:20). There is no evidence that parents were killing their children and eating them, although that was known to occur sometimes in deep famine (2 Kings 6:28-29). It is most likely that people were eating the remains of their children who had died from starvation and other causes.

Eze 5:14

**“I will make you a desolation.”** Although this is spoken directly of Jerusalem, the Babylonian attack devastated the whole Kingdom of Judah as well.

Eze 5:16

**“staff of bread.”** “Bread” was a common idiom for food. “Bread” came to be used by metonymy for food in general because bread was the main food in the culture and staple of life. Bread was indeed the staff upon which the people leaned for food, and in literature it is sometimes referred to as the “staff of life” (cf. Lev. 26:26; Ps. 105:16; Ezek. 4:16).

**Ezekiel Chapter 6**

Eze 6:2

**“toward the mountains of Israel.”** From where Ezekiel was near Nippur in Babylonia, the direction of the mountains in Israel was due west, and about 500 miles (800 km).

**“and prophesy against them.”** The most likely reason that Yahweh tells Ezekiel to prophesy against the mountains of Israel is that is where many of the idols were worshiped. Thus, Ezekiel 6:13 says, “their slain men will be among their idols around their altars on every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains.” It was believed by many ancient people that God or the gods ruled from mountains.

[For more about God or gods ruling from mountains, see commentary on Gen. 17:1.]

Eze 6:3

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52). In this case, the shrines were on the mountains, in high places, but the primary emphasis is that God will destroy the pagan shrines.

Eze 6:4

**“I will throw your slain men down in front of your idols.”** God will throw the slain men of Judah down in front of their idols to show that the idol gods were powerless to protect them and cannot raise them from the dead.

Eze 6:5

**“I will scatter your bones around your altars.”** The bones around the pagan altars will prove that the pagan gods are powerless to raise the dead. In contrast, God takes dead, dry bones and gives them life (Ezek. 37:1-14). Jonah rightly said, “Those who worship worthless idols forsake their own mercy” (Jonah 2:8), because only Yahweh can give a person everlasting life, so those who abandon Yahweh and worship idols die forever instead of live forever.

[For more on people dying forever, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Eze 6:7

**“and you will know that I am Yahweh.”** That is, you will experience that I am Yahweh (see commentary on Exod. 6:7).

Eze 6:12

**“die by the famine.”** The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem had produced a horrible famine (see commentary on Lam. 1:11).

**Ezekiel Chapter 7**

Eze 7:3

**“the end is upon you.”** Here in Ezekiel 7:3, God speaks directly to the land. Although the people of Israel sinned, the land itself will be punished, although as you read the text, the “land” is also intermingled by metonymy with the people of the land. When the people of a land sin, the land itself becomes defiled and reaps consequences (Lev. 18:25, 27-28). The land then becomes barren, desolate, subject to drought or flood, insects or disease, and the inhabitants are forced to abandon it, or it becomes conquered and other people take charge of it.

**“hold you accountable for.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “bring upon you,” but it means to “hold you accountable for” (NET) or can be nuanced even further to “punish you for” (HCSB; ESV).

Eze 7:5

**“A unique disaster.”** Or a “one-of-a-kind” disaster, or “an exceptional disaster.”[[20]](#footnote-30229) Some Hebrew manuscripts read, “disaster after disaster,” and a number of modern versions read that way (cf. HCSB, ESV, NLT, NRSV).

Eze 7:7

**“inhabitant.”** Although some versions nuance “inhabitant” to “inhabitants,” the Hebrew is singular. Each person, each “inhabitant” faces his situation and divine retribution alone.

Eze 7:8

**“hold you accountable.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “bring upon you,” but it means to “hold you accountable for” (NET) or can be nuanced even further to “punish you for” (HCSB; ESV).

Eze 7:12

**“Do not let the buyer rejoice, or the seller mourn.”** This is a reference to the standard back-and-forth haggling play between the buyer and the seller in the biblical culture, and when the sale is over, the buyer rejoices he got the deal at such as good price and the seller mourns that he will be ruined for selling so low. The point Ezekiel is making is that in the day of disaster buying and selling will not be as normal and even perhaps there will be no buying and selling.

Eze 7:13

**“For the seller will not regain what he has sold.”** This unusual line can be understood in light of the day of disaster. It seems the sale will not be completed, and the seller not paid, but the seller will not get back what he “sold.” The NET has, “the customer will no longer pay the seller” following the Septuagint.

Eze 7:14

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

Eze 7:18

**“baldness.”** A symbol of mourning. See commentary on Jeremiah 47:5.

Eze 7:19

**“like an unclean thing.”** The silver and gold they covet so dearly will not just be worthless to them, it will be like filth, like things that are unclean.

**“appetites.”** The Hebrew word is “soul,” *nephesh* (#05315 נֶפֶשׁ), but here it is used of the appetite. People focused their lives on silver and gold, but in the day of disaster, they cannot eat it. Furthermore, the famine will be so great in the city that all their silver and gold will not be able to buy food. This verse in Ezekiel is not talking about the final Day of Judgment but the lesson applies to that great and terrible Day. There is a Day of Judgment coming for every person, and the only wealth that will be valuable on that Day is the wealth of having obeyed God during one’s life.

[For more on nephesh and its uses, see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

“**stumbling block that brought about their iniquity**.” The Hebrew reads, “stumbling block of their iniquity,” but it is a genitive of production and thus “brought about” or “produced” their iniquity is the meaning. Wealth became a stumbling block for these Judeans 2,500 years ago, and it is still a stumbling block for many people today, and entices people into lives of sin—lives that will end in everlasting death. There is a great irony in people living lives of sin in the pursuit of wealth. Even if they get it, it will only last a few decades at best, and sinful gain is never peaceful; it always comes with anxiety and fear—who will find out, will I lose it after all? In contrast, those people who obey God can live without anxiety now and will live in a gold city with walls of gemstones and streets of pure gold (Rev. 21:18-21).

Eze 7:20

**“God’s ornaments.”** The Hebrew text is “his ornaments” but that leaves the English unclear, so the REV nuances “his” to “God’s” for clarity. The people took some of the gold and silver articles in the Temple and made idols and perhaps other things such as decorations for idols from them (cf. Ezek. 16:17).

Eze 7:22

**“my treasured place.”** The meaning of the phrase is debated because it could refer to the Temple (and even be translated, “my secret place”), but the context indicates a wider scope, likely Jerusalem or even the whole land of Judah. The Hebrew can be “secret” or “treasure,” and likely refers to both Jerusalem and the Temple, or even Judah, Jerusalem, and the Temple. The point is that the sin of the people of Judah opened them up to attack and conquest by foreigners. The wise Christian should learn from that. No sin is harmless. Sin opens people up to being attacked by spiritual and physical forces.

Eze 7:23

**“Make the chain.”** This phrase is unclear in the context, and many different emendations and translations have been suggested. It seems logical that since captives were led away in chains, that it is a reference to the upcoming captivity of the people.

**“the city.”** Jerusalem.

**Ezekiel Chapter 8**

Eze 8:1

**“in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month.”** This is Ezekiel’s third revelation recorded in the book of Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 1:1-2; 3:16). It starts in Ezekiel 8:1 and ends in Ezekiel 11:25. The sixth year refers to the sixth year of the Babylonian Captivity, which started when Jehoiachin was king of Judah (2 Kings 24:14-16). Many scholars accept that this date is September 18, 592 BC. That makes this vision a little over 13 months later than Ezekiel’s first vision (see commentary on Ezekiel 1:1, “in the fourth month”). Thus, after Ezekiel got his first revelations, it was over a year before he received this vision.

**“the elders of Judah sat before me.”** These elders, like Ezekiel himself, had been carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar’s army (2 Kings 24:2-16). These elders, like King Jehoiachin of Judah himself, apparently had no formal authority in Babylon, but they had been recognized as leaders and elders among the Jews before the Captivity and they were still recognized by the Jews in that capacity, so they did have a genuine influence among the Jewish exiles.

The fact that they came to Ezekiel’s house indicates that they recognized Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry, even if they did not believe everything he said. This delegation is different from the one in Ezekiel 14:1, which is designated as “the elders of Israel,” instead of “the elders of Judah.” They could have been many of the same elders, but the occasions were different.

The reason for the elders of Judah coming to Ezekiel is not stated, but it is logical to conclude that they came to hear a word from Yahweh about the situation in Judah and Jerusalem as well as any word from Yahweh about their situation and fate. That they wanted to know about Jerusalem may in part explain why it was at that time that the spirit being took Ezekiel on a multi-chapter tour of Jerusalem and the Temple there, and showed him the abominations that were going on there, and with such egregious abominations, Yahweh could hardly bless and protect Jerusalem, Judea, and the people there.

**“fell on me.”** The word “fell” indicates a sudden and powerful revelation to Ezekiel. This included speaking loudly into Ezekiel’s ears (Ezek. 9:1). Ezekiel 6:1 and 7:1 simply said the word of Yahweh “came” to Ezekiel. But this revelation “fell” on him.

Eze 8:2

**“there was a form that had the appearance of a man.”** The Hebrew words “fire” and “man” are very similar, but “man” fits the context and is properly preserved in the Septuagint. At some point, the Hebrew text was improperly transmitted, which is why versions such as the KJV read “fire” and not “man.”

This mysterious figure is not specifically identified in this context, but the evidence in the text is that it is Yahweh Himself. A number of things support this. One of them is that this description of Yahweh is extremely similar to the description of Yahweh in Ezekiel 1:26-27. Also, the form of the man on the throne on top of the platform above the cherubim in Ezekiel 1:26-27 is described as being “the God of Israel” (Ezek. 10:20). Yahweh does appear as a man or man-like figure many times in the Bible (cf. Adam and Eve who heard His footsteps, Gen. 3:8; Abraham, Gen. 12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1; Jacob, Gen. 28:13; Moses and the elders of Israel, Exod. 24:9-11; Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:10; Solomon (twice), 1 Kings 3:5; 9:2; 11:9; Micaiah, 1 Kings 22:19-22; Isaiah, Isa. 6:1-5; Ezekiel, Ezek. 1:26-28; Daniel, Dan. 7:9-14; Amos, Amos 7:7; Stephen, Acts 7:56; and the apostle John, Rev. 5:1-8. See commentary on Gen. 18:1).

Also, this spirit uses the first person, “I” or “me” when God is speaking, e.g., Ezekiel 8:6, 17. Also, this “man” refers to the Temple as “my sanctuary” (Ezek. 8:6). Also, the last verse in the chapter, Ezekiel 8:18, is similar to what God had said elsewhere (cf. Ezek. 5:11; 7:9). Also, the Spirit continues speaking in chapter 9, and commands spirit beings in their roles in the destruction of Jerusalem, and by 9:4 the speaker is Yahweh (Ezek. 9:1-4). Then in Ezek. 9:5 the speaker is again referred to as “he,” and Ezekiel identifies him with Yahweh, saying, “Oh, Lord Yahweh!” (Ezek. 9:8). Chapter 9 ends with a statement that is similar to many other places in the Old Testament where Yahweh says He will not spare but will punish people for their sins, and in the closing verse the angel scribe reports back to Yahweh that he has done as “you have commanded me.” The personal appearance of God is theologically referred to as a theophany.

Eze 8:3

**“the Spirit lifted me up.”** Yahweh, who appeared to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 8:2 in the form of a human, now forcibly picks him up and takes him in a vision from Babylon, where he lived as an exile in the Babylonian Captivity, to Jerusalem, to show him the abominations going on there. God took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in this vision even though Ezekiel was right in the middle of meeting with the elders of Judah that had been taken captive to Babylon. Ezekiel’s vision lasted from Ezekiel 8:3 to 11:24, but even though it was complex it must not have taken very long in actual time because the elders of Judah sat there the entire time, and when the vision ended Ezekiel told them about it (Ezek. 11:25).

**“statue of jealousy.”** Here in Ezekiel 8:3, God calls the idol the “statue of jealousy” and it makes God jealous. We are not told what god or goddess is represented by the statue, and that would not have mattered much because God detests all idols. Israel made a covenant with God on Mount Sinai that He would be their only God, so rightfully God is jealous that He is sharing Israel’s worship with an idol god. The priests, Levites, and many of the people had abandoned the Law of God in order to have this kind of idol at one of the gates into the Temple.

It is because of idolatry like this among the priests and Levites that God showed Ezekiel that in the Millennial Kingdom, the priests who live near the Temple and serve with Christ will not have been idolaters like these priests and Levites were (Ezek. 48:11).

Eze 8:4

**“the glory of the God of Israel was there.”** The personal presence of Yahweh, surrounded by His bright glory, was now at “the entrance of the gate of the inner court [of the Temple] that looks toward the north” (Ezek. 8:3-4).

What we see in Ezekiel chapters 8-11 is God taking Ezekiel in a vision from Babylon to Jerusalem and showing Ezekiel some of what was happening there and why He must abandon His Temple and destroy Jerusalem. Then, when Ezekiel’s vision is over, he tells his vision to the elders back in Babylon (Ezek. 11:25).

When Ezekiel arrives in Jerusalem in the vision, God is already there, surrounded by His glory (Ezek. 8:4). Then God gives Ezekiel a personal tour around different places in the Temple and shows him all the idolatry and idols that are there. God had already told Ezekiel about all the sin and rebellion going on in Judah, and that He was going to go against it (Ezek. 5:8) and also that He would have to withdraw from Jerusalem and the people (Ezek. 5:11). But in Ezekiel 8 God personally shows Ezekiel some of what was happening in Judah, even in the Temple itself (Ezek. 8:5-17), and God says He will act in wrath (Ezek. 8:18).

Then, in Ezekiel 9:3, and repeated with a different emphasis in Ezekiel 10:4, God moves from His cherubim chariot-throne to the threshold of the Temple, which was the entrance to the Holy Place, the outer room of the Temple. (Chapters 9 and 10 can be very confusing if it is not recognized that 9:3ff and 10:4ff are speaking of the same event but with a different emphasis.) At that point, the whole Temple is filled with the glory of God (Ezek. 10:4). In Ezekiel 9:1-11, the emphasis is on the spirit beings that God summons to destroy Jerusalem. In contrast, Ezekiel 10:1-17 focuses on the role of God’s personal presence and the cherubim chariot-throne in the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Ezekiel 9:1-7 God moves to the threshold of the Temple at the entrance of the Holy Place. From there He faces and speaks to the spirit beings who were standing beside the great bronze altar that was in the inner courtyard of the Temple (Ezek. 9:2). God tells the one spirit being who had an inkhorn to mark those who groan over the abominations done in Jerusalem, and He tells the other spirit beings to destroy all the inhabitants of the city who do not have a mark (Ezek. 10:3-7).

After doing that, God left the threshold of the Temple and mounted His cherubim chariot-throne, and then traveled to over the far east gate of the Temple (Ezek. 10:18-19). Then God brought Ezekiel to the east gate and showed him evil men and told him to prophesy against them and Ezekiel did so (Ezek. 11:1-13). God closes Ezekiel’s vision by speaking to him about the hope of Israel: that the people of Israel will be regathered to the very soil of Israel, all the idols and ungodly things will be removed, that the people will have a new heart and new spirit, and God will be their God and the people will be God’s people (Ezek. 11:17-20). Then God traveled on His cherubim chariot-throne to over the top of the Mount of Olives and Ezekiel was brought back in his vision to the exiles in Babylon where the vision ended (Ezek. 11:23-24). Ezekiel then told his fellow exiles the vision he had received from God (Ezek. 11:25), but the Bible never tells us about when God leaves the Mount of Olives or where He goes after that. We do know there is no record of God coming back to His Temple when it was rebuilt when the exiles returned from Babylon or when it was remodeled by King Herod. The Bible tells us God’s glory will return from the east when the Messiah builds the Millennial Temple and rules the earth in righteousness (Ezek. 43:1-4). So what we see in Ezekiel is the sad record of how the sin of God’s people eventually had existed so long, and was such great sin, that God had to leave, and He left in stages, going from inside the Temple to the threshold of the Temple, to the East Gate of the Temple to the Mount of Olives east of the Temple and then onward toward the east.

**“like the vision that I had seen in the plain.”** The vision Ezekiel had on the plain is the vision he had in Ezekiel chapter 1.

In Hebrew, a “valley” can in fact refer to something we would call a “plain.” For example, the “Jezreel Valley” is many miles wide, and we Westerners would call it a “plain.” It does have hills on both sides, but they are many miles apart.

Eze 8:5

**“in the direction of the north.”** In the vision, Ezekiel was placed at the entrance to the gate from the inner court of the Temple that looks north, i.e., the north gate of the inner court (Ezek. 8:3). He was told to look north, and when he did he saw the image of jealousy in the entrance to the gate. So we know from this information that in the vision Ezekiel was set down inside the inner court, not outside it. If Ezekiel was outside the gate he would have had to have looked southward to see an idol in the north gate.

**“the Altar Gate.”** The Hebrew is “the gate of the altar,” but that is unclear in English because the altar did not have a gate, the gate was roughly adjacent to the altar in the inner courtyard, so it was called “the Altar Gate.”

**“image that aroused *God’s* jealousy.”** The literal Hebrew is “this image of jealousy,” and the genitive is a genitive of production, so it means an image (an idol) that arouses God’s jealousy or produces jealousy, that is, the idol made God jealous. Translating the Hebrew text literally and saying “an image of jealously” would be unclear, for one thing, you can’t make an image of jealousy because jealousy is an emotion.

Eze 8:6

**“do you see what they are doing.”** This is a rhetorical question. God is emphasizing the evil by formulating what He says as a question. He is building a case and showing Ezekiel why He has to leave His Temple, and also why Judah will be conquered and its people carried into exile in Babylon.

**“so that I must go far away from my sanctuary.”** The last sight of Yahweh as He leaves His Temple and Jerusalem is Ezekiel 11:22-23, when He is over the Mount of Olives. We know He goes from there into the east, but exactly where we are not informed. In the Millennial Kingdom, He will come back to His Temple from the east (Ezek. 43:1-4).

Eze 8:8

**“when I had dug through the wall, behold, a doorway.”** Exactly what is happening here is unknown, in part because we do not know the exact location where the hole in the wall was, and in part because we do not know the exact construction of the Temple at this time. The Temple had storerooms between the Holy Place and Holy of Holies and the wall to the courtyard, so it is likely that Ezekiel dug into a wall that gave him entrance to a storage room on the outer wall of the Temple proper, and the room had been converted into a pagan cult center.

Eze 8:10

**“engraved on the wall.”** Since these detestable things and idols were engraved on the wall of a room in the Temple (or perhaps even the Temple sanctuary itself), only the priests and Levites would supposedly have ever seen them, but it seems that the priests had let other leaders in the Temple—the 70 elders mentioned in Ezekiel 8:11—against the Law of Moses.

Eze 8:11

**“70 men of the elders of the house of Israel.”** A parallel horror to the engravings and idols in a room of the Temple were these 70 men who were elders of Israel but not Levites or priests worshiping idols inside the Temple when the Law of Moses strictly forbade their being there. Thus, not only were the priests and Levites not doing their duty to keep the sanctity of the Temple, but the elders, who knew better, seem more than happy to elevate their status at the expense of the Law and worship idols in the Temple. The avarice of fallen man is such that it takes laws and people willing to enforce them to keep people civil and obedient.

Eze 8:14

**“the entrance of the north gate of the house of Yahweh.”** Exactly how this gate differed from the earlier north gate is not known. This gate may have been further west than the Altar Gate (Ezek. 8:3-5) and been adjacent to the Temple proper, not just the eastern part of the inner courtyard.

Eze 8:16

**“into the inner courtyard of the house of Yahweh.”** Ezekiel had been in the inner court, but now he was directly in front of (east of) the Temple itself.

**“with their backs toward the Temple of Yahweh and their faces toward the east.”** Yahweh resided in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, between the cherubim and over the mercy seat, and the men could have been facing Yahweh and worshiping Him. Instead, they turned their backs on Yahweh and worshiped the sun from inside Yahweh’s Temple. Since the men were facing east, and Ezekiel was facing west toward the Temple, Ezekiel was looking directly at these men and if he was visible they would have seen him.

**“were worshiping.”** Or “were bowing down to.” The same Hebrew verb, *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship. The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

Eze 8:17

**“to my nose.”** Here in Ezekiel 8:17, the ancient scribes deliberately changed “my nose” to “their nose” to avoid offensive theology, and because that change is reflected in the standard Hebrew text, many English versions read “their nose” instead of “my nose.” The ancient scribes emended (changed) the text occasionally to, in their minds, preserve the sanctity of God.

The custom of putting a twig to the nose has been lost in antiquity, and scholars are not sure of its significance. A possible parallel might be a bas-relief of a Syrian king holding a flower to his nose as he worshiped the stars (*ANEP* 281). If that is the case, it may be that God is telling Ezekiel that the worship of idols in the Temple was so bold and arrogant that it was as if the people of Judah were putting a branch to His nose so that He could worship their idols too.

It seems that the meaning of the custom was lost by 250 BC because the Septuagint does not translate the phrase but translates a possible meaning: “and behold, they are like those who mock” (the LXX using *muktērizō*, “to turn up the nose at; to mock” to make the point).

About the change to the Hebrew text, E. W. Bullinger writes: “The Massorah, i.e., the small writing in the margins of the standard Hebrew codices…consists of a concordance of words and phrases, etc., safeguarding the Sacred Text. A note in the Massorah against several passages in the Hebrew Bible states: ‘This is one of the Eighteen Emendations of the Sopherim [Scribes]’, or words to that effect. Complete lists of these emendations are found in the Massorah of most of the model or standard codices of the Hebrew Bible, and these are not always identical; so that the number exceeds eighteen…”[[21]](#footnote-28103)

Eze 8:18

**“though they cry out in my ears with a loud voice.”** This seems cold of God, but actually it is not. God knows that when disaster strikes the people will not cry out to Him because they love Him and wish to repent of their sins, they will cry out to Him out of their selfish desire to save their lives and property.

**“I will not listen to them.”** God does not hear prayers simply because people pray. Everyone sins, but some people are prideful and unrepentant about their sin, and God will not listen to the prayers of wicked and unrepentant people; those prayers are an abomination to Him (Prov. 28:9). It is the prayer of a righteous person that accomplishes much (James 5:16). There are a number of verses that say God does not answer the prayers of the wicked (cf. Job 35:12-13; Prov. 15:29; Isa. 1:15; 59:1-2; Ezek. 8:17-18; Mic. 3:4; Zech. 7:12-13; and James 4:3). God spoke to Jeremiah, who was alive at the same time as Ezekiel, and told him on three different occasions not to pray for Judah (cf. Jer. 7:16; 11:14, 14:11; see commentary on Jer. 7:16).

[For more on God not hearing the prayers of the wicked or honoring their sacrifices, see commentary on Amos 5:22].

**Ezekiel Chapter 9**

Eze 9:1

**“cried out in my ears.”** This is a splendid example of audible revelation, although it is part of the larger revelation Ezekiel was having.

[For more information on revelation, what it is, and how it works, see commentary on Gal. 1:12.]

Note that Yahweh cries into Ezekiel’s ears with a loud voice to make a strong impression on Ezekiel, right after saying that the sin of the people was so great that if they cried out to God with a loud voice He would not hear them (Ezek. 8:18).

Eze 9:2

**“six men.”** These are not human beings, but spirit beings in the form of men, and therefore called “men.” They are never specifically said to be angels, and they may not have been. Apparently, there are many different types of spirit beings, just as there are many types of people and animals on earth (see commentary on Eph. 3:15).

**“Upper Gate.”** Also called, “the Upper Gate of Benjamin,” this is the gate in the northern wall of the Temple, not the northern gate in the city wall. It was built by King Jotham, son of Uzziah (2 Kings 15:35).

**“shattering weapon.”** This is most likely a war club. It is not the word for sword. Judah will be shattered.

**“they went in.”** That is, into the inner courtyard of the Temple area.

**“and stood beside the bronze altar.”** The bronze altar was between the entrance to the Temple proper and the east gate of the Temple, so God, standing in front of the Holy Place in the threshold of the Temple, could look directly at these spirit beings.

Eze 9:3

**“And the glory of the God of Israel went up.”** In Ezekiel’s vision, God, surrounded by His glory, that is, His glorious brightness, moves to the threshold of the Temple (when the text says “the glory of God” moved, it is assumed that the reader knows the glory is surrounding God—that He is personally present in it, so that in this context, when the glory moves, God moves. See commentary on Ezek. 1:28).

The text is not specifically clear about where God had come from when He moved to the threshold of the Temple. When Ezekiel was taken in his vision to the north gate of the Temple adjacent to the altar, God was already there (Ezek. 8:3-4). Then God led Ezekiel on a tour of the Temple and the wickedness going on there (Ezek. 8:5, 7, 14, 16). It is possible that God rode on His cherubim chariot-throne while giving that tour, and that does seem to be the natural reading of the text seeing that after the tour God moves from over the cherubim to the threshold of the Temple (Ezek. 9:3; 10:3-4).

It does not seem that God moved from inside the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the Temple, although some scholars believe that when the text says God moved from the “cherub” to the threshold that He moved from the cherubim inside the Holy of Holies to the threshold. But we learn from Ezekiel 10:3 that God had parked His chariot-throne on the south side of the Temple in the courtyard, and God’s glory had filled the inner courtyard. God apparently had come into the Temple courtyard riding on His cherubim chariot-throne and would have been “above” the cherubim on his throne (cf. Ezek. 1:26). Then He got off his throne that was above the cherubim and went to the threshold of the Temple, immediately in front of the entrance to the Holy Place.

Once at the threshold of the Temple, God issues a command to destroy Jerusalem. Most scholars agree that the threshold of the Temple is the entrance to the Temple itself, which is the entrance to the Holy Place. God did not issue His command to destroy Jerusalem from His chariot-throne even though He could have; He issued His command from the Temple itself. This is significant because He had wanted to live in His Temple among His people, but their egregious sins drove Him away, and even resulted in His command to destroy Jerusalem. God understands that people sin, but when people willfully sin against Him out of a hard and rebellious heart, He withdraws from them and their sin has terrible consequences.

What Ezekiel 9:3 says is stated again in Ezekiel 10:4, Yahweh coming off His chariot-throne and going to the threshold of the Temple. However, in Ezekiel 10 the text focuses on the glory of God—the brilliant light that surrounded God and indicated His presence—and shows how it filled both the Temple court and the Temple itself. Also, Ezekiel 10 tells us more about the “man” who will bring judgment on Israel, and that he is to scatter burning coals on Jerusalem (Ezek. 10:2, 6-7).

In summary, then, when Ezekiel arrived in the Temple in his vision, God’s cherubim chariot-throne and God were already there (Ezek. 8:3-4). Then God moved to the threshold of the Temple and gave the command to destroy Jerusalem (Ezek. 9:3-7). Then He got back on His chariot-throne and moved to the east gate of the Temple (Ezek. 10:18-19). From over the east gate, He moved to over the Mount of Olives (Ezek. 11:22-23). God and His glory will not return to a Temple in Jerusalem until the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 43:1-4). So the continual sin of Judah, and their hard-heartedness, drove God away. God, surrounded by His glory, left Judah and Jerusalem, which were then destroyed by the Babylonians.

[For more on Ezekiel 8-11 and what happened, see commentary on Ezek. 8:4.]

Eze 9:6

**“begin at my sanctuary.”** The Temple of God is where the rebellion against God and the idolatry was most apparent, and where there should have been the most reverence and attention to holiness. Cleansing of evil must start at the house of God.

**“the house.”** The Temple.

Eze 9:7

**“Defile the house.”** A dead body would make the Temple area unclean, but the sin was so egregious, and the timing so urgent, that God overlooked making His Temple unclean so that evil and the evil ones could be dealt with. The Temple had been defiled by all the evil things the priests and leaders were doing, and now it would be defiled by their dead bodies.

Eze 9:9

**“injustice.”** The Hebrew word occurs only here in the Old Testament, and the exact meaning is uncertain. Logical suggestions include “injustice” (ESV, NIV, NLT); perverseness, perversity, perversions (KJV, NASB, NRSV); “lawlessness” (NAB); “corruption” (NET). We do know that the people were involved in egregious sin against God, and there were serious consequences for it.

**“because they say.”** When people do not believe in God or that God sees sin and will punish it, they are emboldened to do all kinds of evil We see that here. There were terrible things going on in Judah and Jerusalem in the times of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel. The leaders and many of the people were involved in egregious sin against Yahweh. They did not believe in Yahweh or that He would punish their sin, but He will. He did punish them then nationally by destroying their country, and He will punish them individually on the Day of Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

**“Yahweh has forsaken the land, and Yahweh does not see.”** This sentence reveals how many of the ancient people thought about their gods. They usually thought their gods were local, not “everywhere,” like modern Christians think about God being everywhere. We see this in a number of places in the Bible such as 1 Kings 20:28, when the Syrian army thought they lost a battle because they fought where Yahweh lived but if they could fight it away from there then their gods would prevail and they would win the battle. Also, Jonah tried to run away from Yahweh by leaving Israel and going to Tarshish. Also, Naaman the Syrian wanted to take dirt from the land of Israel so he could worship Yahweh when he got back to Syria, thinking that the god went with the land (2 Kings 5:17). So here in Ezekiel 9:9, the people said Yahweh had left the land and did not see what they were doing.

It is reasonable to assume that part of the reason the people thought Yahweh was no longer in the land was due to the terrible things that had happened in Judah in their recent history, for example, being defeated by the Egyptians and Babylonians (2 Kings 23:31-24:20). What they were seemingly ignorant of, but certainly should not have been, was that it was their sin that caused the blessings and protection of God to be removed from Judah and brought the terrible consequences they were experiencing upon themselves.

The situation in which God can bless a land has not changed. The Devil constantly pushes society to be more and more ungodly so that he and his demons have a greater and greater influence in society, and he pushes his agenda through ungodly people. As a society increases sinfulness, including ignoring God’s commands, lawlessness, greed, sexual perversion, idolatry, etc., God’s blessings are removed from the country. Weather patterns change, disease and sickness, crime, and economic instability increase, and there are pressures and threats from enemies from within and without. The Bible makes this all very clear. It is difficult to stop evil, but it must be done for society to survive. There is no “low point” in society when the Devil is satisfied and will leave it alone—his goal is the annihilation of all godliness in society, which is why Christianity is illegal in so many countries, and godly men and women need to realize that and be willing to fight for godliness and freedom. In Judah’s case, the godly people were too few, and Judah was conquered: the Temple was burned, Judah’s cities burned, the men killed or carried away captive, the women raped and carried away captive, and what was left of the land was under ungodly governors. That is the Devil’s agenda for godly countries, and only godly people fighting against it will stop it.

Eze 9:10

**“what they have done.”** The Hebrew is literally, “their road;” thus, “I will bring their road down upon their own heads.” This is a standard Hebrew idiom. A person’s “road” was the way they were living and what they were doing.

**Ezekiel Chapter 10**

Eze 10:1

**“platform.”** For information on the platform, see commentary on Ezekiel 1:22.

**“like a lapis lazuli stone *in color*.”** This is similar to Ezekiel 1:26. The deep blue color of lapis lazuli—a stone that was well-known in the ancient Near East—was often associated with God and his throne (Exod. 24:10; Job. 28:16; Isa. 54:11; Ezek. 1:26; 10:1). The majority English translation, “sapphire,” is almost certainly wrong (see commentary on Ezek. 1:26).

**“in appearance resembling a throne.”** In this verse the throne is empty. God had come down from the throne in Ezekiel 9:3 and stops above the cherubim, and thus remounts His chariot-throne, in Ezekiel 10:18. C. F. Keil[[22]](#footnote-25991) punctuates the last Hebrew phrase as “He [God] appeared above them,” as if God was seated on the throne, however, the English translations almost universally describe the scene with the throne being empty, which according to the chronology in Ezekiel, is correct.

Eze 10:2

**“And he spoke.”** This is Yahweh, who is commanding His angels and cherubim.

**“whirling wheels.”** The wheels of God’s chariot-throne are first mentioned in Ezekiel 1:15-21. Here in Ezekiel 10:2, 6, and 10:13, the Bible uses a different word for “wheels” than it had used earlier in Ezekiel. Ezekiel now uses *galgal* (#01534 גַּלְגַּל), which can mean a wheel, whirlwind, or even whirl. Some English versions translate it as “whirling wheels,” while others translate it as “wheelworks.” The Word Biblical Commentary has “rotary system,” while the New International Commentary on the Old Testament: *Ezekiel*, has “castors.” The word focuses on the whirling motion of the wheels.

**“under the cherubim.”** The cherubim were no doubt quite large, and had one set of wings stretched up and out, so the angel would have to go “under” the cherubim to get to the fire between them. Some scholars have understood this to mean that the cherubim were suspended below the platform and above the wheels, but the Bible describes the wheels as beside the cherubim. When the wheels were on the ground, so were the feet of the cherubim.

**“from between the cherubim.”** The four cherubim formed a hollow square, with the fire between them, and the wheels are on the outside of the cherubim.

Eze 10:3

**“the south side.”** The Hebrew is literally, “the right side,” but the biblical culture was oriented to the east and thus “ahead” was east, not north. The Temple faced east, so “the right side” is the south side. Leaving “the right side” in the text could be confusing to the Western reader. Thus, in Ezekiel’s vision, God parked His chariot-throne in the courtyard on the south side of the Temple. This may well have been due to the fact that there was an idol, “the image of jealousy,” in the north gate of the Temple (Ezek. 8:5).

**“the house.”** The “house” is the house of God, the Temple.

**“the cloud filled the inner courtyard.”** The cloud was the brilliant light that surrounded God and indicated the presence of God, and it filled the inner courtyard. The altar was in the inner courtyard of the Temple, and Yahweh and His chariot-throne were on the south side of the Temple, but Yahweh’s brilliant presence was so bright that it, “the cloud,” filled the inner courtyard of the Temple. That the Temple in Ezekiel’s vision had an inner courtyard means it was similar to Herod’s Temple, which had an outer courtyard for the Israelites, and an inner courtyard where the altar was, which was where the priests ministered and people with sacrifices were allowed to enter.

[For more on the cloud being the brilliant light that surrounded Yahweh, see Ezek. 1:17-28, and commentary on Ezek. 1:28.]

Eze 10:4

**“And the glory of Yahweh rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house.”** When the Bible says “the glory of Yahweh rose up,” it is referring to Yahweh Himself, surrounded by the cloud of brilliant light, rising up and moving—God is moving (for more on the glory of Yahweh being Yahweh surrounded by a cloud of brilliant light, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28).

Ezekiel 10:4 is a repetition of Ezekiel 9:3, as many scholars point out. God does not twice get off His chariot-throne and go to the threshold of the Temple; Ezekiel 10:4 would better read that “the glory of Yahweh had risen up” because it had in Ezekiel. 9:3. John Taylor seems to correctly suggest that “it is best to understand that [verse] as a pluperfect, hearkening back to what was described in Ezekiel 9:3.”[[23]](#footnote-16612) However, whereas Ezekiel 9:3ff describes the impending destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel 10:4 focuses on the glory of Yahweh. Most scholars agree that the threshold of the house is in the front portico of the Temple at the entryway to the Holy Place.

[For more on Ezekiel 8-11 and the sequence of what happened and what God showed Ezekiel, see commentary on Ezek. 8:4.]

**“the cherub.”** This is apparently a collective singular, like the Hebrew text in Ezekiel 10:2 uses the singular “wheel” for the four wheels collectively.

**“the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of Yahweh.”** Yahweh was personally in the threshold of the Temple (cf. Ezek. 9:3), and the cloud of glory around Him filled both the Temple and the court of the Temple. God sometimes appears as a bright “cloud of glory” (see commentary on Ezek. 1:28).

Eze 10:5

**“as far as the outer court.”** The Temple had an inner (western) court and an “outer” (eastern) court, separated by a wall with a gate. The sound of the wings of the cherubim was loud enough to be heard in the outer court. The loud sound of the cherubims’ wings is also described in Ezekiel 1:24.

**“Shaddai.”** “Shaddai” is the name of God that is commonly translated as “Almighty” (see commentary on Gen. 17:1).

Eze 10:7

**“stretched out a hand from between the cherubim to the fire.”** The cherubim had hands and arms like a human (Ezek. 1:8; 10:8) and they could wield a sword (Gen. 3:24).

Eze 10:8

**“form of a man’s hand under their wings.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 1:8.

Eze 10:9

**“beryl.”** The same color is mentioned in Ezekiel 1:16.

Eze 10:10

**“like a wheel inside a wheel.”** This same structure is mentioned in Ezekiel 1:16.

Eze 10:11

**“the head.”** In this context, the head of the chariot. The chariot would go in any of the four directions.

**“they did not turn as they went.”** The chariot-throne traveled straight forward, it did not veer from side to side or turn as it traveled. This is also stated in Ezekiel 1:12 and 1:17.

Eze 10:12

**“and the wheels gleamed all the way around.”** Ezekiel 1:16 and 1:18 mention the gleam of the chariot-throne. See commentary on Ezekiel 1:18.

Eze 10:14

**“the first face was the face of the cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle.”** This is an apparent discrepancy with the description given in Ezekiel 1:10, and it has been explained in a few different ways, some of them more plausible than others. The easy way out for some scholars is to simply suggest that the Hebrew text had been corrupted, and “bull” (or “ox”) changed to “cherub.” However, that is generally rejected due to the lack of similarity between the Hebrew for “ox” and “cherub.”

The wording of the text here in Ezekiel 10:14 is different than in Ezekiel 1:10, and here just one face of each cherub is described, rather than the four faces of each cherub, and thus, as the scholars point out, there is no need for a complete redescription of the cherubim (that each one did have four faces is repeated in Ezekiel 10:21). So it seems that what Ezekiel is describing in Ezekiel 10:14 seems to be the face of each cherub that he is looking most directly at. In the case of “the cherub” face, it is the face of a cherub, so that is correct even if it is uninformative, but we would know from Ezekiel 1:10 that it is the face of an ox. On the other hand, C. F. Keil[[24]](#footnote-13500) proposes that since the text reads “the face of the cherub” instead of what we would expect, “the face of a cherub,” it is intending to point out and emphasize that “the” cherub is “the” cherub who took the coals from the fire in Ezekiel 10:7, and thus emphasize that individual cherub rather than its ox face, and that seems certainly plausible also.

Eze 10:15

**“And the cherubim rose up.”** Here in Ezekiel 10:15 we learn for the first time that the “living creatures” of Ezekiel 1:5-14 are cherubim, and this is confirmed in Ezekiel 10:20.

Eze 10:16

**“when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise up from the earth.”** When God’s chariot-throne was on the ground it rolled on the wheels, but when it went into to air the cherubim flew and carried it.

**“did not turn from beside them.”** The wheels stayed with the cherubim when they moved. This is the same idea that is expressed in Ezekiel 1:19-21.

Eze 10:17

**“for the spirit of the living creature was in them.”** This phrase in Ezekiel 10:17 is like the one in Ezekiel 1:21 (cf. Ezek. 1:20), but what the phrase means is unclear. Scholars mostly agree that the phrase serves to show that the whole chariot-throne system works together and moves together in concert.

Eze 10:18

**“the house.”** This is the Temple in Jerusalem.

**“and stopped over the cherubim.”** This is a very brief and clipped description, but clear enough in the context of Ezekiel’s visions. God had parked His cherubim chariot-throne in the courtyard of the Temple, south of the Temple itself (Ezek. 10:3). Above the cherubim was the sapphire-colored platform, and on the platform was God’s throne. So this short phrase is describing Yahweh moving from the threshold of the Temple where He had been (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4), and getting on His throne, which is on the platform over the cherubim, and in the next verse Yahweh, on his chariot-throne, moves on to the next location, which we learn in the next verse, Ezekiel 10:19, is the entrance of the east gate of the Temple. This “east gate” is the far east gate on the eastern wall of the Temple complex. So the sin of the leaders and people of Judah drove Yahweh from His place between the cherubim in the Holy of Holies to the threshold of the entrance of the Temple, and then to the east gate of the Temple. God is steadily leaving His Temple. God’s next stop as He leaves Jerusalem, and the last one recorded in Ezekiel, is over the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem (Ezek. 11:23). There is no record of the glory of God returning to the Temple built by the people who returned from the Babylonian Captivity as recorded in Ezra, the Second Temple that was embellished by Herod the Great and destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. The glory of God will return to the Millennial Temple built by Jesus Christ as per the prophecy of Ezekiel 43:1-4.

[For more on Ezekiel 8-11 and what happened, see commentary on Ezek. 8:4.]

Eze 10:19

**“they stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the house of Yahweh.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 10:18.

**“and the glory of the God of Israel was up over them.”** At this point, Yahweh covers Himself with His glory, and that brilliant cloud of glory is what Ezekiel sees.

[For more on the glory of God being the bright cloud that surrounds Him, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28.]

Eze 10:21

**“what looked like human hands.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the likeness of the hands of a man,” but the meaning seems to be “what looked like human hands” or perhaps, “something like human hands.”

**Ezekiel Chapter 11**

Eze 11:1

**“the spirit.”** This is Yahweh, who appeared to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 8:2, and now continues taking Ezekiel around the Temple in Jerusalem.

**“and brought me to the east gate of the house of Yahweh.”** So God brought Ezekiel to Jerusalem, to the Temple, in a vision.

Eze 11:3

**“The time is not near to build houses. This city is the caldron, and we are the meat.”** The meaning of these phrases in Ezekiel 11:3 is debated. The idea in the text as espoused by the REV seems to be that these new “leaders,” who were left in Jerusalem after the former leaders and citizens such as Daniel and Ezekiel were carried away to Babylon, did not need to build houses. This could be because they needed to fortify the walls of Jerusalem, or more likely, because they had taken over the estates of those people who had been carried away already, and they did not need to build places for themselves to live in. Actually, if the text is worded as a question, “Is not *the time* near to build houses?” (NASB), then the idea would be that these new leaders had taken over the estates of the people who had been carried away captive to Babylon and so could build themselves nice new houses. In either case, the new leaders who had taken over Jerusalem had only their own interests in mind.

The phrase, “This city is the caldron and we are the meat” has to be understood from the context, which is that these new leaders were thinking of themselves and relishing in the fact that, with the king and former leaders led away captive, they had risen to rulership in Jerusalem. These men were plotting evil and giving wicked advice (Ezekiel 11:2). Therefore, this verse does not mean that Jerusalem was a vulnerable pot and the men were “just meat,” that is, somehow in deep trouble. Rather, the meat in the caldron was the best part, certainly much better than the vegetables, and the caldron, which usually had a lid, protected the food from things getting into it and spoiling the taste. Thus, these men were saying that Jerusalem would protect them and they were the meat, the “best part,” or the most privileged part, and they certainly were taking advantage of their new power and taking advantage of the common people who were their prey.

**“this city.”** The Hebrew is “she,” but that would be very unclear in English; the leaders are referring to the city of Jerusalem, a “she” (or an “it”) to them.

Eze 11:5

**“fell on me.”** This was a revelation that came suddenly, powerfully, and clearly to Ezekiel. Verses like this show that when God wants a prophet to speak something, He can make it very clear, and the experienced prophet understands what God is doing and cooperates by prophesying boldly and saying what God wants said.

**“and he said to me.”** That is, and Yahweh said to me. “Spirit” is feminine, while Yahweh takes the masculine pronoun. Yahweh puts His gift of spirit upon people such as the prophets and then speaks most directly to them via His gift of spirit. The direct communication that the gift of holy spirit allows a person to have with Yahweh is why He put His spirit upon the prophets (cf. Num. 11:17, 25). The verb “fell” is feminine singular and refers to “spirit,” while the verb “said” is masculine singular and refers to Yahweh. The spirit of God is not a person but is the gift of God’s nature that He puts upon people to empower them spiritually.

[See Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

**“thinking.”** The Hebrew verb is more literally “saying,” but it is used of “saying to yourself,” or thinking, which is apparently what is going on in this verse since the last phrase is about things that come into people’s minds.

Eze 11:9

**“the city.”** The Hebrew is “she” but the REV and other English versions nuance the text to “the city” for clarity.

Eze 11:10

**“in the territory of Israel.”** The word most versions translate “border” also means “territory,” and in this case, the meaning of the Hebrew phrase refers to the territory of Israel. It is misleading to translate it “at the border of Israel” as if it were right at the border that God’s judgment would take place. The phrase “in the borders” (Darby, Douay-Rheims) gets the sense somewhat (although “within the borders” would be clearer). The NASB has “to the border” which also gets the sense. Daniel I. Block has “On Israelite territory,” which gets the meaning also.[[25]](#footnote-14014) The people sinned against God and would be judged on God’s holy territory.

Eze 11:15

**“They are far away from Yahweh.”** This translation of Ezekiel 11:15 is more consistent with the context than, “Go far from Yahweh,” which most versions have. The vowels in the Masoretic text, which were added centuries after the Old Testament was written, make more sense if added such that the verb is a perfect (“They are far”) instead of an imperative (“Go far”), and some versions and commentaries adopt this reading, as does the REV (cf. NAB, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV, RSV, NICOT[[26]](#footnote-16747)).

The sentiment of the people in Jerusalem reveals the coldness of their hearts, as well as their arrogance, for they themselves had certainly gone far away from Yahweh when they turned to idols. And now, instead of doing what they could to support those people who had been carried away from the land of Israel and taken as captives to Babylon, they coldly announced that the captives were, after all, far away from Yahweh and so the land belonged to the Jews who were still there. In fact, it may have in part been due to a “land grab” situation that they did not want to try to help their fellow Judeans in captivity. The phrase “this land has been given to us” indicates that they thought that because they were still in the land, the ancient promise of the gift of the land to Abraham and his seed was somehow meant for them but not for the people who had been taken captive, and that, of course, is a complete misrepresentation of the truth.

In Ezekiel 11:16, Yahweh corrects the arrogant Jews who still lived in Israel and who were thinking that the captives in Babylon were far away from Yahweh. God says that even though the captives had been carried to far-off countries, He has still been a sanctuary for them. Furthermore, in Ezekiel 11:17, God says He will bring the captives back to Israel and give the land to them. We know historically that many Jews died in captivity and never returned to the land in their first life, but those who lived lives faithful to God will inherit the land once the First Resurrection occurs, and the land of Israel will be distributed as is laid out in Ezekiel 48.

[For more on the Promised Land being given to the resurrected Jews, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 11:17

**“I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you.”** Ezekiel 11:17 says Israel would come back to the land, which was part of the promise of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:8-33), and the gathering would in large part be due to the first resurrection, the Resurrection of the Righteous (cf. Ezek. 37:12-28).

[For more on Israel and Judah being brought back to the Promised Land, see commentary on Jer. 32:37. For more on the two future resurrections, the Resurrection of the Righteous and the Resurrection of the Unrighteous, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

**“the soil of Israel.”** The Hebrew word usually translated “land” is not the more normal *eretz*, but *adamah* (#0127 אֲדָמָה) ground, soil, land. Although often translated “land,” it seemed appropriate in this context to catch the contrast in the Hebrew text and render the word as “soil.” The Israelites said the land (eretz) was theirs (Ezek. 11:15), but God said no, He would give the “soil” to the returning captives.

Eze 11:18

**“its detestable things and all its abominations.”** Sadly, the “detestable things and abominations” were not due to pagans, but due to the Israelites themselves who had turned away from God.

Eze 11:19

**“I will give them one heart.”** Ezekiel 11:19 is very similar to Ezekiel 36:26. Also, it has some things in common with Jeremiah 32:39, see commentary on Jeremiah 32:39.

**“I will put a new spirit inside you.”** Ezekiel 11:19 has a couple important meanings, based on the word “spirit.” The word “spirit” can mean one’s thoughts, attitudes, and emotions, and it means that here, as we can tell from the whole verse. In the future, when the New Covenant is fully realized, people will have new thoughts and attitudes. This same truth is expressed in Ezekiel 36:26.

Also, however, “spirit” refers to the holy spirit of God, which in the Old Testament God placed “upon” people but which in the New Covenant will be “in” people. The Old Testament prophets had foretold that a new spirit was coming in the future, one that was different from the spirit God gave in Old Testament times. It was foretold to come as part of the Messianic Kingdom and the New Covenant that God would make with Israel (Isa. 32:15-18; 44:3-5; Ezek. 11:17-21; 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29). Jesus Christ understood this and taught it to his apostles at the Last Supper (see commentary on John 14:17).

Eze 11:21

**“are devoted to.”** The Hebrew text seems to have been miscopied, but as it is, it basically says, “whose heart walks after the heart of their detestable things.” The meaning of the verse, as is generally admitted, refers to the people whose hearts are committed to their idols.

**“I will bring their way on their own heads.”** It is a consistent theme throughout Scripture that evil people bring evil upon themselves (see commentary on Prov. 1:18). The Hebrew “their way” is literally “their road.” The Bible uses “road” for “way of life.”

Eze 11:22

**“the glory of the God of Israel was over them, above *them*.”** The “glory of God” is God surrounded by His cloud of brilliant light (see commentary on Ezek. 1:28). The cherubim powered Yahweh’s chariot-throne. Above the cherubim was a platform, and on the platform was a throne, and on the throne sat Yahweh (see commentaries on Ezek. 1:22, 26).

Eze 11:23

**“The glory of Yahweh.”** That is, Yahweh surrounded by His brilliant light (see commentary on Ezek. 1:28).

**“and stopped.”** God had moved to the threshold of the Temple and gave the command to destroy Jerusalem (Ezek. 9:3-7). Then He got back on His chariot-throne and moved to the east gate of the Temple (Ezek. 10:18-19). From over the east gate, He moved to over the Mount of Olives (Ezek. 11:22-23). God and His glory will not return to a Temple in Jerusalem until the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 43:1-4). So the continual sin of Judah, and their hard-heartedness, drove God away. God, surrounded by His glory, left Judah and Jerusalem, which were then destroyed by the Babylonians. In Ezekiel’s vision this mountain east of Jerusalem, which would have been the Mount of Olives, is as far east as the glory of Yahweh traveled, although it seems clear from Ezekiel 43:2 that it had eventually left Judah and traveled east.

[For more on Ezekiel 8-11 and what happened, see commentary on Ezek. 8:4.]

**“the mountain that is on the east side.”** That mountain is the Mount of Olives.

Eze 11:24

**“The Spirit.”** This is Yahweh, who appeared to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 8:2 and 11:1, and now takes Ezekiel back to Chaldea and the exiles there, and at that point the vision Ezekiel was having stopped (see commentary on Ezek. 8:2).

**“by the spirit of God.”** This is most likely the spirit that God puts on prophets to best communicate with them, often called “holy spirit” (cf. Num. 11:17, 25). It could, however, also just be a reference to God like in Genesis 1:3.

[For more on the spirit of God, see Appendix 7: “What is the ‘Holy Spirit.’”]

**“the vision that I had seen went up from me.”** This was the end of Ezekiel’s second vision, which began in Ezekiel 8:1 (see commentary on Ezek. 8:1).

**Ezekiel Chapter 12**

Eze 12:2

**“because they are a rebellious house.”** Free will is a powerful thing, and when people are greedy, envious, angry, and self-focused in those and other ways, they do not see the truth or the actual situation. That is clearly the case when it comes to God and the things of God. There is evidence for the existence of God all around us, but many people “just don’t see it.” In this situation, Judah had plenty of evidence about God, but completely ignored/overlooked it.

Eze 12:4

**“while they are watching.”** Literally, “in their eyes.”

Eze 12:10

**“burden.”** The Hebrew word is “burden” but in this context, the burden is not the supplies Ezekiel was carrying, but the message he was communicating by way of his acted-out prophecy. The word of the Lord is often a burden to the prophet because of the heavy message being communicated, and then, when it is spoken, can be a burden to the people.

[For more information on “burden,” see commentary on Mal. 1:1.]

Eze 12:13

**“I will spread my net over him, and he will be taken in my snare.”** Yahweh speaks as if Zedekiah was a fish caught in a net or an animal caught in a snare. People who sin against God will not escape His judgment.

**“he will not see it even though he will die there.”** This riddle in Ezekiel 12:13 is solved in the historical record in the book of Kings. After capturing Zedekiah, the king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, blinded him before he exiled him to Babylon (2 Kings 25:7; Jer. 52:11). Thus, Zedekiah did die in Babylon, but he never saw it.

Eze 12:22

**“The days go by.”** This is more literally, “The days are prolonged.” The reference is to how the days pass without the prophecies being fulfilled. Given the context, the reference is to prophecies of the false prophecies that foretold of good times ahead.

**“every vision fails.”** In this context, “every vision” refers to every prophecy. Prophets often got their information in a vision, and then the prophets spoke and described what they had seen.

Eze 12:23

**“And tell them, ‘The days are at hand, even the fulfillment of every vision.’”** In the context, “the fulfillment of every vision” applies to the prophecies of the true prophets, such as Ezekiel, who was prophesying in exile (Ezek. 1:1), and Jeremiah, who was prophesying in Jerusalem. It did not refer to the prophecies of the false prophets, whose prophecies of things like the defeat of the Babylonians and prosperity for Judah were not fulfilled.

Eze 12:27

**“is for many days to come.”** Zedekiah and the people of Israel were saying that the words of Ezekiel were for times in the far future, and denied their own sin and the prophecies of destruction from Ezekiel and many prophets before him.

**Ezekiel Chapter 13**

Eze 13:2

**“prophesy against the prophets of Israel.”** God’s people are fellow workers with God, and there are times when God asks prophets to speak to influence things to happen. This is more than God just saying to Ezekiel that “such and such will happen.” The fact that Ezekiel prophesies about it means his prophecy has an actual effect. See commentary on Hosea 6:5.

Eze 13:4

**“jackals.”** The Hebrew word for “fox” and “jackal” is the same, so the versions are divided, some saying foxes and some saying jackals. The context and known behavior of the animals is the determining factor in the translation. Foxes are solitary, not really dangerous to people, and tend to avoid human contact. In contrast, jackals are pack animals, dangerous to humans, and become very bold in their packs. Given that, it is very appropriate that God referred to the false prophets as “jackals.” They worked in groups supporting one another by their false visions, and were very dangerous to God’s people, feeding them with all manner of bad information.

Eze 13:6

**“cause *others* to hope.”** The Hebrew verb can be causative, and that is the case here. The false prophets say wonderful things about the future—but they are falsehoods—and they cause the people who listen to them to have false hopes about the future.

Eze 13:7

**“Have you not seen.”** Here in Ezekiel 13:7, Yahweh, or Ezekiel as Yahweh’s spokesman, speaks directly to the false prophets for just this one verse.

Eze 13:9

**“They will not be in the council of my people.”** To understand this, we need to realize that the nation of Israel was mostly related by blood. However, because God opened membership in the community to people who worshiped Yahweh and kept his laws, more than anything Israel was a community of people who had a covenant with Yahweh and worshiped Him in the ways that He prescribed. But these false prophets had gone so far against God that He denies they are part of the community of Israel, He “dismisses their claim to membership in the earthly community of faith—the people of Yahweh.”[[27]](#footnote-13644) God has stated in a very graphic way that these false prophets would not be saved and be part of the future Messianic Kingdom of Israel.

**“written down in the register of the house of Israel.”** In this context, the “register” is the Book of Life, in which the names of those who are saved are recorded (cf. Ps. 69:28; Phil. 4:3). Before the Day of Pentecost which started the Christian Church and the Age of Grace, and after the Rapture, a person could sin so badly that he had his name expunged from the Book of Life (cf. Exod. 32:32-33; Rev. 3:5; 22:19). For God to say that the false prophets would not be in the register of Israel was another graphic way of saying they would not be in the Book of Life, and so they would not have everlasting life in the Messianic Kingdom.

**“nor will they enter the land of Israel.”** The promise to Abraham and the patriarchs was that they would inherit the Promised Land, the land of Israel (see commentary on Gen. 15:8). Ezekiel 37:12-14 tells how Israel will get back to the land. It specifically says that God will open the graves and bring the Israelites back to the land of Israel. Ezekiel 37:13-48:29 specifically lays out how the land of Israel will be divided to the different tribes of Israel in the future Messianic Kingdom on earth. So to say that the false prophets would not enter the land of Israel was a powerful and graphic way of saying that the false prophets would not be given everlasting life. The three statements together, about not being in the council of God’s people, not being in the register of the house of Israel, and not getting to enter the land of Israel struck at the very heart of everything the common Israelite hoped for and what it meant to be an Israelite. God’s harsh words would hopefully turn some false prophets from their sinful ways while discouraging others from following in their footsteps.

We should take note that these false prophets had taken it upon themselves to say they were speaking the words of God when they were not. Everyone sins, but it is a very serious sin indeed to say that you are speaking for God when you are not.

[For more on Christ’s Millennial Kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 13:10

**“Because, indeed, because.”** The word “because” is repeated twice for emphasis. The English word “indeed” is part of the second “because” and is not an independent word in the Hebrew text. This text is very clear. It is “because” the false prophets have done the evil that they have done in misrepresenting God and building false hope in others that they will receive the consequences that God speaks of here in Ezekiel 13 and in other places.

**“they have seduced.”** This refers to the false prophets who seduced the people by their false prophecies.

**“Because when anyone builds a flimsy wall.”** In this context of Israel’s war with Babylon, people built mental walls for protection, and their “flimsy walls” were walls built on false hopes. A person’s hope can be a wall of protection and blessing for them because it prepares them mentally for the future and helps them stand firmly against things that would distract or discourage them. The false prophecies of the false prophets, along with people’s own false expectations of the future, which were based on God’s delivering his people in the past—for example, in the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:35-36)—caused people to build flimsy mental walls because they were built on false hopes. The false prophets would then elaborate on—whitewash—the false hopes of the people, leading them more deeply into error. For example, the false prophet Hananiah foretold that Israel would be delivered within two years (Jer. 28:2-4). In contrast, Jeremiah said the captivity would last 70 years (Jer. 25:11). There have always been false hopes and false prophets to bolster and whitewash those hopes, so the wise believer spends time in prayer, reading the Bible, and talking with other sincere and knowledgeable Christians to discern truth from error.

Eze 13:11

**“a flooding rain will come.”** The wrath of God is often portrayed in Scripture as a powerful storm (e.g., Ps. 18:12-14; 77:17-18; 83:15; Isa. 28:17; 30:30; Jer. 23:19; 30:23; Ezek. 13:11). Powerful storms were dangerous and deadly in the ancient world just as they are today. The “storm” of God is portrayed in different scriptures as having wind, rain, thunder, lightning, fire, hail, and a flood. Powerful storms can destroy crops and leave people with nothing to eat; they could destroy houses and even sometimes whole villages and leave people with no shelter; and they could kill people in various ways, such as being struck by falling or flying objects, drowning, dying from exposure, or dying from famine after the storm. Given that, it is appropriate to compare the wrath of God to a dangerous storm.

Eze 13:14

**“I break down the wall that you have plastered with whitewash.”** This continues the metaphor of the wall and the whitewash. The false hope—the flimsy wall—of the people and the false prophets will be destroyed by the reality of the situation. Babylon will conquer Judah and the people will be carried into exile for many years.

Eze 13:17

**“prophesy against them.”** In Ezekiel 13:2, God told Ezekiel to prophesy against the false prophets. Now He tells Ezekiel to prophesy against the women who were false prophetesses. God’s people are fellow workers with God, and there are times when God asks prophets to speak prophetically about things that are going to happen and even sometimes to influence things to happen. See commentary on Hosea 6:5.

Eze 13:18

**“magic bands.”** The exact meaning of the Hebrew vocabulary is not known, partially because it is technical and therefore uncommon, and partially likely because the description of the items originated in another language. However, the translation “magic bands” is certainly the general idea, and most modern translations are going that way, with some variation such as “magic charms,” “amulets,” etc. The NET text note has, “The wristbands mentioned here probably represented magic bands or charms.” An older idea was that the word was related to the word “pillow” (e.g., ASV, KJV, Geneva), but most scholars have abandoned that position.

These women prophesied, but in fact, they were witches, making objects for people to wear that then through sympathetic magic (and perhaps, sex, drugs, or suggestion) gave the women some kind of control over the people. This was very purposeful, and the women “hunted for souls,” indicating they lured people away from the true God and salvation. From the culture, we can glean that the armbands and headbands would have likely had various charms on them or hanging from them.

That these women used magic to “hunt for souls” reveals the difference between the Devil and God. The Devil wants to control people and does not want people to think differently than he does, and he will use whatever force necessary to accomplish that—these woman in Ezekiel used black magic to control others. We see the Devil’s desire to control how people think all around the world today, for example, in many countries the free practice of Christianity is persecuted simply because the godless leaders don’t like it. The same is true for the new WOKE ideology. Many of the proponents talk about “inclusion” and “diversity,” but they are liars because they rail against and persecute anyone who does not accept their ideology. The Devil and his people don’t tolerate people who think differently than they do. In contrast, God recognizes the value of freedom of choice, and gives people the freedom to live and believe the way they want as long as it is not hurtful to others. Historically the Devil has been very good at overturning Christian cultures by using their tolerance to insert intolerant people and religions among them, who then grow into a majority and persecute the Christians who gave them the liberty to be different in the first place. Thus is the nature of evil, it uses the goodness of others to gain an advantage, then, when it is able, it controls the good people and persecutes their goodness.

**“headbands.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is unknown. Some English Bibles have “veils,” but there is no record of men wearing veils. A headband is more likely, especially since they were being made for every size head. A veil would be a “one size fits all” type of garment. It is almost certain that from that headband, or on that headband, would usually be magic charms. Whatever the headbands and wristbands were, they were part of the magic that these women were using on their victims.

**“hunt souls...soul.”** The Hebrew word translated as “soul” is *nephesh* (#05315 נֶפֶשׁ), and *nephesh* has a wide range of meanings. In this case, the word “soul” refers to lives, living people.

[For more information on “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

**“Will you hunt the souls of my people and *yet* save your own souls alive?”** God’s rhetorical question needs to be understood in the wider context of the chapter. The prophetess-witches hunt for the souls of others, but on the Day of Judgment, they will find that they cannot keep their own souls alive. These ungodly women will be like the false prophets at the beginning of the chapter (Ezek. 13:1-16) who do not have everlasting life (Ezek. 13:9), these women will not be able to keep themselves alive but will be destroyed in the Lake of Fire (Matt. 10:28).

Eze 13:19

**“handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread.”** Prophets were often paid a wage to prophesy for someone. These false prophetesses were taking a meager wage for their prophetic witchcraft, and giving godless prophecies.

**“putting to death souls who should not die.”** As part of the Noahic Covenant, God placed people in charge of policing their own society (Gen. 9:6). This is a major reason why people should be invested in who gets voted into positions of power. Evil people in power will put innocent people to death (see commentary on Gen. 9:6).

Eze 13:22

**“and preserve his life.”** Wicked people tend to have shorter lives than godly people, but the more complete meaning of this phrase in this context refers to the everlasting life that a godly person enjoys versus the everlasting death that the wicked experience.

[For more on the wicked experiencing everlasting death, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Eze 13:23

**“therefore you will no longer see false visions or practice divination.”** In the short term, that these false prophetesses would no longer see false visions would be the by the death of the false prophetesses, almost certainly as part of the Babylonian Captivity. However, that would not stop false prophets and prophetesses from continuing to be active on the earth, as we can see from the fact that it is now over 2500 years after the Babylonian Captivity and false prophets are still alive and well on the earth. However, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back and conquers the earth, Ezekiel’s prophecy will fully come to pass and there will be no more false prophets.

**Ezekiel Chapter 14**

Eze 14:1

**“and sat before me.”** The use of “sit” in this context was most likely purposeful and indicated the arrogance of these men. Biblically, rulers “sat” while those underneath them in position or authority stood (see commentary on Isa. 14:13, “sit”).

Eze 14:3

**“and put the stumbling block of their sin before their faces.”** The Hebrew phrase, “the stumbling block of their sin,” is either a genitive of relation, thus, “the stumbling block related to their sin,” or it could be a genitive of cause, “the stumbling block that causes their sin,” or it could be a genitive of result, “the stumbling block that is a result of their sin.” The stumbling block is the idols that Yahweh abhors. The author of the text, God, likely used a genitive in this case as He spoke to Ezekiel because to a certain degree, all three of these explanations are correct and all are involved in communicating a meaning that God wanted communicated. These men set up idols in their hearts, and also had idols of wood and stone set up for them to worship and serve.

Setting up idols of wood and stone is a slippery downward slope. Once the idols are set up they must be worshiped and served. But the more one worships and serves an idol god, the deeper that worship lodges itself in one’s heart. And the deeper in the heart the idolatry is, the more important worshiping and serving the idol becomes. Thus, the person who sets up idols is on a downward slope to ignoring or rejecting God and putting their everlasting life in jeopardy.

**“Should I let them ask me *for advice*?”** God’s clearly implied answer to the question is, “No, I should not let them ask me for advice.” This is a great lesson for believers. When unbelievers have their minds made up about something, it is a waste of time to try to change their minds. These men who came to Ezekiel pretended to come to ask advice, but God, who knows the hearts, told Ezekiel that they already had their minds made up—they had idols in their hearts. Although the Bible does not give us the real reason that these men came to Ezekiel—perhaps it was to look good to their peers by going to the prophet, or perhaps it was to get a chance to openly challenge and embarrass Ezekiel—one thing we do know is that they did not come humbly and honestly to ask for advice from Ezekiel.

So that they do not waste their time with people who have no interest in the truth or in changing their opinion, Christians need to develop an “early warning alarm” in their minds that alerts them to the times when people clearly have their minds made up and are making ungodly statements and asking stupid questions. Paul wrote to Timothy and said to “avoid foolish and uninformed speculations, knowing that they breed fights” (2 Tim. 2:23). God gave Ezekiel the right advice in this situation: just tell the men to turn away from their idols and abominations and return to God (Ezek. 14:6). That is the simple truth, and if people won’t hear that they won’t hear other truth either.

Eze 14:4

**“I, Yahweh, will answer him according to the multitude of his idols.”** In saying this, God is stating that he will answer anyone who has an idol in their heart as he would answer anyone who is an idolator and sinner. The fact that these men were leaders in Israel would not cause God to show them any special favors or give them any special treatment. They were idolaters and God would answer them according to that fact.

Eze 14:9

**“I, Yahweh, have deceived that prophet.”** This is an excellent example of the Semitic idiom of permission, where God is said to actively do something that He only played a part in. God did not deceive the false prophets. God spoke the truth through His Word and His prophets. However, the false prophets and the Jews in general did not want to obey God. They loved their idol gods and their pagan worship practices such as ritual prostitution, and the leaders, elders, and wealthy did not want to humble themselves to the will of God and thus give up their power and control over the people. So the Jews rejected what Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and other true prophets of God were saying at that time and allowed their greed and pride to lead them into deception. Thus they thought that what prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah were saying was just false and misleading information, in today’s jargon, “misinformation.”

So, in summary: God tells the Jews how to live to be godly, which forces the Jews to either obey or disobey God. The Jews reject God’s commands and purposely turn to pagan gods and practices and become deceived by their proud hearts and their pagan gods. Because God was the one who gave them the choice to obey or not, which forced the Jews into a decision, in the Semitic idiom of permission, God is said to have deceived the Jews.

[For a more complete explanation of the Semitic idiom of permission, see commentary on Exod. 4:21.]

Eze 14:13

**“and break the staff of its bread.”** Bread was considered the “staff of life,” because bread was the staple food that everyone relied on. Thus, everyone leaned on “the staff of bread” for support and sustenance. Famine broke the staff of bread.

**Ezekiel Chapter 15**

**Ezekiel Chapter 16**

Eze 16:2

**“make known to Jerusalem her abominations.”** Jerusalem is being compared to a woman who has abandoned God, and disobeyed and defied Him. The comparison to a woman is clearly implied, which is the figure of speech hypocatastasis (see commentary on Rev. 20:2). It was common in the biblical culture to refer to cities and nations as women (see commentary on Isa. 1:8).

Eze 16:4

**“you were not salted at all.”** This refers to the ancient custom of putting a little salt on the baby, either in water or even just touching the baby with salt. It was one way that the baby was dedicated to God. This custom still exists in some parts of the East, but the reasons for it have been forgotten.

[For more on the salt covenant, see commentary on 2 Chron. 13:5.]

Eze 16:7

**“hair was grown.”** Referring to the pubic hair.

Eze 16:8

**“your time was the time for love.”** Israel had matured to the point she could marry and have sexual relations.

**“I spread the corner.”** More literally, “I spread my corner” (or my “wing;” the corner, or border, of the garment was called the “wing” of the garment, cf. Malachi 4:2, where the Messiah, the “sun of righteousness” has healing in his “wings,” i.e., the corners of his garment.” “Spread the corner of my garment over you” is not quite literal since the “corner” or “border” of the garment would not cover the couple; the phrase was an idiom for taking a woman under one’s protection and care, and also implied the sexual relations that went with that.

Eze 16:10

**“dugong.”** A mammal quite like a manatee that lives in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba. The skin was excellent for sandals. See commentary on Exodus 25:5.

Eze 16:12

**“ring in your nose.”** It was the custom in biblical times for women to wear nose rings rather than earrings because the women not only had long hair, but they often wore head coverings, and those things covered any earrings such that they could not be seen. So, women customarily wore nose rings for personal decoration (Gen. 24:47; Isa. 3:21; cf. Prov. 11:22).

Eze 16:15

**“you trusted in your beauty.”** This is a case where the woman’s trust shifted from the one who had made her beautiful (Yahweh, the giver) to the beauty itself (the gift given by Yahweh). Many people shift their trust from Yahweh to something else that seems to make them successful. For example, it is common for a person who trusts Yahweh in day-to-day life and work, to become wealthy and then stop trusting Yahweh the giver and start trusting money (the gift). Career women who make their living in the beauty industry are tempted to trust their beauty rather than the One who made them beautiful, Yahweh.

**“poured out your prostitution.”** The term “poured out” in a context like this portrays abundance and overflow. Judah was an aggressive prostitute, seeking out lovers and “throwing herself at them” (cf. “poured out” in Joel 2:28, used of the abundance of the spirit in the Last Days).

Eze 16:16

**“shrines.”** The Hebrew word “shrines” is *bamot*, which is often translated as “high place,” but which referred to a place that was built up or raised up and leveled and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. The *bamot* was thus a “high place” (a raised up place), but not because it was particularly high, but rather because it was raised up to be higher than what was immediately around it, even if that was the floor of a temple. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52). However, in this context, the word *bamot* had another meaning, and thus was a double entendre. At the shrines, there were often raised platforms where the temple prostitutes prostituted themselves.[[28]](#footnote-10401) These, as we can imagine, were usually covered with something such as thick cloth to make sex more comfortable.

Eze 16:17

**“male images.”** The text is unclear as to exactly what these images were. There was no known phallic worship in Israel, so that is almost certainly not what this text is about. The reference is most likely at least in part to idols, which may have specifically been male, such as a bull god or an image of Baal (in keeping with Israel generally being referred to as a woman who commits adultery with her lovers). However, there was all kinds of illicit sex in ancient Israel, and it is quite possible that the Israelites made dildos out of silver and gold and engaged in sexual activity with them. The use of dildos for sexual pleasure is very ancient, and was certainly part of the Mediterranean world by this time, for example, in ancient Greece.

Eze 16:18

**“set my oil and my incense before them.”** When the Bible speaks of “worshiping and serving” pagan gods, part of that service was offering food and incense. Performing and maintaining the worship service at a pagan shrine was usually just as involved—sometimes perhaps more involved—as performing and maintaining the worship service at the Tabernacle or Temple of Yahweh. It required a lot of work. The reason God calls it, “my oil and my incense” is due to the fact that these were things that were due Yahweh, not pagan gods. Yahweh is always the source of abundance in Israel.

Eze 16:19

**“set it before them for a pleasing aroma.”** This phrase with “pleasing aroma” indicates that the flour, oil, and honey were burned on the altar that was in front of the pagan idol that the Judeans were worshiping, although which specific idol is not mentioned. Ostensibly, different pagan gods were worshiped in different ways. Yahweh required that on His altar the morning and evening regular sacrifice of a lamb was accompanied by an offering of grain, oil, and wine (Exod. 29:48).

Eze 16:20

**“to idols.”** In this instance, we replaced the pronoun “them” with “idols” so the reader would better understand the verse.

**“to be devoured.”** Children were sometimes sacrificed to pagan gods, and God speaks of that here as if the gods were eating the children as food. The sacrifices that were regularly burned to both God and pagan gods were food and would have otherwise been eaten by the priests and the people, and meat, grain, and oil were burned to God and the gods. In many cases, people presented food they had baked as a gift-offering to the gods. So the image in this verse is very cultural, but horrific: people are offering their children as food to the gods, and murdering their children in the name of religion. That anyone, pagan or not, could do that is beyond understanding, but that the people of Israel could stray so far from God, His commandments, and family love boggles the mind. Because child sacrifice was common among the pagans, God specifically forbade it for Israel (Lev. 18:21; 20:2; Deut. 12:31; 18:10).

Eze 16:21

**“pass through the fire.”** These wicked Israelites took the children that were born due to their prostitution and offered them up as sacrifices to their idol gods. This was specifically forbidden in the law of Moses (Lev. 18:21; Deut. 18:10). Before the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, King Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah, was sacrificing children by burning them (2 Kings 16:3). Now it is over 100 years after the fall of Israel and people were still sacrificing their children to idol gods. Thus, like Israel fell to Assyria, Judah fell to Babylon. Sin has consequences, and sin on a national level has national consequences.

Eze 16:24

**“a vaulted place...a lofty place.”** The meaning of the Hebrew words is uncertain, and besides that, the specific nature of the context indicates that they are being used in a technical sense. When words are used in a sexual context they often take on a specific idiomatic meaning. For example, we know that when we say a man and woman “slept together” we are not talking about “sleep” at all, we are talking about sexual intercourse. That kind of specific idiomatic meaning seems to be the case here, and both words likely refer to places that were built up or raised up and used for sex and ritual prostitution. The English versions vary: “brothel house...high place” (KJ21); “altar for prostitution...high place *for ritual prostitution*” (Amplified); “mound...elevated place” (CSB); “pavilion...platform” (CEB); “place of debauchery...high place” (Darby); “places to worship idols and practice prostitution” (GNT).

Eze 16:25

**“spread your feet *wide*.”** Some English versions read, “spread your legs,” and that is the idea in the text, but the Hebrew text reads “feet,” not legs, and the biblical association between feet and the genitals is strong and important, so the REV left the word “feet” in the text. The addition of the word “wide” is due to the implication of the word “spread.” The implication is that she spread her legs wide for “everyone,” thus indicating her willing (and even eager) participation in her promiscuity.

Although there was ritual prostitution at many of the pagan shrines, we must not forget that this is a type of double entendre. While physical prostitution certainly occurred, we must not forget that there was spiritual prostitution as well, and that spiritual prostitution had to do with the worship of pagan gods. The people of Judah were all too willing to worship many different different idols. The cultures that Judah came in contact with had their own gods, and Judah seemed more than happy to worship any gods that they came in contact with.

Also, we must not think that spiritual prostitution is limited to worshiping statues of ancient gods. Any object can become an idol if it is worshiped in the sense that it is “worth it,” and it is looked to for help or advice. Thus, for example, objects that bring spiritual help, such as “lucky charms” or “lucky objects” such as lucky hats, are actually idols. Yahweh our God is to be our only source of help.

[For more on “feet” being a euphemism for sex and the genitals, see commentary on Judges 5:27. For more on how God feels about getting help or advice from other things besides Him, see Deut. 18:9-14.]

Eze 16:26

**“great of flesh.”** The word “flesh” is being used euphemistically for the penis. This is done in other places in the Bible as well (cf. Ezek. 23:20).

Eze 16:27

**“the daughters of the Philistines who are ashamed of your lewd way.”** Judah was behaving so badly that even the pagan Philistines were ashamed of her.

Eze 16:51

**“and have justified your sisters.”** It is not as if Judah’s sin actually justified the sin of Samaria, Sodom, etc., but rather that Judah’s sin was so egregious that it made the sin of the other cities seem much less serious.

Eze 16:57

**“Aram.”** Often called “Syria.”

Eze 16:60

**“Nevertheless, I myself will remember.”** There is now a distinct shift in the emphasis and tone of the text. God now promises the restoration of Israel. Whereas Israel and Judah had sinned egregiously and deserved (and received) punishment, now God promises He will remember His earlier covenant with Israel (the “Old Covenant”) and so will establish a new covenant, an everlasting covenant, with Israel.

In the Old Covenant, God promised that Israel would be God’s own possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:5-6). Although Israel failed to keep their part of the covenant, God remembered His original intention and planned to put a new covenant in place that would be an everlasting covenant. Salvation is always individual and personal, never corporate. No one is given everlasting life just because they are part of a group, even if that group is the Jews, God’s chosen people. From the scope of Scripture, we learn that it is the people who obey God and are saved that get to be part of the New Covenant and live forever on a restored earth.

**“an everlasting covenant.”** This refers to the New Covenant that God will establish with Israel.

**“in the days of your youth.”** The covenant God made with Israel in the days of her youth was the “Old Covenant,” made at Sinai just after Israel had left Egypt and as it was forming as a nation, not just related tribes (Exod. 24:1-8).

Eze 16:62

**“my covenant.”** The context show that this is the New Covenant.

Eze 16:63

**“and be ashamed.”** Many people who are saved and have everlasting life never make the effort to live a truly godly life on earth. In the future Kingdom of Christ, there will be a distinct difference between those people who made the effort to live truly godly lives and those people who got saved but continued living selfishly and in sin. The people who have little or no rewards in the Millennial Kingdom will realize why that is, and will be ashamed of their selfish lives.

[For more on shame in the future life, see commentary on 1 John 2:28 and 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on the future Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**Ezekiel Chapter 17**

Eze 17:4

**“a city of merchants.”** Babylon (Chaldea) was known as a place of merchants (cf. Ezek. 16:29).

Eze 17:12

**“rebellious house.”** The country of Judah.

Eze 17:13

**“mighty men.”** The Hebrew word translated by the phrase “mighty men” is literally “rams,” the powerful male leaders of the flock. So, “he took away the rams of the land.” The powerful leaders of the country are called “rams” by the figure of speech hypocatastasis (see commentary on Rev. 20:2). The mighty men are also called “rams” in Exodus 15:15.

Eze 17:14

**“brought low so that it could not lift itself up.”** This verse shows us the value of leaders. Not everyone is a leader. The Bible makes it clear that God gives different people different “ministries,” or “ways of serving,” and one of those ways of serving is leadership (Rom. 12:8). A wise ruler knows that some people are leaders and some people are not. If you want something organized and run correctly, choose a leader to do it; if you want to bring an organization or country down, remove its leaders. Nebuchadnezzar was a smart man, and knew if he removed the leaders from Judah, the country would never successfully organize and rebel, and they never did. It was God’s power that finally brought Judah back from the Babylonian Captivity after the Persians had conquered Babylon.

Eze 17:16

**“the king lives who made him king.”** Nebuchadnezzar, who lives in Babylon, carried away king Jehoiachin and made Zedekiah king of Judah instead of Jehoiachin. Ezekiel foretold that Zedekiah would die in Babylon (Ezek. 12:13).

Eze 17:17

**“when ramps are thrown up.”** When Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacks and builds siege ramps to take cities, Pharaoh of Egypt will not help Judah.

**“and siege walls are built.”** The siege wall the Babylonians built around Jerusalem is mentioned in 2 Kings 25:1, Jeremiah 52:4, and Ezekiel 17:17. It was a common practice for an army to build a wall that surrounded the city that they were attacking to keep the enemy from escaping and to keep weapons and supplies from being smuggled into the city (see commentary on 1 Kings 25:1).

Eze 17:23

**“birds of every kind.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic: “all birds of every wing.” Reading the Hebrew text without understanding it makes it sound like every bird on earth will live under the tree, and that is not what the text is saying; every kind of bird will be there.

Eze 17:24

**“trees.”** In this context, a “tree” is a person. This is the figure of speech hypocatastasis.

[For more on trees being people, see commentary on Luke 3:9. For more on hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 18**

Eze 18:2

**“sour grapes.”** The Hebrew word translated as “sour” refers to fruit that has not yet fully ripened and is therefore sour or bitter.

**“The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge.”** It was widely believed in the ancient Near East that the sins of one’s ancestors carried over and fell upon the descendants. In this case, Ezekiel is among the people who have been carried captive from Judea to Babylon. Those captives were angry and bitter about the fact that they had been carried away from their homeland in Judah. They blamed their ancestors for sinning in such a way that they were the ones who were carried away to Babylon, and that was in part true because the ancestors had sinned. However they themselves continued in the same idolatry that their ancestors had engaged in, and they were being intellectually dishonest about that fact. Ezekiel chapter 2 says that the people of Judea were a rebellious house. Ezekiel chapter 6 speaks about all the evil abominations that the people were involved in. Ezekiel chapter 14 mentions the elders who came to Ezekiel but had set up idols in their hearts and had idols before their faces (i.e., idols that they looked at and worshiped). Ezekiel chapter 16 is about all the idolatry that the Judeans engaged in. More examples could be given but the point should be made: it wasn’t just the ancestors who were sinful and idolaters. The exiles from Judah who were alive at the time were also sinful and idolaters, and because of that, to blame their situation on their ancestors, and saying that the fathers (the ancestors) sinned and the children’s teeth were set on edge was not accurate when it came to the exiled Judeans. There are reasons to believe that if their generation had repented en masse, like the Ninevites did at the preaching of Jonah, God could have kept them from being exiled.

Eze 18:4

**“soul.”** In this verse, “soul” has the common meaning of a “person.” The verse is saying, “Behold, every person is mine; the people who are fathers as well as the people who are sons, and the person who sins will die.”

[For more on the use of nephesh, “soul,” see Word Study: “Psuchē.”]

Eze 18:5

**“But if a man is righteous.”** What God requires of people is to recognize Him as the one true God and be loving, giving, and kind. This is stated here in Ezekiel 18:5-9, and also in a few different ways in other places in the Bible (see commentary on Mic. 6:8).

Eze 18:6

**“has not eaten on the mountains.”** There were shrines and altars to pagan gods on the mountains, and sacrifices to the pagan gods were made there (cf. Deut. 12:2; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4; 2 Kings 17:10; 2 Chron. 28:4; Jer. 3:6; Hos. 4:13). When a sacrifice was made on the altar it was customary to have a community meal for the worshipers gathered there, so the primary meaning of the phrase “eaten on the mountains,” refers to participating in the worship of idols.

It was also common that one of the goddesses that was worshiped on the hills was Asherah, the female consort of the god Baal, and she was worshiped in part by sacred prostitution. So although “eaten” in Ezekiel 18:6 does not have the primary meaning of enjoying sexual pleasure, it was likely included as a sub-theme of “eaten” here (see commentary on Jer. 3:6). Sex was often spoken of euphemistically as eating (e.g., Prov. 9:17; 30:20; Song 2:3; 4:16; 5:1).

**“come near to a woman.”** This is an idiom for sexual intercourse. According to the law of Moses, it was a sin to have sex with a woman when she was on her period.

Eze 18:8

**“not lent *money* and charged interest.”** Israelites were not to charge interest to other Israelites (Lev. 25:36). But they could charge interest to foreigners.

**“nor has taken any profit.”** That is, the lender has not taken a profit from the loan. Loaning without interest or profit is sacrificial, and that was the point. God wanted the Israelites to be a people who loved and supported each other, helping others as they had need.

Eze 18:9

**“live, yes, live.”** The verb “live” is repeated twice, once in the infinitive form, then in the imperfect form. This is the figure of speech polyptoton, and it is done for emphasis. That the person will live does not mean that he will necessarily survive the Babylonian conquest of Judah or the Babylonian Captivity, “live” refers to everlasting life. In the Old Testament, an Israelite who lived righteously according to the Mosaic Law would be given everlasting life.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

Eze 18:13

“**will he then live?”** The phrase means, will he then live forever, i.e., have everlasting life.

**“He will not live.”** The “he” in Ezekiel 18:13 refers to the son, who is a sinner. The pronoun shifts are not always clearly delineated in the Hebrew and Greek text, so care must be taken to read and understand the context.

**“die, yes, die.”** This is the figure of speech polyptoton, used for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

Eze 18:19

**“live, yes, live.”** The Hebrew text repeats the word “live” twice, but in different aspects of the verb. This is the figure of speech polyptoton, and is used for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

Eze 18:20

**“The soul who sins will die.”** This is a good example of the word “soul” being used as “person.” The person who sins will die.

**“The son is not to bear the iniquity of the father.”** This verse says the son will not share the guilt of the father, nor the father share the guilt of the son. But in Exodus 20:5 and Numbers 14:18, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. In Ezekiel God is telling us that a child is not “accountable” or “liable” for the sins of the father. Whereas the Generational Curse that God speaks of in Exodus 20:5 and Numbers 14:18 is referring to the “consequences” of the sin. The child is not liable for the sin but they still suffer the effects of the sin. For instance, if my dad was an alcoholic I am not held accountable to God for my father’s sin, but I still feel the effects of his alcoholism.

Eze 18:21

**“if the wicked person turns from all his sins that he has committed...he will live.”** The message that God gave Ezekiel here in Ezekiel 18:21-24 is also given in Ezekiel 3:17-21 and Ezekiel 33:7-16. However, Ezekiel 3:17-21 and Ezekiel 33:7-16 include the responsibility of the person called to be a watchman to tell others about the disaster that will come upon those who disobey God. There is a warning and a message of hope in these passages. The warning, and the message of hope is that if a person has committed sins in the past, these do not keep him from being righteous before God if he changes and does what is right, and it includes a warning to people not to believe that past righteousness will cover for current sin, and the encouragement that sin in one’s past will not keep a person from being considered righteous in God’s sight if they repent of their sin and live righteously.

**“live, yes, live.”** The Hebrew text repeats the word “live” twice, but in different aspects of the verb. This is the figure of speech polyptoton, and is used for emphasis (see commentary on Gen. 2:16).

Eze 18:24

**“righteous.”** In this context, “righteous” means doing what is right and just to other people and in the sight of God; it does not mean “saved” (see commentary on Matt. 5:6).

Eze 18:26

**“he will die because of those things.”** In the Hebrew text, “those things” is plural. “The plural suffix perceives, ‘turning’ from righteousness and ‘practicing evil’ [‘commits iniquity’ in the REV] as two separate actions.”[[29]](#footnote-19567)

Eze 18:27

**“He will keep his soul alive.”** This is a wonderful example of how a person by their own free will participates in receiving everlasting life. A person does not have the power to keep their soul, i.e., themselves, alive, it is God who has the power of resurrection and life and death. However, God exercises that power in accordance with the decisions the person makes in life. If a person decides to do evil and to reject God and his Messiah, then they will die in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15). If a person decides to believe and obey God, then God will respect that decision and give the person everlasting life (cf. John 3:16; Rom. 6:23).

[For more on dying in the lake of fire and not “burning in hell forever,” see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Eze 18:28

**“live, yes, live.”** The Hebrew verb is repeated twice for emphasis. This is the figure of speech polyptoton (see commentary on Gen. 2:16). The person who turns from their sin will live forever.

Eze 18:30

**“a stumbling block.”** This is also used in Ezekiel 3:20. English versions that use “stumbling block” include the Amplified Bible, CSB, CJB, ISV, LSB, NASB, TLV, YLT (Cf. NET). As long as a person is alive, their sin is a stumbling block that can lead to their death, but they can always change. As Ecclesiastes 9:4 says, “a living dog is better than a dead lion.” But once the person is dead, they can’t change, and they will be judged for their sin.

Eze 18:31

**“make a new heart and a new spirit for yourselves.”** This is a powerful phrase because it points to the free will that God has given to each person. The Calvinists who say that God makes the decisions that govern a person's life are not correct. It is your own free will and your own free will decisions that govern your life. So, as Deuteronomy 30:19 says, “choose life so that you will live.” Make good and godly decisions.

**Ezekiel Chapter 19**

Eze 19:1

**“a lamentation.”** The Hebrew word translated as “lamentation” is *qina*, and it is often used to mean a dirge, a musical composition sung at someone's death.[[30]](#footnote-29277) However, it is likely that when Ezekiel penned this lamentation, it was in part prophetic and all the players had not yet died. Nevertheless, their circumstances were such that a lamentation was appropriate.

Eze 19:2

**“What was your mother?”** This line introduces a new meaning to the lamentation (or perhaps “dirge”). It is also a riddle, and solving it requires a knowledge of the history of Judah, but even so, the illustrations are not strictly literal and the people being referred to is debated although the scholars agree that the lion cubs who grow to be lions are kings of Judah.

“**lioness.**” Ezekiel 19 is a metaphorical illustration of the last kings of Judah, and technically it uses the figure of speech hypocatastasis, which is usually confused with, or included in, metaphor. Technically a metaphor is a comparison by representation, i.e., “You are a lioness,” while a hypocatastasis is a comparison by implication, simply the word “lioness” with no indication of who the lioness is. That is the situation here: the identity of the lioness and cubs is not given.

[For more on metaphor and hypocatastasis, see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

**“she nourished her cubs.”** The evidence best supports the two lion cubs being the Judean kings, King Jehoahaz and King Zedekiah. Of the last Judean kings, King Jehoahaz was the only one who was taken as a captive to Egypt, so scholars mostly agree that he is the first lion cub. However, the scholars are divided about the second lion cub, some arguing for Jehoiakim, some for Jehoiachin, and some for Zedekiah. But only Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were taken captive to Babylon, so that evidence supports one of those two being the second lion cub.

Of those two kings, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, Zedekiah fits the biblical description the best. For one thing, both Jehoahaz and Zedekiah were the sons of one mother, Hamutal (2 Kings 23:31; 24:18) although it is also possible that in the prophecy, the “mother” is Israel herself (Israel is the vine that puts off shoots in the metaphor of the vine given after the lioness and cubs metaphor). Also, although both Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were taken to Babylon, it seems that only Zedekiah ruled in Jerusalem long enough to fulfill the prophecy that he “devoured men...and laid waste their cities, and the land was desolate, and everything in it” (Ezek. 19:6-7). Jehoiachin only reigned three months (2 Kings 24:8), whereas Zedekiah ruled for 11 years (2 Kings 24:18).

The information in the books of 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel shows that Zedekiah was a weak and ungodly king who “did evil in the eyes of Yahweh” (2 Kings 24:19). He was the last Judean king to rule in Jerusalem, and it was his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar that resulted in the Babylonian Captivity and the destruction and burning of Jerusalem, which cost many thousands of lives. Also, when Zedekiah was taken to Babylon, he was imprisoned in such a way that he no longer influenced the people of Judah, which seems to fulfill the prophecy of Ezekiel 19:9, which says he was confined “so that his voice could no longer be heard.” In contrast, Jehoiachin, who also did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, was taken to Babylon but then seems to have lived there peacefully under house arrest. When Evil-merodach became the king of Babylon, he elevated Jehoichin and honored him. Jehoiachin outlived Zedekiah and so became the last legitimate king of Judah (Jer. 52:31-34).

**“A lioness.”** The text shows a good knowledge of the lion in Judah, and Ezekiel 19:2 uses four different Hebrew words for “lion.”

Eze 19:3

**“one of her cubs.”** This first lion cub is most likely Jehoahaz (see commentary on Ezek. 19:2).

Eze 19:5

**“waited in vain.”** This is the idea behind the Hebrew “waited.” In this context it refers to waiting in vain.[[31]](#footnote-13924)

**“she took another of her cubs.”** The evidence supports that this second cub was Zedekiah (see commentary on Ezek. 19:2).

Eze 19:6

**“prowled about.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “he walked up and down,” but since it refers to him as a lion prowling around among the lions, “prowling about” is a good translation and adopted in some English versions.

Eze 19:9

**“into the fortress.”** The meaning of this phrase is disputed, but the main idea is that this king, likely Zedekiah, was confined in a way that he could no longer influence the people of Judah (for more on this king being Zedekiah, see commentary on Ezek. 19:2).

**“on the mountains of Israel.”** The Judean kings ruled from Mount Zion in the hill country of Judah, and there were mountains all around it. When the king was taken to Babylon, his voice would no longer be heard on the mountains of Israel. In this context, “Israel” stands for the whole country of historic Israel, not just the Northern Kingdom of Israel in contrast to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. After the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by Assyria, the southern kings of Judah had more influence over all of the historic territory of Israel.

Eze 19:10

**“Your mother was like a vine.”** Here in Ezekiel 19:10 the imagery abruptly switches from a lioness and cubs to a vine with branches. But on close examination, the switch may not be as abrupt and unexpected as it first seems. It is noteworthy that this switch parallels the switch in Jacob’s prophecy of Judah in Genesis 49:9-12. Jacob’s prophecy starts with Judah being a lion’s cub and ends up with vine and wine imagery (Gen. 49:11-12). Daniel Block points out that even some of the vocabulary words are the same.[[32]](#footnote-22599)

An examination of the illustration of the vine and branches in Ezekiel 19:10-14 reveals that the “mother” and fruitful vine is Judah, and the branches are the rulers of Judah. Judah started as a fruitful and godly nation, but over time it sinned and grew more sinful. The branches were proud and arrogant, and finally, an unnamed someone, who is no doubt the Babylonians carrying out the wrath of God, came and uprooted it.

**“full of shoots.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads, “in your blood,” which makes no sense in the context. There have been numerous attempts to make sense of the passage. One of the most likely was suggested by J. A. Bewer, who suggested redividing the words and recombining them differently.[[33]](#footnote-12736) The reading “full of shoots” makes sense and fits the context perfectly.

**“abundant water.”** In this context, “water,” which is always a plural noun in Hebrew, should be translated as the singular “water” and not the plural “waters,” and in this case the “water” stands for the blessing of God and God working through His spirit in Judah. Thus, early on in her history, Judah was a truly blessed country.

[For more on water being related to spirit, see commentary on Jer. 2:13.]

Eze 19:11

**“conspicuous.”** The Hebrew is more literally “seen,” but in this case, the reason the vine and branches were seen was because they stood out, they were conspicuous. This was a bad thing, not a good thing. To get the negative impact of what Ezekiel 19:11 is saying, we must remember that Judah is being compared to a once fruitful vine. Vines grew relatively close to the ground and thus were humble before God. But this vine wasn’t humble. She exalted herself and her branches above the clouds, and eventually, that arrogance brought evil consequences.

Eze 19:12

**“the east wind.”** Here in Ezekiel 19:12, the “east wind” refers to Babylon. Babylon dried up the rulers of Judah and destroyed them. The “strong branches” were the rulers of Judah.

**“strong branches.”** The Hebrew word translated as “branches” here is a branch, rod, staff, or, when used of rulers, a scepter, representing a king. The branches were kings (and perhaps other rulers) in Judah.

Eze 19:13

**“Now it is planted in the wilderness.”** The one who uprooted Judah ended up planting it in the wilderness.

**“In a dry and thirsty land.”** The meaning of this is likely at least twofold. Obviously, the land of Judah cannot be moved, but it can be “dry and thirsty” in the sense that is is removed from God. The people of Judah forsook Yahweh, “the spring of living water” (Jer. 2:13). Water often stood for spirit and the blessings of Yahweh (see commentary on Jer. 2:13). So when Judah forsook Yahweh, the land was left dry and thirsty. Ezekiel portrays Yahweh leaving Israel due to its sin (see commentary on Ezek. 11:23).

Also, in a very real sense “Israel” was moved to Babylon, a dry and thirsty land ruled by pagan kings and pagan gods. Many people died in the Babylonian attacks, but the articles of the Temple were taken to Babylon, as well as the kings of Judah and their families and the people of Judah. God sent word via the prophet Jeremiah to the Judean people in Babylon, to the elders, prophets, priests, and people, that they were to prosper in Babylon. They were to build homes, have families, plant gardens, and seek the welfare of the places they lived in Babylon, for God planned to prosper them there (Jer. 29:1-14). God said they would be there 70 years (Jer. 29:10), long enough for three generations of children to be born, so they needed to settle in Babylon and prosper there. And they did. We know from history that when the Persians conquered Babylon and allowed the Judeans to return to the land of Israel, more Judeans stayed in Babylon than returned to Judah.

Eze 19:14

**“Fire.”** This is not referring to a literal fire, but metaphorically refers to something that can totally consume the “branches,” the kings of Judah. In this case, the illustration is a good one because after Jehoiachin, the last king of Judah to die (Zedekiah died before Jehoiachin did), there were no more kings of Judah. After the deportation of Zedekiah, governors put in place by the Babylonians ruled Judah, then when Babylon was conquered by Persia, governors appointed by Persia ruled, and so on down through the conquest of the Greeks, Hasmoneans, Romans, etc. To this day the “throne of David” has never been occupied by a descendant of David, but it will in the future when Christ reigns from Jerusalem, just as the angel said to Mary (Luke 1:32).

**Ezekiel Chapter 20**

Eze 20:1

**“seventh year, in the fifth month, the tenth day of the month.”** That is, the seventh year reckoned from when Jehoiachin was taken into exile in the Babylonian Captivity (2 Kings 24:8-17; 2 Chron. 36:9-10). Thus, this revelation came to Ezekiel on August 14, 591 BC. The date sets this chapter apart from chapter 19, and starts a new subject.

[For more on the chronology of Ezekiel, see commentary on Ezek. 1:2.]

**“certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of Yahweh.”** What they came to ask Ezekiel about is unstated and therefore not important for the record. They may have come to see if Ezekiel would confirm Hananiah’s prophecy that the Judeans would return to their homeland soon (Jer. 28:1-4). They may have come thinking that they were righteous and were seeking Yahweh and wanted to know if Yahweh would soon let them return to Judah. Deuteronomy 4:25-31 said that if the Israelites engaged in idolatry they would be scattered, but if they changed and sought him out, then God would remember his covenant, which meant that God would bring them back to Judah (although these elders had not changed but had idols in their hearts). Those are viable possibilities, but there are no doubt others as well, and the text just does not tell us why these elders came to Ezekiel.

Eze 20:3

**“I will not be inquired of by you.”** The elders who came to Ezekiel to ask him about any word from Yahweh were insincere. They had idols in their hearts and had no intention of abandoning their gods and following Yahweh. Yahweh knew that, and thus had no intention of playing their fake game. Instead, Yahweh confronted them about their idolatry. In doing that, Yahweh set the example that believers should follow. Many times people come to pastors or people they know are godly and ask them questions, wanting to get the pastor to “rubber stamp” what they have already decided to do. Godly people should never be pulled into the trap, but should speak what God leads them to say.

Eze 20:5

**“In the day when I chose Israel.”** God now reminds the people how He had chosen Israel to be His people and brought them out of Egypt.

**“lifted up my hand.”** One way a person swore a solemn oath was to raise his hand and swear. See commentary on Genesis 14:22.

Eze 20:6

**“lifted up my hand.”** A way of swearing an oath. See commentary on Ezekiel 20:5.

Eze 20:7

**“the detestable things that are before his eyes.”** The Hebrew text reads, “detestable things of his eyes,” that is, that he sees or looks at. The NIV nuances the text but makes it clear: “get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on.” This context shows that those things were idols.

**“Stop defiling yourselves with the idols of Egypt.”** The sense of the text is “stop defiling yourselves.”[[34]](#footnote-26308) This is not a warning about what Israel might do, it is a command to stop doing what they were already doing. The books of Moses do not specifically refer to the Israelites worshiping idols while they were in Egypt, but it is apparent they did. They had barely left Egypt when they desired to have gods made, and made a golden calf (Exod. 32:1-4). Also, according to Joshua 24:14, the Israelites still had gods with them that they had worshiped in Egypt. So from here in Ezekiel 20:7 we learn that at least some of the Israelites who left Egypt brought Egyptian gods with them.

God’s people need to realize that having idols of any kind (and “good luck charms” and protective amulets are idols) defiles a person in the eyes of God. That point is made several times in Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 20:7, 18, 31; 22:4; 23:7, 30).

Eze 20:9

**“eyes…sight.”** The Hebrew words are literally “eyes” (*ayin*, #05869) in both places, but the first use refers to the mental eyes, i.e., the knowledge or understanding, while the second use refers to the physical sight. The use of the same word in one sentence with two different meanings is the figure of speech antanaclasis, and it is meant to catch the attention.

[For more on antanaclasis, see commentary on 1 Sam. 1:24.]

**“by bringing the Israelites out of the land of Egypt.”** The Hebrew text reads “them,” not “the Israelites,” but “them” is confusing because the immediate context is the pagan nations.

Eze 20:11

**“live.”** This is the pregnant sense of “live,” meaning live a meaningful life now but also live forever.

Eze 20:12

**“gave them my Sabbaths.”** The plural “Sabbaths” indicates that Ezekiel is not referring to just the weekly Sabbath, but to all the Sabbaths in the Mosaic Law; the feasts such as Passover and Tabernacles had Sabbaths as part of the feast. Here we see some of God’s reasons for the Sabbaths. They were to be a sign that reminded the people of the covenant that they had made with God, and they were to make people holy. Most ancient cultures had feasts and festivals when people did not work or work much, but Yahweh gave His people a Sabbath every week so they had a rest day every week and could rest, rejuvenate, have family time, and spend time with God. That gave people time to reflect on God and commit to being holy. The weekly Sabbath made sure that parents had time to spend with their children to educate them about Yahweh and the covenant responsibilities they had before Yahweh.

Eze 20:14

**“eyes…sight.”** The Hebrew words are literally “eyes” (*ayin*, #05869) in both places, but the first use refers to the mental eyes, i.e., the knowledge or understanding, while the second use refers to the physical sight. The use of the same word in one sentence with two different meanings is the figure of speech antanaclasis, and it is meant to catch the attention.

[For more on antanaclasis, see commentary on 1 Sam. 1:24.]

Eze 20:15

**“lifted up my hand.”** A way of swearing an oath. See commentary on Ezekiel 20:5.

Eze 20:22

**“eyes of the nations in whose sight I brought them out.”** This is the figure antanaclasis, “word-clashing,” when a word is used in the same sentence with two different meanings. In this case, the Hebrew word for “eyes” is used twice. The first time refers to the mental eyes, the mind or understanding, and the second time it refers to the physical eyes, the sight.

[For more on antanaclasis, see commentary on 1 Sam. 1:24.]

**“brought them out.”** Brought them out of Egypt.

Eze 20:23

**“lifted up my hand.”** A way of swearing an oath. See commentary on Ezekiel 20:5.

**“scatter them among the nations.”** God said if Israel sinned He would scatter them (e.g., Deut. 28:36, 46, 64).

Eze 20:25

**“statutes that were not good.”** It is not that the statutes were not good, they were good. But because Israel could not keep some and refused to keep others, those good statutes ended up producing death (cf. Rom. 7:10).

Eze 20:26

**“and I defiled them by their gift-offerings.”** This is a great example of the idiom of permission. God did not actively defile the Israelites, they defiled themselves (cf. Ezek. 20:30-31). God did not actively defile the Israelites, but what He did do was give them Laws that commanded them not to worship idols and defile themselves by the idols. Since God gave the laws, there is a sense that God participated in the sin of the Israelites. If God had not given those laws, their idolatry would not have been directly disobeying God and sinning, thus defiling themselves. So, by the Semitic idiom of permission, God can be said to have defiled the people.

[For a much more complete explanation of the Semitic idiom of permission, see commentary on Exod 4:21.]

**“their firstborn children.”** The Hebrew uses the idiom, “all that opens the womb,” referring to the firstborn children. The Israelites were so heartless that they burned their children to death as gift-offerings to the idol gods they worshiped.

**“that I might make them desolate in order that they would know.”** The point God is making is that the sin of the people in burning their firstborn children would result in their destruction as a consequence and show the people that Yahweh was God. People cannot sin against God without consequence.

Eze 20:28

**“lifted up my hand.”** A way of swearing an oath. See commentary on Ezekiel 20:5.

**“there...there...there...there.”** God had told the Israelites to offer their offerings at the place that he would choose, and at that time in Israel’s history, that place was wherever the Tabernacle was. But the Israelites ignored God’s command and worshiped like the pagans did.

Eze 20:29

**“What is the shrine where you go *to worship*.”** Although the Hebrew word *bamah* is usually translated as “shrine” in the REV, in this context is it clear that the shrine is on a hill or high place (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

The meaning of God’s question to the Israelites is captured well in the CJB version, “This high place where you go, what is the meaning of it?” God, the searcher of every human heart, wants the people who visit the shrines to admit what they are doing, worshiping their pagan gods, and thus admit how they are blatantly disobeying God. People cannot hide their sin from God, and God will judge every person (Eccl. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15), so people who openly sin should at least know about the judgment that will come in their future.

Eze 20:30

**“detestable things?”** Referring to the idols of the ancestors.

Eze 20:34

**“will gather you out of the countries in which you are scattered.”** It is clear from the context that this gathering is not a return at the end of the Babylonian Captivity, but rather the regathering of Judah and Israel into the land of Israel when Christ sets up his Millennial Kingdom. That is why there is a judgment and a separation of the godly people from the ungodly (Ezek. 20:38). That judgment is the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:31-46).

Eze 20:35

**“into the wilderness of the peoples.”** This is the wilderness through which Israel passed on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. Jesus Christ will enter the Promised Land from the south, from Edom, when he comes to conquer in the same way that Israel came out of Egypt into the Promised Land (Isa. 63:1). After the conquest, he will set up his throne in the “wilderness of the people” and separate them there into Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25:31-46). The “sheep,” the godly people, will be let into his kingdom, but the “goats” will not get to go into the Promised Land (Ezek. 20:38) but will be destroyed (Ezek. 34:16); they will be thrown immediately into Gehenna (Matt. 25:41, 46).

This “wilderness” (or “desert”) of the people” is not the desert between Babylon and Israel to gather the people coming back from the Babylonian Captivity, because this gathering is after Armageddon as the context shows (cf. esp. Ezek. 20:38). This gathering of God’s people has some important similarities to the Exodus. At the Exodus, God took Israel from their bondage in Egypt and judged them in the wilderness (Ezek. 20:36). In the future, God will take Israel from the nations where they have been scattered due to their sin and will again judge them in the wilderness (Ezek. 20:35). Israel will be judged by God; it will be put under His “rod” and the flock separated into good and bad before the good are allowed to enter the Promised Land and the bad people destroyed (Ezek. 20:38; 34:16). Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 25, and it is referred to as the “Sheep and Goat Judgment” (Matt. 25:31-46). Also, in the future Israel will meet God “face to face” and be judged in the “wilderness” (Ezek. 20:35) just as Israel met God “face to face” after the Exodus (cf. Moses meeting God “face to face” (Exod. 33:11; Deut. 34:10)), the Israelite leaders personally seeing God (Exod. 24:9-11), and Israel meeting God “face to face” at Mount Sinai (Deut. 5:4) and hearing His voice (see commentary on Exod. 20:1).

Eze 20:37

**“I will make you pass under the *shepherd’s* staff.”** A shepherd counted his sheep for different reasons and he would count them by passing them under his staff. The shepherd or herdsman drove the flock or herd through a gate, and someone counted the animals as they went through. In the case of the tithe, every tenth animal passing under the rod would be marked because each tenth newborn animal was given to God as His tithe. If a person was starting out with a small herd or flock, and ten animals were not born to him that year, then the man did not have to tithe that year, which was a way God provided for His people and helped them build their wealth (Lev. 27:30-33).

Ezekiel 20:37 is a picture of God gathering His faithful people together and counting them to make sure none of them is missing, as well as separating them into good and bad. God’s people have sinned and will suffer consequences, but there will be a time in the future when God’s faithful ones will be gathered together and not one will be missing. “The covenant” referred to here is the New Covenant. We learn from other scriptures that when the people are judged (“passed under the staff”) the righteous will be separated from the unrighteous and the unrighteous will not enter into the Promised Land in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom but will be destroyed (Ezek. 20:38; 34:16). Jesus Christ speaks of this time of judgment as the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt 25:31-46).

[For more on the Sheep and Goat Judgment, see commentary on Matt. 25:32. For more on the Millennial Kingdom, Christ’s 1,000-year kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 20:38

**“I will bring them forth out of the land where they live, but they will not enter into the land of Israel.”** The Bible does not tell the fate of those who rebel against God here in Ezekiel 20:38, but it does give the fate of the ungodly in other places. Since the judgment spoken of here is associated with the time that the people of Israel are gathered out of the countries to which they have been scattered, the most likely time this will happen is immediately after Christ fights the Battle of Armageddon, when he sets up the Sheep and Goat Judgment (Matt. 25:32-46). At that time the “sheep” will enter Christ’s kingdom, but the “goats,” those who have rebelled and transgressed, will be thrown into the Lake of Fire (see commentary on Matt. 25:32).

Eze 20:40

**“For on my holy mountain.”** That is, Mount Zion in Israel. When Ezekiel was prophesying, Israel and Judah had been captured by foreign armies and scattered throughout foreign lands. But just as there had been an exodus from Egypt and Israel got its own land, now Ezekiel foretells of another exodus, with the faithful people of Israel leaving their exile and being regathered in Israel and worshiping God on His holy mountain. That regathering is still future.

**“on the highest mountain of Israel.”** The literal Hebrew is difficult to understand: “On the mountain of the height of Israel.” The meaning is the highest mountain of Israel (cf. “on the highest mountain in Israel” NAB). In the Millennial Kingdom, the mountain on which God’s Temple and the city of Jerusalem are located will be the highest mountain in the world. Other verses that say that Mount Zion will be the highest mountain include Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1.

[For more on the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“all the house of Israel, all of them, will serve me in the land.”** Although by Ezekiel’s time the Northern Kingdom of Israel, consisting of the ten northern tribes, had been long before carried away by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:6), the prophecy was that Israel would be regathered and would serve God in the land of Israel.

[For more on the ten lost tribes of Israel being regathered in the Millennial Kingdom, see commentary on Jer. 32:37.]

**“there…there…there.”** When God reestablishes Israel, which will be in the Millennial Kingdom, the Temple will be on Mount Zion and the worship of Yahweh will happen there. There is a clear emphasis in this verse that it will be “there,” on Mount Zion in Israel, that Yahweh will be worshiped. Ezekiel’s prophecy of that fact would be very comforting and encouraging to the people listening to Ezekiel who had been carried as captives to Babylon and places some 600 miles east of Jerusalem.

Eze 20:41

**“I will show my holiness through you.”** All the nations will see that God is holy because of the way He treats Israel.

Eze 20:42

**“lifted up my hand.”** A way of swearing an oath. See commentary on Ezekiel 20:5.

**“I lifted up my hand *and swore* to give to your fathers.”** One of the reasons that there must be a Millennial Kingdom, a future Kingdom of Christ on earth, is that God swore to give the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants. Yet Abraham never owned land in Israel (cf. Acts 7:5). Furthermore, between Israel’s failure to conquer the land under Joshua, and the fact that through much of Israel’s history part or all of the land was controlled by foreigners—the Philistines, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and others—God’s promise that Israel would have the land has not been fulfilled. Yet God’s promise must be fulfilled; and it will be when Jesus Christ comes back to earth, fights the Battle of Armageddon, conquers the earth, and gives the land of Israel back to the Israelites.

Eze 20:43

**“And there you will remember.”** When the Israelites are back in the land of Israel, which will occur at the Resurrection of the Righteous (the First Resurrection), the people will remember how they lived their first life, and if they were sinful and selfish, they will hate that they lived that way.

**“and you will loathe yourselves.”** This is very strong wording considering that it is speaking about people who are saved and alive in the Millennial Kingdom. Many people who are saved and have everlasting life never make the effort to live a truly godly life on earth. In the future Kingdom of Christ there will be a distinct difference between those people who made the effort to live truly godly lives and those people who got saved but continued living selfishly and in sin. The people who have little or no rewards in the Millennial Kingdom will realize why that is, and will be ashamed of their selfish lives.

[For more on shame in the future life, see commentary on 1 John 2:28 and 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on the future Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 20:46

**“brushland.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “the forest of the field,” which seems to refer to the brushland. Although many translations read “forest,” there is no forest in the Negev, which is in the southeast of Israel, and it is doubtful there ever was a forest there. On the other hand, there is brush and small trees. Daniel Block uses the word “brushland” in his translation and it fits the context and geography.[[35]](#footnote-14433)

**“prophesy against the brushland in the Negev.”** Some scholars give reasons why this prophecy applies to Jerusalem and not directly to the Negev.

Eze 20:48

**“it will not be quenched.”** That the fire will not be “quenched” means that people will not be able to put out the fire until it burns out on its own or God puts it out. It does not mean that the fire will burn forever.

**Ezekiel Chapter 21**

Eze 21:2

**“prophesy against the land of Israel.”** Jerusalem was full of pagan worship, and there were many pagan “holy places” in Israel, and God could not hold back the consequences any longer.

Eze 21:3

**“will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked.”** It is a sad reality that when a country experiences the consequences of its sin, such as by war, famine, plague, or natural disasters such as hurricanes, both the righteous and the wicked suffer. God can do some things to lessen the suffering of the righteous, but often there is no way to punish the wicked and protect the righteous when the whole country is caught up in sin. That kind of “universal sin” generally occurs when the leaders of a country enact laws that promote or protect sin. What is promised to the righteous is that on the Day of Judgment, the righteous will be granted everlasting life while the wicked will die in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

Eze 21:5

**“it will not turn back any more.”** Perhaps in the past when God’s sword was drawn against His enemies He had mercy and did not follow through with His threats, but now God specifically says that He will not turn back from what He said would happen. God’s sword would go to work and fulfill its purposes.

Eze 21:6

**“you will groan before their eyes.”** Righteous people are especially affected by the horrific consequences of sin. They often see the consequences coming (cf. Ezek. 21:7) and are appalled and confused by the sin of the leaders and people. So they groan in agony as they watch the destruction of themselves and their beloved country.

Eze 21:7

**“every knee will run with urine.”** Ezekiel is describing a time of intense fear. Although the majority of English versions read something like “every knee will be weak as water,” the Hebrew word, translated as “weak,” is more literally “walk, go, run.” That the knee would “run” with water more likely refers to urine (water is sometimes used euphemistically for urine). Versions that translate this verse as urine include the CSB, CEB, and NIV.

Eze 21:10

**“How can we rejoice in the scepter of my *royal* son? *The sword* condemns every tree..”** The Hebrew is unclear, and there are many tentative possible translations, but none that are generally accepted. The English versions differ widely, as do the commentaries. The REV translation generally follows the idea in the NIV. As it stands, the “trees” that are condemned by Nebuchadnezzar’s sword are the royal family and the rulers, elders, and powerful people in society. Those people are referred by the figure of speech hypocatastasis as “trees” (cf. Luke 3:9).

The “royal son” is the king in the line of David. Because of God’s promise that the throne of David would last forever, many people expected a miraculous deliverance for Jerusalem such as happened in the time of Hezekiah (2 Kings 19:36-37). But the sin of Judah drove God away. David’s throne will continue—it will be continued by the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:32).

[For more on “trees” being people, see commentary on Luke 3:9. For more on the figure of speech hypocatastasis see commentary on Rev. 20:2.]

Eze 21:12

**“it will.”** The text is in the past tense, but it is a prophetic perfect. The destruction is future.

[For more on the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6.]

**“so slap your thighs.”** Slapping the thigh was a sign of grief, frustration, and failure, just as it can be today.

Eze 21:14

**“the sword for the wounded to death.”** The Hebrew is idiomatic and refers to the sword that will attack the people and wound them resulting in death. The sword will strike them twice, yes, three times, as the verse says.

Eze 21:15

**“grasped.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain and the English versions differ widely.

Eze 21:19

**“mark out two roads for the sword of the king of Babylon to come.”** In this context and situation, Ezekiel would have marked out two roads by drawing them on the ground or perhaps on a clay tablet, but the ground seems more likely because it allowed for a much larger map. Ezekiel was part of the Babylonian Captivity, and had been taken from his homeland in Judah to Babylon, close to Nippur (see commentary on Ezek. 1:1). He would not have been able to get to the actual site of the two roads, so God told him to draw them, which almost certainly meant drawing them on the ground or a tablet.

Depending on the detail that the drawing had, the land the road originated from was Babylon. The most likely place where the one road would have divided into two roads and allowed for a choice of two desirable targets—Jerusalem and Ammon (Ezek. 21:20)—would have been Damascus. From Damascus, anyone traveling south has two major routes they can take to continue their journey. They can either take the main eastern road and travel south on it toward Ammon in the Transjordan, or they can take the main road on the west side and continue as if they were going to Egypt or Jerusalem, and continue on to Jerusalem. As we see in Ezekiel 21:22, when Nebuchadnezzar looked at the omens, they pointed to Jerusalem, which means he will take the western road and attack Jerusalem first.

**“make a signpost, make it at the beginning of the road to the city.”** The “city” is Jerusalem, so it seems that Ezekiel, after drawing a roadmap in the dirt, puts up a sign pointing to Jerusalem, thus indicating what city Nebuchadnezzar would attack, which was the city the omen pointed to as well.

Eze 21:20

**“to Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and to Judah.”** Nebuchadnezzar’s army will come from the north and advance toward Judah and Ammon.

Eze 21:21

**“shakes the arrows.”** A form of divination that seems to have included shaking arrows and dropping them and receiving guidance from the way they landed.

**“he consults the teraphim.”** Teraphim were household gods and were seemingly associated with ancestors, so consulting the teraphim seems to be equivalent to asking of one’s ancestors.

[For more on teraphim, see commentary on Gen. 31:19.]

**“looks at the liver.”** A common form of divination in the biblical world, as well as among the Romans, was to kill an animal and look at the liver and/or intestines and receive guidance from them. This practice is still occurring in a few parts of the world today.

Eze 21:22

**“On the right side *of the liver*.”** This seems to be the meaning of the text. Although many versions say something like, “into his right hand,” there is no indication that Nebuchadnezzar actually touched the liver, that was the job of the priests.

**“is the divination *pointing* to Jerusalem.”** The exact situation of looking at the liver is not explained, but we know the liver has lobes, and Nebuchadnezzar is coming from the north and looking south. If the result of the divination was an omen on the right side of the liver, then that would indicate heading toward the right, heading west toward Jerusalem. If the omen had been on the left side of the liver, that would have pointed toward the east, toward Ammon. But the omen pointed toward Jerusalem.

Eze 21:23

**“But to them.”** The Hebrew text is difficult to translate in an understandable way in part due to the subject matter and pronouns. The king of Babylon is coming to attack Jerusalem, “but to them” (the Israelites) this seemed like a false divination because they had sworn an oath of loyalty to Babylon. But the king of Babylon was aware of their iniquity (or “guilt,” the Hebrew word can mean either) and so to him, the country and Jerusalem could be attacked and captured in spite of the oath.

**“it will remind them of their iniquity.”** The fact that Jerusalem is being attacked will remind the Jews of their sin, and the consequences of sin. The Jews would certainly remember the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which occurred because of Israel's sins, and now they are in the same situation: their sin is bringing dire consequences. Many scholars think the “it” should be translated as “he,” which is a legitimate translation of the Hebrew text, but if Nebuchadnezzar reminded Judah of their sin, it was only through his attack and conquest of Judah, not because he said anything to them that reminded them of it. The translation “it” seems more likely.

**“taken captive.”** The Hebrew word is just “taken,” but it is used in some contexts for being taken captive or conquered.

Eze 21:24

**“Because you have brought to mind your iniquity.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “caused your iniquity (or “guilt”) to be remembered.” The sin of the Judeans resulted in the Babylonian attack but did not result in the Judeans repenting. They continued to sin openly so that their sin could not be ignored, so eventually, the consequence of their sin was being conquered by Babylon.

Eze 21:25

**“punishment.”** The Hebrew is more literally “iniquity,” but here it is put by metonymy instead of its consequence, which is punishment. A number of English versions pick up on that idea (e.g., BBE, CEB, CJB, CSB, ESV, JPS, NASB, NET, NIV, NRSV).

Eze 21:26

**“Things will not remain as they are.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “This—not—this!” The meaning is “This new way, not this old way.” The English versions have many different ways of bringing the short and punchy Hebrew phrase into a more understandable English phrase.

Eze 21:27

**“A ruin, a ruin, a ruin.”** The rare threefold repetition emphasizes the totality of the ruin.

**“until he comes whose right it is.”** The Hebrew text can be legitimately read in two different ways. The first way, “whose right it is,” is favored by many translators, especially those who see this as a messianic prophecy (e.g., ASV, BBE, Geneva Bible, KJV, NASB, NET, NJB, NIV, NRSV, RSV). The other way, which refers to its being a rightful judgment, is favored by those translators who are neutral or who do not think this is a messianic prophecy (cf. LSV, “Whose is the judgment.” See also the NLT). Many modern scholars feel the rightful coming judgment is Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Judah. But, given the full context of Scripture foretelling the coming of a Messiah starting as early as Genesis 3:15 and continuing through the Bible with dozens of verses, there is every reason to believe this is a prophecy of the Messiah.

**“and I will give it to him.”** There is a longstanding Christian tradition that this prophecy refers to the Messiah, and there is a recognizable parallel between Ezekiel 21:27 and Genesis 49:10. Recently it has become fashionable to say that this prophecy is about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, but conservative scholars usually reject that. The NET text note on Ezekiel 21:27 says, “Hummel, *Ezekiel*, 2:658, states that ‘very early’ interpreters saw similarity between this verse and Gen 49:10. Early Christian scholars like Jerome interpreted Ezek 21:27 of Jesus Christ, as did the majority of Christian scholars until rather recent times. The phrase ‘until he comes to whom it belongs’ in Gen 49:10 resembles the words here.”

C.F. Keil writes, “The thought is this: ‘nowhere is there rest, nowhere security; all things are in a state of flux till the coming of the great Restorer and Prince of Peace’ (Hengstenberg). …He then, to whom this right belongs, and to whom God will give it, is the Messiah, of whom the prophets from the time of David onwards have prophesied as the founder and restorer of perfect right on earth (cf. Ps. 72; Isa. 9:6; 42:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:17).[[36]](#footnote-17227) Robert Jenson writes, “I lean to the Messianic reading, because of the eschatological rhetoric of the whole poem and because ending merely with Nebuchadnezzar would be a poetically disastrous anticlimax, unlikely in so powerful a poet.[[37]](#footnote-26493)

One compelling argument in favor of Ezekiel 21:27 being a messianic prophecy is that the kingdom of Judah was a ruin, with no king sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem from the time of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem even until today, and there will be no king sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem until Jesus comes back and sits there himself. Thus, understood messianically, this prophecy fits with the history of Judah and also with all the other prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. The true kingdom of Judah with the throne of David was indeed a total ruin after Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest. No king ever sat on the throne of David in Jerusalem again until now, and no one will until Jesus Christ comes and conquers the earth. He will rule from the rebuilt Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2) and will sit on the throne of David (Luke 1:32). But if we make this prophecy about Nebuchadnezzar, it is indeed a “disastrous anticlimax,” as Robert Jenson said. No future hope for Israel would be spoken of or expected, and that would not be like what we read elsewhere in Ezekiel, which, for example, spends nine whole chapters speaking of the future of Israel and Jerusalem on earth (Ezek. 40-48).

Eze 21:29

**“while they.”** In this context, “they” refers to the false prophets who were speaking lies to the people of Ammon (Ammon, not Judah, is the context here).

**“about you...about you...to put you.”** The key to understanding Ezekiel 21:19 is to realize that the context is about the sword, the sword of Babylon. The prophecy seems to be saying that the message of the false prophets about the sword—which would have been that somehow the sword will not come to Ammon—will actually result in the Ammonites being killed.

Eze 21:30

**“Return it to its sheath.”** It seems the context and timing have suddenly and drastically changed. The sword of Yahweh, wielded by Nebuchadnezzar, is to be returned to its sheath, the conquest is over. But Nebuchadnezzar and his army were not innocent in the way they warred against the land and people of Judah. They will return to Babylon and be judged, which indeed they were. They were conquered by Persia, and the Persians let the people of Judah return home and build the Temple again (Ezra 1:1-4).

**Ezekiel Chapter 22**

Eze 22:2

**“the bloody city.”** The Hebrew is literally, “the city of bloods,” with “bloods” being a plural of emphasis. In their greed and avarice, the wicked rulers of Jerusalem had shed much innocent blood.

**“confront her.”** More literally, “cause her to know,” but that would occur by Ezekiel confronting the leaders.

Eze 22:3

**“O city.”** This prophecy of Jeremiah is spoken to Jerusalem, a city, as if it were a person. This is a kind of metonymy, where the city is put for the people in the city. If it were literal, and not figurative, the sentence might read, “The people of a city who shed blood in the midst of it, so that its time of doom is coming, and the people of the city that make idols for themselves that defile them.”

Eze 22:4

**“You have become guilty.”** “You,” i.e., the city of Jerusalem (put for the people of Jerusalem) have become guilty (see commentary on Ezek. 22:3).

**“will make you.”** The Hebrew is a prophetic perfect (“I have made you”) for emphasis, but the event is future (see commentary on Eph. 2:6).

Eze 22:6

**“each uses his power to shed blood.”** The rulers in the city have used their power to gain advantages over people and shed innocent blood to take what the people have. The NLT, an expanded version, has, “Every leader in Israel who lives within your walls is bent on murder” which was in order to take what others have.

Eze 22:7

**“they have wronged the fatherless and the widow.”** The Bible often places widows and orphans in the same context because both of those groups are subject to many different ways of being exploited and many different kinds of oppression (cf. Deut. 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19-21; 26:12-13; Jer. 7:6; 22:3). Sadly, God’s people, the leaders in the city of Jerusalem, are not part of the solution but are themselves a part of the problem.

Eze 22:8

**“You.”** “You,” i.e., the city of Jerusalem (put for the people of Jerusalem) have become guilty (see commentary on Ezek. 22:3).

Eze 22:9

**“In you are men who slander in order to shed blood.”** “In you,” that is, in the city of Jerusalem, which is put by metonymy for the people of Jerusalem (see commentary on Ezek. 22:3). There were people in Jerusalem who slandered others and lied about them in order to have innocent people killed so they could take their possessions and/or land. That kind of thing happened to Naboth, who Ahab and Jezebel murdered just so they could take Naboth’s land (1 Kings 21:1-16).

**“those who have eaten on the mountains.”** That is, within Jerusalem are those who go to the mountain shrines and eat food offered to the idol to establish a communion with the pagan gods.

**“lewdness.”** In this context, the Hebrew word refers to different kinds of sexual immorality.

Eze 22:10

**“In you they have uncovered their fathers’ nakedness.”** “Uncovering your father’s nakedness” is an idiom for having sex with your father’s wife, who may or may not be your mother (Lev. 18:8).

**“humbled her who was unclean in her impurity.”** This is an idiomatic way of speaking of having sex with a woman on her period, which made the man unclean (Lev. 15:24). However, the Hebrew text here uses vocabulary that indicates the men forced themselves on the women, so the sex was closer to rape than consensual sex.

Eze 22:11

**“defiled his daughter-in-law.”** Sex with a daughter-in-law was forbidden (Lev. 18:15; 20:12).

**“another in you has humbled his sister.”** Sex with a sister was forbidden in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 18:6, 9; 20:12). Until the Mosaic Law, while the earth’s population was building, sex with a sister was not forbidden, in fact, early on brothers and sisters and other close relatives were the only ones alive. However, by the time of the Mosaic Law, sex with a close relative was no longer necessary.

Eze 22:12

**“they have taken bribes to shed blood.”** The judges and rulers took bribes to rule against and then execute innocent people for someone else’s advantage. This is premeditated murder, and shows the cruelty and heartlessness of the leaders in Judah. They were indeed deserving of God’s wrath.

**“and have forgotten me.”** The Judeans had not “forgotten” Yahweh, but they ignored and defied Him, which means they paid no attention to His commandments and the Day of Judgment.

Eze 22:16

**“by your own doings.”** The Hebrew is “by yourself,” but it means by what you yourself do. Ezekiel 22:16 highlights the value of the free will decisions that people make. It is in our own power to do what blesses God or do what defiles us in God’s sight.

Eze 22:18

**“the house of Israel has become dross to me.”** This is a graphic metaphor. In the smelting process, the dross is worthless and is thrown away. Apparently, Judah and Jerusalem were so sinful they had become worthless to God. So they were conquered by Babylon and carried away from the Promised Land. There is a limit to the sin that God can tolerate. Sin opens the door for the Adversary to afflict people, and that was clearly the case when it came to Judah.

Eze 22:24

**“tell her.”** Here Judah is referred to in the feminine.

**“nor rained on.”** The form of the Hebrew word translated as “rained” only occurs here in the Hebrew Bible, but “rain” is likely and makes sense in the context. If rain is meant, it is meant both physically and spiritually. There had been little genuine revelation from God or spiritual blessings for a while. Godless people don’t admit it, but sin affects the weather (cf. 1 Kings 17:1; see commentary on Lev. 18:25). The saying is “Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh,” and that is true in a large number of ways, good weather with seasonal rain being one of them.

Eze 22:25

**“they have made her widows many in its midst.”** The result of the false prophecy of the false prophets is that many people died. In this context, because the verse says that the false prophets had made many widows, the indication is that those false prophecies led to war in which many men died. For example, Jeremiah had been telling the people not to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, while the false prophets were saying that God would protect Jerusalem. Even after Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, they said the captivity would not be long. The false prophets fueled the fire of disobedience and rebellion against Babylon which cost many lives.

Eze 22:31

**“Their own way I have brought on their heads.”** It is a consistent theme throughout Scripture that evil people bring evil upon themselves. This can happen in many different ways, and often in multiple ways at the same time. Many verses say that the evil deeds of evil people will eventually come upon their own heads (see commentary on Prov. 1:18).

**Ezekiel Chapter 23**

Eze 23:4

**“Oholah the elder.”** The word elder is literally “greater.” In this case, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, represented by its capital city Samaria, was larger than the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and was first in formal idolatry. The first king, Jeroboam I, set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan. Also, Israel was the first kingdom to be conquered and carried away—by Ezekiel’s time Israel had not existed as a nation for over 100 years.

**“they became mine.”** This is a way of saying that God married the sisters.

**“they gave birth to sons and daughters.”** This proved the marriages had been consummated; there had been a real marriage. Although who the sons and daughters are is not described, that they are mentioned indicates that early on both Israel and Judah grew in size and prospered.

Eze 23:5

**“when she was mine.”** The meaning is, when she was God’s wife.

**“craved.”** The Hebrew word is *ʿagav* (#05689 עָגַב); it is “a rare expression meaning ‘to be driven by luse, by inordinate passion/affection.’”[[38]](#footnote-21801)

**“Officers.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain, but since these men were dressed in purple (or bluish purple), they had to have been men of some standing. The traditional reading, “neighbors,” does not fit. The Assyrians were not neighbors to Israel and furthermore, the Hebrew syntax does not work well. This may well be a title from the Aramaic brought into Hebrew.[[39]](#footnote-17087)

Eze 23:8

**“poured out their whoredom upon her.”** The verb translated as “poured out” is masculine, which then would refer to ejaculation, and the “pouring out” implies a large volume. This is very graphic writing and is part metaphorical and part physical. There is idol worship, which is spiritual adultery, and very often there was ritual physical sex involved in the idol worship as well. Leslie Allen translates it as they were “wantonly ejaculating upon her.”[[40]](#footnote-25223)

Eze 23:10

**“They uncovered her nakedness.”** This phrase is often used for having sexual intercourse (Lev. 20:17, 18, 21), and it has that meaning here, but this verse has a couple different layers of meaning. We cannot forget the idolatry that has been interwoven throughout the whole chapter, and although Israel started by giving herself freely to the Assyrian idols and men, eventually things changed and the Assyrian gods and men became aggressive adversaries (Ezek. 23:9-10). The Assyrian gods showed up more powerfully than Israel’s, and Israel was defeated in battle and carried away captive to Assyria. In that situation, many of the women would have been raped and their “nakedness” forcibly “uncovered,” but beyond that, in this context of the people being carried as captives to Assyria, in many cases their nakedness being “uncovered” would have also included it being “displayed.” Some captives were carried away naked, sometimes even with their hair and/or pubic hair shaved to humiliate them (Isa. 7:20 and 20:4).

**“they killed her with the sword.”** The Assyrians “killed” Israel. They came in and destroyed the cities and carried the people away captive and scattered them, thus putting an end to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. So “Israel” was “killed” by Assyria, but they “seized her sons and her daughters,” the people of Israel, and carried them captive to cities in the Assyrian Empire (cf. 2 Kings 17:6, 23).

Eze 23:14

**“The images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion.”** How images of the Babylonians would have gotten on the wall in Jerusalem is not stated. It could have gone back over a century to when the Babylonians visited Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:12-19). The use of “Chaldeans” instead of Babylonians in this context points to the men being leaders and rulers in Babylon, and perhaps connected with the military as well.[[41]](#footnote-24927)

Eze 23:18

**“uncovered her prostitution.”** An unusual phrase, where her “prostitution” is put by metonymy for the nakedness that led to it. The Hebrew word translated as “uncovered” is repeated twice in the verse. Thus, in practical terms, the phrase is doubled for emphasis. She uncovered her nakedness which allowed for her prostitution.

Eze 23:20

**“whose flesh is like the flesh of donkeys.”** Here “flesh” is being used euphemistically for the penis (see commentary on Ezek. 16:26).

Eze 23:21

**“Thus you.”** The text has been third person, “she,” but now it abruptly changes to second person, “you,” and addresses Judah (“Oholibah”) directly, making for a much more personal rebuke.

**“squeezed.”** This is the reading of the Syriac and Latin, and fits much better than the Masoretic Hebrew which is “in order to.”[[42]](#footnote-15162)

Eze 23:23

**“Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa.”** These were tribes (or people groups) within the Babylonian Empire, east of Israel.

**“all the Assyrians.”** As a nation, the Assyrians had been conquered by Babylon, but as a people group they still existed, and joined the Babylonians.

Eze 23:24

**“weapons.”** The Hebrew word translated as “weapons” is a hapax legomenon (it only occurs here), so while “weapons” makes sense in the context and thus occurs in many English versions, the word may not mean “weapons.”

**“chariots, and wagons.”** The meaning of this is not exactly known. The Hebrew word translated as “wagons” is “wheels,” and so while “wagons” makes sense in the context—they would be used for carrying supplies—it is only a guess; the word “wheels” may refer to something else.

**“they will judge you according to their judgments.”** The meaning of the phrase is that the Babylonians will use their own laws and standards of judgment when they conquer and judge the Judeans. For the rebellious leaders, that judgment was very harsh (cf. 2 Kings 25:7).

Eze 23:25

**“They will cut off your nose and your ears.”** This was a common atrocity committed by Assyrian victors against the victims that had withstood them (and continued into the Babylonian Empire, which had many Assyrians in its army). Captives were often mutilated and tortured and stripped naked and publicly disgraced (Ezek. 23:26; cf. Isa. 20:4).

**“your remnant.”** Daniel Block correctly says that the Hebrew “is difficult.”[[43]](#footnote-12068) The word is used twice in the verse, quite clearly applying to two different things. It refers to what is “behind,” and in Ezekiel 8:16 refers to the “backs” of the men. Perhaps here it refers to people who were left behind (i.e., not carried away) who died by the sword, while later in the verse it seems to refer to the buildings in the city that were left behind and thus not destroyed in the fighting, and so were later burned with fire.

Eze 23:27

**“lift up your eyes to them.”** This is a cultural idiom. A woman would lift up her eyes to her lover in love and respect.

Eze 23:29

**“take away all *the fruit of* your labor.”** The Hebrew text reads, “take away your labor,” referring to what the labor has produced, i.e., the fruit of the labor.

**“completely naked.”** The Hebrew text uses two nouns that both refer to being naked, “naked and bare” (cf. KJV, NASB), but this is almost certainly a hendiadys for emphasis, meaning “completely naked,” and many English versions go that way (or, “stark naked,” “utterly naked,” e.g., CEB, CSB, NAB, NJB, NIV, NLT, Rotherham). Captors and robbers often stripped their victims and left them naked (this is mentioned in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, see commentary on Luke 10:30).

Eze 23:31

**“her cup.”** Here in Ezekiel 23:31, “her cup” represents the “cup,” the “experience” that Israel had, which will now pass to Judah, and they too will be conquered.

[For more on the idiomatic use of “cup,” see commentary on Matthew 26:39.]

Eze 23:33

**“the cup of your sister Samaria.”** So Judah will experience for their idolatry and immorality what the Northern Kingdom of Israel had suffered many years before.

Eze 23:34

**“you will tear at your breasts.”** The phrase is unparalleled in Scripture. While there are verses that speak of remorse for sins committed, nothing is as graphic or ironic as this statement. The scholars disagree on the exact meaning of the vocabulary. Does it refer to “tearing” or “tearing at” the breast, or does it refer to “tearing out” the breast? It seems that “tearing at” the breast is more logical, and could have actually been done to some degree. It is ironic that the very breasts that gave her sexual excitement and pleasure were now so loathed that she tears at them (the New Jerusalem Bible has “lacerate your own breasts). This verse shows how greatly our view of things can change when the circumstances change. For example, Isaiah 2:20 says that in the day of God’s wrath, when money will be worthless and idols will be seen for the affront to God that they are, people will throw their gold and silver idols to the moles and the bats, i.e., in the ground and away from their sight.

Eze 23:37

**“For they have committed adultery.”** The spiritual adultery that the Judeans committed with idols was often accompanied by ritual sex, which sometimes caused pregnancies. In some cases, the children of that adultery were then offered to the pagan gods as human sacrifices, although it seems that sometimes people used their children from their marriages as human sacrifices as well (cf. Jer. 7:31; Jeremiah and Ezekiel were contemporaries).

**“to be passed through *the fire* to their idols as food.”** Part of the concept of offering sacrifices to God and the pagan gods was to share a meal with the god. Thus, usually, part of the sacrifice was burned up, thus “eaten by the god,” part of the sacrifice was eaten by the priests, and part of the sacrifice was eaten by the person doing the offering. Leviticus gives details on many different sacrifices and what was to be done with each sacrifice. The concept of sharing a meal with God (or the god) is why the altar where the sacrifice or incense was burned is called a “table” (cf. Ezek. 41:22; Mal. 1:7, 12; cf. Ezek. 39:20; 44:16). When the priests were ungodly and sinners, like Eli’s sons were, then they took parts of the sacrifice for their personal meals that were not authorized in Leviticus (1 Sam. 2:12-17).

[For more on the altar being called a “table,” see commentary on Mal. 1:7.]

Eze 23:40

**“they sent.”** In this case, the same Hebrew verb form can be read as “you sent” or “they sent.” In this case, the “they sent” fits with the flow of the context best and the second person “you” then starts with the next sentence.

**“you bathed yourself.”** The text becomes very personal as Yahweh now addresses the Judeans personally with “you.” The woman here in Ezekiel does several things to make herself look and feel attractive for her male visitors. She bathes, puts on makeup, puts on jewelry, and sits on an elegant couch with a table prepared before it.

**“painted your eyes.”** The custom of eye makeup, especially for women, is very ancient and lost in ancient history. It likely predates Noah’s flood. One of Job’s daughters was named “Keren-happuch” (Job 42:14), which refers to a container for holding the black powder that women used to paint their eyes, and those containers were often made of animal horn. Based on that, some scholars have suggested that the girl’s name means “horn of eye paint” (for more on eye makeup in the Bible, see commentary on 2 Kings 9:30).

**“adorned yourself with adornments.”** The verb “adorned” and the noun “adornments” are related. It would be similar to saying that a woman “bejeweled herself with jewelry.”

Eze 23:42

**“The sound of a carefree multitude was there with her.”** People today normally associate sexual activity with privacy, but in this case, Judah has invited all kinds of men to what was some kind of orgy. The men from the desert is likely a derogatory term for people from Babylon, across the desert to the northeast.

Eze 23:43

**“Then I said about her.”** The Hebrew text of Ezekiel 23:43 is so disjointed that almost every English translation reads differently. There is no translation that scholars generally agree on. The message seems to be that Judah is so worn out from adultery that it is amazing that pagan gods even pay attention to her.

Eze 23:44

**“But they went in to her just as they go in to a prostitute.”** This is idiomatic for sexual intercourse. The CSB reads, “Yet they had sex with her as one does with a prostitute.” The implication is that the woman was available for sex any time, and the phrase “as they go in to a prostitute” indicates they had sex over and over. The ERV reflects this in their translation and reads that the men went to the women “again and again.”

Eze 23:45

**“because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.”** There have always been women like Oholah and Oholibah who commit adultery and shed blood in various ways, and they will be judged for what they have done. Many Scriptures teach that on Judgment Day people will get what they deserve, good or bad (e.g., Job. 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:8; see commentary on Ps. 62:12).

[For more on rewards in the future and people getting what they deserve, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.”]

Eze 23:46

**“and will hand them over to be terrorized and plundered.”** At that time, the assembly that would terrorize and plunder Judah were the Babylonians and the armies that joined them.

Eze 23:47

**“cut them down.”** The Hebrew text just has “cut,” but the implied meaning is to kill them, thus “cut them down.”

Eze 23:49

**“They will return your lewdness on you.”** Here, “your lewdness” is put by metonymy for the consequences of the lewdness. So the statement could be more completely worded, “they will return the consequences of your lewdness upon you.” That is the meaning of the text.

**“and you will bear the sins of your idols.”** This phrase is also a metonymy, where “the sins of your idols,” is put by metonymy for the consequences of sinning by having idols. Thus, the meaning of the sentence is, “you will bear the consequences of the sin of worshiping your idols.”

**Ezekiel Chapter 24**

Eze 24:2

**“the name of the day.”** That is, write the date.

**“The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this same day.”** There is no way that Ezekiel, a captive in Babylon, could have known that Nebuchadnezzar began his attack on Jerusalem except by revelation from God. This is a great example of the manifestation of holy spirit called “a message of knowledge” (1 Cor. 12:8). God told Ezekiel something that he would not have known for several months—the time it would take to get a message from Jerusalem to where Ezekiel was near Nippur in Babylon.

The phrase “laid siege against” is more literally in Hebrew “leaned near,” but in this context it refers to laying siege or beginning an attack.

Eze 24:4

**“the choice bones.”** In this context, the bones would be expected to have the good meat on them. They would not be bare bones.

Eze 24:6

**“No lot has fallen on it.”** It has not been chosen by lot to be blessed. The people cannot say that Yahweh has chosen Israel.

Eze 24:14

**“nor will I change my mind.”** The Hebrew word translated “change my mind” is *nacham* (#05162 נָחַם), and in this context, it means to change one’s mind and the subsequent course of action (cf. NLT). God sometimes changes His mind in response to what people do, but in this case, the sin of the people was so great that disaster could not be averted.

[For more information on God changing His mind, see commentary on Jer. 18:8.]

Eze 24:17

**“and do not eat food given by people.”** There would commonly be food and drink at the home of the person who died (cf. Jer. 16:7). In this case, Ezekiel’s wife was about to die, but God told Ezekiel not to openly mourn her and not to partake of the food that people brought to comfort the family.

Eze 24:21

**“my sanctuary.”** That is, the Temple.

**“your sons and your daughters whom you have left behind will fall by the sword.”** What an irony! When the Babylonians carried away Ezekiel and the people he was speaking to as captives to Babylon, but left others back in Judah, the exiled captives likely thought of themselves as the unlucky ones. But now we find out that the people who were taken captive to Babylon have the opportunity to live and prosper while the people left back in Judah will suffer in wars and many, perhaps even most, will die.

Eze 24:24

**“When this happens.”** When everything that Jeremiah said and portrayed happens, the people will supposedly know that Yahweh is God, and no doubt some of them did. But we can tell from the behavior of the exiles who returned to Judah (displayed in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Malachi) and from the historical fact that more Jews decided to stay in Babylon rather than return to Judah that most of them were more interested in their sinful desires than in obeying Yahweh.

Sadly, the same is still true today. Most believers do not “seek first the kingdom of God,” but put their own desires and agendas ahead of that.

Eze 24:25

**“strength.”** In this context, their “strength” (some translations read “stronghold”) is the Temple.

**“their glorious joy.”** The Hebrew text read, “the joy of their glory,” but the genitive seems to refer to their glorious joy, which again is a reference to the Temple.

**“the desire of their eyes.”** Again, this refers to the Temple. The immensity of the disaster of losing the Temple is indescribable, and is magnified here by the multiple descriptions of it.

**“that which lifts up their soul.”** This also refers to the Temple. The Temple of Yahweh back in Jerusalem was their strength, joy, desire, and that which inspired them. This fourfold description of the Temple gives us an idea of how much personal joy and inspiration thinking about that glorious Temple back in Jerusalem gave the exiles in Babylon. What an incredibly crushing blow it must have been to them when the news arrived from Judah that it had been burned to the ground. Combined with the knowledge of the loss of their children and relatives by war and famine as described in Lamentations, the news would have been almost unbearable.

Besides being almost unbearable news, that particular news about the Temple and the people in Jerusalem would rock the theology and faith of the people exiled in Babylon. We hear of Christians who experience something tragic and unexpected that “rocks their faith” or even causes them to “lose their faith.” The conquest of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple must have shaken the faith and theology of many Judeans. They had trusted that Yahweh would somehow miraculously protect His Temple. But that was a false theology (cf. Jer. 7:3-8, esp. v. 4). False theology leads to doubt about God and about the truth and reliability of the Bible.

Eze 24:27

**“and they will know that I am Yahweh.”** The destruction of Jerusalem and the resulting destruction and revision of their faith in God would result in a new knowledge of Yahweh. When people believe something about God that turns out to be false, it causes an upheaval and revision of their faith, which is then anchored in a new knowledge of God. In this case, the exiles in Babylon learned a hard lesson that God does not value physical things such as His Temple, above true and humble obedience and worship.

**Ezekiel Chapter 25**

Eze 25:3

**“Aha.”** In this context, “aha” is a general utterance of pleasure and “you deserved this.” The English “aha” is not an exact translation of the Hebrew, but gets the idea across.

**“my sanctuary.”** That is, the Temple in Jerusalem.

Eze 25:4

**“the children of the east.”** The eastern border (if you can call it that—there was no crisp border line) of Ammon was the vast Arabian desert, which was inhabited by many different nomadic Arabian tribes. Ezekiel foretold that these tribes would overrun Ammon, which they did after Nebuchadnezzar and his successors attacked the area and weakened it. But eventually, as Ezekiel had said, Ammon became a place where the camels and flocks of the eastern people grazed.

Eze 25:5

**“Rabbah.”** Rabbah was the capital city of Ammon.

Eze 25:7

**“I will stretch out my hand against you.”** The Hebrew is written in the past tense (“I have stretched out my hand”), for emphasis, which is the idiom referred to as the “prophetic perfect” (see commentary on Eph. 2:6).

Eze 25:8

**“Moab.”** Jeremiah had a long prophecy against Moab (Jer. 48:1-17).

**“Seir.”** In this context, this is another name for Edom.

Eze 25:9

**“I will expose the flank of Moab.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “open the shoulder,” but in this case it refers to exposing the flank of Moab to its enemies such that cities in Moab will be conquered.

Eze 25:13

**“I will stretch out my hand against.”** A prophetic perfect (see Ezek. 25:7).

Eze 25:14

**“Edom.”** The Hebrew text is “they,” but that is a confusing sentence in English because according to English grammar, the “they” would refer to Israel. Other English versions also change the pronoun for clarity (e.g., EXB, GW, NCV, NLT).

**“they will know my vengeance.”** Edom will “know” God’s vengeance. This is the more idiomatic sense of the word “know,” meaning “experience.” Edom will experience God’s vengeance.

Eze 25:15

**“have acted revengefully and have taken vengeance, *yes,* vengeance.”** The root word of vengeance occurs three times, emphasizing the vengeful malice of the Philistines. The first and last times are nouns, the middle occurrence is a verb form.

**“due to.”** The Hebrew is more literally “with,” but in this context it seems that the extreme malice against Israel is “due to” their ancient and perpetual enmity. The NJB reads “because of their long-standing hatred” (cf. CSB, EXB, NCV, NKJV). The CJB reads, “due to their long-standing hatred.”

**“ancient enmity.”** The Hebrew word translated as “ancient” is *ōlam* (#05769 עוֹלָם), and although it is often used for “everlasting,” “perpetual,” or “age-abiding,” it can refer to things that are “ancient” as well. “Ancient” seems to be the meaning here in Ezekiel although it could refer both to “ancient” and “perpetual.” The JPS reads “ancient hatred.” The CEB reads, “old hatreds” (cf. KJV, NKJV, Darby, Douay, Geneva). The CJB reads, “long-standing hatred” (cf. GW).

The ancient people of the Middle East were well-known for having blood feuds that went on for centuries. For example, Joel 3:4-8 speaks of the Philistines’ hatred for Israel, which we can document as far back as the Judges period of Israel (Judges 13:5).

Eze 25:16

**“and destroy the remnant of the *people of the* sea coast.”** The Philistines had not been a powerful nation for a long time, they were just a remnant of the former powerful Philistine nation. But now Ezekiel prophesies that even the remnant of the nation will be destroyed, which came to pass. Ezekiel calls them “the remnant of the sea coast,” where “sea coast” is put by metonymy for the people who live on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

**Ezekiel Chapter 26**

Eze 26:1

**“in the eleventh year.”** This timing is problematic because Ezekiel 33:21 says that Ezekiel learned of the fall of Jerusalem in the twelfth year, not the eleventh, and Ezekiel learned that from a fugitive who came to him and brought the message. But if the eleventh year in Ezekiel 26:1 is correct, then Ezekiel already knew of the destruction of Jerusalem before the messenger came, because his prophecy against Tyre in Ezekiel 26 includes information that Jerusalem had been conquered and was a waste (Ezek. 26:2). But the timing is not impossible if God told Ezekiel about Babylon’s attack of Jerusalem, which began in the 9th year, 10th month, 10th day (2 Kings 25:1). The city was breached in the 11th year, 4th month, 10th day (2 Kings 25:2-3). In the 11th year, 5th month, 7th day the city of Jerusalem was burned, including the Temple (2 Kings 25:8-9). In the 12th year, 10th month, and on the 5th day (Ezek. 33:21).

Eze 26:2

**“she has turned over to me. I will be filled now that she is laid waste.”** The keys to understanding Ezekiel 26:2 include recognizing that Tyre, personified as a person, is speaking about Jerusalem, not just “gates.” Jerusalem was a major 'gateway' for trade that flowed between Egypt, the Middle East, and the Far East. Tyre was envious of the trade that went through Jerusalem and wanted that trade to enrich herself. Now that Jerusalem had been conquered by Babylon, Tyre could exert pressure to route that trade through her and cities under her national umbrella, and thus become “filled,” i.e., enriched.

Eze 26:3

**“will cause many nations to come up against you.”** Tyre did become subservient to Babylon and the many nations that were confederate with it, but it was completely conquered by the Greeks under Alexander the Great.

Eze 26:4

**“They will destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers.”** 'This did not happen during the time of Nebuchadnezzar but it was accomplished by Alexander the Great.

Eze 26:5

**“in the middle of the sea.”** This is accurate. Tyre was built on an island off the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Eze 26:6

**“her daughters.”** This refers to Tyre’s “daughter cities,” i.e., the cities that were on the mainland of Phoenicia which were under the control of Tyre (see commentary on Josh. 15:45). Those small cities did not have the defenses or the military manpower to stand up against Babylon, and then later the Greeks.

Eze 26:11

**“standing-stones.”** This is the most likely meaning of the Hebrew here, which is literally, “standing-stones of your strength.”[[44]](#footnote-30128) Tyre was a pagan nation and likely had many standing-stones representing various gods (cf. CJB). The Hebrew word refers to standing-stones in the other places it is used. However, many scholars believe the Hebrew refers to the large stone pillars that supported the mighty buildings in Tyre.

[For more on standing-stones, see commentary on Gen. 28:18. For more on idols being harmful, see commentary on Deut. 7:5.]

Eze 26:12

**“in the midst of the water.”** Tyre is an island city, so the enemy will push the rubble from the destroyed city into the Mediterranean Sea. The prophet says the destruction of Tyre will be so complete that even the dust from the destruction will be thrown into the sea—this is a hyperbolic statement to emphasize the totality of the destruction, which was completed by the Greeks.

Eze 26:18

**“islands...islands.”** The Hebrew word is the same and it can mean either “coastlands” or “islands.” Since the major subject in the context is Tyre, which is itself an island kingdom, the translation “islands” fits well. The word “islands” refers to the Gentile lands in contrast to the land of Israel, the homeland of the Jews. From Israel looking west, the Gentile lands were far out over the ocean (the Mediterranean Sea), so the word “islands” is applied to them, even though we do not think of the countries west of Israel as islands. The word “islands” is repeated twice for emphasis, something that is not uncommon in the Old Testament.

However, since the Hebrew word translated as “islands” can also mean “coastlands,” some English translations treat the word as if its meaning changes within the verse and translate the Hebrew two different ways (e.g., CSB, CJB, GW, ICB, LEB, NCB, NIV, NLT). While it is possible that the Hebrew word changed meanings in the verse, it seems that since the word has both meanings, then both meanings apply both times the word is used, and the verse simply repeats the word for emphasis. After all, the fall of Tyre would have a huge impact on the Mediterranean world.

Tyre was powerful and influential. As one of the “superpowers” in that part of the Mediterranean Sea, it controlled trading routes and shipping, but it also provided some protection and stability. Tyre was so powerful and well-fortified that even Nebuchadnezzar’s forces could not conquer it—however, Alexander the Great did. So when it fell, there was alarm and uncertainty about what would happen afterward.

Eze 26:19

**“the great waters.”** The “great waters” refers to the Mediterranean Sea, but the statement is hyperbolic because although there may have been huge waves at one time or another that washed over part of the island, the island never sunk under the ocean the way that some Greek cities did. But Tyre did eventually lose its importance and influence, so in one sense it was indeed covered by the sea.

Eze 26:20

**“I will bring you down with those who descend into the pit,”** Tyre is now personified, as if she were a person. The “pit” is used figuratively for the grave in many places in the Bible.

**“you will no longer display your glory.”** The verb is a rare second-person form, not a first-person form as most English versions have it.[[45]](#footnote-28691)

**Ezekiel Chapter 27**

Eze 27:3

**“islands.”** In this context, the word “islands” refers to the Gentile lands in contrast to Israel, the homeland of the Jews. From Israel looking west, the Gentile lands were out in the ocean (the Mediterranean Sea) so the word “islands” is applied to them, even though we do not think of the countries west of Israel as being islands (although some of them were). Tyre was indeed a merchant to Gentile nations as well as to Israel.

Eze 27:6

**“They made your deck from cypress wood from the coasts of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory.”** Scholars disagree on the translation of some of the nautical references in Ezekiel 27. For example, “decks” could be “hull,” and it is doubtful that ivory was used on the deck where people would walk on it. Some translations have “benches,” but that is not what the Hebrew text means. In any case, the boat was well-made and beautiful, and that is the point of the section.

Eze 27:7

**“Elishah.”** The location is debated, but there is some evidence that it was an ancient name for the island of Cyprus.

Eze 27:9

**“repairers of the ship’s seams.”** Ancient ships often leaked, and the seams of the hull often needed to be recaulked.

**“All the ships of the sea with their mariners came alongside you.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “All the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you,” but that does not make sense in English, so the versions usually have something such as “alongside you” or “in your harbor.” Both meanings are possible.

Eze 27:13

**“human beings.”** In this context, the term human beings refers to slaves, and the fact that the text says “human beings” (more literally, “the souls of men)” instead of “slaves” makes the crime more graphic. There was no respect for the person and rights of others.

Eze 27:35

**“islands.”** In this context, the word “islands” refers to the Gentile lands and nations in contrast to Israel, the homeland of the Jews. From Israel looking west, the Gentile lands were out in the ocean (the Mediterranean Sea) so the word “islands” is applied to them, even though we do not think of the countries west of Israel as being islands (although some of them were).

**Ezekiel Chapter 28**

Eze 28:12

**“the king of Tyre.”** The “king of Tyre” is Satan, the Devil. Although this is denied by many scholars, many godly scholars agree that the “king of Tyre” refers to Satan. In his marginal note on Ezekiel 28:12, E. W. Bullinger wrote: “Here we have a supernatural being addressed: he of whom the ‘prince of Tyre’ was only a type; he who was using that ‘prince’ as one of his agents to secure the world-power. He is not a mere ‘man’ as [was] ‘the prince of Tyre.’ His description is superterrestrial, and superhuman, and can refer to no other than Satan himself.”[[46]](#footnote-13402)

The text note in *The Holy Bible: Pilgrim Edition*[[47]](#footnote-22743) reads, “once more the agent king is used as a symbol for a greater personality. From verses 12 to 17, the language is such as to be applicable only to Satan, the arch-enemy of God. Together with Isaiah 14:12, describing the fall of Lucifer from heaven, it forms one of the most important revelations in Scripture regarding the origin and fall of Satan. God did not create a devil. He created a cherub…and placed that cherub in a place of great importance in the Kingdom of God. The description of this cherub is such as to indicate that he was the highest of all *created* beings, although in no sense the equal of God. When this high being sinned, he became Satan, the final example of the corrupting power of sin. The final doom of Satan is foretold in Rev. 20:10.”

J. Vernon McGee wrote, “in back of the king of Tyre is Satan. Ezekiel 28 is one of the few passages in the Word of God that gives us the origin of the devil and of evil.”[[48]](#footnote-20819)

Many scholars recognize that Ezekiel 28:11-19 is about Satan but see him as being portrayed through the arrogant King of Tyre. So, for example, *The Scofield Study Bible* has the following note: “Here in vv. 11-17, the language goes beyond the king of Tyre to Satan, inspirer and unseen ruler of all such pomp and pride as that of Tyre. …The unfallen state of Satan is here described; his fall is written in Isaiah 14. …Moreover, the vision is not of Satan in his own person, but of Satan fulfilling himself through an earthly king who arrogates to himself divine honors so that the prince of Tyre foreshadows the beast (Dan. 7:8; Rev. 19:20).”[[49]](#footnote-11910)

There is every reason to see Satan as the one being written about here, and he is the real King of Tyre. As has been stated, the description of the King here in Ezekiel 28 fits Satan exactly. “You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Ezek. 28:12). “You were in Eden, the garden of God…you were created” (Ezek. 28:13; the human King of Tyre was born, not created). “You were the anointed guardian cherub, and I placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain of God” (Ezek. 28:14). “You were blameless in your ways from the day that you were created until unrighteousness was found in you” (Ezek. 28:15).

God created Satan as a beautiful cherub, but he became lifted up with pride and rebelled against God. But he was cast from his position of authority on God’s holy mountain, and now is an example of how pride goes before destruction.

While it is true that the majority of the people of Ezekiel’s time, and for some time after, did not understand enough about Satan to apply this revelation to him, God’s purpose in writing this was primarily to Jesus Christ and those who would come after him. Jesus knew a lot about Satan, and in large part that was because the Bible was his guide into many of the spiritual realities that he dealt with. Jesus would have seen that this revelation in Ezekiel 28:12-19 was about his arch-enemy, the one who tempted him in the wilderness and tried to turn him against God, and would have had many insights about Satan because of this section in Ezekiel.

It is worth noting that in Daniel 10:13, the demon spirits that were in control of Persia are referred to as “kings,” so it is not unreasonable to refer to Satan as a king.

Eze 28:13

**“You were in Eden, the garden of God.”** The context shows that this garden in Ezekiel 28:13 is not referring to the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve lived in. The Hebrew word “Eden” means “land of bliss,” “happy land,”[[50]](#footnote-16358) “pleasure.”[[51]](#footnote-16578) “Eden” was a name for a pleasurable, blissful place, a “garden of delight” (see commentary on Gen. 2:15), and there was one in heaven in the spiritual world and one on earth in the physical world, just like there is a temple in the spiritual world (Isa. 6:1; Rev. 11:19; 15:5-8) and God had Israel build a temple in our physical world.

The English word “Eden” is a transliterated word from the Hebrew *‘eden* (#05731 עֵ֖דֶן), but the transliteration does not help people understand the meaning of “Eden.” The “Garden of Eden” could well be translated as “Garden of Delight.” It was a delightful place, both in God’s realm (Ezek. 28:13) and also on earth when God made an earthly Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve to enjoy (Gen. 2:8-10). The Garden of Eden in the spirit world is associated with the “holy mountain of God” (Ezek 28:14). It seems likely, given that the garden was associated with the holy mountain, that the garden was on the mountain, but it might have been just closely associated with it. The Garden of Eden on earth was certainly elevated in an area higher than the surrounding territory because water flowed through it and became four rivers, which, of course, flowed downhill (Gen. 2:10). Ugaritic is a close cognate language to Hebrew, and it is noteworthy that in Ugaritic mythology the dwelling place of El (God) was “at the ‘sources of the Two Rivers.”[[52]](#footnote-18473) That myth could have been derived from the earthly Garden of Eden, which had rivers flowing from it (Gen. 2:10), or it could be a picture of what the spiritual world was like, which had God’s holy mountain and garden, and God revealed that in early times to some of His people, and it became immortalized in myth.

The Hebrew word “Eden” was translated in the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, as *paradeisos* (παράδεισος), and the English word “paradise” comes from the Greek. The New Testament was written in Greek, so it uses the word “paradise” (e.g. Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), but if one was reading the New Testament in Hebrew instead of Greek the word would likely be “Eden,” not “Paradise.” Frankly, it would have helped people see the plan of God from Genesis to Revelation if the whole Bible was in one language instead of three (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek).

**“every precious stone adorned you.”** The evidence supports that “heaven” (the spiritual abode of God and spirit beings), although invisible to us humans, is very colorful to the spirit beings. It is logical that the God who made the earth so colorful and enjoyable for us would make the spirit world colorful and enjoyable for the beings who live there. We certainly see beautiful colors in Ezekiel 28:13. The stones that Satan wore before he fell were very colorful, including greens, whites, reds, and deep blues, so those stones and colors exist in the spirit world. Furthermore, the spiritual world of heaven is not flat, but has mountains (Ezek. 28:14, 16; Isa. 14:13).

The stones themselves are mostly tentatively identified. Educated guesses make the list 1) carnelian (red); 2) peridot (pale green); 3) moonstone (whiteish); 4) topaz (likely golden color); 5) onyx (pale white with black, brown or gray stripes); 6) jasper (red, brown, or yellow); 7) lapis lazuli (deep dark blue); 8) unknown (perhaps turquoise or feldspar); 9) unknown (perhaps emerald). 10) gold (some scholars make the gold a 10th stone, but most put the gold with the next phrase, as does the REV).

Eze 28:14

**“the anointed guardian cherub.”** Although the meaning of this phrase is debated by scholars, the Hebrew word translated as “guardian” occurs in Exodus 25:20 in reference to the cherubim “covering” the ark which likely included “covering” in the sense of protecting. A number of modern translations have “guardian” or a related concept (cf. CEB, CSB, ESV, NET, NIV, NLT, NRSV). Satan was likely created with some kind of guarding or ruling role.

**“You were on the holy mountain of God.”** This “holy mountain of God” is almost certainly the “Mountain of Assembly” that is mentioned in Isaiah 14:13, where the top spirit rulers of the world assembled with God at their head. Besides His mountain in heaven, God also has mountains on earth. For example, Mount Sinai is called the mountain of God (Exod. 3:1; 18:5; 24:13).

[For more on the mountain of God, see commentaries on Gen. 17:1 and Isa. 14:13].

**“You have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”** What “the stones of fire” are is unknown. They may have been stones that actually burned with perpetual fire, or they may have been red/yellow/orange stones that gleamed and glistened like fire. Although they could have been for decoration, like the stones worn by Satan before he fell (although those may have had specific meaning too), it seems unlikely that they were “just decoration” with no other meaning. There is a strong relationship between fire and judgment throughout the Bible (e.g.. Lev. 10:1-2; 2 Kings 1:9-12; Dan. 7:9-10; Matt. 3:11; Rev. 20:14). Given that, it seems likely that these stones were a reminder of the seriousness of what took place on the Mountain of God. God’s divine council that met on this “Mount of Assembly” did serious work in ruling the earth. We see an example of that serious work in ruling in Genesis 11 when the people in the land of Shinar decided to build a tower into the heavens. God saw their sinful desire and said to His council, “Come, let’s go down there and confuse their language” (Gen. 11:7), which they did.

That Satan had “walked up and down” (we would say “back and forth”) among those stones of fire shows the authority he had as an anointed cherub. He was one of the spirit beings whose voice was heard in determining what happened in the universe. Amazingly, he was not content with that and wanted to be like the Most High God, meaning he wanted to be the Most High on the mountain.

Eze 28:15

**“until unrighteousness was found in you.”** God created angels and humans with free will. In the case of the Devil, at some point in the ancient past the Devil turned against God and became His enemy, and now is our enemy too.

Free will has to be managed to keep it pointed in the right direction. For that purpose, God created free will—in humans at least, and it clearly seems in angels too—along with other faculties of the mind that work together so that humankind can obey God and be godly. These faculties are no doubt part of what God gave us when He created humankind in His image, and they are a major reason that humankind is different from the animals, who do not have all these faculties. Although psychologists differ on the exact number of faculties of the mind, and exactly how to define them, a common belief is that there are six, and they work in concert with one another: Intuition, Imagination, Perception, Reason, Will, and Memory. So, while our free will allows us to think and do many different things, including profitable and unprofitable things, our reason, intuition, and memory should keep us from doing unprofitable things. Nevertheless, sometimes things like greed cloud our reason and we make unprofitable free will choices. That is what happened to the Devil (and to Adam and Eve).

Eze 28:16

**“you were filled to the core with violence.”** The Hebrew more usually would be “midst” or “middle,” but in this context, the idea is that Satan was completely filled or filled to the core.[[53]](#footnote-19504)

**“you have sinned; therefore I have cast you out of the mountain of God as a defiled thing.”** In this context, “the mountain of God” is the same mountain as is found in Isaiah 14:13, “the Mountain of Assembly,” the mountain that exists in the spirit realm where God meets with His divine council and they rule the world from there. Besides His mountain in heaven, God also has mountains on earth. For example, Mount Sinai is called the Mountain of God (Exod. 3:1; 18:5; 24:13).

It seems apparent from verses such as Ezekiel 28:14, 16, and Isaiah 14:13 that God ruled from a mountain in the spirit world, which we think of as “heaven.” This then is replicated on earth. God’s temple is on top of Mount Zion, which in the future Millennial Kingdom of Christ will be very high (Ezek. 40:2), and in fact will be the highest mountain on earth (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1; Ezek. 20:40). Many pagan gods were believed to rule from mountains as well, for example the Greeks believed that the gods ruled from Mount Olympus, and it was believed by many Canaanites that Baal ruled from Mount Zaphon. This in part explains why pagan gods were often worshiped on mountains. God told Ezekiel to prophesy against the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 6:2) because that was a primary place where the Israelites built their altars and worshiped their pagan gods (Ezek. 6:13).

[For more on the mountain of God, and gods ruling from mountains, see commentaries on Gen. 17:1 and Isa. 14:1.]

Eze 28:18

**“in your unrighteous trade.”** The text is more literally, “the unrighteousness of your trade,” but the phrase means “your unrighteous trade.”

**“you have defiled your holy places.”** The Hebrew word translated as “holy places” can refer to a Temple and its courts, a palace, or anywhere else that is considered holy. There is not enough detail here to know exactly what is being referred to, but we get the idea that Satan has become so sinful and corrupt that he defiles the holy places where he goes.

**“therefore I will bring a fire out of the midst of you.”** In the Hebrew text, this passage is written in the past tense for emphasis, to bring out the fact that this “king’s” future destruction is certain. Writing about a future event as if it had already happened is a Semitic idiom and is referred to as the “prophetic perfect” idiom (see commentary on Eph. 2:6). A more literal translation of the Hebrew is: “therefore I have brought forth a fire from the midst of you; it has devoured you, and I have turned you to ashes on the earth.” Worded literally that way, the text is confusing to most people because the events being referred to are future to Ezekiel (and to some extent are still future to us today). The CEB translation gets the sense of the text well: “Therefore, I will bring fire from your midst. When it has consumed you, I will turn you into dust on the earth in the sight of all who see you.”

**“I will turn you to ashes on the earth.”** The context of Ezekiel 28:18 shows that becoming ashes refers to Satan. It is almost universally believed in Christendom that Satan will burn forever in the Lake of Fire, and that may be true. But “spirit” can be destroyed in the Lake of Fire (cf. Matt. 10:28 where “soul” is destroyed, but soul is a variety of spirit, which explains why the Bible seems to occasionally use them interchangeably). Ezekiel 28:18 seems to say that eventually even the Devil himself will be annihilated in the Lake of Fire.

[For more on the unsaved being annihilated in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Eze 28:19

**“and you will be no more forever.”** Although Ezekiel 28:19 could be saying that the Devil will no longer be important forever, it is more likely that it is saying that after being in Gehenna “for ages and ages” (Rev. 20:10) the Devil will be ultimately annihilated and not exist anymore in any way.

Eze 28:25

**“When I have gathered the house of Israel.”** Many verses prophesy Israel’s return to the land of Israel. Although Israel did return from Babylon, this prophecy will not be fully fulfilled until in the Millennial Kingdom, as is clear from the context.

[For more information on Israel’s return to the Promised Land, see commentary on Jer. 32:37.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 29**

Eze 29:5

**“I will give you for food.”** The Hebrew is written in the past tense, “I have given you for food,” but it is the idiom of the prophetic perfect, putting a future event in the past tense for emphasis (for more on the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6).

**Ezekiel Chapter 30**

Eze 30:3

**“a time of *doom for* the nations.”** This is one of the many prophecies that the great tribulation will be a time of great distress for the earth and the people on it. See commentary on Isaiah 13:9.

Eze 30:13

**“idols.”** The Hebrew text has the word *'eliyl* (#0457 אֱלִיל), more literally “Worthless Ones” or “worthless things,” a sarcastic name for “idols” (see commentary on Hab. 2:18, “worthless things”).

**Ezekiel Chapter 31**

Eze 31:1

**“the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month.”** This is the 11th year, 3rd month, and 1st day of the month of King Jehoiachin’s exile. The dates in Ezekiel are very exact, and are reckoned from the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah (see Ezek. 1:2). The dates are so exact that many scholars believe they can arrive at the year, month, and day BC that these events occurred. So this vision is dated to June 21, 587 BC.[[54]](#footnote-28834)

Eze 31:3

**“the Assyrian.”** Although many modern scholars emend the text and remove the reference to Assyria, there is evidence that the reference to Assyria is original and valid.[[55]](#footnote-13910) God asked who Pharaoh and Egypt were like, and the answer is that they are like Assyria was. So in this section of Ezekiel, God is using the allegory of Assyria, which had been destroyed some years before by the Babylonians, as a comparison and allegory of the current greatness of Egypt but picturing its future fall—it was conquered by Babylon, but to a degree rose again in time.

Eze 31:9

**“trees of Eden that were in the garden of God.”** The Garden of Eden was long gone before Assyria came to be, but God is comparing Assyria, a great tree, to the trees in Eden to make a point about how magnificent Assyria was. In this section of Ezekiel, God is using the allegory of Assyria, which had been destroyed some years before, as a comparison and allegory of Egypt and its future fall—it was conquered by Babylon, but to a degree rose again in time.

Eze 31:11

**“I will even deliver him into the hand of the mighty one of the nations.”** Historically, Egypt was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar.

Eze 31:12

**“will cut him off.”** Ezekiel 31:12 is written in the past tense, which is the idiom called the “prophetic perfect.” Ezekiel sees the destruction of Egypt in a vision, and so he writes as if it was already destroyed, thus describing what he saw in his vision. However, that is confusing to the average reader who does not know the idiom. Some English versions and the REV change the figurative past to a literal future (i.e., “will cut him off” instead of “has cut him off”) which makes the Bible easier to understand.

[For more on the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6.]

**“gone away from his shade”** The Middle East was very hot in the summer, and some places were almost always hot, such as by the Dead Sea. Shade was a very valuable asset, and was understood in the culture to refer to help, support, and longed-for relief from the hot sun. For example, Psalm 121:5 says, “Yahweh is your *protective* shade.” Many verses refer to the value of shade (cf. Judg. 9:15; Job 7:2; Isa. 25:4; 32:2; Ezek. 31:12).

Eze 31:16

**“Sheol.”** Sheol is the state of being dead (see Word Study: “Hades”).

**“the pit.”** The pit is another word for the grave and/or being dead, depending on the context, as can be seen by the way it is used in the Bible.

**“were comforted in the lower parts of the earth.”** This is the figure of speech in which non-human things are spoken of with human characteristics, and it also assigns feelings experienced by the living to things that are dead to make it seem like death can be a blessing. All that becomes obvious because the things that are in Sheol and are “comforted” are trees.

On earth, there are many troubles and many worries about all kinds of different things. But in death all—all those who go down to the pit—are equal. There is no social standing to worry about if you are like a tree of Eden or a little shrub. Also, there is no work or knowledge, so there is “comfort” for the dead in comparison to the worries of life. But in reality, death is death, and like Ecclesiastes says, “there is no work, or planning, or knowledge, or wisdom, in Sheol” (Eccl. 9:10). So in death there are no troubles and no worries. The saying “Rest in peace” is true.

[For more on the figure personification, see commentary on Prov. 1:20. For more on the dead being dead in every way and not alive in any form, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

Eze 31:17

**“those who were his arm.”** This refers to those who were the strength and support of the king.

**Ezekiel Chapter 32**

Eze 32:18

**“send them down.”** This statement reveals the power and necessity of prophets speaking the revelation they received from God. When a prophet receives a revelation and speaks it boldly and with confidence, it has great power to affect the spiritual and physical world (cf. Hos. 6:5).

**“even her and the daughters of the majestic nations.”** The Hebrew text is very confusing, hence the great number of different translations. It has also been suggested by some scholars that this phrase could go with the opening words, such that the verse would read, “Son of man, wail—you and the women of the majestic nations—over the pomp of Egypt.”[[56]](#footnote-24346) In that case, the women would not be part of those consigned to the underworld, but rather would join Ezekiel in wailing. However, most scholars reject that as the original meaning.

**Ezekiel Chapter 33**

Eze 33:2

**“the sons of your people.”** This is literal. Although the message of Ezekiel applied to the women and children too, culturally, Ezekiel would only speak to the men, the heads of the families.

Eze 33:3

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

Eze 33:4

**“shofar.”** The ram’s horn trumpet, not the metal trumpet.

Eze 33:5

**“delivered his soul.”** That is, saved his life from the invading army. This is not speaking of eternal life salvation. Verses like this are examples of “soul” meaning “life.”

Eze 33:6

**“I will require from the watchman’s hand.”** An idiomatic statement meaning that God will hold the watchman accountable for the blood of those he did not warn.

Eze 33:7

**“I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel.”** The message that God gave Ezekiel here in Ezekiel 33:7-16 is the same basic message that God gave in Ezekiel 3:17-21 and Ezekiel 18:21-24. Ezekiel 33:7-16 includes the responsibility of the person called to be a watchman to tell others about the disaster that will come upon those who disobey God. It also includes a warning to people not to believe that past righteousness will cover for current sin, and the encouragement that sin in one’s past will not keep a person from being considered righteous in God’s sight if they repent of their sin and live righteously.

Eze 33:12

**“righteousness.”** In this context, “righteousness” is doing what is right and just to other people and in the sight of God (see commentary on Matt. 5:6).

**“fall by it.”** That is, fall to his death, or die unsaved.

**“live by it.”** This is the “pregnant sense” of “live,” where it refers to staying alive with God’s blessing but more fully refers to living forever. Thus, the primary meaning of “live” here is “live forever.” In the Church Age, believers are “born again,” which is a one-time event of spiritual birth that assures that they will live forever. However, before the Day of Pentecost, in the Old Testament and Gospels, a person had to maintain their trust in God to be assured of being saved.

[For more on Christian salvation, see Appendix 10: “God’s Promise of Salvation.”]

Eze 33:13

**“live, yes, live.”** The Hebrew is the figure of speech polyptoton, which is used for emphasis. Saying the person will “live, yes, live”’ is a very strong affirmation that the person will live, i.e., live forever. The primary meaning of “live” in this context is “live forever,” and similarly, the primary meaning of “die” in this context is “die forever.”

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16. For more on the wicked being annihilated in the Lake of Fire and not living forever in torment, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

Eze 33:14

**“die, yes, die.”** The Hebrew is the figure of speech polyptoton.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16; cf. Gen. 2:17, “you will die, yes, die.”]

Eze 33:15

**“live, yes, live.”** The Hebrew is the figure of speech polyptoton.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

Eze 33:16

**“live, yes, live.”** The Hebrew is the figure of speech polyptoton.

[For more on polyptoton and the way it is translated in the REV, see commentary on Gen. 2:16.]

Eze 33:17

**“the children of your people.”** This is an idiom for “your people.”

Eze 33:20

**“I will judge each one of you according to his ways.”** The teaching that on Judgment Day people will get what they deserve, good or bad, based on what they have done in their life is taught many times in Scripture (e.g., Job. 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Ezek. 33:20; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:8; see commentary on Ps. 62:12).

[For more on rewards in the future and people getting what they deserve, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.”]

Eze 33:21

**“fugitive.”** In this case, a “fugitive from Jerusalem,” meaning one who had escaped death but also escaped the ungodly and dangerous leadership in Jerusalem. This “fugitive” was most likely part of the Babylonian Captivity, but a person whose life was spared and who now could start over in Babylon.

**“defeated.”** Literally, “struck, struck down.” The city had been taken by the enemy.

Eze 33:22

**“in the evening.”** The Bible does not say if this was before or after sunset. If before sunset, then God’s hand had been on Ezekiel on the fourth day of the tenth month, but if after sunset, then God’s hand was on Ezekiel and he could speak on the fifth day of the tenth month, the same day the fugitive arrived. The consistent dating in Ezekiel is evidence for the conclusion that it was after sunset.

**Ezekiel Chapter 34**

Eze 34:13

**“and will bring them into their own land.”** Many verses prophesy Israel’s return to the land of Israel, the Promised Land. Although Israel did return from Babylon, this prophecy will not be fully fulfilled until in the Millennial Kingdom, as is clear from the context.

[For more information on Israel’s return to the Promised Land, see commentary on Jer. 32:37.]

Eze 34:23

**“David.”** Here in Ezekiel 34:23, the Messiah is called “David.” This is the figure of speech antonomasia, “name change,” where a person is called by a name other than his or her own name in order to import characteristics from the other person. Here, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, is called “David” because the reign of David, especially early on, was a glorious time in Israel, and David was a man after God’s own heart. Thus, the literal David was a type of the “David” to come, Jesus Christ, who will save people from their sins and reign over a glorious kingdom. The Messiah is called “David” in Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25, as well as Jeremiah 30:9 and Hosea 3:5. Other examples of antonomasia in the Bible include John the Baptist being called “Elijah” (Mal. 4:5), and Jehu being called “Zimri” (2 Kings 9:31).

We can tell that the name “David” actually refers to the Messiah from the context, which is about the glory of Jesus’ coming kingdom on earth, when Jesus will rule the earth, God will judge evil people, God’s people will no longer be the prey of the strong and ruthless but will be properly shepherded and fed, God will be their God, there will be a new covenant, evil animals will cease and people will be safe and secure, and the weather will be a blessing so crops will grow abundantly (Ezek. 34:25ff).

[For more information on antonomasia, see commentary on Matt. 17:10. For more information on Jesus’ future rule on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 34:24

**“David.”** The Messiah is called “David” by the figure of speech antonomasia (“name change”). See commentary on Ezekiel 34:23.

**“ruler.”** The Hebrew word translated “ruler” is *nasi* (#05387 נָשִׂא or spelled נָשִׂיא *nasiy*). The root meaning refers to being lifted up, and thus it can mean prince, ruler, leader, chief, captain, etc. It can also refer to a rising mist or vapor. In this context or other contexts in which it refers to the Messiah, “ruler” is a good translation because God is the king and the Messiah is His only son and rules under Him and with His authority. As the ruler present and available on earth, the Messiah is the de facto king, and is called the king in Ezekiel 37:24.

Eze 34:25

**“and I will cause evil animals to cease out of the land.”** When Christ conquers the earth and reigns as king, the earth will be restored to an Edenic state and animal nature will revert to the wonderful way it was before Adam and Eve sinned. There will not be any more harmful animals on earth (cf. Isa. 11:6-9).

**Ezekiel Chapter 35**

Eze 35:2

**“Mount Seir.”** Mount Seir is another name for Edom and is identified with Edom in Ezekiel 35:15.

Eze 35:6

**“since you have not hated bloodshed.”** The Edomites did not “hate bloodshed” and thus they did not avoid it. They participated in bloodshed, and so now bloodshed will come upon them.

**Ezekiel Chapter 36**

Eze 36:5

**“utter contempt.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “contempt of soul,” referring to complete or utter contempt.

**“so that its pastureland became plunder.”** The exact meaning of this Hebrew phrase is unclear, and the English versions vary greatly. What is clear is that the nations surrounding Israel were more than happy to take advantage of Israel’s weakness and grab some of Israel’s land for themselves.

Eze 36:7

**“lifted up my hand.”** One way a person swore a solemn oath was to raise his hand and swear. See commentary on Genesis 14:22.

Eze 36:8

**“for they will soon come *home*.”** It is in the Millennial Kingdom, when Christ rules the earth, that this prophecy in Ezekiel 36:8-12 (and also in Ezek. 36:22-38) of the return to Israel will be fully fulfilled. There was a partial fulfillment when the Persians let Israelites return to Israel, and many people did come back to Israel after the Babylonian Captivity, which is the subject of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, historically more Israelites stayed in the areas where they had been scattered than returned home to Israel, and the prophecies of Israel’s abundance that are here in Ezekiel 36 will not be fully fulfilled until Christ rules the earth.

[For more on Israel’s return to their land when Christ rules the earth, see commentary on Jer. 32:37. For more on the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 36:24

**“bring you into your own land.”** Many verses prophesy Israel’s return to the land of Israel, most of which will happen at the first resurrection, the Resurrection of the Righteous (cf. Ezek. 37:12-28).

[For more information on Israel’s return to the Promised Land, see commentary on Jer. 32:37.]

Eze 36:25

**“sprinkle.”** The Hebrew word is normally translated as “throw,” but here “sprinkle” fits better.

Eze 36:26

**“I will put a new spirit inside you.”** Ezekiel 36:26 is very similar to Ezekiel 11:19. Also, it has some things in common with Jeremiah 32:39 (see commentary on Ezek. 11:19 and Jer. 32:39). Also, although “spirit” can have several meanings in this verse, one of them is the gift of holy spirit, which in the Old Testament God placed “upon” people but which in the New Covenant will be “in” people. Jesus Christ understood this and taught it to his apostles at the Last Supper (see John 14:17 and commentary on John 14:17).

Eze 36:27

**“and cause you to walk in my statutes.”** The context of this phrase is the resurrected believers in the Millennial Kingdom, and they will have the gift of holy spirit and will also have the advantage of not having a sin nature that fights with the spirit nature, like Christians do today (cf. Gal. 5:17).

**“and you will keep my ordinances and do them.”** It is clearly implied here, and in other verses as well, that when God pours out the new gift of holy spirit upon people in the future, that it will be with them and help them forever. Jesus certainly saw that in the Scripture (cf. John 14:16, and see commentary on John 14:17).

Eze 36:36

**“rebuilt.”** The Hebrew word is *banah* (#01129 בָּנָה) and it can mean “build” or “rebuild” depending on the context. Here it means “rebuild.” Over the centuries many of the cities of Israel and Judah were destroyed (and here in Ezekiel the primary emphasis is on the cities of Judah that were destroyed by Babylon), but God promises that in the future, which we know will be in the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus Christ rules the earth from Jerusalem, Israel will be repopulated and the cities rebuilt.

[For more on God regathering all the Israelites to Israel, see commentary on Jer. 32:37. For Jesus Christ reigning over all the earth see commentary on Dan. 2:35. For more on the future reign of Jesus Christ over the earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 36:37

**“I will increase them.”** The prophecies of the future Millennial Kingdom include all Israel being filled with people. This will be due in large part to the number of righteous people who will be in the first resurrection, the Resurrection of the Righteous, and also because the natural people allowed into the Kingdom from the Sheep and Goat Judgment will multiply greatly.

[For more on the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.” For more on the Sheep and Goat Judgment, see Matt. 25:31-46 and commentary on Matt. 25:32.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 37**

Eze 37:1

**“plain.”** The Hebrew word is *biqah* (#01237 בִּקְעָה). While most English translations read “valley,” in Hebrew a “valley” can in fact refer to something we would call a “plain.” For example, the “Jezreel Valley” is many miles wide, and we Westerners would call it a “plain.” It does have hills on both sides, but they are many miles apart. The land that Ezekiel was on would have been more like a plain in our minds than our common idea of a valley.

Eze 37:6

**“sinews.”** The Hebrew word is *giyd* (#01517 גִּיד), and the part of the body this refers to is not exactly known. A few translations say “tendons” and some others say “ligaments,” but most say “sinews.” The word “sinew” refers to tough fibrous tissue that connects bone to bone or muscle to bone, and it seems that God is using the term in a general way here since the bones needed sinew of different types to be mobile when they came alive.

Eze 37:12

**“I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves.”** That God is going to raise people from the dead is clearly set forth in a number of verses in the Old Testament and Gospels (cf. Job 19:25-27; Ps. 49:15; 71:20; Isa. 26:19; 66:14; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2, 13; Hos. 13:14; Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31; 14:14; John 5:28-29). Then, after the day of Pentecost, it is set forth again in the Epistles and book of Revelation (Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 42-49, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Rev. 20:4-15).

There will be two resurrections in the future: the first resurrection (the resurrection of the righteous people), and the second resurrection, (the resurrection of the unrighteous people (Dan. 12:2; Luke 14:14; John 5:29, Acts 24:15). These two resurrections will be separated by 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-6, 13). The fact that in this section of Ezekiel God speaks of bringing the resurrected people “into the land of Israel” shows us that the resurrection being portrayed here in Ezekiel is the first resurrection, the “Resurrection of the Righteous.”

Many Christians do not believe in a literal Millennial Kingdom where Christ reigns as king on earth and Israel is restored. but these verses argue strongly that Christ does reign as king on earth and Israel is restored (cf. Ezek. 48:1-29). God keeps His promises, and He promised the Promised Land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God told Abraham that he and his descendants would get the land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:7, 18; 17:8). He told it to Isaac (Gen. 26:3). He told it to Jacob (Gen. 28:13; 35:12; 48:4). Then over and over He told Israel about the promise or that He would give them the land (cf. Exod. 6:4, 8; 12:25; 13:5, 11; Lev. 14:34; 20:24; 23:10; 25:2). The Eternal City described in Revelation 21-22 is not the land of Israel. Some people say that God gave the land he promised to Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, during the reigns of David and Solomon, but when God was speaking with those three men God said he would give the land “to you,” to them, not just their descendants (Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13; and 35:12). God will keep those promises and give the land to them when they are raised from the dead (cf. Ezek. 37:11-14).

[For more on the two resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

Eze 37:21

**“and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land.”** Many verses prophesy Israel’s return to the land of Israel, the Promised Land. Although Israel did return from Babylon, this prophecy will not be fully fulfilled until in the Millennial Kingdom, as is clear from the context.

[For more information on Israel’s return to the Promised Land, see commentary on Jer. 32:37.]

Eze 37:24

**“David.”** This is the figure of speech antonomasia, “name change,” where a person is called by a name other than his or her own name in order to import characteristics from the other person. Here the Messiah is called “David” to highlight that the Messiah would be a lineal descendant of David, which he was through Mary, and also because the reign of David, especially early on, was a glorious time in Israel and the Messiah’s reign on earth will be a glorious time. The Messiah is called “David” in Ezekiel 34:23, 24, and 37:24, 25. We also see antonomasia when John the Baptist is called “Elijah” (Mal. 4:5), and Jehu is called “Zimri” (2 Kings 9:31).

[For more on antonomasia, see commentary on Matt. 17:10. For more on Jesus’ kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“king.”** Here the Messiah is called the “king,” while in other places he is called the “prince” (cf. Ezek. 34:24). While Jesus Christ is a “prince” under his father, God, he will be the de facto king over the people, ruling with God’s authority.

Eze 37:25

**“David my servant.”** This is an antonomasia for the Messiah (see commentary on Ezek. 37:24).

**“ruler.”** The Hebrew word translated “ruler” is *nasi* (#05387 נָשִׂא or spelled נָשִׂיא *nasiy*). The root meaning refers to being lifted up, and thus it can mean prince, ruler, leader, chief, captain, etc. It can also refer to a rising mist or vapor. In this context or other contexts in which it refers to the Messiah, “ruler” is a good translation because God is the king and the Messiah is His only son and rules under Him and with His authority.

**Ezekiel Chapter 38**

Eze 38:1

**“The word of Yahweh came to me.”** Ezekiel 38-39 is one vision (Ezek. 40 starts a different vision) and describes the invasion of Israel by Gog and its hordes, and then the destruction of those armies by Yahweh.

Eze 38:2

**“set your face toward Gog...and prophesy against him.”** Ezekiel 38:1-6 describes a war against Israel that involves enemies from all directions: the north, northwest, northeast, east, and south (see the geographical locations below).

In this context in Ezekiel, Gog is the name (or designation) of a person. For centuries scholars have tried to identify Gog and even what the name “Gog” means, all without success. Most scholars try to identify him as a historical figure, believing Ezekiel was written in post-exilic times, but that is a mistake and, predictably, has not yielded any satisfactory results. The Word of God is “God-breathed” and in this prophecy, God is speaking about the distant future. The content of the prophecy (Ezek. 38-39) shows that this is a prophecy that even now is future, and the most likely candidate for “Gog” is the Antichrist, the one who will attack Israel during the Great Tribulation. In Revelation 20:8, “Gog” is the name of a country or gathering of people.

**“Magog...Meshech, and Tubal.”** These are countries or people groups, not individuals, but exactly which countries are not known (although widely guessed at). It is even possible that the countries were not formed in Ezekiel’s time and may not even be in place today. They are countries during the Great Tribulation. C. F. Keil writes, “These are all summoned by Gog, and gathered together for an attack upon the people of God. This points to a time when their [Israel’s] former foes, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistines, and Syrians, and the old imperial powers, Egypt, Asshur, Babel [Babylon], Javan [Greece], will all have passed away from the stage of history, and the people of God will stand in the centre [sic] of the historical life of the world, and will have spread so widely over the earth, that its foes will only be found on the borders of the civilized world (cf. Rev. 20:8).”[[57]](#footnote-29696)

Although some versions read, “the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal,” the term “Rosh” is much more likely that part of a title, i.e., “chief ruler,” or “chief prince.”

Eze 38:4

**“and I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out with all your army.”** In this prophetic metaphor, Gog and his confederate armies are portrayed as some kind of animal (a crocodile or sea monster has been suggested by scholars, as well as a horse) that has been hooked by God and is being drawn out of his lair to God’s battle. This is a seemingly enigmatic sentence because in the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39, God will destroy Gog and his confederate armies, so if that is the case, why is he turning them, hooking their jaw, and drawing them out to battle? This can be explained from the scope of the whole Bible and the way God consistently uses the idiom of permission throughout the Bible. The actual fact of the situation is that the Devil will draw these enemy armies into the battle (cf. Rev. 16:12-16). God will be working in Israel in the Last Days to show His glory to the world, and that will provoke the Devil and his hordes to attack Israel. The “you” in this sentence is singular, “you,” not “you all.” This indicates Gog’s leadership in this conspiracy.

[For an explanation of the idiom of permission, see commentary on Exod. 4:21.]

Eze 38:5

**“Persia, Cush, and Put.”** These three countries represent the area to the northeast (Persia) and the south (Ethiopia and Libya) of Israel. What in biblical times was the heartland of Persia is now Iran. Cush was ancient Ethiopia, and Put was ancient Libya in North Africa. A confederacy that involved both Persia and North Africa would represent the “whole inhabited world” (Rev. 16:14).

Eze 38:7

**“and you be a guard for them.”** This is in a military context and thus has the implication of the leader being a guard to his gathered forces in the sense that he would lead them to victory. That idea is simplified and clarified in many versions that read something such as “take charge of them” (CJB); “take command of them” (NIV, NLT).

Eze 38:8

**“After many days you will be mustered; in the latter years.”** This phrase is not explicit as to how long a time “many days” is. However, we are now some 2,500 years after Ezekiel wrote, and the event described is still future. The war described occurs in the “latter years,” and will occur during the Great Tribulation.

**“a land that has been restored from the sword.”** Ezek. 38:8 is about the End Times attack on Israel. At the time of Ezekiel, the fact that Israel is said to come to a time when it will be restored from the sword, which in Ezekiel’s time meant the conquest by Babylon and other pagan nations before it, would have been somewhat comforting, even though this prophecy would mean there would be another attack in the future. The phrase “restored from the sword,” means restored from war.

Eze 38:11

**“bars.”** The “bars” were strong wooden beams that were placed behind the doors of the gate so they could not be opened and could withstand pounding from the outside without giving way. Those bars were the origin of the shout “Bar the doors!” when an enemy would approach.

Eze 38:13

**“the young lions.”** The young and powerful leaders. This is the figure of speech hypocatastasis, comparison by implication (see commentary on Rev. 20:2).

**“hordes.”** This is the army, see Ezek. 38:15.

Eze 38:14

**“will you not know it.”** In this context, “know” means more than just “know,” it means to take notice and then do something about it, as we see in the next verse.

Eze 38:19

**“a great shaking in the land of Israel.”** This refers to a great earthquake, and there are several in the book of Revelation. However, given the extent of the destruction that is described here in Ezekiel 38:19-20, the most likely earthquake is the one described in Revelation 16:18. But it could also be that “a great shaking” is a collective description of the effects of all the earthquakes that happen during the Great Tribulation (cf. Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18).

Eze 38:20

**“and the birds...and the animals...and all creeping things...and all the people…and the mountains...and the steep places...and every wall.”** The “and” between each member in the list is the figure of speech polysyndeton, which emphasizes each thing in the list and thus highlights the huge extent of the destruction caused by the earthquake or earthquakes.

[See Word Study: “Syndeton.”]

Eze 38:22

**“great hailstones.”** The Bible mentions great hailstones in Revelation 16:21, but that does not mean this is a prophecy of that event. God has used hailstones to defeat His enemies several times in the past (Cf. Josh. 10:11) and has said He will use them again in the future.

**Ezekiel Chapter 39**

Eze 39:11

**“the east of the sea.”** This is not the Mediterranean, for all of Israel is east of the Mediterranean. This may be the Sea of Galilee (according to the Targum), or it may be the Dead Sea (Keil and Delitzsch; who say north of the Dead Sea, in the Jordan Valley).[[58]](#footnote-13521)

Eze 39:14

**“the invaders.”** The Hebrew text is more literally, “those who were passing through,” but those passing through who are dead on the ground are the invaders.

**“After the end of seven months they will make their search.”** It seems that there will be mass burials going on for seven months (Ezek. 39:12), and then after that, people will be regularly employed to bury others that die or bones that work to the surface of the ground. That is why they have to “search” for the bodies. Some scholars think that these seven months are the time the burials take, and that is reflected in some translations (cf. NAB, NET), but that interpretation seems less likely and is a minority opinion.

Eze 39:17

**“Speak to the birds.”** This is an example of God telling His prophets to speak, that is, to prophesy, which is sometimes important in God bringing His Word to pass (see commentary on Hos. 6:5).

**“of every kind.”** The Hebrew text is literally, “of every wing,” meaning of all the different kinds of birds.

**“Gather yourselves from all around.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “from every side.” The birds and wild animals that were going to assemble and eat the flesh of all the people who died in the Tribulation and Armageddon were the “guests” whom God called to His great sacrifice and feast (cf. Zeph. 1:7; Rev. 19:17-21).

**“in order that you may eat flesh and drink blood.”** In a culture where family ties were strong and family tombs common, to not have anyone bury your dead body was considered a terrible curse. In fact, many people believed (falsely, but it was a very widely held belief) that a proper burial was important for a comfortable existence in the afterlife. Thus, the threat of not being buried but having one’s dead body eaten by animals, birds, and vermin was a horrifying threat of unspeakable loneliness and rejection, both on this earth and in the afterlife (see commentary on Jer. 14:16).

Eze 39:18

**“of rams, of lambs and of male goats, of bulls.”** These animal terms are all referring to people of various ranks and authority. Technically, the figure of speech is called hypocatastasis, a comparison by implication (see commentary on Rev. 20:2).

Eze 39:20

**“You will be filled at my table.”** Here in Ezekiel 39:20, the enemy is metaphorically spoken of as being a sacrifice (Ezek. 39:17, 19), and in the context of the Temple and sacrifices, “my table” refers to the great altar of sacrifice in front of the Temple building (cf. Mal. 1:7, 12; see commentary on Mal. 1:7).

Eze 39:26

**“They will bear their shame.”** Although the Hebrew text has been amended to “forget” in many English versions, based on a belief that the accepted Hebrew text was miscopied, there is every reason to believe that people who lived in sin in this life will be aware of that in the next. There are a number of verses that speak of people being ashamed in the future (cf. Ezek. 16:54, 61; 39:26; 1 John 2:28).

Eze 39:28

**“and have gathered them to their own land.”** Many verses prophesy Israel’s return to the land of Israel, the Promised Land. Although Israel did return from Babylon, this prophecy will not be fully fulfilled until in the Millennial Kingdom, as is clear from the context.

[For more information on Israel’s return to the Promised Land, see commentary on Jer. 32:37.]

**“leave none of them there.”** When God gathers Israel from the nations, He will leave no one behind.

Eze 39:29

**“I will pour out my spirit.”** The Hebrew is in the past tense, “I have poured out my spirit,” and is the prophetic perfect idiom in which a future event is spoken of as being in the past to assure people it will happen. There are many verses that say literally that the spirit will be poured out in the future (cf. Joel 2:28-29).

[For more on the prophetic perfect, see commentary on Eph. 2:6.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 40**

Eze 40:1

**“in the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city *of Jerusalem* was struck down.”** The date of this vision has been calculated by some scholars to be April 573, BC, even perhaps April 28, 573 BC.

**“twenty-fifth year of our captivity.”** Ezekiel 38-39 is one vision, and Ezekiel 40:1 starts another. All of the dates like this one in Ezekiel—“In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down”—are reckoned from the captivity of Jerusalem when King Jehoiachin was taken captive in 597 BC (2 Kings 24:8-17). This date in Ezekiel 40:1 would be 573 BC. When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah during the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1; 2 Chron. 36:5-8) he took “some” of the articles of Yahweh’s Temple to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:7; Dan. 1:2). But when he conquered Judah again after Jehoiakim’s rebellion and installed Jehoiachin, he took “all” Yahweh’s treasures to Babylon (2 Kings 24:13; 2 Chron. 36:10).

This vision is 14 years after the destruction of the Temple, and 20 years after God had shown Ezekiel the evil that was going on at the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 8:1). So just as God showed Ezekiel a vision of why Solomon’s Temple would be destroyed, He now shows Ezekiel a vision of what the Messiah will rebuild in the Millennial Kingdom.

[For more on the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“captivity.”** The Hebrew can also be translated as “exile.” This was the captivity of Judah, when the people were taken captive to Babylon.

**“after the city was struck down.”** That is, after Nebuchadnezzar’s army destroyed Jerusalem and burned it.

**“and he brought me there.”** That is, Ezekiel was brought to the land of Israel in his vision. He could see Jerusalem (Ezek. 40:2), but he was brought to the Temple, which was north of the city of Jerusalem.

Eze 40:2

**“In the visions of God.”** In Ezekiel 40-48, God takes Ezekiel into the future in a vision and shows him what the future kingdom of the Messiah will be like when Jesus rules the earth. The Temple and city of Jerusalem are literal and will be as they are described in these chapters (see commentary on Ezek. 40:5).

[For much more on the Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“a very high mountain.”** This mountain is Mount Zion, where Jerusalem and the Temple will be during the Millennial Kingdom. Mount Zion will indeed be a very high mountain during the Millennial Kingdom. It will be lifted up to be the highest mountain, while other mountains will be lowered in size (cf. Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1; Zech. 14:10).

**“like a city.”** We can see why Ezekiel would look at the Millennial Jerusalem and say it was “like a city.” This new Jerusalem will be a city, but unlike any Ezekiel had ever seen for beauty and brilliance. It will be a very large city by biblical standards; it will be a walled square of about 1.5 miles on each side, with three gates on each side (Ezek. 48:30-35).

**“on the south.”** In the Millennial Kingdom, the Temple will be on the top of Mount Zion and the New Jerusalem will be on the south side of the mountain. That places Jerusalem, where Christ’s kingly throne will be, at the right hand of the Temple where God will live. This fulfills the prophecy in Psalm 110:1 that the king will be at the “right hand” of God. According to biblical custom, compass directions were oriented to the east, and the Temple looked east, so Christ’s throne was “at the right hand” of God.

Eze 40:3

**“there was a man.”** In the early chapters of Ezekiel, there is a supernatural “man” who is actually Yahweh (Ezek. 8:2). However, this “man” is not Yahweh but a supernatural being, most likely an angel. However, God Himself reenters the scene in the form of a man in Ezekiel 43:2 and takes Ezekiel into the inner court of the Temple (Ezek. 43:5) and begins to speak with Ezekiel (Ezek. 43:6).

**“and he stood in the gate.”** That is, the gate of the Millennial Temple. The opening of Ezekiel 40 can be confusing, so the reader must pay close attention. Ezekiel was in captivity in Babylon when God took him in a vision to Israel. He saw the New Jerusalem on the south side of Mount Zion, but the angel was in the gate of the Temple, north of Jerusalem.

Eze 40:4

**“see with your eyes and hear with your ears.”** This is idiomatic for look and listen carefully. God is about to reveal to Ezekiel what the Temple and land of Israel will be like in the Millennial Kingdom, and Ezekiel needed to pay close attention.

Eze 40:5

**“And behold.”** This section of Ezekiel is very difficult for a number of reasons. One is that Ezekiel uses a number of technical architectural words whose exact meanings have been lost so exactly how to translate them is disputed. Also, due to the subject matter, some more common words are used in ways that are accepted but are not often used. Another reason is that this chapter has apparently been subject to a number of copyists’ errors and scholars disagree on how to reestablish the correct meaning. Still another is that Ezekiel is giving an overview as he sees it, and so some details that we would like to have to build a mental picture of the Temple compound, or try to build a model of it, are simply not given.

**“there was a wall all around the outside.”** Ezekiel sees the outer wall around the Temple compound, but the angel does not measure it until he has shown Ezekiel all around the inside of the compound. We learn from Ezekiel 42:15-20 and 45:2 that the wall on each side of the Temple is 500 cubits (about 285 yards or 260 meters; just under 3 football fields), and the Temple compound is a square with 500 cubits on each side.

**“of the house** ***of God*.”** The “house” is the Temple in Ezekiel 40-48. The angel took Ezekiel north of the Millennial City of Jerusalem to the Millennial Temple, which was higher up on Mount Zion (on the top of Mount Zion) than the city of Jerusalem, which was on the south slope of Mount Zion (Ezek. 40:2). The Hebrew text, using jargon commonly used in the Old Testament, simply calls the Temple, “the house,” but that could easily be misunderstood by the modern reader. Many English Bibles simply change “house” to “Temple,” but that loses some of the meaning, and also obscures verses such as Acts 2:2, where the Temple of God is called “the house.” The REV has “house *of God*” for clarity, putting “of God” in italics to show it was added. In this context, the “house” is the entire Temple compound, not just the sanctuary itself. This Temple has a strong wall enclosing the entire Temple compound.

The extremely detailed description of the Temple in Ezekiel tells us that it is a literal building—there will be a physical Temple in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom. Furthermore, there are statements in other prophetic books of the Bible that indicate the Millennial Temple is a literal Temple. For example, Zechariah says that the Messiah will build the Temple of the Lord and be a priest and king (Zech. 6:12-15). Haggai says that when the “desired of the nations comes,” i.e., the Messiah comes, then the glory of the Temple will be more glorious than the glory of Solomon’s Temple (Hag. 2:6-9). The context of Haggai makes it clear he was speaking about a physical temple, not a metaphorical one. Joel 3:18 says there will be a “house of Yahweh” when Christ rules the earth, and that water will flow from it, and that agrees with what Ezekiel and Zechariah say about the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8-9). Isaiah 56:5, speaking of the future Kingdom of Christ on earth, says that eunuchs who did what pleased God will have a memorial “within my Temple and its walls.” Furthermore, the Millennial Temple will be “a house of prayer for all nations” (Isa. 56:7), which makes sense if the temple is literal, but nowhere in the Bible is a group of believers referred to as a “house of prayer.” Micah 4:2 also testifies to there being a Temple of God in the Kingdom of Christ, “Many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh and to the house of the God of Jacob.’” These believers were going to worship at a physical temple; this is not a metaphorical statement. Other verses that speak of a temple being in Israel in the future include Isaiah 60:7.

There has been a long debate among scholars as to whether or not there is a Millennial Temple, and if Ezekiel describes it, or whether the temple described in Ezekiel is just a figure of speech, a metaphor for the Church or for something else. However, the evidence leads to the conclusion that Ezekiel is describing a Millennial Temple. The description is so detailed, taking seven chapters (Ezek. 40-46) that there is no reasonable way that the Temple could be the Christian Church. In the New Testament, the Bible simply states that the Church is the Temple of God, but that is not what Ezekiel does. Almost every part of the Temple is described, and not as the Church, but as a building. If this Temple in Ezekiel is a metaphor for the Church, then who are the doors? Who are the walls? Why are the walls and doors even measured? What could that mean in terms of being people? Furthermore, in the New Testament, believers are said to be priests, but in the Millennial Temple there are priests, but also Levites and other people (Ezek. 44). That makes sense if the Millennial Temple is an actual Temple, but how can the New Testament say the people of the Church are priests, but then imply in Ezekiel that not all of them are? Which believers would get to be priests, which would be Levites, and which would be the people of Israel and “foreigners?” Furthermore, the priests in Ezekiel have priestly duties and wear special clothing, which makes sense if the Temple and priests are literal, but how are we to understand special clothing and special duties applying to the Church? Furthermore, Ezekiel describes sacrifices, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, but if they are not literal what are they? What “sacrifice” that Christians make could be represented by killing animals? The extensive and detailed description of the Temple in Ezekiel is a description appropriate for a physical temple, not a metaphor.

Also, in the Bible, physical things and spiritual realities are measured, but metaphors are not. Things that are measured in cubits include Noah’s ark (Gen. 6); Moses’ Tabernacle (Exod. 25-27); city structures in the Promised Land (Num. 35:5); people (1 Sam. 17:4; 1 Chron. 11:23); Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6); cherubim (1 Kings 6:24); houses (1 Kings 7:2); execution stakes (Esther 5:14); idols (Dan. 3:1); and Ezekiel’s Temple (Ezek. 40). In contrast, the Christian Church is called a temple, but it is never measured or described in detail. The metaphor of “pillars” is used, but “pillar” was a common term for someone who provided support in an organization, and that expression is still used today. But no one in the Church is called a “door,” “table,” “stairs,” etc. The fact that Ezekiel’s Temple is measured in cubits testifies to it being a real structure and not a metaphor.

Also, and very importantly, if the last chapters of Ezekiel are not literal but are some kind of nine-chapter metaphor, then Ezekiel has nine chapters that metaphorically describe the Church with lots of details that do not clarify things but only raise questions, and the Bible has no chapters that tell us what Christ’s Millennial Kingdom will be like. If we say that the closing nine chapters of Ezekiel are not literal, then God has provided us nine chapters that tell us what will not happen in Christ’s 1,000-year reign, but no chapters that tell us what will happen in Christ’s 1,000-year reign. That seems incredibly unlikely. The descriptions of Ezekiel’s Temple and the City of Jerusalem and the land of Israel leave us with some questions, but they do fit into a cogent picture of Christ as king and High Priest in the Millennial Kingdom, and they do fit with the other places in the Bible that speak of the New Jerusalem and the future Temple.

[For more on the Temple and sacrifices, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13. For more on Christ’s Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth”].

**“each *cubit* being a cubit and a handbreadth.”** So the “cubit” that the angel measured with was the long cubit or “royal cubit” of about 21 inches (53.3 cm).

**“the thickness of the wall, one reed, and the height, one reed.”** So the wall around the Temple was about 10.5 feet thick and 10.5 feet high. The height of this wall is the only height given in the description of the Temple,

Eze 40:6

**“the gate that looks toward the east.”** The East Gate was the most important gate in the Temple because the Temple itself had its doors facing east. If the doors and curtains in the Temple were all opened, a person could stand in the innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, and see the sunrise to the east. The day’s new sun, arising in the east, was always a blessing, bringing light and dispelling darkness as it rose. That was analogized to the Messiah, who was called “the Rising Sun from on high” (Luke 1:78), and the “Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. 4:2).

**“and went up its steps.”**As a person entered from outside the Temple compound to the Temple itself, the elevation got higher and higher. There were steps from outside the Temple compound up to the outer gate, then another set of steps from the first courtyard, the “outer” courtyard, up to the “inner gate,” the gate in the inner wall that led into the inner courtyard where the altar of sacrifice was, then there were more steps up to the Temple itself, which had the outer vestibule, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. Thus, the “lower gate” is the gate in the outer wall of the Temple compound (Ezek. 40:19).

Eze 40:7

**“vestibule.”** This has been translated in different ways, but as we see its whole description in Ezekiel 40 we can see that the vestibule was a large covered room at the inner end of the gate complex. It was at the inner end of the gate complex after you passed the guardrooms. Technically a “vestibule” is a passage, hall, or room between the outer door and the interior of a building, in some cases a lobby, but “lobby” would not be correct here. Here it refers to a large room under the roof of the gate just before you enter the outer court of the Temple. In the ancient world, gates tended to be large in order to allow for good defense of the city and they became places of business. It is likely that this large room inside the gate complex would be used for people to meet each other and such things as that. Although the Hebrew has been translated in some versions as “porch” or “portico,” those translations give the wrong impression. The “vestibule” of the gate is a room at the inner end of the gate after passing the three guardrooms on each side of the gate.

Eze 40:8

**“Then he measured the vestibule of the gate.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text has a long addition that probably came about by dittography. As it is in the Hebrew text, it reads, 8“Then he measured the vestibule of the gate, [on the inside it was one rod. 9Then he measured the vestibule of the gate] it was eight cubits...” The words encased by brackets are most likely not in the original text, although they are in some English versions because they are in the Hebrew text. The words are omitted in some Hebrew manuscripts, the Septuagint, the Syriac, and the Vulgate, and in many English versions, including the REV. The extra addition added words to both Ezekiel 40:8 and 40:9.

Eze 40:9

**“eight cubits”** This eight cubits (14 feet; 4.3 meters) is the measurement of the vestibule from front to back. From side to side, it was much larger.

Eze 40:11

**“Then he measured the width of the opening of the gate, ten cubits.”** All three of the outer gates into the Temple compound were the same. The width of the opening was 10 cubits (17 feet, 6 inches; 5.3 meters). The gates were wide enough to let a large number of worshipers into the Temple, after all, this Millennial Temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations (Isa. 56:7; Mark 11:17). Isaiah 2:2 says people will “stream” to Mount Zion, and of course Jerusalem and the Temple that are on Mount Zion. When God is in His Temple in Jerusalem and Christ is reigning as king over the world, the nations will not just “trickle” into Jerusalem, they will come as a river of people. The wide gates will allow all those people access to the Temple.

**“total width of the gate.”** The total width of the gate was 13 cubits (22 feet, 9 inches; c. 22.5 meters). After measuring the width of the opening of the gate, the angel measured the total width of the gate. The Hebrew text uses the term “length,” but in this context, it refers to the total width, not just the width of the opening of the gate. The “length” of the gate from outside to inside is given in Ezekiel 40:15 as 50 cubits (87 feet, 6 inches; 26.6 meters).

Eze 40:12

**“border.”** This seems to be some kind of boundary line. It does not seem to be a wall of any kind, for that would make the rooms much less effective and available. Daniel Block refers to it as a “boundary line.”[[59]](#footnote-18104)

Eze 40:14

**“He also measured the vestibule, 60 cubits.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text is disputed and is likely corrupted. It is possible that the original reading was more like the ESV or NIV. The ESV reads, “He measured also the vestibule, 20 cubits. And around the vestibule of the gateway was the court.” The NIV reads, “He measured along the faces of the projecting walls all around the inside of the gateway—60 cubits.”

The Masoretic Hebrew text reads more like, “He also made side pillars, 60 cubits [105 feet], and the court reached to the posts around the gate.” It is unlikely that the original text read “pillars” or that the measurement of 60 cubits refers to the height of the pillars. It is most likely that a height is not being given here because it would be the only thing in the entire description of the Temple buildings whose height is described. Also, as Daniel Block describes, it would only take a “simple orthographic adjustment” in the Hebrew text for “vestibule” to be miscopied to “pillar.”[[60]](#footnote-23769) Ezekiel 40:14 is likely a description of the vestibule but the measurement is disputed. Furthermore, the measurement of 60 cubits may be correct or it may be corrupted, and the English versions reflect that fact and read differently: “20 cubits” (BBE, ESV, NJB, NRSV, RSV, Rotherham), “six cubits” (NAB). Also, the scholars differ as to exactly what was being measured, which is also reflected in the versions.

Eze 40:15

**“from the front of the gate at the *outside* entrance to the front of the vestibule on the inside *side* of the gate​.”** The Hebrew text of this verse can be confusing, and translations that woodenly follow it, such as the NASB, are confusing as well. Nevertheless, the meaning of the text is quite clear. The total length of the gate, from the front of its outer entrance as people enter the Temple compound, to where the gate ends and people leave the gate and enter the inner court, which is “the front of the vestibule on the inside *side* of the gate,” was 50 cubits (87 feet 6 inches; c. 26.6 meters). A number of English versions translate this quite clearly (cf. CJB, CSB, NAB, NIV, NLT, NRSV, RSV). The words “at the entrance” are a likely guess. The Hebrew word is an architectural term of unknown meaning and it only occurs here in the entire Bible. People in Ezekiel’s day knew what the term meant, but its meaning has been lost in history.

Eze 40:16

**“narrowing inwards.”** The Hebrew can also mean “closed; shuttered,” and some translations have that meaning here (cf. KJV).

**“on the jambs were palm trees.”** Solomon’s Temple also was decorated with palm trees (1 Kings 6:29, 32, 35).

Eze 40:17

**“there were rooms and a pavement​ laid out around the entire court.”** This seems to be the meaning of the Hebrew text. Daniel Block is correct when he writes, “What he [Ezekiel] sees is not entirely clear because he employs technical architectural terms whose meanings are disputed.”[[61]](#footnote-28376) So even though Ezekiel described what he saw, we today do not have complete clarity on what that was. Furthermore, even though some things were described in great detail, every detail of the Temple was not described, so there are things we have to assume or guess at. On the other hand, enough is described that a good representation of this Temple can be drawn and thus is depicted in many commentaries and study Bibles.

What seems clear is that butted up against the outer walls of the Temple compound were 30 rooms. There is less room for these rooms on the west wall than on the other walls because there were rooms for the priests on the west wall, so if there were eight rooms on the north, east, and south walls and six rooms on the west wall that would make 30 rooms. These rooms will likely be used for worshipers who have come to the Temple, much like the porticos that abutted Herod’s Temple and were used by worshipers. Perhaps worshipers will relax, eat, and fellowship in these rooms. “Solomon’s porch” was one of the porticos abutted against the east wall of Herod’s Temple where people went and hung out and fellowshipped together (John 10:23; Acts 5:12).

It also seems clear that covering the floor of the outer courtyard there was a pavement that had two levels, because Ezekiel 40:18 refers to the lower pavement. So the outer courtyard will be paved, not just a dirt floor like in the Tabernacle of Moses.

**“30 rooms.”** In the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will rule the whole world and there will not be any pagan worship, so people will come from all over the world to worship God in this Temple, so it will be a busy place and lots of rooms will be needed for different purposes. Here Ezekiel mentions 30, but we later see there are more than that, but these 30 are against the outer wall of the Temple.

Eze 40:19

**“the width *of the court*.”** The words “of the court” are in the Septuagint and can be supplied from the context even though they are not in the Masoretic Hebrew text.

**“from the front of the lower gate.”** The “lower gate” is the gate in the outer wall of the Temple compound. As a person entered from outside the Temple compound to the Temple itself, the elevation got higher and higher. There were steps from the outside to the outer gate, then another set of steps from the first courtyard, the “outer” courtyard, up to the “inner gate,” the gate in the inner wall that led into the inner courtyard where the altar of sacrifice was, then there were more steps up to the Temple itself with the outer vestibule, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies.

Eze 40:20

**“the gate of the outer court that faced toward the north.”** This is the north gate of the Temple complex.

Eze 40:21

**“guardrooms.”** Guardrooms are mentioned here as well as in Ezekiel 40:29, 33, and 40:36. Why would there be a need for guards or guardrooms in the Millennial Kingdom, a time of great peace and justice and of plentiful amounts of food, with Satan and all his demons locked up in Tartarus? There will still be some mortal natural human beings who remain on the earth after the battle of Armageddon. During the sheep and goat judgment at the start of the Millennial Kingdom, they will have been judged worthy and will live in the kingdom.

These people, and their descendants, will still be mortal and therefore still have a flesh and blood sin nature. This is also why in the book of Revelation, Scripture says the Messiah (Jesus) will shepherd them with a rod of iron. As a result, there will be a need for guards and for guardrooms.

Eze 40:22

**“And people.”** The Hebrew text reads “and they,” but it refers to the worshipers.

**“would go up to it by seven steps.”** As a person entered from outside the Temple compound to the Temple itself, the elevation got higher and higher. There were steps from outside the Temple compound up to the outer gate, then another set of steps from the first courtyard, the “outer” courtyard, up to the “inner gate,” the gate in the inner wall that led into the inner courtyard where the altar of sacrifice was, then there were more steps up to the Temple itself, which had the outer vestibule, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies.

Eze 40:23

**“And the inner court had a *north* gate opposite the *outer* gate on the north, just like the gate on the east *did*.”** From the outside of the Temple compound going in, from the north, east, and south there was an outer gate that led into the Temple compound and then an inner gate opposite the outer gate that led into the inner court where the altar and Temple proper was. So there were six gates in all; three outer gates with three inner gates directly opposite them. There was about 175 feet (c. 53 meters) from each outer gate to its corresponding inner gate.

Eze 40:24

**“there was a gate on the south.”** This is the south gate in the outer wall.

Eze 40:26

**“seven steps going up to it.”** The Temple compound was higher than the ground around it, and as one entered the Temple compound, the courts got higher and higher as one approached the Temple proper where the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were. Thus, we see steps to enter the Temple compound through the outer gate, more steps to enter from the outer courtyard to the inner courtyard, and still more steps to go from the inner courtyard to the Temple itself (see commentary on Ezek. 40:6).

**“was before them.”** This is explaining the same thing that is expressed in Ezekiel 40:22, that “before them” is referring to “in front of the person who just walked up the steps, i.e., that a person walking up the steps to the gate would have the vestibule in front of them. We know that technically the guardrooms on the sides of the gate came before the vestibule, but since the average worshiper would simply pass by them, it was the vestibule where people could meet and that led into the Temple that Ezekiel portrays in his explanation.

Eze 40:27

“**from gate to gate on the south *side*.”** From the south gate of the inner court to the south gate of the Temple was 100 cubits or 175 feet.

Eze 40:28

**“Then he brought me through the south gate to the inner court.”** The “tour” the angel is giving Ezekiel now takes him from the outer court to the inner court. The fact that there are gates to the inner court tells us that it had a wall around it just like there was a wall around the whole Temple compound. So there was an outer wall with gates around the whole Temple compound, and then another wall with gates around the area of the Temple building itself. Inside the inner wall was the inner courtyard with the altar of sacrifice, and then west of that was the Temple proper with the Holy Place and Holy of Holies.

Eze 40:29

**“according to those *same* measurements.”** That is, the measurements of each gate were the same.

Eze 40:30

**“The vestibules all around.”** The vestibules at all the gates on the north, south, and east side were all the same size. There was no gate on the west side of the outer wall or inner wall.

Eze 40:31

**“and its stairway had eight steps.”** The Temple compound was higher than the ground around it, and as one entered the Temple compound, the courts got higher and higher as one approached the Temple proper where the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were. Thus, we see steps to enter the Temple compound through the outer gate, more steps to enter from the outer courtyard to the inner courtyard, and still more steps to go from the inner courtyard to the Temple itself. This was the stairway on the south side from the outer courtyard into the inner courtyard, and it had eight steps.

[For more on the steps into the Temple, see commentary on Ezek. 40:6.]

Eze 40:32

**“and he measured the gate.”** This is the east gate in the inner wall, leading from the outer court into the inner court where the altar was.

Eze 40:34

**“the stairway to it had eight steps.”** The Temple compound was higher than the ground around it, and as one entered the Temple compound, the courts got higher and higher as one approached the Temple proper where the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were. Thus, we see steps to enter the Temple compound through the outer gate, more steps to enter from the outer courtyard to the inner courtyard, and still more steps to go from the inner courtyard to the Temple itself. This was the stairway on the east side from the outer courtyard into the inner courtyard, and it had eight steps.

[For more on the Temple steps, see commentary on Ezek. 40:6.]

Eze 40:35

**“Then he brought me to the north gate.”** This is the north gate of the inner wall, the gate that led from the outer court into the inner court where the altar was.

Eze 40:37

**“the stairway to it had eight steps.”** The Temple compound was higher than the ground around it, and as one entered the Temple compound, the courts got higher and higher as one approached the Temple proper where the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were. Thus, we see steps to enter the Temple compound through the outer gate, more steps to enter from the outer courtyard to the inner courtyard, and still more steps to go from the inner courtyard to the Temple itself. This was the stairway on the north side from the outer courtyard into the inner courtyard, and it had eight steps.

[For more on the Temple steps, see commentary on Ezek. 40:6.]

Eze 40:38

**“by the jambs.”** The Hebrew text reads “jambs,” but many scholars say that does not make sense and say it should be “vestibule.”

**“at the gates.”** These “gates” are the gates that have just been mentioned. They are the inner gates that lead from the outer court to the inner court where the altar of burnt offering is.

**“they washed the burnt offering there.”** Here we see the physical tied to the spiritual. Being physically clean did not necessarily mean being spiritually clean, and vice versa, but here the animals are washed as an act of ritual cleansing before going further into the Temple. It is also possible that they washed the slaughtered pieces of the animal before offering them on the altar; which was prescribed in the Mosaic Law for parts of the sacrifices (Lev. 1:9, 13).

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

Eze 40:39

**“on which to slaughter the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering.”** The slaughter of these animals is not described in detail like it is in Leviticus, so presumably, the animals were slaughtered and sacrificed the way it is prescribed in the Mosaic Law.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

Eze 40:40

**“as one goes up to the entrance of the north gate.”** The platform of the inner court and the Temple proper was higher than the platform of the outer court. The elevation of the platforms got higher as one got closer to the Temple proper and thus to God in the Temple.

Eze 40:42

**“with which the burnt offering and the sacrifice were slaughtered.”** For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezekiel 42:13.

Eze 40:43

**“hooks.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain. “Hooks” seems to be the most likely possibility and that reading is supported by the Aramaic Targum, but the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac say a shelf or projection. The Hebrew word is also dual, which is why some versions say “double hooks.” If the projections are shelves, then they are only a handbreadth wide—about three inches—which does not seem to be wide enough to be functional as a shelf.

Eze 40:44

**“On the outside of the inner gate.”** This wording can be confusing, but it refers to outside the gate on the inner side, toward the Temple, not outside the gate in the outer court. According to our Western way of speaking, we would normally say “inside the inner gate,” but the Hebrew custom is different. In any case, the rooms were on the outside of the gate on the inner side.

**“there were two rooms.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “rooms for the singers,” but that does not seem correct. For one thing, the Bible then goes on to say that the south room is for the priests who are in charge of the Temple, and the north room is for the priests who are in charge of the altar. Neither is for the singers. Furthermore, in this instance the copying error that led to the reading “singers” can be easily explained, as Daniel Block points out, “the reading of the LXX [the Septuagint] makes perfect sense, and the rendering of the MT [Masoretic Hebrew text] is readily explained as a spelling error, a *taw* having been misread as a *resh.*”[[62]](#footnote-13581) (Block also gives other reasons that “singers” is unlikely.) Many scholars agree that “two rooms” is the correct reading, and that reading occurs in many versions (BBE, CEB, DBY, ESV, NAB, NIV, NJB, NLT, RSV).

So we learn that when Ezekiel is taken into the inner court, he sees two rooms, one at the north gate and one at the south gate, which are for the priests who minister there and have charge of the Temple proper and the altar.

**“south gate.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “east gate,” which does not make sense in this context; the Septuagint reads “south gate” which is almost certainly correct.

Eze 40:45

**“keep charge.”** The Hebrew word means to guard, but it can also refer to other kinds of service duties.

**“the house.”** That is, the Temple.

Eze 40:47

**“the altar was in front of the house.”** The altar was east of the Temple. In the biblical culture, maps and directions were oriented to the east, so anything to the east was “in front of” anything west of it. Similarly, anything south of something else was “at the right hand” or to the right side of it. When Jesus rules from his palace which will be on the south side of the Temple (Ezek. 40:2), he will be “at the right hand” of God, who lives in the Temple (Ps. 110:1, 5).

Eze 40:48

**“Then he brought me.”** The angel now begins to give Ezekiel a tour of the Temple proper, which had three main rooms: the vestibule (or lobby) before entering in the Holy Place, then the Holy Place where the Menorah and Bread of the Presence are, then the Holy of Holies. Ezekiel 40:48 should have started a new chapter and been labeled as Ezekiel 41:1, because the information about the Temple proper started with Ezekiel 40:48 and then keeps on going through Ezekiel 41. All those verses should have been one chapter, which would have made understanding this vision of Ezekiel a little easier. When a chapter marking is put in the wrong place it causes confusion, as it well could here.

**“the vestibule of the house.”** The “house” is the Temple. In the Millennial Temple there will be a vestibule, a foyer or lobby, if you will, before one even enters the Holy Place. So to get to God in the Holy of Holies, one must walk up the steps to the Temple, walk through the vestibule, then walk through the Holy Place, and then finally walk into the Holy of Holies.

**“measured each jamb of the vestibule, five cubits on this side and five cubits on that side.”** The door jambs were over 8 feet, 9 inches wide, but that is not excessive for the size of the Temple that they are supporting.

**“14 cubits, and the sidewalls were.”** This phrase apparently got dropped from the Masoretic Hebrew text in the process of copying, but is restored from the Septuagint.

Eze 40:49

**“The vestibule was 20 cubits wide and 12 cubits deep.”** The way this is written can be confusing. In this case, “wide” is the length of the vestibule from side to side, and “deep” is the depth of the vestibule from front to back. The vestibule is wider than it is deep. Many versions read like the ESV: “The length of the vestibule was 20 cubits, and the breadth 12 cubits,” but we must see things as Ezekiel is looking at them, from inside the courtyard to outside the gate. From his perspective, the length (side to side) was 20 cubits while the “breadth” (width; depth) from front to back was 12 cubits.

**“12 cubits.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “11 cubits,” but the Septuagint reads 12, and that is almost certainly correct because the overall measurements of the Temple are given (Ezek. 41:13) and the width needs to be 12 so the numbers come out correctly.

**“ten.”** The “ten” is supplied by the Septuagint. The evidence is that the Masoretic Hebrew text suffered quite a bit in the process of copying this section of Ezekiel, and the Septuagint seems better in many places. Here it seems that the number “ten” was dropped from the Hebrew but remained in the Septuagint.

**“steps led up to it.”** The Temple compound was higher than the ground around it, and as one entered the Temple compound, the courts got higher and higher as one approached the Temple proper where the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were. Thus, we see steps to enter the Temple compound through the outer gate, more steps to enter from the outer courtyard to the inner courtyard, and still more steps to go from the inner courtyard to the Temple itself. This was the stairway from the inner courtyard up to the Temple itself. There was an increasing sense of holiness as one got closer and closer to God in the Holy of Holies.

[For more on the Temple steps, see commentary on Ezek. 40:6.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 41**

Eze 41:1

**“Then he brought me.”** The angel is continuing his tour of the Millennial Temple. He started showing Ezekiel the Temple in Ezekiel 40:48, and this is a continuation of that part of the tour. It would have been easier for Bible students if Ezekiel 41:1 did not start a new chapter, but was marked as 40:50 and continued from there. Actually, the best move would be to have made Ezekiel 40:48 be Ezekiel 41:1 and start the new chapter at that verse.

**“the Holy Place.”** The nave, or main hall, is the Holy Place in the Temple, the main room in which are the menorah, the table with the Bread of the Presence, and the golden altar of incense.

**“width of the jams.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads “tent,” which does not make any sense in this context, which is about the jambs. Furthermore, the building was not just 6 cubits wide, but the jambs were. Many modern versions understand the subject to be the jambs (cf. CSB, ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, NJB, NLT, RSV, TNK). Even if we think that this may be referring back to Moses’ Tabernacle to make some kind of comparison, Moses’ Tabernacle was ten cubits wide, not six. The Septuagint reads “jambs,” and that almost certainly is how the original Hebrew text read also.

Eze 41:2

**“the length of the Holy Place.”** The Hebrew text just reads “its length,” but given the fact that the subject had just been the entrance, that wording is very confusing unless you are already familiar with the Temple structure. Most people are not that familiar with the Temple, so most versions add something that identifies what is being measured, as does the REV. The “Holy Place” is the outer room of the Temple where the menorah, the golden altar of incense, and the Bread of the Presence are. It is sometimes referred to as the “nave,” “outer sanctuary” or “main hall.”

Eze 41:3

**“Then he went into the inner room.”** Here the angel goes into the “inner room,” the Holy of Holies. Note that although he had been bringing Ezekiel along with him (cf. Ezek. 40:17, 24, 28, 32, 35, 48; 41:1), when he enters the Holy of Holies he leaves Ezekiel in the Holy Place. Ezekiel was a priest and so was entitled to go into the Holy Place, but he was not the High Priest and could not go into the Holy of Holies.

Eze 41:4

**“before the *outer* Temple.”** The meaning of this phrase is not clear. It seems to be saying that from God’s position looking out, the Holy of Holies was before the outer rooms of the Temple.

**“This is the Holy of Holies.”** The Holy of Holies is the most inner and most holy room in the Temple, and it is where the cherubim are and where God is said to dwell. This is the Millennial Temple, so there is no ark of the covenant in this Temple.

Eze 41:6

**“with 30 *rooms* in each story.”** So there were 30 sets of rooms stacked three high, for a total of 90 rooms.

Eze 41:7

**“And the side rooms surrounding the house got longer.”** This description is hard to imagine. Admittedly, the Hebrew is somewhat obscure, but what seems to be portrayed is that up against the walls of the “house” (the Temple) are 30 sets of three-story rooms. Each set has three rooms, one on top of the other, and the rooms get longer as they go upward, that is, longer in the direction away from the Temple. Although many scholars see this as very unlikely and amend the text such that it does not say that, scholars that see the rooms widening as they go up, which is certainly what the text seems to say, either see the Temple begin to look like an upside-down pyramid or they say that the Temple building itself gets thinner at the top such that the wider rooms only serve to keep the look of the outside of the Temple as going straight up.

Eze 41:8

**“It’s elevation.”** The meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain. Different scholars assign it different meanings, but given that it is in the context of a foundation, the elevation of the foundation seems a likely explanation. The King James Version reads like that also.

Eze 41:9

**“side rooms of the house.”** The side rooms of the Temple, the “house” is the Temple.

Eze 41:12

**“And the building that was facing the separate area.”** Ezekiel tells us about two things in this verse that have not been mentioned before, the “building” (Hebrew is *binyan*), and the “separate area.” About the “building,” Daniel Block writes: “Only the barest details concerning this nondescript edifice are given: (1) It was located west of the temple building. (2) It was separated from the temple by a *gizra*, “restricted space.” (3) Its walls were 5 cubits thick (about 8.5 ft), like the side chambers. (4) The building was imposing for its size. Internally it measured 90 cubits long by 70 cubits wide (about 150 ft. by 120 ft.), which means that its external dimensions were 100 by 80 cubits, exceeding the area of the temple itself!”[[63]](#footnote-25301)

**“the separate area on the west side *of the Temple*.”** This is the first mention of this separate area just west of the Temple. The Bible does not describe its purpose, but it was between the Temple and the “building” mentioned here.

Eze 41:13

**“So he measured the house.”** Here we learn that the Temple proper including the vestibule, was 175 feet long (53.3 meters).

Eze 41:14

**“also the width of the face of the house.”** So the front of the Temple with its adjoining separate space was also 175 feet.

Eze 41:20

**“the nave.”** The Holy Place, the larger room before the Holy of Holies.

Eze 41:21

**“As for the nave, the doorposts were squared, and as for the front of the Holy *of Holies*.”** Ezekiel is looking into the Temple. He describes the front of the nave, the Holy Place, and then looks inward to the front of the Holy of Holies, which had the same appearance as the front of the Holy Place.

Eze 41:22

**“The “altar” *in the Holy Place*.”** This description is confusing because in the Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple, the “altar” in the Holy Place was the golden altar of incense (Exod. 30:1-10; 1 Chron. 6:49). However, this “altar” is correctly called a table later in the verse, and it is the wooden table on which the Bread of the Presence was placed weekly.

**“three cubits high, and two cubits long; and two cubits wide.”** The phrase, “two cubits wide” was dropped from the Masoretic Hebrew text in the process of copying, but is restored from the Septuagint.

**“its base.”** The Masoretic text reads “length,” but that would be the walls. The Septuagint has “base,” which is evidently correct.

**“This is the table that is before Yahweh.”** The altar was sometimes referred to as a “table” because God got to partake of what was offered on it. In this case, the “table” is the altar of incense inside the Holy Place of the temple.

[For more on the altar being called a table, see commentary on Mal. 1:7.]

Eze 41:23

**“the nave.”** The Holy Place; the room that had the menorah and the Bread of the Presence.

**“the Holy of Holies.”** The Hebrew reads “holy,” (there is no word for “place,” even though that appears in most versions) but that could be confused with the outer room of the Temple. This is referring to the Holy of Holies, and both it and the Holy Place, the outer room, had double doors.

Eze 41:25

**“carved.”** The literal Hebrew is “made,” but they were made on the doors by carving.

Eze 41:26

**“and the beams.”** The Hebrew word translated “beams” in the REV is an architectural term that is not known, and interpretations vary widely. For example, “thresholds” (ASV); “beams” (CEB); “canopies” (CSB); “portals” (DBY); “planks” (KJV); “overhangs” (NIV); “porch roofs” (NJB); “vestibule” (RSV). and “lattices” (TNK).

**Ezekiel Chapter 42**

Eze 42:1

**“the way of the north *gate*.”** That is, the way that led from the inner court to the outer court through the north gate. The angel could have used the east gate or south gate, but used the north gate.

**“*set of* rooms.”** The Hebrew is more literally “room,” but here it is a collective singular.

Eze 42:3

**“a gallery facing a gallery in three stories.”** Exactly how this is structured and looks is debated, but there are 30 sets of three stories of rooms, one on top of the other, for a total of 90 rooms. The purpose of these rooms is not described, but it seems they could be for the priests who minister there.

Eze 42:4

**“on the inside.”** The text is not clear about this. “On the inside” of what? The courtyard? Or the text could be saying “on the inner side” (cf. NRSV).

Eze 42:7

**“And there was a wall *that ran* outside in front of the rooms.”** Although the purpose of this wall in front of the rooms is not stated, it is likely that it screened the rooms from worshipers and gave some privacy to the priests in the rooms.

Eze 42:8

**“For the length of the rooms.”** This is the length of all the rooms, not the length of one room.

Eze 42:10

**“At the beginning of the wall of the court toward the south.”** This is the reading of the Septuagint, which makes good sense and is accepted by many scholars and is in some English versions (cf. NAB, NET, NIV, NLT, RSV). The NRSV put the rooms in the passageway, but not in the wall. The Masoretic Hebrew text became corrupted in copying and reads “In the width of the wall of the court toward the east.” However, it does not seem that the wall would have been wide enough to have rooms in it, but more to the point is that Ezekiel 42:11-12 mentions the rooms to the south, while no other verse mentions rooms that were in the wall, and from the context, the wall ran north-south, so “east” does not seem to fit well either.

Eze 42:12

**“on the east *side*.”** This entrance allowed people to enter the passageway from the east side.

Eze 42:13

**“eat the most holy offerings...the grain offering, and the sin offering, and the guilt offering.”** In the Millennial Kingdom, the Temple and its practices will be restored. There will again be a physical Temple with Jesus as High Priest, and there will be other priests and Levites, and sacrifices and offerings.

The exact reason for the restoration of the Temple system and the sacrifices that go with it is never explained in the Bible, but the text is clear that it is restored (cf. Ezek. 43:18-27; 44:15, 27; 45:17-25; 46:2-24; ). But since Jesus is the one-time offering for sin for all time (Heb. 7:26-27; 9:11-14, 22-28; 10:11-14), it is unclear why the offerings for sin are restored. There will be “natural people” in the Millennial Kingdom, and they will sin and need to be forgiven, but that happens today without Levitical priests and physical sacrifices, so why would those physical sacrifices be reestablished?

Scholars have set forth some theories, such as the sacrifices might be memorial offerings, and that might be the case if the offerings are correctly understood. Until the death and resurrection of Christ, when the Temple and sacrificial system were superseded by the work of Christ, animal sacrifices prefigured the work of Christ and provided a temporary covering for sin. However, it is important to understand that the offerings and sacrifices were never sufficient in and of themselves to take away sin. The sacrifices had to be offered in sincerity of heart and with trust in God to be accepted. That sincerity and trust were represented by the salt of the covenant, which was offered along with every offering (Lev. 2:13), and which was a way of proclaiming, “What I am saying and doing is true and sincere.” In the same way, therefore, it could possibly be in the Millennium that the sacrifices and sin offerings will be a way of demonstrating one’s trust in God that Jesus’ sacrifice could and did take away sin (although salt will be used on at least some of the Millennial sacrifices as well; Ezek. 43:24).

It could be that the sin offerings in the Millennial Kingdom will be a way of restoring the fellowship relationship between the sinner and Jesus Christ. Although today we do not offer a sin offering when we sin, we do have to confess our sin to be cleansed from sin and thus have our relationship with the Lord fully restored. It is important for the restoration of our relationship with God and Jesus that we confess our sin (1 John 1:9). In the Millennial Kingdom, Jesus Christ will be personally present, and the presence and blessings of God abundantly clear all over the earth. If a person sins in those conditions, it seems logical that the Lord would want more from the sinner than simply saying, “I’m sorry,” although that would be necessary also. If a person sinned, having to sacrifice a sin offering would be costly in both time and the cost of the animal, and almost surely make the person think hard about sinning again, and the sacrifice would also point to the value of the completed work of Christ, who saves from sin.

Another possible reason that God is going to restore the system of sacrifices and offerings is that it was the primary way that the priests and Levites had always lived and eaten. As we see in Ezekiel 42:13 and Ezekiel 44:29-31, the priests will eat of the offerings and sacrifices just as they had always done since the Mosaic Law had established the priestly system. So it seems that if God is going to reestablish the Temple, priests, and Levites, which the Bible says He is going to do, then He must either change the way the priests and Levites will be sustained and fed, or reestablish the system of offerings and sacrifices as it had always been. Verses such as Ezekiel 42:13 show us that God is going to reestablish the sacrificial system and that the priests will at least in part live off that system just as they have always done. Thus, the Bible lets us know that one function of the sacrificial system in the Millennial Kingdom will be to sustain the priests and Levites. The priests eating meat in the Millennial Kingdom will not be unusual. People will eat meat in the Millennial Kingdom (Isa. 25:6).

However, although we know that the priests and Levites will be at least sustained in part by the sacrificial system, that does not tell us why God reestablished it in the first place. We know that God says in a number of places, not just in Ezekiel, that there will be a physical Temple in the Millennial Kingdom and Jesus will be the High Priest (cf. Isa. 56:7; Zech. 6:12-15; Ps. 110:4), but since there is no Temple now and people are forgiven and saved, why reestablish the Temple system? The Bible does not tell us, so we can offer logical possibilities, but we do not know for sure.

[For more on the Millennial Temple being a literal temple, see commentary on Ezek. 40:5. For more information about salt being offered with the sacrifices, see commentary on Lev. 2:13. For more information on the sacrifices of wicked people being of no value, see commentary on Amos 5:22. For more information about the natural people being in the Millennial Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 25:32, which is about the “Sheep and Goat Judgment.”]

Eze 42:14

**“they must not go out of the holy place into the outer court.”** The priests who ministered in the Temple and in the inner courtyard were not to go into the outer courtyard with the clothes they ministered in, but were to leave them in the sacred space of the inner courtyard, no doubt in one of the buildings there.

**“the area that is for the people.”** The Hebrew reads more literally, “that which is for the people,” but it is speaking of going out of the inner court into the area of the outer court of the Temple, where all the people are.

Eze 42:15

**“the inner house.”** That is, the Temple building itself, not including the area around it, the outer court. The angel takes Ezekiel through the outer court to exit the Temple complex, but the outer court is not mentioned in Ezekiel 42:15, it is not important in this context. Here, as often, the Temple is called the “house.” It is the house of Yahweh.

**“he brought me out.”** Now the angel takes Ezekiel out of the Temple complex so that the entire Temple complex can be measured, and it is 500 cubits (875 feet; c. 267 meters) on each side.

**“the gate that faced toward the east.”** The east gate was the most important gate in the Temple, the sunrise shone through it.

Eze 42:16

**“He measured on the east side with the measuring reed, 500 cubits.”** The distance on each side of the Temple is 500 royal cubits (about 285 yards or 260 meters), and thus almost 3 football fields long on each side (for more on measurements in the Millennial Kingdom, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8). It is interesting that the angel does not start with the outer wall of the Temple and give its total dimensions at the beginning of the tour. This shows us that what is important is getting an understanding of inside the Temple, where the activity is, and only secondarily understanding exactly how the Temple looks. We also get that idea from the fact that we have no heights of what is in the Temple. With the exception of the height of the outer wall, we do not know the height of any of the inner structures, including the inner Temple itself.

The angel used the measuring rod to measure the outer wall, but the total measurement is given in cubits. The scholars disagree about whether or not the internal measurements of the Temple match the 500 cubits, but we can assume it does, and Daniel Block[[64]](#footnote-30207) shows how that can be done:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Depth of the Eastern exterior gate | 50 cubits |
| Distance between the exterior and inner gates | 100 cubits |
| Depth of the inner Eastern gate | 50 cubits |
| Depth of the inner temple court | 100 cubits |
| Length of the temple with auxiliary structures | 100 cubits |
| Depth of the restricted area at the rear of the temple | 20 cubits |
| Depth of the *binyān* (inclusive of the walls) | 80 cubits |
| Total distance east to west | 500 cubits |

Eze 42:17

**“500 cubits.”** The distance on each side of the Temple is 500 cubits (875 feet; c. 267 meters).

Eze 42:19

**“Then he turned around to the west side.”** The west side was the least important side of the Temple. Unlike the north, east, and south sides, it had no gates leading to it and the back of the Temple faced to the west.

Eze 42:20

**“500 *cubits*.”** The distance on each side of the Temple is 500 cubits (875 feet; c. 267 meters), almost three football fields (900 feet) on each side. In this closing statement about the measurements of the Temple, the text is not interested in repeating all the measurements it had given earlier, but simply repeating that the length and width of the Temple compound were the same, as had been stated earlier. What is important is the closing statement, that the Temple compound had a wall around it to separate the holy areas from the common areas outside the wall.

**Ezekiel Chapter 43**

Eze 43:2

**“the glory of the God of Israel came.”** Ezekiel had been being led around his vision of the future Millennial Temple by a supernatural being, most likely an angel (Ezek. 40:3). Now God Himself returns and takes over and leads Ezekiel just as He had in earlier chapters (cf. Ezek. 8:2). God is surrounded by His glory. In visions like this, God is not separate from His glory as if the glory could be there without Him. God is surrounded by glory (cf. Ezek. 1:26-28). God and His glory had left the Temple and Jerusalem due to the sin of the people and gone east (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18; 11:23), now in this vision of the future Millennial Temple, God returns from the east.

[For more on the travels of the glory of God, see commentary on Ezek. 9:3. For more on the glory of Yahweh, see commentary on Ezek. 1:28].

**“sound.”** The Hebrew word translated “sound” in the REV can be either “sound” or “voice” (cf. Gen. 3:8). Here, “sound” is the better translation. Ezekiel heard the sound of God coming. The coming of the glory of God, which surrounded God, was the coming of God in his glory. The sound that he heard now was basically the same as what he heard when God appeared to him the first time (Ezek. 1:24), it was the sound made by the quickly beating wings of the cherubim.

Eze 43:3

**“when he came to destroy the city.”** The Hebrew text was apparently corrupted from “he” to “I,” and this is explained in many commentaries. Ezekiel never came to destroy the city, destroying spirits did (cf. Ezek. 9:1-11).

**“by the Chebar Canal.”** Ezekiel was by the Chebar canal when he received his early visions (Ezek. 1:1).

Eze 43:4

**“the glory of Yahweh.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 43:2.

Eze 43:5

**“the Spirit.”** This likely refers to God via the power of His spirit (cf. Ezek. 2:2), however, it could also refer to the angel who was taking Ezekiel around the Temple.

**“inner court, and behold, the glory of Yahweh filled the house.”** The Spirit took Ezekiel into the inner court of the Temple, from which he could see into the Temple proper, into the vestibule, then the Holy Place, then the Holy of Holies, that is, if the double doors of the Holy Place and Holy of Holies were open. Once God was in the Temple, His glory filled the entire Temple. The glory of Yahweh had left the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Ezekiel 9:3. Now that Israel’s sin has been dealt with, in the Millennial Temple the glory of God returns.

Eze 43:6

**“I heard someone speaking to me out of the house.”** We learn from Ezekiel 43:7-8 that this “someone” is God Almighty. Here He speaks person-to-person with Ezekiel. God would have been speaking from the Holy of Holies out to Ezekiel in the courtyard.

Eze 43:7

**“place of my throne.”** The Millennial Temple will not have an ark of the covenant (see commentary on Jer. 3:16). Furthermore, Jerusalem itself will be the throne of God (Jer. 3:17).

**“the dead bodies of their kings at their shrines.”** This enigmatic line is irony, and the “dead bodies of their kings” are the destroyed idols who the people worshiped and obeyed more than Yahweh. They made idols at the high places and treated them like their kings, but those “kings” will be destroyed and be just the broken bodies of statues of idols.[[65]](#footnote-13960) There are scholars who think that the kings of Judah were buried close enough to the Temple to defile it, but there is no evidence that that ever happened. Even more evidence that the “dead bodies” are the “bodies” (statues) of idol gods is that Ezekiel 43:9 says the Israelites need to put “the dead bodies of their kings” far away from God if He is going to dwell in Jerusalem, but there is no requirement in the law that the dead bodies of ungodly people need to be moved away in order to get God’s blessing. But in contrast, the bodies of the lifeless idols did need to be removed and destroyed.

The Hebrew word translated “shrines” is *bamot*, which referred to a place that was leveled and built up and on which were placed various idols and objects of worship. Many of the towns had such shrines (see commentary on Num. 33:52).

Eze 43:9

**“dead bodies of their kings.”** The lifeless statues of their pagan gods, who they treated as kings (see commentary on Ezek. 43:7).

Eze 43:10

**“describe the house to the house of Israel, so that they may be ashamed of their iniquities.”** Here God tells Ezekiel to describe to the people of Israel what he is seeing in the vision with the hope that they “may” be personally convicted of their sin and change (but they did not change). Periodically, in Ezekiel’s description of the future Temple and the land of Israel, God breaks in with a message to the people of Ezekiel’s time, as He does here in Ezekiel 43:10 (cf. Ezek. 43:10-11; 44:6-16; 45:9-10). This shows us that the vision of the future Temple and the land of Israel is not just for head knowledge and intellectual stimulation, but to give hope, excitement, and clarity about the future to the faithful and a stern warning to the unfaithful that their lives will be judged and there will be consequences for their sin and indifference toward God.

The phrase, “describe the ‘house’ [i.e., the Temple] to the ‘house’ [i.e., the community] of Israel” is a beautiful antanaclasis, which is a figure of speech in which a word is used twice in close proximity but has two different meanings.

[See Word Study: “Antanaclasis.”]

Eze 43:11

**“and if they become ashamed.”** The scholars differ on how to translate Ezekiel 43:11. The word “if” is in the Hebrew text, but it does not always have to be translated as an “if.” However, it seems that God is not telling Ezekiel whether or not Israel will believe and repent. From this, it seems that Ezekiel was to tell the community of Israel some things about the Temple, and if that convinced them and they repented of their sin, then Ezekiel was to tell them more about the future Temple.

Eze 43:12

**“the house.”** That is, the Temple, the “house of Yahweh.”

**“the whole area on the top of the mountain—all around it—will be most holy.”** In the Millennial Kingdom, the Temple will be on the very top of Mount Zion, and the whole area around the Temple will be most holy.

Eze 43:13

**“These are the measures of the altar.”** The Millennial Temple has sacrifices that are burned on the altar just as occurred in the Tabernacle and Temple.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

**“the cubit is a cubit and a handbreadth.”** The standard cubit was about 18 inches (46 cm) and the “long” or “royal” cubit was about 21 inches (53.5 cm). A “span” was about 9 inches (23 cm). The angel had been using the royal cubit to measure the whole Temple and Temple compound (Ezek. 40:5).

**“the *height of the* bottom is to be a cubit.”** The altar was bigger at the bottom than at the top. It went up by stages, and the bottom was the largest part. The bottom of the altar stuck out one cubit (21 inches) beyond the walls of the altar, and thus looked like a step, but of course, going nowhere. The extra width of 21 inches at the bottom could have provided some stability to the walls of the altar, which were seven feet high.

Eze 43:14

**“From the bottom on the ground to the lower ledge is to be two cubits.”** Ezekiel 43:14 gives us a better picture of how the altar goes up in stages, with each stage being smaller than the one below it. The base at ground level was the largest, then the lower part (the lesser ledge) was above that then the “greater ledge,” the upper part, was above that.

Eze 43:16

**“12 cubits long by 12 wide, square in the four sides of it.”** The altar hearth on which the sacrifices will be burned will be a square that will be 21 feet by 21 feet (c. 6.4 meters).

Eze 43:17

**“and its steps will face to the east.”** It seems that the altar in the Millennial Temple will be accessed by steps, unlike the Tabernacle of Moses that had a ramp. Steps were forbidden for the Tabernacle of Moses (Exod. 20:26). The steps will be on the east side of the altar. It has also been suggested by some scholars that the Millennial Temple will have a ramp but that here in Ezekiel the way up to the top of the altar is called “steps” even though it will be a ramp.

Eze 43:18

**“These are the ordinances concerning the altar on the day it is built.”** After the altar is built, it is to be cleansed and sanctified for seven days before it goes into regular use. There will be a special cleansing and atonement on the first day, and the next six days the sacrifices on it will always be the same.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

Eze 43:19

**“the Levitical priests.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads, “the priests the Levites,” and this phrase is correct since every priest was also a Levite, but it can be confusing so many versions and commentaries read “Levitical priests,” as does the REV. We know this is speaking of priests and not just Levites because Zadok was a priest so his descendants are priests.

[For more on the Levitical priests, see commentary on 2 Chron. 30:27.]

**“a young bull for a sin offering.”** The exact reasons for the sacrifices and offerings in the Millennial Temple are not known but there are some likely reasons for them (see commentary on Ezek. 42:13).

Eze 43:20

**“and make atonement for it.”** Before the altar could be regularly used for sacrifice it had to be cleansed and made holy. This was also done for the altar in Moses’ Tabernacle (cf. Lev. 16:18).

Eze 43:21

**“the house.”** The “house” is the Temple. The body of the sin offering was to be burned in an appointed place that was associated with the Temple (all sacrifices and offerings were done in connection with the Temple), but outside of the Temple compound.

**“outside of the holy place.”** Although the Hebrew word translated “holy place” can refer to different holy places or things, in this context, the “holy place” (or “sanctuary”) is the entire Temple compound (cf. Lev. 12:4; 19:30; 21:12; Num. 3:38; 18:1; Ezek. 45:4). In many cases, the bodies of animals that were sacrificed were burned on an altar outside the Temple. Students of Scripture are aware that the Tabernacle and Temple had two altars, which were the golden altar of incense inside the Holy Place (Exod. 30:1-10; 37:25-28) and the large altar of sacrifice in the courtyard of the Tabernacle/Temple (Exod. 27:1-8; 38:1-7). However, there was a third altar associated with the Tabernacle and Temple that is not at all well-known. That altar was “outside of the camp,” that is, it was outside of the area of the Tabernacle/Temple, and it was where things that were often considered unclean were burned (cf. Exod. 29:14; Lev. 4:12, 21; 8:17; 9:11; 16:27). This “altar” (it is called an altar in Heb. 13:10) was not described in detail in the descriptions of the Tabernacle or Temple, so it is not well-known, but it is the place to the east of the Tabernacle/Temple where the bodies of the sin offering, and some other things as well, were burned.

[For more on this third altar and especially how it relates to Jesus’ sacrifice and death on the cross, see commentary on Heb. 13:10.]

Eze 43:22

**“On the second day.”** The offerings to initially cleanse and sanctify the altar were the same on days two through seven (Ezek. 43:22-26), then the altar was put into regular use.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

Eze 43:26

**“dedicate it for divine service.”** The Hebrew text uses the idiom “fill its hands,” but that idiom was commonly used in the Bible for divine ordination for service to God (cf. Exod. 28:41; 29:9, 33; Lev. 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num. 3:3).

Eze 43:27

**“your burnt offerings.”** The “your” is plural, meaning the offerings of the people of Israel.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 44**

Eze 44:3

**“the ruler.”** This will be Jesus Christ, the ruler over the Millennial Kingdom. He will be both ruler and High Priest. There is no one else qualified to be the ruler. The Hebrew word translated “ruler” is *nasi* (#05387 נָשִׂא or spelled נָשִׂיא *nasiy*). The root meaning refers to being lifted up, and thus it can mean prince, ruler, leader, chief, captain, etc.; the context determines the best translation. It can also refer to a rising mist or vapor. In this context or other contexts in which it refers to the Messiah, “ruler” is a very good translation because God is the king and the Messiah is His only son and rules under Him and with His authority. The ruler is called “David” by the figure of speech antonomasia (“name change) in Ezekiel 34:23-24). Also, he is called the “king” in Ezekiel 37:24 because he will be the de facto king on earth, ruling with the full authority of God. The Messiah is called the “ruler” quite a few times in Ezekiel (Ezek. 34:24; 37:25; 44:3; 45:7, 16, 17, 22; 46:2, 4, 8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18; 48:21, 22).

**“to eat bread before Yahweh.”** Here “bread” refers to food in general. This eating would seem to certainly include the sacrificial meals that he would get to eat as the High Priest.

**“he must enter by the way of the vestibule of the gate.”** Even the prince/ruler will not be allowed to enter through the east gate that Yahweh had entered through because it was closed to all traffic (Ezek. 44:3). He must enter the east gate area from inside the Temple court, and the vestibule was the room that was closest to the inside of the gate (Ezek. 40:9, 15). This verse shows a clear distinction between the prince (the Messiah; Jesus Christ) and “Yahweh the God of Israel” (Ezek. 44:2). The prince is not God, nor does he have the privileges of God.

[For more on Jesus Christ not being God, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” Also see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?”]

Eze 44:4

**“Then he brought me by the way of the north gate to the front of the house.”** Ezekiel had been in the outer courtyard looking at the east gate (Ezek. 44:1-3). Now God brings him through the north gate of the inner wall into the inner courtyard and right to the front of “the house” (the Temple), and Ezekiel could see that the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple, and Ezekiel fell on his face.

Eze 44:12

**“lifted up my hand.”** One way a person swore a solemn oath was to raise his hand and swear. See commentary on Genesis 14:22.

Eze 44:13

**“they will bear their shame and *the consequences of* the abominations that they have committed.”** Many people who are saved and have everlasting life never make the effort to live a truly godly life on earth. In the future Kingdom of Christ, there will be a distinct difference between those people who made the effort to live truly godly lives and those people who got saved but continued living selfishly and in sin. The people who have little or no rewards in the Millennial Kingdom will realize why that is, and will be ashamed of their selfish lives. In this case in Ezekiel 44:13, there will be priests who did enough to get saved, but worshiped both God and idols, and they will bear the consequence of their idolatry.

[For more on shame in the future life, see commentary on 1 John 2:28 and 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on the future Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 44:14

**“house.”** This refers to the Temple, which is called “the house” or “the house of God.”

Eze 44:15

**“the Levitical priests.”** The Masoretic Hebrew text reads, “the priests the Levites,” and this phrase is correct since every priest was also a Levite, but it can be confusing so many versions and commentaries read “Levitical priests,” as does the REV.

[For more on the Levitical priests, see commentary on 2 Chron. 30:27.]

**“sons of Zadok.”** “Sons” is being used for descendants.

**“Zadok.”** Zadok was a priest (thus, a descendant of Aaron) who descended through Aaron’s son Eleazar, and was a priest during the time of David. Zadok supported David and then Solomon, and so it is fitting that the faithful priests who will serve the Messiah, the “greater David,” in the future Millennial Temple are here referred to as the “sons of Zadok.”

**“to offer to me the fat and the blood.”** The sacrifices and offerings will be restored in the Millennial Temple, but the Bible never explains why.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

Eze 44:16

**“my table.”** The altar in the Temple was referred to as God’s “table” because of the offerings given to Him there (see commentary on Mal. 1:7).

Eze 44:19

**“go out into the outer court, into the outer court to the people.”** To understand Ezekiel 44:19 and 46:20, we need to notice that the setting is Ezekiel’s Temple. That is a vital point to understand because the Temple described in Ezekiel is very different from the Tabernacle of Moses, but designed more like Solomon’s Temple. The Tabernacle of Moses only had one large courtyard, and that courtyard had the altar of sacrifice and the great basin for washing. The people would enter that courtyard with their sacrifices. In contrast, Solomon’s Temple had a wall that divided the courtyard into an “inner court” and “outer court” (1 Kings 6:36; 2 Chron. 4:9). Only the priests and Levites could go into the inner courtyard. The way things were done in Ezekiel’s Temple was more complicated than in the Tabernacle. Here in Ezekiel’s Temple, the priests minister in the inner court in their special garments, but when they go out into the outer court, they have to take off their special clothing and put on different clothing. There was a similar event associated with the Tabernacle. On the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, he was to put on special clothing, but then take them off when he came out of the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16:23).

Once we understand the layout of Ezekiel’s Temple, we can see what is going on. In the inner courtyard is the laver for washing and the altar of sacrifice. That is where the priests kill the sacrifices and burn them. In the outer court were the people, and many of them needed cleansing and help from the priests. For example, a person might have had a skin disease and needed to be examined and cleansed. The unclean person could not go into the inner court, but the priest would come out and inspect the person to see if he or she was clean. When the priest would leave the inner court and go into the outer court to the people to do that kind of priestly work, he was not to wear the special clothes that he ministered in when he was in the inner court, but was to have other clothes to wear in the outer court.

Unfortunately, most English translations of the Bible translate the Hebrew as the CSB does, that the priests change their clothes “so that they do not transmit holiness to the people through their clothes.” There is good evidence that translating the verse that way misses the point. When something “clean” is touched by something that is “unclean,” the clean thing becomes unclean, the unclean thing does not become clean. Holiness is not transmitted by touch, but uncleanness is. This is clear from a large number of verses (see commentary on Lev. 6:18; and see the good example in Hag. 2:12-13). The Targum of Onqelos gets the idea of the Hebrew text, and says that the priests put on different clothes “so that they do not mix with the people [while] in their [special] garments.”

Eze 44:22

**“And they are not to take a wife who is a widow or is divorced.”** This is what the Law of Moses stipulated about priests (Lev. 21:7, 13-14). However, the idea that the priests in the Millennial Kingdom can marry must mean that this regulation is for priests and Levites who were “natural people” who survived the Tribulation and were allowed into Christ’s kingdom on earth at the Sheep and Goat Judgment. The priests and Levites who were allowed into the kingdom at the Sheep and Goat Judgment will apparently minister along with the priests and Levites who will be raised from the dead in the First Resurrection. Jesus made it clear that people who had lived their life on earth, died, and were in the resurrection did not marry (Matt. 22:30). However, before Jesus clarified that point, we can see that scriptures such as Ezekiel 44:22 could have introduced the idea that people did marry in their next life.

[For more information about the natural people being in the Millennial Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 25:32, which is about the “Sheep and Goat Judgment.” For more on the resurrections, see commentary on Acts 24:15.]

Eze 44:24

**“they are to judge it according to my judgments​.”** When Christ sets up his kingdom on earth, he will be assisted in governing the earth by people who have been faithful to him (see commentary on Jer. 23:4).

[For more on Christ’s future kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 44:27

**“he must offer his sin offering.”** The sacrifices and offerings will be restored in the Millennial Temple, but the Bible never explains why (see commentary on Ezek. 42:13).

Eze 44:29

**“They will eat the grain offering.”** That the priests get to eat of the sacrifices and offerings is also stated in Ezekiel 42:13.

[For more on the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple, such as the burnt offering and sin offering, see commentary on Ezek. 42:13.]

**Ezekiel Chapter 45**

Eze 45:2

**“500 *cubits*.”** Given the length of the royal cubit as 20.59 inches (52.3 centimeters; see commentary on Ezek. 48:8), then the Temple complex in the Millennial Jerusalem will be about 285 yards (260 meters) square.

Eze 45:6

**“as the property of the city *an area* 5,000 *cubits* wide and 25,000 long.”** The city of Jerusalem was to be on the south side of the Temple Mount (Ezek. 40:2; 48:15), and it had land associated with it. The land was 25,000 cubits east to west, and 5,000 cubits north to south, whereas the city of Jerusalem was only 4,500 cubits square (Ezek. 48:16). The rest of the land was for the people and farming, and was “for the whole house of Israel,” meaning that it was not a sacred district with limited access, but was for everyone to enjoy.

**“alongside of.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “side by side with.”

Eze 45:7

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the “ruler” because he is the Son of the King, God, and he rules the world (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

**“on each side of the holy offering *area* and of the property of the city.”** In this verse, God divides “the holy offering area” from the area given to the city of Jerusalem and the “whole house of Israel” (Ezek. 45:6). The “holy offering area” mentioned here in Ezekiel 45:7 includes the 25,000 by 10,000 cubit area set aside for the Levites and the 25,000 by 10,000 cubit area set aside for the priests. That area is holy and so it is separated from the 25,000-cubit by 5,000-cubit area that will be set aside for the city of Jerusalem, its property, and the “whole house of Israel” (Ezek. 45:6, some of whom may not be ceremonially clean. The three areas together make the 25,000-cubit square offering area that is spoken of in Ezekiel 48:20.

The prince will get the land on “each side” of the 25,000-cubit square area, extending to the borders of Israel: the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (cf. Ezek. 48:8).

Eze 45:9

**“This is what the Lord Yahweh says: enough, you rulers of Israel!”** Periodically in Ezekiel’s description of the future Temple and land of Israel God breaks in with a message to the people of Ezekiel’s time, as He does here in Ezekiel 45:9 (cf. Ezek. 43:10-11; 44:6-16; 45:9-10).

Eze 45:10

**“You must have just balances.”** Leviticus 19:35 commanded people to have honest weights and measures. The fact that Ezekiel has to remind the people of that shows that they were acting unrighteously in their business deals; just more of the sin that the people of Judah were involved in during the time of Ezekiel.

[For more on the biblical balance used in buying and selling, see commentary on Prov. 11:1.]

**“bath.”** A liquid measure roughly equal to nine gallons.

Eze 45:11

**“The ephah and the bath will be of one measure.”** The ephah was a dry measure and the bath was a wet measure, like we might have a peck and a gallon today.

Eze 45:16

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3). He is not only the ruler, but the High Priest as well.

Eze 45:17

**“new moons.”** The new moon, the beginning of the month, was celebrated with special sacrifices and offerings under the Law of Moses (see commentary on Num. 28:11).

**“the sin offering, and the grain offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings.”** The sacrifices and offerings will be restored in the Millennial Temple, but the Bible never explains why (see commentary on Ezek. 42:13).

Eze 45:22

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

**Ezekiel Chapter 46**

Eze 46:1

**“The gate of the inner court.”** The east gate from the outside world to the outer courtyard of the Temple compound was always shut (Ezek. 44:1-2). However, the east gate of the inner courtyard was to be shut the six working days of the week but opened on the Sabbath and the new moon (the new moon started the new month in the Hebrew calendar). During the week people could enter the inner court through the north and south gates. Reasons for the east gate being open on the Sabbath and new moon likely include because on those days there would be a large number of worshipers in the Temple, and also to honor God who established the calendar.

**“new moon.”** The new moon, the beginning of the month, was celebrated with special sacrifices and offerings under the Law of Moses (Num. 28:11-15; 10:10), and it will be again in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

Eze 46:2

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

**“his burnt offering and his peace offerings.”** The sacrifices and offerings will be restored in the Millennial Temple, but the Bible never explains why (see commentary on Ezek. 42:13).

**“worship.”** Or “bow down.” The same Hebrew verb, *shachah* (#07812 שָׁחָה), is translated as both “bow down” and “worship;” traditionally “worship” if God is involved and “bow down” if people are involved, but the verb and action are the same, the act of bowing down is the worship. The common biblical way of bowing down before people or God was to fall to one’s knees and bow the upper body to the earth.

[For more on bowing down, see Word Study: “Worship.”]

Eze 46:3

**“worship.”** Or “bow down.” See commentary on 1 Chronicles 29:20.

Eze 46:4

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

Eze 46:10

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

Eze 46:12

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

Eze 46:16

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

Eze 46:20

**“the guilt offering and the sin offering.”** The sacrifices and offerings will be restored in the Millennial Temple, but the Bible never explains why (see commentary on Ezek. 42:13).

**“in order that they do not bring them into the outer court and sanctify the people.”** It is not like the sin and grain offering would sanctify the people. The priests would go into the outer court of Ezekiel’s Temple to sanctify the people as a matter of their responsibilities, but the sin offering and the grain offering were not to be eaten by the people like the peace offering was, so the priests were not to take the sin and grain offering out into the outer court with them when they went out to sanctify the people.

Eze 46:22

**“the same size.”** The Hebrew is more literally, “of one measure.”

**Ezekiel Chapter 47**

Eze 47:1

**“the house.”** The “house” is the Temple, as it has been since Ezekiel 40:5 (see commentary on Ezek. 40:5).

**“water was flowing out from under the threshold of the house toward the east.”** Ezekiel describes the river that flows from the Temple to the east and down to the Dead Sea. For some reason it does not mention the river that flows from the Temple toward the west and into the Mediterranean Sea; that river is mentioned in Zechariah 14:8. This river is also mentioned in Joel 3:18. Joel says the river flows through the Valley of Acacia Trees. Although we cannot identify that exact valley by that name, from its name as the Valley of Acacias we know it is a valley that leads down to the Arabah, the dry area just west of the Dead Sea.

**“the right side.”** That is the south side; the biblical world was oriented looking east, so south is to the right. Ezekiel 47:1 uses different words here for “right side” and “south” in the same sentence

**“house.”** The house, house of God, is the Temple.

**“south of the altar.”** The healing water flowed out from the south side of the Temple threshold, then flowed eastward south of the altar, then flowed to the wall of the Temple just south of the east gate (Ezekiel 47:2). As it left the Temple it was just a trickle.

Eze 47:2

**“right side.”** That is, the south side, in this case from the context it is the south side of the gate, the wall just south of the gate, and the flow was still at this point just a trickle. The biblical custom was to face east, so the right side was the south side.

Eze 47:3

**“the man went out eastward.”** Today the Mount of Olives is directly east of the Temple in Jerusalem and so water could not flow directly east from the Temple Mount. Today, water from the Temple Mount would flow down from the Temple Mount into the Kidron Valley then flow to the south and through the Judean Wilderness, and eventually flow into the Dead Sea. However, when Christ conquers the earth the Mount of Olives will split, with part moving north and part moving south and opening a valley from the Temple to the east so water will be able to flow in a much more direct path from the Temple Mount into the Dead Sea.

Eze 47:4

**“water that was to the waist.”** So it took about a mile (1.6 km) for the water from the Temple to be waist-deep.

Eze 47:8

**“the sea.”** The sea in this verse is what we today call the Dead Sea.

Eze 47:10

**“En-gedi.”** “En-gedi” means “spring of the wild goat” and it is not quite halfway down the west side of the Dead Sea.

**“En-eglaim.”** “En-eglaim” means “spring of the calf (or heifer)” and its location is not known. There is a site several miles south of Qumran that might be the location.

**“fish will be of many different kinds.”** There will be a great variety of fish. Here in Ezekiel, “many different kinds” seems to be a better translation than “every kind” (see commentary on Gen. 1:11).

**“Great Sea.”** The common Old Testament name for the Mediterranean Sea. Although this river is flowing from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, it will have many varieties of fish like the Mediterranean Sea does. To the Israelites, the Great Sea was the Mediterranean Sea, which was the western border of Israel.

Eze 47:13

**“This will be the border**.” The subject now switches from the river flowing from Jerusalem to the borders of the Promised Land in the Millennial Kingdom. It would have been helpful if the people who originally added chapters to the Bible made this a new chapter, including from Ezekiel 47:13 through chapter 48, which deals with land areas.

[For more on Christ’s future kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.]

Eze 47:14

**“lifted up my hand.”** One way a person swore a solemn oath was to raise his hand and swear. See commentary on Genesis 14:22.

**“to give it to your fathers.”** God promised the land of Israel to the fathers of Israel. God told Abraham that he and his descendants would get the land (Gen. 12:7; 13:15-17; 15:7, 18; 17:8). Then God said the same thing to Isaac (Gen. 26:3), to Jacob: (Gen. 28:13; 35:12; 48:4), and to the tribes of Israel many times: (cf. Exod. 6:4, 8; 12:25; 13:5, 11; Lev. 14:34; 20:24; 23:10; 25:2). The reason that Israel is called “the Promised Land” is because God promised it.

**“fall to you.”** An idiomatic phrase meaning “be yours.” The idiom came from the tradition of giving land by lot, that is, by casting stones or “lots” in some way. Thus, the land would “fall” to the person. We still speak of dice “falling” for or against us.

Eze 47:15

**“the Great Sea.”** The common Old Testament name of the Mediterranean Sea.

**“by the way of Hethlon.”** This could also be translated, “by the Hethlon road” (cf. NIV.) The word “way” is “road.”

Eze 47:18

**“eastern sea.”** This is the Dead Sea.

Eze 47:19

“**And the south side toward the south**.” This could also be understood as “On the side of the Negev toward the south.” The “Negev” (the word also means “south”) is the geographical designation of the arid region in the south of Israel, including the area of Beer-sheba (cf. CJB).

**“the Great Sea.”** The common Old Testament name of the Mediterranean Sea.

Eze 47:21

**“according to the tribes of Israel.”** This quick summary is explained in detail in the next chapter. There will be 12 tribal areas, because the tribe of “Joseph,” one of the 12 sons of Jacob, had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and each of them will get a tribal area equal to the land area the other tribes get, and Levi will not get a land area like the other tribes but will have a holy area north of the Temple (Ezek. 48:13-14).

**Ezekiel Chapter 48**

Eze 48:1

**“*Beginning* from the north end.”** That is, the north end of the Promised Land as it will be divided into tribal areas in the Millennial Kingdom.

**“Dan, one portion.”** The twelve tribes of Israel that were allotted a land area by Joshua (cf. Joshua 13-19) will receive a land area in the Millennial Kingdom. At the time of Joshua, the land was divided by lot. The High Priest would draw lots and the lot would determine how the Promised Land was to be allocated (Num. 26:55-56; 33:54; 34:13; 36:2; Josh. 14:2). However, it was believed that Yahweh determined how the lot fell. In the Millennial Kingdom, the lot will not be used to determine the various tribal areas but Yahweh will simply decree the areas of land the various tribes will get.

It seems fitting that in the Millennial Kingdom, the tribe of Dan will get the northernmost section of land, furthest from Jerusalem and the Temple. When Joshua divided up the Promised Land, Dan got a tribal area quite close to Jerusalem (Josh. 19:40-48). However, the Danites failed to conquer their land (Judg. 1:34-36), which they could have done with more focus, prayer, godly behavior, and possible help from other tribes. Then, instead of doing what it took to acquire the land that God had given them by lot, the majority of the tribe moved north and conquered the city of Laish and settled there, and immediately began worshiping idols (Judg. 18). Since the Danites chose to be the northernmost tribe throughout the Old Testament, it is fitting that God assigned them the northernmost tribal area in the Millennial Kingdom.

Nothing is said about the width from north to south of each tribal area except it seems that they are equal. Also, since the scholars are somewhat divided on the exact northern and southern boundaries of Israel, it is hard to exactly draw a map of the future Israel and put each tribe on that map. It does seem that Israel in the Millennial Kingdom will be somewhat larger than historical Israel, but by exactly how much is hard to determine.

[For more on the future earth and Christ’s kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 48:2

**“And on the border of Dan.”** That is, on the south border of Dan. So the northern border of the tribe of Asher is the southern border of the tribe of Dan.

Eze 48:3

“**Naphtali, one portion**.” So the northern border of the tribe of Naphtali is the southern border of the tribe of Asher.

Eze 48:4

“**Manasseh, one portion**.” So the northern border of the tribe of Manasseh is the southern border of the tribe of Naphtali.

Eze 48:5

**“Ephraim, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Ephraim is the southern border of the tribe of Manasseh.

Eze 48:6

**“Reuben, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Reuben is the southern border of the tribe of Ephraim.

Eze 48:7

**“Judah, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Judah is the southern border of the tribe of Reuben.

Eze 48:8

**“the offering.”** Here in Ezekiel 48:8, the “offering” is an area of land in the middle of the tribes of Israel that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Jordan River on the east, and is 25,000 cubits, just over 8 miles, from north to south (25,000 cubits is just over 8 miles; some scholars would say 8.12 miles or 13.06 km). We know that it stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River because it is “as long as one of the other portions” and the other portions are for the other tribes of Israel, especially Judah and Benjamin that border this offering area, and the Jordan River has always been the natural boundary of the central portion of Israel.

Ezekiel 48:8-21 can be somewhat confusing because the word “offering” refers to different areas of land, all of which are offerings to Yahweh. Here in Ezekiel 48:8, the “offering” is the whole strip of land that is about 8 miles from north to south between the tribal area of Judah to the north and the tribal area of Benjamin to the south.

Inside the “offering” of the strip of land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River is another “offering” that is a square of land that is 25,000 cubits by 25,000 cubits (8.12 miles; 13.06 km); thus a square of just over 8 miles (Ezek. 48:20). The 25,000-cubit square “offering” area is divided into three separate “offerings” that are each rectangular in shape.

The northernmost rectangular area is for the Levites, and it is 25,000 cubits east to west and 10,000 cubits (3.25 miles; 5.23 km) north to south (Ezek. 48:13).

South of the area of the Levites is another area that is 25,000 cubits (8.12 miles; 13.06 km) by 10,000 cubits (3.25 miles; 5.23 km), and it is for the priests (Ezek. 48:9-12). Ezekiel describes it as the offering for the priests who had remained faithful when Israel and the Levites went astray (Ezek. 48:11). It is called an “offering” (Ezek. 48:9, 12), a “holy offering” (Ezek. 48:10), and a “most holy place” (Ezek. 48:12). We can tell that the section for the priests is the center section of the three areas because it has the Temple in it (Ezek. 48:10), and the Temple is in the middle of the whole 25,000-cubit square offering area (Ezek. 48:8). Having the Levites occupy the north section, the priests occupy the center section, and Jerusalem occupy the south section, is the only way to get the Temple to be in the center of the 25,000-cubit square area.

South of the area for the priests is the “offering” which is the area for the city of Jerusalem. That area is also 25,000 cubits from east to west, but is only half the size from north to south; 5,000 cubits instead of 10,000 cubits (Ezek. 48:15). The dimensions and partial description of the Millennial city of Jerusalem are given in Ezekiel 48:16-20; 30-35). Jerusalem is on the south side of Mount Zion as described here and stated in Ezekiel 40:2. So as seen from an airplane’s viewpoint, Mount Zion is a high mountain with the Temple on the top which has an area for the priests associated with it. North of the area for the priests, on the north slope of the mountain, is an area for the Levites, and south of the area for the priests, on the south slope of Mount Zion, is the city of Jerusalem, which is just under 1.5 miles (2.4 km) square. The description of Jerusalem can be somewhat difficult in Ezekiel 48 because it is only called “the city,” and never by its name, Jerusalem.

[For more information on the measurements, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8, “25,000 cubits.” For more information on Christ’s Millennial Kingdom, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

**“25,000 *cubits*.”** The standard of measurement in chapter 48 is never given, but because of the size of Israel and the areas given, and because in Ezekiel 40:5 the measuring reed used was in royal cubits, it is logical to conclude that the “royal cubit” (which is a regular cubit and a hand width: Ezek. 40:5) of about 20.59 inches (52.3 centimeters) is the standard of measurement used in Ezekiel 48. The actual lengths of the cubit and royal cubit are debated by scholars, but they generally estimate the length of the royal cubit to be between 20.3 inches (51.56 centimeters) and 20.7 inches (52.57 centimeters), although some go up to 21 inches (53.34 centimeters). Nevertheless, recent study done in Israel has led researchers to conclude that the ancient royal cubit was 52.3 centimeters, or 20.59 inches.

If that is the case, then 25,000 royal cubits is just over 8 miles (8.12 miles; 13.06 km), and the sacred area in the Millennial Kingdom will be a square of just over 8 miles. The 10,000 royal cubits (cf. Ezek. 48:9) is roughly 3.25 miles (5.23 km). The 5,000 royal cubits (Ezek. 48:14) is about 1.62 miles (2.6 km).

**“in width.”** In this context, “width” is the north-south measurement. Since the biblical worldview was oriented to the east, “width” was usually, but not always, a north-south measurement.

**“and the sanctuary will be in its middle.”** The “sanctuary” is the Millennial Temple. South of the territory of Judah, and north of the territory allotted to Benjamin, will be an area that is set apart. It will be about 8 1/3 miles wide from north to south, and as wide from east to west as the areas allotted to the other tribes (generally from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea). In the center of this special area will be an area 8 1/3 miles square, which will be divided into three parts: a part for the Levites, a part for the priests, and a part for the city of Jerusalem. In the very middle of this special area (in the area designated for the priests), will be the Millennial Temple.

Eze 48:9

**“The offering.”** See commentary on Ezekiel 48:8.

**“25,000 *cubits*…10,000.”** 25,000 royal cubits is just over 8 miles (8.12 miles; 13.06 km), while 10,000 royal cubits is roughly 3.25 miles (5.23 km). For the measurement of the royal cubit, see commentary on Ezekiel 48:8.

**“in length.”** “Length” is the east-west measurement. Since the biblical worldview was oriented to the east, “length” was usually an east-west measurement.

**“in width.”** In this context, “width” is the north-south measurement.

Eze 48:10

**“for these, even for the priests.”** In the Millennial Kingdom, the priests will get a section of land that is 25,000 royal cubits (8.12 miles; 13.06 km) from east to west and 10,000 royal cubits (roughly 3.25 miles; 5.23 km) from north to south. This is very different from how things were in the Old Testament when the priests, who are all also Levites, did not get any land of their own but were assigned cities (Josh. 21:1-42). Every priest was a Levite, a descendant of Jacob’s third son, Levi (Gen. 29:34), but not every Levite was a priest, because the priests were descended from Aaron, who was a great-grandson of Levi (Levi, Kohath, Amram, Aaron; 1 Chron. 6:1-3).

**“*The side* toward the north *will be* 25,000 in length.”** The rectangle for the priests was to have its north and south border be 25,000 cubits long, and its east and west border 10,000 cubits long, and 25,000 royal cubits is just over 8 miles (8.12 miles; 13.06 km), while 10,000 royal cubits is roughly 3.25 miles (5.23 km). For the measurement of the royal cubit, see commentary on Ezekiel 48:8.

In this context, “length” is the east-west measurement, and “width” is the north-south measurement. This is contrary to our normal Western thinking, but that is the case here.

**“and the sanctuary of Yahweh will be in its middle.”** The Temple of Yahweh was to be in the middle of the area for the priests, and was thus in the middle of the whole 25,000 cubit square. The square was an offering to Yahweh, but the priest’s section, which contained the Temple, was the holiest part of the offering, and was “a most holy place” (Ezek. 48:12).

Eze 48:11

**“who kept my instruction.”** The section for the priests is for priests who were faithful to God during their lives and did not abandon the Law and go astray after idols and participate in other such sins. There has always been a difference between salvation and rewards. Salvation is, and always has been, by grace through trust in God. In contrast, rewards are earned for serving God and will be given out during the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. In this case, part of the rewards for faithful priests is that they get to live in the priestly area that contains the Temple. God does not tell us where priests who got saved but were unfaithful get to live in the Millennial Kingdom.

[For more on rewards in the Kingdom, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on the Millennial Kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

Eze 48:12

**“a most holy place.”** The priest’s section, which was 25,000 cubits from east to west and 10,000 cubits from north to south, and contained the Temple, was the holiest part of the 25,000-cubit square offering area, and was “a most holy place.” Of the whole 25,000-cubit square land area for the city of Jerusalem, the priests, and the Levites, the 25,000-cubit by 10,000-cubit section for the priests is the only section of the three sections that is referred to as a “most holy place.” That makes perfect sense considering that the priests were the most holy of the people and because the Temple was located in the priest’s section of land.

[For more on the measurements, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8.]

Eze 48:13

**“And alongside the territory for the priests.”** When we put the three sections of the holy offering area together, we can see that the priests have the central section that contains the Temple, and the section with the city of Jerusalem is the south section, so the section for the Levites is next to the section of the priests and on the north side of it (see commentary on Ezek. 48:8).

**“length...width.”** In this context, the length is the east-west measurement and the width is the north-south measurement.

**“25,000…10,000.”** 25,000 royal cubits is just over 8 miles (8.12 miles; 13.06 km), while 10,000 royal cubits is roughly 3.25 miles (5.23 km).

[For the measurement of the royal cubit, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8.]

Eze 48:14

**“choice portion.”** The section of land given to the Levites is just north of the section for the priests, and very close to the Temple, so it is indeed a “choice portion.”

Eze 48:15

**“will be for common use for the city.”** Here in Ezekiel 48, “the city” is Jerusalem. We know that because Jerusalem is the subject of much of the restoration of Israel and it is also the only city referred to as the “holy city” in the Bible, and the city in Ezekiel 48 is the only city in the 25,000 cubit square special gift area that Ezekiel is describing. “The city” can be no other besides Jerusalem.

**“5,000 *cubits* in width and 25,000 in length.”** The land area for the Millennial city of Jerusalem will be south of the area for the priests. In this context, the length is the east-west measurement and the width is the north-south measurement. This area will be 25,000 royal cubits from east to west (just over 8 miles; 8.12 miles; 13.06 km), and 5,000 royal cubits from north to south (about 1.62 miles or 2.6 km) (Ezek. 48:14). The city of Jerusalem inside this area will be smaller, only 4,500 royal cubits on a side and 18,000 cubits in circumference (This is just under 1.5 miles (1.44 miles) or 2.4 km. Cf. Ezek. 48:30-35).

[For more on the measurements, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8.]

Eze 48:16

**“its measurements.”** The measurements of the city of Jerusalem, as per Ezek. 48:15.

**“4,500 *cubits*.”** This is about 1.46 miles (2.34 km). So the city of Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom will be a square that is about 1.5 miles square.

[For more on the measurements, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8.]

Eze 48:17

**“pastureland.”** The Hebrew can also refer to “open land,” or “open space.” However, although that seems like very little space for pasture, animals could be kept there for a short time if they were going to be offered in the Temple.

**“250 *cubits*.”** 250 royal cubits is about 143 yards (130.7 meters).

[For more on the measurements, see commentary on Ezek. 48:8.]

Eze 48:20

**“The entire offering.”** That is, the entire offering area that is for the Levites, the priests (and the Temple), and the city of Jerusalem. The square area is roughly 8.12 miles (13.06 km) on each side. For more detail, see commentary on Ezekiel 48:8.

**“the property of the city.”** That is, the city of Jerusalem.

Eze 48:21

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3). He will have a land area set aside for himself in the Millennial Kingdom. Joshua, a type of Christ, foreshadowed this when he received a city in the Promised Land as his personal inheritance in return for his faithfulness to God (Josh. 19:49-50).

**“to the east border *of the land*.”** The east border of the land of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom will be the Jordan River.

**“to the west border.”** The west border is the Mediterranean Sea.

**“the sanctuary of the house.”** In this context, the “sanctuary” seems to refer to the Temple building proper and “the house” refers to the “house of God,” the entire Temple complex, including the courtyards and what is in them. The Millennial Temple will be in the middle of the 25,000 cubit holy area, which is toward the north side of the area given to the priests.

**“will be in its middle.”** That is, in the middle of the 25,000-cubit square holy area, not in the middle of the whole east-west strip of land. Jerusalem and the Temple are not “in the middle” of the land belonging to the prince, the Messiah. They are to the east of the middle of that whole section, and although the topography of the earth will be different in the Millennial Kingdom than it is now, there is no indication that the Temple Mount will shift to the west from its current position.

Eze 48:22

**“ruler.”** The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the ruler, the Son of God the king (see commentary on Ezek. 44:3).

**“*the land* between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin.”** So, there is the special land area that is to be for the “ruler,” Jesus Christ and for the 25,000 cubit square holy area that is for the Levites, priests, and the city of Jerusalem. That entire special area is between the land that is given to the tribe of Judah, which is to the north, and the tribal area of the tribe of Benjamin which is to the south. So going through Israel from north to south one would have to travel through the tribal area of Judah, then through the special area, then through the tribal area of Benjamin.

Eze 48:23

**“Benjamin, one portion.”** Nothing is said about the width of each tribal area except it seems that they are equal. Also, since the scholars are somewhat divided on the exact north and south boundaries of the Land, it is difficult to determine each area’s precise dimensions. The result of that is that we are not sure how wide from north to south each tribal area is. (See commentary on Ezek. 48:1).

Eze 48:24

**“Simeon, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Simeon is the southern border of the tribe of Benjamin.

Eze 48:25

**“Issachar, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Issachar is the southern border of the tribe of Simeon.

Eze 48:26

**“Zebulun, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Zebulun is the southern border of the tribe of Issachar.

Eze 48:27

**“Gad, one portion.”** So the northern border of the tribe of Gad is the southern border of the tribe of Zebulun.

Eze 48:30

**“the city.”** This is the city of Jerusalem as it will be in the Millennial Kingdom. It will be on the south side of Mount Zion, which has the Millennial Temple at the top (Ezek. 40:2).

**“4,500 *cubits* by measure.”** This is just under 1.5 miles (1.46 miles) or 2.35 km. The city will be a square with about 1.5 miles on each side. This is larger than the walled city of Jerusalem has ever been, giving more evidence that this is the Millennial Jerusalem, not some Jerusalem that has existed at some time in the past. Jeremiah 31:38-40 also gives the dimensions of the city and refers to it being part of the New Covenant, but Jeremiah uses landmarks instead of measuring by cubits. Unfortunately, those landmarks cannot now be identified, but enough is known about them that the basic idea of the layout of the city can be known.[[66]](#footnote-21026)

Eze 48:31

**“Reuben...Judah...Levi.”**It makes sense that the three gates leading north from the city of Jerusalem would be for Reuben, Judah, and Levi. The north gates would lead directly uphill to the Temple, which was on top of Mount Zion.

The city of Jerusalem will be on the south slope of Mount Zion (Ezek. 40:2) so the palace of the Messiah will be on the “right hand” of God, who dwells in the Temple just north of the city of Jerusalem (Ps. 110:1). The Messiah, Jesus Christ, comes from the tribe of Judah, so that Judah Gate would give him direct access to the Temple (of course he could use other gates as well to leave Jerusalem, but the one named after his tribe would be to the north). Similarly, the Levites would have quick access to the Temple where they served through the Levi Gate. Lastly, it would honor Reuben, who was the first son of the twelve sons of Jacob, to have a gate on the north side of Jerusalem.

Eze 48:35

**“Yahweh is There.”** Yahweh will be present in the Millennial Jerusalem because He will reign through His Son, Jesus Christ, and His nature, righteousness, will reign in the land. Also, just uphill to the north of the city will be Yahweh’s Temple.

1. Edwin Thiele​​​​​​​, The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-17034)
2. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-25906)
3. Horatio B. Hackett, Dr. William Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible, 1:420. [↑](#footnote-ref-32325)
4. Cf. NET, WBC, NICOT, Hermeneia, The Anchor Bible: Ezekiel, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Ezekiel, NJB, NRSV, and NLT. [↑](#footnote-ref-15562)
5. Harris, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 861. [↑](#footnote-ref-19784)
6. Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. [↑](#footnote-ref-19162)
7. Holladay, Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon. [↑](#footnote-ref-16490)
8. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 102n89. [↑](#footnote-ref-27788)
9. Katherine Sakenfeld, ed., The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, 5:107. [↑](#footnote-ref-17795)
10. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 104. Block footnotes J. R. Harris, Lexicographical Studies in Ancient Egyptian Minerals Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin Institut für Orientforschung 54 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1961), pp. 124–29. [↑](#footnote-ref-24760)
11. Ruth Wright and Robert Chadbourne, Gems and Minerals of the Bible, 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-10101)
12. George F. Kunz, The Curious Lore of Precious Stones, Dover Publications, New York, 1971, p. 37, 227, 229, 293, 294, [↑](#footnote-ref-26518)
13. Wikipedia, “Lapis Lazuli,” accessed June 18, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapis\_lazuli. [↑](#footnote-ref-15299)
14. James Hastings, A Dictionary of the Bible, s.v. “Glory,” 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-11205)
15. Cf. BDB, s.v. כָּבוֹד def. 2c, “of God, glory, in historic theophanies,” 458; Strong’s #03519. [↑](#footnote-ref-16013)
16. Elliger and Rudolf, eds., Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Hebrew Bible, Stuttgart [BHS] as preserved in the Leningrad Codex [WTT]). [↑](#footnote-ref-23129)
17. Cf. Leslie C. Allen [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-28185)
18. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 135-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-31803)
19. Schumacher, Across the Jordan, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-32579)
20. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-30229)
21. Bullinger, Companion Bible, Appendix 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-28103)
22. Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Ezekiel, 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-25991)
23. John Taylor, Ezekiel [TOTC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-16612)
24. Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel, 140-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-13500)
25. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 328. [↑](#footnote-ref-14014)
26. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-16747)
27. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 404. [↑](#footnote-ref-13644)
28. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 488. [↑](#footnote-ref-10401)
29. Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 584n146. [↑](#footnote-ref-19567)
30. Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 592-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-29277)
31. See Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 596. [↑](#footnote-ref-13924)
32. Daniel Block,The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 608. [↑](#footnote-ref-22599)
33. Block, The Book of Ezekiel [NICOT], 607n68. He refers to J. A. Bewer, “Textual and Exegetical Notes on Ezekiel,” JBL 72, no. 3 (1953): 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-12736)
34. Translation by Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel; Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 625. [↑](#footnote-ref-26308)
35. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 663. [↑](#footnote-ref-14433)
36. Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-17227)
37. Robert W. Jenson, Ezekiel, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Kindle edition, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-26493)
38. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 738. [↑](#footnote-ref-21801)
39. Block, The Book of Ezekiel [NICOT], 738. [↑](#footnote-ref-17087)
40. Allen, Ezekiel 20-48 [WBC]. See also Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel; Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 737. [↑](#footnote-ref-25223)
41. Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 744-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-24927)
42. Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 743. [↑](#footnote-ref-15162)
43. Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [NICOT], 748n103. [↑](#footnote-ref-12068)
44. Cf. Moshe Greenberg, Ezekiel 21-37 [AB]. [↑](#footnote-ref-30128)
45. Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-28691)
46. Bullinger, The Companion Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-13402)
47. Holy Bible: Pilgrim Edition, Oxford University Press, 1948. [↑](#footnote-ref-22743)
48. McGee, Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee: Proverbs - Malachi. [↑](#footnote-ref-20819)
49. Scofield Study Bible, English Standard Version, Oxford University Press, New York, 2006. [↑](#footnote-ref-11910)
50. Koehler and Baumgartner, HALOT. [↑](#footnote-ref-16358)
51. Robert L. Thomas, ed., New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Including Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-16578)
52. Richard Clifford, The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-18473)
53. See translation by Daniel Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-19504)
54. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-28834)
55. Daniel I. Block, Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 184-187. [↑](#footnote-ref-13910)
56. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-24346)
57. Keil & Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel, Daniel, 160-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-29696)
58. Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel and Daniel, 174-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-13521)
59. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-18104)
60. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 518n24. [↑](#footnote-ref-23769)
61. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 524. [↑](#footnote-ref-28376)
62. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 535-37. [↑](#footnote-ref-13581)
63. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 553. [↑](#footnote-ref-25301)
64. Daniel I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48 [NICOT], 570. [↑](#footnote-ref-30207)
65. Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel and Daniel, 280-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-13960)
66. Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Ezekiel and Daniel, 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-21026)