EZEKIEL

INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – His name means "God Strengthens." He was the son of Buzi, a priest, taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC, 10 years before the fall of Jerusalem.
2. DATE – His messages began in the 5th year of Jehoichin's reign (593 BC) and the last recorded message was 571 BC. See 1:2 and 29:17.
3. READERS – Most of the messages were written to Judah in exile. When he speaks of Jerusalem it is because he was having visions of Jerusalem.
4. THEME – The exile was God's punishment for Judah's sin. But in His grace, God promised restoration to a remnant of the people in the Promised Land.
5. KEY PHRASES – Seventy times the phrase occurs "Then they will know I am the Lord." God's deliverance would prove His sovereignty just as His deliverance from Egypt proved it. Compare Ezekiel 6:14 and Exodus 7:5.

OUTLINE

1. GOD CALLED EZEKIEL WHILE HE WAS IN CAPTIVITY. CH 1-3

2. EZEKIEL PROPHESIED JERUSALEM'S DESTRUCTION. CH 4-24
   In Chapter 24, Ezekiel's wife died as a symbol of the fall of Jerusalem.
   As a sign of trust in God's sovereignty, Ezekiel was not to mourn her.

3. EZEKIEL PROPHESIED AGAINST THE PAGAN NATIONS. CH 25-32

4. EZEKIEL PROPHESIED ISRAEL'S AND JERUSALEM'S RESTORATION. CH 33-48
   A. Preparation for restoration. Ch 33-37
   B. Prophecies regarding Gog and the invasion of Israel. Ch 38-39
   C. The plans for the final kingdom and Temple. Ch 40-48

SPECIAL NOTE ON CH 40-48

Ezekiel's vision of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple has caused various views of interpretation. Two main views are given.

1. The prophecies are fulfilled in the Holy Spirit inhabiting the Church today. See 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 6:18-20.
2. The Temple will be restored for the Millennial Kingdom and the sacrifices look back at Christ's death instead of ahead.

IMPORTANCE OF EZEKIEL

1. Ezekiel's call contained a warning that his own people would not respond to his message (Ch 2-3). The success of one who speaks God's Word is not measured by response, but by faithfulness.
2. God removed His presence from the Temple and Jerusalem in stages. See 9:3, 10:18, and 11:23. His glory returns to the new Temple in 43:2.
3. Ezekiel's vision of the living creatures in Ch 1, predicting God's judgment parallels the scenes in Genesis 3:24 and Revelation 4:6-8. These cherubim had four faces, a lion, ox, man, and eagle. He is the Alpha and Omega.
4. Israel's leaders received special judgment for their failures in Ch 34. God will replace the unfaithful shepherds with one Great Shepherd. Compare Ezekiel 34:23-24 with John 10.
5. Ezekiel's prophecy and vision of the dry bones (Ch 37) is a type of the resurrection and of the salvation of the Gentiles. See Ephesians 2:1-10. It also offers hope to any apparently hopeless situation.
6. Ezekiel 47 is a picture of the Gospel moving out from the Temple to the sea of the Gentile peoples. Compare it to John 7:37-39.

Notes by PJW (2003)

EZEKIEL

1 – This chapter contains a description of a vision that Ezekiel had of God. Lord, as we read this, grant us a vision of you. See what we can learn about God from this vision. First, God is awesome. No one is like him. He is Omnipresent, able to move in every direction at the same time. He is all encompassing, having the face of a human, a lion, an eagle and an ox. The dominant feature is the eyes that are all around the wheels. God sees all, and therefore knows all. Let us bow in worship right now. Verses 20-21 repeat the phrase, "for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels." The entire vision had to do with the glory of the Lord. V28 "Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord."

2 – Not only is God transcendent, he is also immanent in that he speaks directly to the prophet. This call is for personal obedience, in contrast to the rebellion of the house of Judah. It is also a call to proclaim the word of God to them in their rebellion. It is the prophet's task to proclaim the word no matter what the response of the people is, whether they listen or refuse to listen. The message would be a message of lament and mourning and woe. V7-8 "And you shall speak my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear, for they are a rebellious house. But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." It had to do with receiving the word of the Lord to be proclaimed to the people.

We need to be faithful to proclaim God's word to our own generation, whether they listen or refuse to listen. We must proclaim both judgment and salvation.

3 – The call to Ezekiel is the one that is appropriate to all of us. Are people today rebellious, not wanting to hear the word of the Lord? We need to speak his word anyway. V4 "Speak with my words to them." V8 "Behold I have made your face as hard as their faces and your forehead as hard as their foreheads." V11 "And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear or refuse to hear." V27 "But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' He who will hear, let him hear; and he who will refuse to hear, let him refuse, for they are a rebellious house."

4 – The Lord called Ezekiel to do some strange things to demonstrate the seriousness of the situation in which the nation found itself. V3 "This is a sign for the house of Israel." It looks like he was to lie on one side for 24 hours a day for 390 days. He would eat only a half- pound of food per day and drink less than a quart of water. He certainly would not gain weight on that diet. This would dramatize for the people how difficult would be their time of punishment from God for their sin. God did grant him an exemption from having to cook over human excrement at his request, as that would have been unclean and Ezekiel protested that he had never eaten anything unclean.

5 – The prophet was to cut off his hair and divide it into thirds and then burn it. This would represent that the people of Jerusalem will be divided into thirds and punished. V12 "A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in your midst; a third part of you shall fall by the sword all around you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds and will unsheathe the sword after them." How difficult it would be to know you have to make this announcement of the judgment of God to your own people! How much more difficult would it be for God to have to make that decision and judgment to his own people after all he has done for them! V13 "Thus shall my anger spend itself, and I will vent my fury upon them and satisfy myself. And they shall know that I am the Lord – that I have spoken in my jealousy – when I spend my fury upon them." That is how serious our sin is to God and how intense is his anger, his wrath of judgment. That has not changed in God. He must punish our sin because he is holy and just.

6 – The description of the punishment continues. V5 "And I will lay the dead bodies of the people of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones around your altars." The Lord tied in the punishment to the validity of his word. V10 "And they shall know that I am the Lord; I have not said in vain that I would do this evil to them." God repeated several times that this punishment is to prove to them that he is the Lord. This means that when God foretold that something would happen it would happen; the happening demonstrated his truthfulness. It is hard to know in this chapter if it was all Israel

and Judah to whom God spoke or if some of it was to foreigners. Either way the judgment will be complete and there will be many who will lie around slain near their idols and altars.

7 – The Lord clearly speaks with wrath and ties the punishment into the fact that he is the Lord and keeps his word. Verses 4 and 9 repeat in chorus fashion. "And my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. I will punish you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst. Then you will know that I am the Lord, who strikes." God is angry. He will judge with justice and the devastation will be complete. It will impact so many areas of life including king, prince, workers, and families.

8 – The Lord took the prophet by vision on a tour of the city to show him the wicked things that were being done behind closed doors that violated the honor of the Lord and his command. The "image of jealousy" in V4 is that which is a competitor to God. Three times God tells the prophet something like, "If you think this is abominable, wait until you see what else these people are doing that is even a greater abomination." It is obvious that God is justifying his wrath that is being carried out on these people who are his. V18 "Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."

9 – The punishment was carried out on the city. Those to be preserved are marked and protected. The mark is described in V4. "Put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." The result was in V6, "but touch no one on whom is the mark." Ezekiel watched the glory of the Lord depart from the threshold of the temple. V10 "As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will bring their deeds upon their heads."

Lord, give us grace to see the sins that we commit against you. Open our eyes so that we may also see and understand your grace and forgiveness to us.

10 – The glory of the God of Israel moved further out of the temple area. This accomplished two things. It represented that the people have abandoned the worship of the Lord and it allowed the temple to be destroyed by foreign armies. V4 "And the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord." V18 "Then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim." The story continues from Ch1. V22 "And as for the likeness of their faces, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the Chebar canal."

11 – During this time, Ezekiel was actually among the exiles in Babylon but he was relating what the Lord was showing him back in Jerusalem. The glory of the Lord continued to move out of the temple to the hill outside the city. V22 "Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city." This chapter also contains early promise of the new covenant that God will establish. This is very significant and is fulfilled in the New Testament. V18-20 "And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. And I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people and I will be their God."

How great it was that for Ezekiel the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him when he was to speak! How does this work for us? Is it that the Spirit of the Lord was on the writer of God's word when it was written? Is there also a falling on us as we speak or teach or preach the word of the Lord? Sometimes it seems so and yet is that feeling necessary for God's word to be effective?

12 – This seems a similar situation to Malachi's day in that people accused God of not keeping his word or of thinking that his word would only be fulfilled some day far off into the future. God announced that that would no longer be the case. From now on they would see his word fulfilled without delay. V15-16 "And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them among the countries. But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the nations where they go, and may know that I am the Lord." The key remains the word of the Lord. V28 "Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord God:

None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be performed, declares the Lord God."

13 – In this chapter the Lord denounced the false prophets who claimed that they spoke the word of the Lord when they had not heard from him. V6 "They have seen false visions and lying divinations. They say, 'Declares the Lord,' when the Lord has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word." God described the nation as a wall. He says the prophets' words are like whitewash. What will they do about all the work they have done on the whitewash when God brings the wall down? Whitewash is useless on a wall that is crumbling. V22-23 "Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not grieved him, and you have encouraged the wicked, that he should not turn from his evil way to save his life, therefore you shall no more see false visions nor practice divination. I will deliver my people out of your hand. And you shall know that I am the LORD." There is no question that the worst thing any prophet can do is to declare our own word and claim that it is the word of God. What a warning for us as preachers and teachers! We must only speak what is God's word not our own.

14 – Some of the elders of the people came to the prophet to seek out the word of the Lord but because God knew that there were idols and other wicked things in their hearts, he would not answer them. He also warned that he would send his four great punishments, the sword, wild beasts, plagues and famine that he is only doing these because they deserve them. He said that the fact that they deserved them should bring console to the heart of the righteous. One of the ways their sin was expressed is in V4. "Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols…"

15 – In this chapter God compares the people of Jerusalem with the wood of a vine. It is useless to make anything. It is only useful for the fire to be destroyed. That is how he sees Jerusalem, useful only for his fire of judgment. God said they would know it was he speaking when he set his face against his people. V7-8 "And I will set my face against them. Though they escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord God."

16 – God tells this story to illustrate his perspective on Judah. He found her without care, clothes and dirty. He cleaned her. He took her in. He adopted her. He gave her that which would make her beautiful. She took it all and used it for her own pleasure. He even married her and all she did was seek out foreign lovers. V43 "Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged me with all these things, therefore behold, I have returned your deeds upon your head, declares the Lord God. Have you not committed lewdness in addition to your abominations?" The key thought is expressed in V22. "And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, wallowing in your blood." Even still God promises not only the judgment but also that he will remember his covenant with them and restore them. V60 "Yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant."

How often we do this with what we have! The life we have, the abilities, the attraction that we have all came from him. We take what God has given us and used our abilities for our own pleasure and advancement. Lord, we offer to you all that you have given to us. That is all we have. Use us for your purposes.

17 – The chapter centers on the word of the Lord, that when he gives it, it will happen as he said. This demonstrates his sovereignty over all events. The king of Babylon removed the branch of Judah and planted it but because God's covenant was broken, he took over and planted his own tree. V24 "And all the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord; I bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it." It seems like the main reason God acts is explained in V19. "Therefore thus says the Lord God: As I live, surely it is my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. I will return it upon his head."

God always keeps his word and that is in promises of blessing on his people and curses and punishment on those who turn away from him.

18 – It appears that Israel accused God of being unjust so God explains what justice is. Each person will die for his own sins, in his own generation. If one man sins, he will die for his sins. If his son is righteous, he will be saved. If his son sins, he will die. If a person turns from his sin, he will live. V26-27 "When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness that he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life." V31-32 "Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."

19 – V14 identifies the point of this chapter. "This is a lamentation and has become a lamentation." It does it by telling the story of a mother lion who raises two cubs to be mighty hunters but they are both captured. It also tells of a vine that is powerful but is struck down, withers, and consumed by fire. It appears to stand for Israel/Judah.

20 – This chapter focuses on the inquiry by the elders from the prophet of the word of the Lord. The Lord answers that he will refuse to answer them because of their sin. The Lord answered them through a history lesson. He pointed back to the actions of the nation when they came out of Egypt and were in the desert. They rebelled against the Lord there and it meant that they died in the desert. Over and over God invited the nation to seek him by obeying his statutes and commands and they refused to do it. They rebelled. V36 is key. "As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord God."

21 – In very strong language the Lord pronounced judgment on the people of Judah and Israel. He said that his judgment would happen and then, V5, "All flesh shall know that I am the Lord. I have drawn my sword from its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again." The graphic language certainly conveys some of the seriousness of the sins of the people against God. The main issue seems to be what God has done for them. He is the one who gave them all they have. V24 "Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have made your guilt to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your deeds your sins appear – because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand."

22 – God continued to speak out against the sins of the people. His judgment will be swift and thorough. Again the repeated phrase is "you shall know that I am the Lord" or "that I the Lord have done this." Note also the concluding V30-31 where God said, "And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. Therefore I have poured out my indignation up on them. I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath. I have returned their way upon their heads, declares the Lord God." Is God looking for that kind of person today for our town, state, or nation?

23 – In this chapter God told the story of Israel and Judah as two sisters who acted as prostitutes from the days of their youth in Egypt. Their lust was very intense, rejecting love for lust and sexual relations. So God as the ultimate lover must punish them. Again the chapter ends V49 with the phrase that all of this happens with the goal of, "And you shall know that I am the Lord God."

Why are our sexual desires so strong? God created them strong so that when directed according to his plan they will unite husband and wife into one. So why are they often even stronger for someone else besides our spouse? We confess that desire is wrong, Lord. We know that that is how strong our desire is supposed to be for you. May we pray that it would become more that way! By your grace, will you bring that about in us?

24 – That phrase appears twice more at the end of this chapter in V24 and 26. Here the nation is described in terms of meat that is to be cooked. The nation is to be judged. God states that he has tried to clean her but she refused to be cleaned so she will be judged. V13 "On account of your unclean lewdness, because I would have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your uncleanness, you shall not be cleansed anymore till I have satisfied my fury upon you. I am the Lord. I have spoken; it shall come to pass; I will do it. I will not go back; I will not spare; I will not relent; according to your

ways and your deeds you will be judged, declares the Lord God." Then the Lord took Ezekiel's wife in death as another sign to the nation. This would be really hard.

25 – The Lord promised vengeance on the nations surrounding Israel/Judah as well. These included the nations of Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia. It appears that these were judged primarily because they either overdid their involvement in the fight against Judah or they celebrated the downfall of the nation. Typical is V6. "For thus says the Lord God: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel, therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you and will hand you over as plunder to the nations." Each of the sections ends that this action will verify the sovereignty of God. For a sample, see V17b. "Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I lay my vengeance upon them."

26 – The great city of Tyre would also fall and be destroyed. It was an island off the coast. The people and leaders of Tyre used to flee to the island, which was much more defendable than the city on the mainland. When the city was destroyed, the buildings of the city were pushed into the sea to form a causeway out to the island and the city was destroyed in both ways. The Lord also promised on his word that this city will never be rebuilt. V12b "Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters." V14 "I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets. You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the Lord; I have spoken, declares the Lord."

27 – This chapter is a lament for the city of Tyre that has fallen. The lament is very detailed. Many nations traded with Tyre. They will all be out the merchandise they were to have traded since it is fallen. There is much detail in this lament with the nations and their merchandise listed. V36 "The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever."

28 – The lament against Tyre continues with concentration on the king of Tyre. V2 "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre. Thus says the Lord God' Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god –" The chapter concludes with a prophecy against Sidon, a twin city of Tyre. V22 "Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, and I will manifest my glory in your midst. And they shall know that I am the Lord when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her." God demonstrates his sovereignty over all the nations that surround Israel and Judah and that his control is not only over his own nation. V26 "And they shall dwell securely in it, and they shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord their God."

29 – God continues to pronounce judgment against the nations that surround Israel. This time it is Egypt. God denounced them for their arrogance. They thought that they were in charge of their strength on which so many of the other nations leaned for support. The main accusation against Egypt and Pharaoh V9 is that they claimed that the Nile River was theirs and they had created it. In particular, Israel kept turning to Egypt in time of difficulty instead of the Lord. So the Lord was about to remove Egypt as one to which anyone would look for help. V16 "And it shall never again be a reliance of the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity, when they turn to them for aid. Then they will know that I am the Lord God." It is also noteworthy that God demonstrated his sovereignty over nations when he says that he will give Egypt to Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar as payment for doing his work. V20 "I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored because they worked for me, declares the Lord."

30 – The day of the Lord's judgment against Egypt was very near. He would break both the arms of Pharaoh and Egypt by their defeat at the hand of Babylon. That way they could not even lift a sword and no one would ever turn to them for help again. Again the repeated phrase is, "Then they will know that I am the Lord when I…" It seems that these sayings are specific enough as prophecies that people would know that it was the Lord who did them.

31 – In this chapter the Lord continues to pronounce judgment against the nations. This chapter seems to be against Lebanon even though it is in relation to Egypt and God's actions against it. They are denounced because of their arrogance and pride. She stood tall as a giant cedar by the waters but

thought that it was due to her own doing. When she did not give credit to God, the tree was cut down and lay on the ground. The birds that had gone there for refuge were forced to fly away. No nation could look to Lebanon for help any longer. V14 "All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For they are all given over to death, to the world below, among the children of man, with those who go down to the pit."

32 – This chapter picks up the pronouncement of judgment against Egypt again. They thought they were invincible but they would be defeated. They were compared to one of the great creatures of the rivers with which certainly they were familiar. Just like them, they would be caught in a net and defeated. V21 "The mighty chiefs shall speak of them with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: 'They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.'"

33 – This chapter runs the gamut from who was responsible for being punished when the watchman warned them, to whether or not the Lord was just when he punished people based on what they were currently doing, to the word coming to Ezekiel that the city of Jerusalem had fallen. If one hears the warning of the watchman but fails to heed and prepare, one holds his own guilt. If one was righteous and then turns unrighteous, he is punished for his unrighteousness, while one who was wicked who turns will live in righteousness. V18-19 "When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them." The word came to the exiles that their city of Jerusalem had fallen. The prophet knew it first and was to announce it before the herald arrived. V32 "When this comes – and come it will – then they will know that a prophet has been among them." God comforted and encouraged his servants with a personal word even though the people he spoke to did not listen to him.

34 – The Lord announced that he would take over as shepherd of his sheep since the shepherds they had were selfish and only interested in their own well-being and comfort. He would judge and protect his flock, not only from outsiders but also from each other. V30-31 "And they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God. And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord God."

Sometimes we feel like we do not "get anything" from our reading of God's word. It does not appear to make sense to us. We need to remember that no matter what we feel, it is God's word. We need its nourishment even if it does not feel impacting. Maybe it is like the food of vegetables, good for us but not our first choice.

35 – The Lord pronounced his word against Mount Seir that represents Edom. These were the descendants of Esau. Their issue was that they took advantage of the fall of God's people even though he was present in that land. V14-15 "Thus says the Lord God: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

36 – The real issue in this chapter seems to be that God announced that while he would restore Israel to their land, he would not do it for their sake but for the sake of his holy Name. It was that name that his people disgraced when they went into foreign lands and those people mocked his people and therefore his Name. V22-23 "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name…And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes." V32 "It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel." The Lord gives one of his great promises in this chapter in V26-27. "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statures and be careful to obey my rules." That promise is fulfilled through Jesus as God gives us the Holy Spirit to live within his people.

37 – This was a "vast army." What would it look like to Ezekiel to stand over all those bones and prophesy what God said was going to happen? Not only was it a vast army but also the bones were "very dry." The people were crying out, V11 "Our bones are dried up and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off." Into that situation God made his announcement. Not only were the bodies reconstructed, but also life was added. The breath of the winds came and entered them and they lived. The chapter continues with the prophecy that God would make Israel and Judah one nation again. He would do it so everyone would know he was the one who did it.

No situation should ever be perceived as without hope when God is involved. This does not say that he will do it or when he will do it, but he is able to do it. There is no reason why God needs to use the prophet to be involved in this process but at each stage, he is told, "Prophesy, son of man." Let us be faithful to tell your word whenever we understand it is your word. What a privilege we have to possess all of it!

38 – God set up this great nation, Gog and Magog, to gather a great number of nations together to attack his people Israel. Then God would intervene with all kinds of weather disasters to accomplish the victory. What chance do all the military capabilities have against the weather interferences? This is impressive and again it appears that God did it to demonstrate that he is holy, meaning that he is different, unique, and set apart. V16 "You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."

39 – It appears that the impression the nations had of the God of Israel when Israel was captured and carried away into captivity was that he was weak and powerless. God set up this scenario to completely demonstrate that was not the case. Rather as he had said, it was because of Israel's sins that they were carried away. He demonstrated his power by not only defeating all the enemies that would gather against his people but by also restoring the nation of Israel to its rightful place. V7 "And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel." V21 "And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them."

40 – The Lord gave Ezekiel a vision of the dimensions of a temple that would be built. These are not the dimensions of a temple that has been built so one explanation is that it is a temple that is still to be built in the future. V4 "And the man said to me, Son of man, look with your eyes, and hear with your ears, and set your heart upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you. Declare all that you see to the house of Israel." It seems that the dimensions of the elements of the building in relation to each other is what is important.

What would have happened if we had built Valley Bible's new building according to these dimensions?

41 – Not only are the dimensions important but so also are the details about the rituals that are to be offered at this temple. Another thing that is noteworthy is the fine ornamentation that accompanies this temple. What is striking is the phrase in V4, "This is the Most Holy Place." In V22 it describes the item as, "This is the table that is before the Lord." The presence of the Lord dominates these chapters.

42 – The instructions are given for the offering meals that the priests eat. They were to eat it all before going back outside. There is something about the holy place that was to be kept separate from the common area. V20 describes the court as separate with, ". . . a wall around it, 500 cubits long and 500 cubits broad, to make a separation between the holy and the common."

43 – In this chapter Ezekiel was given a vision that was the reverse of what he saw in the earlier chapters. The glory of the Lord that departed the city in the early chapters is seen returning in all his glory. V5 "The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold the glory of the Lord filled the temple." God invited them to put away their sin and he would dwell among them forever. The prophet was told to describe the plans for the temple and it would be an incentive to the people to put away their sin. V10 "As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be

ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan." Then a ritual was carried out that would purify the new altar so that it would be holy. There was something about the design that should cause the people to put away their sin.

44 – Ezekiel was given instructions about the new city and temple. The eastern gate remains closed over today and will only be entered by the prince. This has been interpreted to mean the Messiah. Only those priests who have been faithful will be permitted to serve in the new temple. Further regulations were given concerning the priests. Most of these regulations seem to be repeated from the books of the law but must now be followed completely. V6 "And say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, enough of all your abominations…" V18 contains instructions for the priests. "They shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat." How does that apply today without air conditioning? It surely was hotter there in the desert of Israel. V19 says, "And they shall put on other garments, lest they communicate holiness to the people with their garments." Here is another great reminder of the privilege God offers. V28 "This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance: and you shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession."

45 – The land was to be divided fairly by the prince. He was to rule in complete justice. These seem to imply that the earlier problems of the nation may have been due to injustice by the prince and impurity by the priests. There is also great emphasis in the early verses about a portion set aside as a holy place, for the priests. Their houses would be there. The property belonged to the whole nation but it was where the priests would live. V1 "When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set apart for the Lord a portion of the land as a holy district…It shall be holy throughout its whole extent."

46 – The instructions are given for the regular offerings that are to be given at the new temple by the prince and the people. The prince is to enter and leave by the eastern gate but the people are to enter by either the north or south gate and leave by the opposite. They are not to exit by the same gate they enter. The animals sacrificed are to be accompanied by specific amounts of grain and oil for some offerings. There are some offerings that are to be made every morning and every new moon. The other issue that appears to be a corrective for the practices of the past has to do with the property of the prince and his sons. They are not to take any of the property of the people as their own, V18 "so that none of my people shall be scattered from his property." There is a phrase in V7 and 11 that says, "and with the lambs as much as one is able to give." V13 "You shall provide a lamb a year old without blemish for a burnt offering to the Lord daily; morning by morning you shall provide it."

47 – This chapter describes the flow of the river from the temple. Every thousand cubits out it gets deeper so that it becomes too deep to cross. It is a river that brings healing and life. The emphasis on the river that flows is for the nations that it brings food through the trees along its banks and that it never fails to bring healing through its presence. V8-9 "When the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes." The rest of the chapter describes the division of the land among the tribes. This water section is often linked to Jesus' words when he describes that he will be a stream of living water from which anyone may drink in John 7:37-39. It seems that V22 is significant. "You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the sojourners who reside among you and have had children among you. They shall be to you as native-born children of Israel."

48 – The impression from this chapter is that everything ends up perfect. The land is divided perfectly with equal distances and equal amounts. The temple area is given its rightful place in the center and the loyal priests are given their land closest to it. The prince gets a fair portion but will not cheat the people and the people are given land proportionate surrounding the temple area and everything is exactly the way it is supposed to be. At the center is the phrase, "The Lord is there." Amen. May it ever so be in our lives!