

irritating heat that will be reflected from the skin. That is why the comparison is made to an oven.

Verse 11. It is an almost universal rule that where undue power is obtained, the commission of sex crimes takes place. The women of Judah were sacrificed to the lust of the Babylonian invaders.

Verse 12. Cruel tortures were inflicted upon the leading men, and no respect was paid to old age, the invaders being interested only in themselves.

Verse 13. *To grind* is from *TECHOWN* which Strong defines, "A hand mill; hence a millstone." This was what the young men had to work, and others had to carry such heavy loads of wood that they *fell* (staggered) under the load.

Verse 14. The gates of cities were the places of communication between them, and the elders or older men were the ones who occupied that position (Job 29: 7, 8). But that setup was absent, for the elders had been carried into captivity. Under these conditions the musicians would have no inclination to play.

Verse 15. This verse is somewhat general and refers to the same sadness of heart the other verses describe concerning their situation after the invasion.

Verse 16. This verse was true literally and figuratively. The king on the throne in Jerusalem was taken off to the land of Babylon. Also, the crown or glory of the nation had been removed by the humiliation of the exile.

Verse 17. The people of Judah had a prostrated feeling from both physical and mental causes. Their eyes had become dim through much weeping.

Verse 18. *Mountain* is sometimes used figuratively; it is so used here. Zion was the capital of Judah and it had been made so desolate that wild creatures ran over it.

Verse 19. The mourning people of Judah could not refrain from noting the great contrast between the throne of God and those of men. The changing from one generation to another does not affect the throne of God, for he is infinite and perpetual in power.

Verse 20. The disconsolate people of Judah are stinging under the thoughts of their fallen state. *Wherefore* is from *MAH* which Strong defines, "Properly in interrogation. What?

how? why? when? Also an exclamation, what!" The Jews seemed to be astonished that their fortunes had fallen so low in view of the power of God. The term *for ever* is explained to mean *so long time*. Human experience tells one that a few years seem like many when he is in discomfort.

Verse 21. This verse may properly be regarded both as prophecy and present desire. The unfortunate citizens of Judah were then in a state of complete dejection; those especially who were in the land of Babylon. They did not have the heart to sing religious songs, but instead they hanged their harps on the willows of the streams and sat down on the banks to meditate. This was also prophesied hundreds of years before by David in the 137th Psalm.

Verse 22. The book and chapter closes with a repetition of the terrible state of mind possessed by the cast-off nation of God. The expressions represent the personal feelings of the righteous Jeremiah, a faithful prophet, and also those of the sinful nation who were suffering the just chastisement for their evil conduct.

EZEKIEL 1

General remarks. Before beginning my manuscript on this book, and especially the first chapter, I spent a considerable amount of time in study. I have consulted various commentaries and other works of reference such as histories and dictionaries. I was aware that most of the explanations that are offered as to the four creatures and their significance, insisted on recognizing the characteristics of the God of all creation, and this in opposition to the idea that they could signify any governments among men. However, there need be no difficulty on this point, for all of the glory and other greatness attributed to these powers of the world must be acknowledged as coming from God because He was concerned with the progress of them in view of the relations they had with His people. (See Daniel 2: 37; 4: 17, 32; 5: 18.)

Here is another thought that should be given consideration. Any explanation that is offered on a passage of the Bible should agree with the historical facts that may be learned from authentic sources. The interpretation that will be given on the meaning of the symbols shown in this chapter should be virtually true historically

of the institutions that will be referred to. If this is true (and it is assured that it will be) then no violence can possibly be done the great subject at hand.

Verse 1. *Thirtieth year* refers to the age of Ezekiel when he began to write. Verse 3 says he was a priest and Numbers 4: 3 requires the priest to be at that age when he starts his term; not that he was acting as priest, for he was in Babylon at the time. The captives were scattered over different places in the land of the Chaldeans and Ezekiel was with the group that was by the river *Chebar*. This was a stream that flowed into the Euphrates some 200 miles north of Babylon. At this time and place the Lord began his communication with Ezekiel for the purpose of prophecy.

Verse 2. *Jehoiachin's captivity*. The Babylonian captivity was accomplished in three stages and the account is in 2 Kings 24 and 25. After the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar took possession of Jerusalem which marked the start of the 70-year epoch. Yet the king of Judah was permitted to occupy his throne as a vassal under the authority of the king of Babylon. After eight years of such a reign Jehoiakim died and his son Jehoiachin came to the throne. But he reigned only three months, and then the king of Babylon took him off the throne and carried him to the land of Babylon. At that time the greatest portion of the citizens of Judah were taken and among them was the prophet Ezekiel. Eleven years later the third and final stage of the captivity occurred. These three stages of the captivity are frequently referred to as the 1st, 2nd and 3rd captivities. Since Ezekiel was taken with the 2nd one, or at the time when Jehoiachin was taken, he dates his writing from that event. In other words, Ezekiel had been in Babylon five years when he began writing.

Verse 3. Ezekiel speaks of himself in the third person in this verse while most of his compositions are in the first person. The word *expressly* has none in the original and does not add anything to the thought. However, we may note that in the first verse the Lord communicated with the prophet in a vision and in this verse it is by word. The conclusion is that he was both to see and hear in his service as an inspired prophet. *Hand of the*

Lord is a phrase often used in the Bible and it means here that the Lord took Ezekiel in hand; not only to control but also to assist him.

Verse 4. The Babylonian captivity as a whole had been going on for 13 years when Ezekiel began to write, but the complete subjugation of Judah was still six years in the future. Hence it was appropriate for the prophet to start his great book as if it were all still in the future. This accounts for the coming of the *whirlwind* from the *north*, since the Babylonians came into Palestine from that direction. (See the note on that with the comments in Isaiah 14: 31 in volume 3 of this Commentary.) A whirlwind is not only strong and swift but its circulating motion tends to draw articles toward its center. That is why the whirlwind was seen *infolding itself*. The second word is not in the original but the first is from *LAQACH* which Strong defines, "A primitive root; to take (in the widest variety of applications)." The simple meaning of the passage is that this combination of whirlwind and cloud was taking hold of the surrounding materials. The appropriateness of this illustration will appear as the chapter proceeds. There is some uncertainty in the works of reference about the word *amber*, but all agree that it is something that has a distinctive glow as of something highly polished. Again the figure will be seen to be appropriate as we get to the central subject of the chapter.

Verse 5. There existed in ancient times what are referred to as "The Four World Empires," and they figure largely in the prophecies and history of the Bible. The names of those empires (with some variations in some of them which will be noted as occasion suggests) are Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. These empires are the *four living creatures* of this verse. They will be seen to have possessed various characteristics, but this verse names only one and it is that which is common to all of them which is the *likeness of a man*. This signifies intelligence which further means the four creatures were powers among mankind; made up of human beings.

Verse 6. The very title "world empires" would suggest the idea of a rule that is over the whole world; that is, that part which is civilized and subject to government control,

hence the *four faces* and *four wings*, corresponding to the four points of the compass. The figure signifies an institution that can look in all directions with its faces and go in all directions with its wings. Using some poetic words, "I am monarch of all I survey."

Verse 7. The illustrations for the four empires will be drawn from the characteristics of dumb creatures in many instances. However, since the powers are human institutions, the selection and description of the various beasts will be made to conform as far as possible to the higher traits of human beings. The word for *feet* also is rendered "legs," and their being straight denotes they are more graceful in their outline and do not have abrupt, protruding parts as the feet of many animals do. *Sole* means the paw as a whole, and according to Moffatt's translation these paws were "rounded like the feet of calves." Such members would give to the creature a more firm bearing upon the surface over which it traveled.

Verse 8. The writer takes care to tell us that the characteristics he is describing apply to the *four* creatures individually and alike. The general likeness unto *man* in verse 5 denotes intelligence. In this verse the comparison is narrowed down to the *hands* of the man, and that indicates skill which certainly was necessary in accomplishing world-wide dominion.

Verse 9. In symbolic language an animal or other object may be represented as doing things that are above nature, such as trees talking in Judges 9: 8-15. And here we see a creature that can fly and look in four directions at once. This is to illustrate an empire that began at some locality and then spread out in all four directions until it became a world power. *Wings were joined* indicates the ability to fly in any and all directions at one time or as if in one concerted movement. *Turned not* is the same as the preceding thoughts. The creature would not need to turn about to change his direction since he has the equipment and ability for traveling in all directions at the same time.

Verse 10. Let the reader not forget that all figures and their explanations apply to each of the four empires. That does not mean that no differ-

ences existed between the four in their general history for there were many. In fact, no two of them were uniformly alike in their whole make-up and conduct. But as far as this chapter is concerned they are the same for all of them possessed the characteristics portrayed by these symbols and figures of speech. Neither do I wish to appear arbitrary in my selection of characteristics to be attributed to these empires. There are numerous terms in our language that could be used correctly because such vast institutions as we are considering would have many things in common with each other. I only claim that among such traits, the ones that will be named were true of each of the empires. In keeping with the foregoing explanations the following comments are offered on this and the following verses of the chapter. Please note the writer says *they four* had these marks which is the reason for my comments in the beginning of this paragraph. The face of a *man* indicates intelligence; a *lion* is fierce and bold; an *ox* is strong; and an *eagle* has the quality of fleetness and exaltation.

Verse 11. A creature with four wings as described here would be well equipped. The two that were *stretched upward* would enable him to travel, and he would also be protected by the two that *covered his body*.

Verse 12. *Straight forward* and *turned not* was explained at verse 9. The *spirit* that prompted the movements of these creatures will be explained later in the chapter.

Verse 13. This verse is a general description of the four creatures, and the central meaning is that they were lively and attractive which was true of the empires.

Verse 14. *Ran and returned* does not mean they went back to their starting place, for history does not bear out that idea. The word denotes a successful traveling over the civilized world. *Flash of lightning* is not used to indicate that it was only a flash and then soon over. The comparison is to the universal presence of the creatures. This comparison to the general and simultaneous appearance of lightning is used in Matthew 24: 27 and Revelation 1: 7.

Verse 15. The symbol now changes but it is the same subject. There is nothing strange in the idea of another

object to have the same meaning as that of the one form just presented. Jesus spoke many parables to illustrate the one institution, so we should not be confused over the use of two representations by Ezekiel. Furthermore, there is no more difference between the two illustrations of Ezekiel than there was between the many parables spoken by Jesus. All symbols must be interpreted in a way that will agree with the literal facts connected with the subjects intended to be illustrated. Such a procedure will be followed in explaining the *wheel* that is introduced into this passage. Notice it was *by the living creatures*, which denotes that each was to work with the other in their movements. This wheel had *four faces* which corresponds with the four faces of the creatures. *Face* is from PANEH and Strong defines it, "The face (as the part that turns); used in a great variety of applications (literal and figurative) also (prepositional prefix) as a preposition (before, etc.)." From this definition we would understand that *by face* is meant that part of the wheel that turns; that is, its forward and outer edge. But this wheel will be seen to have moved in four directions at once just as the creatures did, which would require that it have four faces in harmony with the four faces of the creatures. A simple wheel would have but two faces, hence we will need the information that will be given in the following verse.

Verse 16. It is evident the wheel that Ezekiel saw was no ordinary one, either in its construction or size. Instead, it was composed of two parts or wheels and one was nested inside the other. *Middle* is from TAVEK and the definition of Strong defines it, "From an unused root meaning to sever; a bisection, i.e. (by implication) the center." Let us suppose two large hoops so nearly the same size that one will just slip inside the other. Now give this last one a quarter turn which will present an object whose four sections will resemble the four quarters of a globe; turning the hoop so that its plane will stand at right angles with the plane of the other. This will give what Ezekiel saw; a *wheel in the middle of a wheel*. And with an object thus constructed it would be prepared to roll in any one of the four directions without

turning, just as the creatures with their four faces could do.

Verse 17. This verse takes the same explanation as that for the four living creatures in verse 9, 12. Since the wheel was a companion symbol with the four creatures it would need to travel along with them.

Verse 18. The *rings* were the fellows or rims, located at that part which is called the face in verse 15. They were *high* or lofty which corresponds with that quality of the eagle in verse 10. *Dreadful* is from a word that is defined "reverence" in Strong's lexicon. The rims or fellows were full of *eyes* and that indicates intelligence as per verse 10. It was appropriate for these eyes to be in the rims of the wheel since that was the part that would be outmost in seeing where to go.

Verse 19. The wheel went whenever the living creatures went because both symbols represented the same thing which was the four empires. By the same token the creatures and the wheel were *lifted up* (made exalted and important) at the same time.

Verse 20. The central meaning of the word for *spirit* is "life" in the sense of consciousness. The *living creatures* would have such a spirit because they were beings that belonged to the animal kingdom. The wheels were normally inanimate objects and hence would not possess such a spirit. Yet in the use of them for symbolical purposes they represented the same things as did the *living creatures* which was the reason for saying *the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels*.

Verse 21. This verse is virtually the same as the preceding one, and the concluding clause of each is exactly the same. The co-operation of the creatures and the wheels signifies that they represent the same thing which is the four world empires noted at verse 5. As to the appropriateness of two different kinds of illustrations for the same thing, see the comments at verse 15.

Verse 22. The *firmament* means a vast expansion like the arch of the sky above the earth. *Terrible* means it was awe-inspiring, and had the appearance of a huge mass of rock crystal formed like a dome to cover the creatures.

Verse 23. Beneath this vast arch or dome of crystal could be seen the winged creatures. *Straight* is from

the same word as in verse 7 and means they were graceful. *One toward the other* is equivalent to *joined one to another* in verse 9. Throughout this whole imagery the one idea that predominates is that of unity in purpose. The wings were for the purpose of protection as well as for exalted traveling. (Verse 11.)

Verse 24. This verse as a whole is a passage intended to show the greatness of the institutions symbolized by the living creatures and the wheels. *Great waters* is a figure and when used in a favorable sense indicates a multitude of people. Such would be a fitting symbol of these empires for they were regarded as including virtually all of the civilized world. *Voice of the Almighty* means the voice of God. This statement is not made on the strength of the word's being capitalized, for all punctuations have been done by man, and while often they are correct, they are of no authority. I have examined the uses of the original word and without a single exception the connection shows it to mean God. Furthermore, Strong defines the original word, "The Almighty" with capital A. This indicates that God was recognized in the four empires, and that also agrees with Daniel 2: 37; 4: 17, 32; 5: 18. *Voice of speech* indicates not only that there was consciousness but intelligence in the creatures which agrees with the fact that the creatures represented governments of and by men. When these creatures were not flying they let their wings down, which indicates they used them then only for defence purposes.

Verse 25. This *voice* was evidently the same as that mentioned in the preceding verse. The Almighty could be heard by the inspired prophet and the force of it would be to confirm the declarations indicated by the passages cited in the preceding verse.

Verse 26. This *throne* was the source from where the voice issued just mentioned. Precious stones are frequently used to compare both the beauty and value of things pertaining to God's arrangements. On this throne was the *likeness of a man* which denotes the Almighty, for Genesis 1: 26 and many other passages teach that man was made in the image of God. However, it is God and not his image that is meant in this place for we have already learned that He was connected with these world governments.

Verse 27. This verse is a highly figurative description of the Almighty. The meaning is that God is as intense as fire, as resplendent as amber, and that the entire Being was radiant with this indescribable glory.

Verse 28. Another figure is added to the picture of the Almighty. He is likened to the rainbow that spans the heavens, betokening the calm that follows a storm and shedding over the earth all of the primary colors. This vision so impressed Ezekiel that he was prostrated and fell dispirited to the ground on his face, where he lay until he heard a voice speaking unto him.

EZEKIEL 2

Verse 1. The voice which Ezekiel heard in the preceding chapter bade him stand upon his feet and it would speak to him. *Son of man*. We have no information in the Bible on why this term was used; especially why it was restricted as it was. It was used at least 92 times for Ezekiel and once for Daniel (Dan. 8: 17). They were the only writing prophets who spent any time in Babylon, but whether that had anything to do with affecting the forms of address I am not able to say.

Verse 2. *Spirit entered into me* means the spirit of encouragement not the Spirit of God. It is true, that Spirit was communicating with the prophet, but it was when He (the Spirit of God) spoke to Ezekiel that his spirit came back to him. This shows the passage to mean that when God spoke to the prophet it encouraged him to "take heart" so that he felt able to stand up. This is similar to the experiences that Daniel had in chapter 8: 17, 18 and 10: 9, 10.

Verse 3. To avoid confusion I shall again explain that Ezekiel was in Babylon, having been carried there with the bulk of the people of Judah at the overthrow of Jehoiachin. Hence many of the predictions of the captivity had been fulfilled, while others were still to come since the "3rd captivity" in the 11th year of Zedekiah was yet pending. Another thing, God wished the captivity to work certain reforms in the lives of His people, and hence they were to be offered many admonitions and warnings. The Lord did not wish Ezekiel to be discouraged if his admonitions were rejected in most instances and therefore he told him that the people to whom

he was sending him were a *rebellious nation*.

Verse 4. The Lord continued his description of the nation to whom he sent Ezekiel as a prophet. They were *stiffhearted* which means they were stubborn. But Ezekiel was to tell them he was approaching them with the word of the Lord.

Verse 5. A man's standing before the Lord does not depend on his success as a speaker of the truth. If he says that which is in harmony with the divine law he will be blessed regardless of whether his teaching is accepted or not. This principle was made known to Ezekiel in this verse. God knew that Israel as a people would not give heed to the admonitions of the prophet but wished him to give them the truth anyhow. But one thing would be accomplished regardless of their attitude and that would be to show them there was a prophet among them.

Verse 6. *Briers, thorns and scorpions* are used figuratively, and refer to the bitter persecutions the prophet would have to face by reason of his unwelcome warnings. The Lord gave Ezekiel the encouragement that he need not be afraid of the people.

Verse 7. The prophet was again told to speak the words of the Lord to the people regardless of their attitude toward his teaching. Timothy was given a like instruction concerning the Gospel (2 Tim. 4:2, 3.)

Verse 8. The particular *rebellion* meant is that of rejecting the word of the Lord. Ezekiel was about to be offered something and he was warned not to rebel against it and thus be like the rebellious nation. The last clause is figurative and refers to some kind of spiritual food.

Verse 9. *Roll of a book* means a piece of writing material was rolled up and was in the hand that appeared. In ancient times books were not bound as they are today, but were written on long strips of the material and then rolled up.

Verse 10. The hand unrolled the book before the prophet and he saw that it was written on both sides. This was unusual because the rule was for the sheets to be written on one side only as it is done today in "regulation" correspondence. Yet in cases of special importance where space is limited and where much is to be said it is permissible to write on both sides. In

the present case there was an urgent need for much space for the subject pertained to lamentations and warnings over the wretched state of God's people.

EZEKIEL 3

Verse 1. See the comments at 1 Kings 20:35 in volume 2 of this Commentary on the subject of prophets performing or acting. In Revelation 10:8-11 John does the same thing that Ezekiel does here. The physical act (made possible by the miraculous help of God) was to symbolize a spiritual circumstance. Since this roll contained the words of God, the eating of it would denote the eating of spiritual food and it would inspire the prophet to speak the truth of God to the *house of Israel*.

Verse 2. *Caused me to eat* was a miracle and it is explained in the preceding verse.

Verse 3. In the case of John (Rev. 10:8-11) the eating of the book had a twofold effect on him, sweet and bitter, but nothing is said about the bitterness in that of Ezekiel, because the personal attitude of the prophet toward the words is the only feature of it that was to be considered in the act. In the case of John in Revelation that of both the speaker and the people were symbolized, hence the bitterness. It was agreeable with Ezekiel to carry the message to Israel because he was a faithful servant of God the same as John. *Belly and bowels* are used to denote the body as a whole, and when used figuratively it denotes that Ezekiel was to be completely possessed by the article. Since the act was a symbol of his being inspired of God it made a circumstance like that of the apostles who were "*filled with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts 2:4).

Verse 4. The Lord's purpose in the preceding verses is made known in this one. Ezekiel was to approach the house of Israel and speak the words He gave him.

Verse 5. *Strange* means foreign and *hard* means difficult, and the people to whom Ezekiel was told to speak did not use that kind of language, but they naturally spoke the same tongue that the prophet used since they both were Jews.

Verse 6. Ezekiel was not even asked to speak to a number of peoples; only to the one, whose native tongue he could understand without any special

help from God. There is no difficulty for an inspired man to speak to any number or kinds of nationalities; that is not the point. On the other hand, a foreign nation might have more pretext for not receiving the words because they would not understand the language; and yet even they would have been more willing to receive the warning than were the Jews who were of a rebellious disposition.

Verse 7. It should be noted that in the frequent statements on the stubbornness of those to whom the prophet was sent, the idea is held out that it is *the house of Israel* or *the people*. This does not prevent any individual in the group from taking a different attitude, and that is largely the explanation of why the Lord insisted on giving them the truth regardless of the general rebellion. There were usually some exceptional instances when certain individuals would accept the admonitions and be profited. The value of this small minority was great enough to justify the work of presenting the word of the Lord though it might bring persecution upon the bearer of the words. It is about time again for the reader to see the long note that was offered in connection with 2 Kings 22: 17 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 8. This verse means that God was to give Ezekiel the boldness necessary to face the threatening looks of the people who would dislike the warnings offered.

Verse 9. An adamant is one of the hardest of stones such as the diamond. It is harder than a flint rock and the term is used figuratively for the firmness that God promised to give Ezekiel in his dealing with the hard-faced people of Israel. See a similar assurance given to the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 1: 18, 19).

Verse 10. God communicated with Jeremiah for the purpose of inspiration in the form of speaking as well as by giving him the sense of it in his mind.

Verse 11. *Them of the captivity* had direct reference to the people of Israel who were then in Babylon. Ezekiel could appear to them because he was in that land also. There were some of the Israelites still in Palestine because the "3rd captivity" had not yet taken place. And again the prophet was commanded to speak the word regardless of their attitude toward it.

This instruction that was repeated so frequently was to the end that Ezekiel need not conclude that he had made a failure just because he could not bring his people to accept the teaching. This subject of the respective responsibility of the speaker and hearer will be treated more thoroughly in a bracket of verses yet in this chapter.

Verse 12. *Spirit took me up* denotes that the Spirit took charge of the prophet and conducted him to a more suitable place where he could speak to the people. At the same time he heard a strong voice giving his evidence of the presence of God.

Verse 13. These *creatures* and *wheels* are the same that were described in chapter one, applying to the four world empires that succeeded each other.

Verse 14. *Spirit lifted me up* has the same meaning as "spirit took me up" in verse 12. These sentiments which the prophet expressed were because of the unfortunate situation of his people. The bitterness would be increased by the knowledge that their own stubbornness had brought these misfortunes upon them, and he had to be the bearer of the unwelcome message from the Lord.

Verse 15. *Astonished* is from SHAMEM and Strong defines it, "To stun (or intransitively grow numb), i.e. devastate or (figuratively) stupefy (both usually in a passive sense)." The thought is that when Ezekiel saw his brethren and beheld their condition, he was so overcome that he had nothing to say for seven days. A like circumstance is recorded in Job 2: 13.

Verse 16. The special message from the Lord came to Ezekiel at the end of the seven days mentioned in the preceding verse. The Lord seems to have respected the feelings of his prophet and did not disturb him for a period.

Verse 17. The subject of the special message was then stated to Ezekiel. He was to be placed in a very important position of responsibility with reference to the house of Israel in that he was to act as a *watchman*. That word is from TSAPHAN, which Strong defines, "A primitive root; properly to lean forward, i.e. to peer into the distance; by implication to observe, await." This definition agrees with the actual work of a man who occupied the walls of ancient cities to

watch for any danger that might threaten the city. If he saw an army or other hostile force approaching he was to announce it to the citizens and give them the opportunity to escape if possible or defend themselves otherwise.

Verse 18. From this verse through 21 the subject is the respective responsibilities of a watchman and those over whom he has been appointed. The principles involved in this situation have been stated frequently and they have always been in force wherever man's conduct toward others was involved. If a watchman fails to warn a wicked man of his danger it will not shield him from the effects of his wickedness. Yet his own death will not atone for the negligence of the watchman; he must die also.

Verse 19. A watchman might not be able to induce a wicked man to turn from his sinful course and the guilty one would have to suffer. But if the watchman has done what he could to turn the unrighteous man from his great error, the entire blame will be placed on his head and not on that of the watchman.

Verse 20. God does not desire that any man shall sin nor does He actually tempt him with evil in order to induce him to go wrong (James 1: 13). But the Lord subjects his servants to tests of faith and such things are meant by *stumblingblocks*. If a servant of God yields to this test and does wrong because the watchman did not warn him, then both the backsliding servant and unfaithful watchman will have to die.

Verse 21. The principle regarding the responsibility of a teacher as set forth in this verse is the same as the Lord has always maintained. The success of a would-be reformer will have nothing to do with his personal reward. It might be possible for him to achieve what would appear as a success and yet he would be condemned because he did not operate according to the truth. On the other hand, a man could fail to accomplish the desired result even when offering the word of God faithfully, because the hearer would not accept the teaching. In such a case the hearer alone would be condemned while the teacher would be blessed. How wonderful it is, then, when the teachings offered is right and the hearer accepts and obeys it; both will be blessed.

Verse 22. The foregoing speech was made to the prophet while he was in the midst of his people near the river Chebar. Now the Lord wishes him to go away into a plain for further inspired communications. *Plain* is from *biqan* and Strong defines it, "Properly a split, i.e. a wide level valley between mountains." It would be a place secluded and thus a suitable one for a private conversation between the prophet and God.

Verse 23. Ezekiel obeyed the instructions given him and went forth into the secluded spot. After arriving there the Lord appeared in the form of a glorious halo that overcame the prophet and he fell prostrated to the earth.

Verse 24. *The spirit entered* denotes that the prophet was rallied from his prostrated frame of mind. After regaining his strength he was told to go to his own house. It was not the time for him to be abroad among the people, for the Lord was going to give him very much information upon his work with the nation.

Verse 25. These *bands* were not literal but were the hindrances that the rebellious Jews would put against the work of the prophet.

Verse 26. *Tongue cleave to roof of mouth* was not to be a physical obstruction in every case. It was virtually the same kind of restriction that was placed on Jeremiah (Jer. 7: 16, 27). No use to waste words on the stubborn people, but when the proper time comes the Lord will inform him of it.

Verse 27. Doubtless the Lord had in mind some future date when a shall number of the Jews would listen to instruction. When that time came He would open the mouth of the prophet, which means he would authorize him to speak. When that was done there would be some who would hear and profit thereby. But before such an event occurs the prophet was to be given a series of revelations, some of which would be in the form of personal acting; see the comments offered on that interesting subject at 1 Kings 20: 35 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

EZEKIEL 4

Verse 1. The chief sin of the Jewish nation and for which it went into captivity was idolatry. In order to impress its people with the seriousness of the offence, the prophet was

required to do some of the "acting" mentioned in the preceding chapter. He was to dramatize the siege of Jerusalem which was the capital of the nation. In this drama he was to do some very unpleasant performances. The city of Jerusalem was to be represented by a tile or brick, on which a likeness of Jerusalem was portrayed.

Verse 2. The 70-year captivity had been going on for some time when Ezekiel began to write, but the city of Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed because the 3rd stage of the subjugation was still to be accomplished. That great event was to be preceded with a siege, and the prophet was to "act out" the same by going through the motions of it in some figurative way.

Verse 3. The city had a protecting wall around it which would have to be attacked before it could be taken. As a representation of this wall Ezekiel was to get an *iron pan* which could be placed on edge in the position of such a protecting structure. This pan was to be raised up between the tile and the prophet who was to act as a besieging army. *This shall be a sign* means that the Jews were to take this performance of Ezekiel as a sign of what was about to happen to their city.

Verse 4. *Lay* is used figuratively and means that Ezekiel would be going through this unpleasant experience to emphasize the iniquity of the house of Israel. Each day he lay on his side stood for a year in the sinful history of the nation. *Bear their iniquity* denotes that the prophet was to undergo this affliction as a sign of the greatness of Israel's sin.

Verse 5. The children of Israel were inclined toward idolatry from the beginning of their history as was shown at Mt. Sinai and afterward. But the specific length of time named in this verse should be dated from the enactment of national idolatry (1 Kings 12: 26) which was in 975 B.C. to 585 B.C., and that was about the date of Ezekiel's performance just described.

Verse 6. The prophet was to lie on his left side when the case of Israel (the 10 tribes) was being treated. After that he was to lie on his right side to indicate the house of Judah, and that was to continue 40 days. Various theories have been offered in the works of reference as to why there was only the smaller number for Judah; but I am not convinced

that any of them is well founded. It is true that Judah was regarded as the greater offender from the standpoint of responsibility, for she had the example of Israel before her and should have profited by the lesson. But in actual years devoted to the abominable practice, Israel far exceeded Judah. It is not necessary to go into any speculation beyond the known facts of history.

Verse 7. *Set thy face* means that Ezekiel was to take his reclining position to indicate the siege of Jerusalem. *Arm uncovered* indicates that all hindrances were to be removed that might make a siege ineffective.

Verse 8. No literal bands would have been necessary, for Ezekiel was an obedient servant and ready always to do the Lord's bidding. Yet he was under an obligation to be as binding as if he had been tied with ropes. In thus acting his part he would be showing the firmness of the siege.

Verse 9. Ezekiel was directed to prepare certain articles of food. This would require him to be up and about the community more or less, which indicates that his position of lying on his side was not literally continuous, but only for the greater part of each day. Short intervals had to be used for the preparation of these articles of diet. The materials designated were such as a famine would produce, and that was one of the subjects the prophet was to portray in his acting.

Verse 10. The short rationing of meat described was another circumstance usually connected with a famine that is brought on by a siege.

Verse 11. Even drinking water is frequently very scarce in a siege. There was no actual shortage of that with Ezekiel, but he was made to ration it for himself as a further sign of the famine about to come on Jerusalem.

Verses 12-15. The history of mankind is one in which it is common to see one man enduring unpleasant experiences for the sake of another. This has been especially true of the prophets according to Jeremiah 13: 1-8; 27: 2, and the case of Ezekiel's lying so long upon his sides. Now in the present verse we have another instance of a very disagreeable task imposed on the prophet. Smith's Bible Dictionary states that dung was

sometimes used as fuel in ancient times. However, it was usually for heating purposes only, which would not be so objectionable. But in the case at hand the prophet was told to prepare his food with this substance as fuel. The necessary handling of such material in connection with cooking a meal would be very unpleasant, especially if the original order had been retained here. But upon the complaint of Ezekiel the Lord permitted him to substitute the discharges from a beast which would be less repulsive though bad enough. This unusual performance was to be a sign to the children of Israel of the unpleasant experiences which they were destined to have among the heathen nations where they had been sent as captives.

Verse 16. To avoid confusion it is well to keep in mind the fact of "the three captivities," or the three stages in the subjugation of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. For a more extended comment on this subject see 2 Kings 24: 1 in volume 2 of this Commentary. Two of these captivities had taken place when Ezekiel began to write. The third one was still to come but not very far in the future. The famine that is predicted in this verse occurred in that terrible event, and the Biblical account of it is given in 2 Kings 25: 3. The statements of this verse are literal and were fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar threw Jerusalem into a siege.

Verse 17. No material facts are added in this verse except to describe the immediate effects of the famine. *Astonied* is from SHAMEM which Strong defines, "To stun (or intrinsically grow numb)." The lack of food caused the people to grow numb and behold each other with a stunned countenance. All of this was to be brought upon them as a punishment for their iniquity.

EZEKIEL 5

Verse 1. The prophet was directed to do some more acting to which reference has been made frequently. The head is the most important part of the body, and the Lord selected that part of Ezekiel's person in the present drama. The weighing of the hairs was necessary in order to make the equal divisions that were called for.

Verse 2. The bulk of the hairs was to be divided into thirds, correspond-

ing to the three points in verse 12. *Midst of the city* could not mean Jerusalem literally, because Ezekiel was in Babylon and there is no evidence that he ever left it. The phrase means he was to perform these things in the midst of the people of whose former kingdom the city of Jerusalem was the capital. (See verse 5.) The prophet was to go out among the people and burn one division of the hairs in their sight. He would hold a division in one hand and with the other he would hack or hew it to bits. The other third of the hairs was to be tossed out and let be scattered with the wind. Apparently these last hairs, representing actual living persons, were set free to go where they would. Yet that was not to be so, for even those who escaped the first two fates were doomed to be pursued with hostile intent, hence the Lord said he would do what Ezekiel could not humanly do; make a sword follow after the scattered hairs.

Verse 3. Before making the divisions described in the preceding verse, Ezekiel was to reserve a *few in number*. (This refers to the "remnant" recorded in Ezra 2: 64.) He was to bind them in his garment which would indicate an act to shield them from the ravages of the three events just described.

Verse 4. The "remnant," however, was not to escape entirely from tribulation, hence Ezekiel was directed to take ~~some~~ of the hairs he had placed in the folds of his garment and burn them. The Lord explained that a fire (figuratively) would come out against the house of Israel.

Verse 5. *This is Jerusalem* explains that what Ezekiel was directed to do was to be fulfilled upon Jerusalem as was stated at verse 2. *Set it in the midst of nations*. God bestowed great honors on Jerusalem by giving her such prominence among the nations.

Verse 6. Jerusalem did not literally commit more or greater idolatry than the nations of heathendom, for that would have been next to impossible. But when considered in the light of her opportunities and her professions, she had committed abomination *more than the countries about*. Specifically, she had substituted *wickedness* for the *judgments* of the Lord and refused to walk in the law of God.

Verse 7. *Multiplied* is from HAMON and the definition in Strong's lexicon

is, "A noise, tumult, crowd; also quietude, wealth." The thought is that Jerusalem made a greater ado than the surrounding nations as to her importance of wealth and strength. In spite of such claims, however, she did not show as consistent an attitude toward the law she professed to follow as did the heathen nations.

Verse 8. It may be observed that much of Ezekiel's writing seems to be directed more especially against Jerusalem than against the nation generally. That can be explained by the fact that most of the nation was already in exile and suffering their punishment, while Jerusalem as a city was still standing and facing the third and last stage of the captivity. Jerusalem was the capital city and was largely responsible for the state of corruption among the people through the power and example of the leaders, hence God declared, "I am against thee."

Verse 9. This means that the punishment the Lord intended to inflict on Jerusalem would be greater than had ever been put on her before.

Verse 10. This verse predicts some of the awful effects of a famine that was to be brought upon Jerusalem by the siege. It would seem impossible for parents to be starved to such an extent that they would eat the flesh of their own children. But hunger is a terrible motive, and this very deed has been committed (2 Kings 6: 25-29).

Verse 11. The defilement refers to the practice of idolatry which the people of Jerusalem had mixed with the worship prescribed by the Lord. *Will diminish thee* was a prediction of the overthrow of the city, both as to its power or authority and also materially in that it was destined to be taken and burned.

Verse 12. These three means of reducing the great capital city would fulfill the symbolic prediction that was made by the acting of the prophet in verse 2. The three items would logically result in the almost total destruction of the nation. *Pestilence* and *famine* are tied together as one because a serious scarcity of food generally breeds disease. Some of the citizens tried to resist the enemy by fighting but were defeated in battle. Some escaped immediate death on the battle field and fled into distant re-

gions, but they could not run away from God and the sword caught up with them.

Verse 13. *I will be comforted* could not mean that God takes personal joy out of the suffering of his people. The thought is that the Lord will be satisfied with his work of reproofing the nation through the severe chastisement.

Verse 14. National "pride" is not endorsed by the Lord at any time, for pride is always condemned wherever it exists. Yet it is a strong punishment upon any nation to humiliate it before the eyes of other nations, and that was to be one form of divine judgment upon Jerusalem and her people.

Verse 15. There was a twofold purpose in punishing the people of Israel in the sight of other nations. One was to bring Israel to repentance and the other was to serve as a warning to those heathen groups. The like object was in the divine mind in recording the facts of ancient times for the use of men in the days of the Christian Dispensation (1 Cor. 10: 11; Rom. 15: 4). Such is the meaning of this verse by including the word *instruction* which was to apply to the heathen observers.

Verse 16. When God sends his judgments on Israel, it should be a lesson to *them* (the heathen) and cause them to improve their national ways.

Verse 17. The items threatened are a repetition of what has previously been stated. An important declaration is connected with it, *I the Lord have spoken it*.

EZEKIEL 6

Verse 1. Ezekiel was an inspired prophet and spoke or wrote only the *word of the Lord* as it came unto him.

Verse 2. *The mountains of Israel* were material objects and could have no moral responsibilities. But the people made a specialty of erecting altars and idols on the "high places" and offering their abominable services thereon. Hence in the form of personification the Lord directed his prophet to write against these mountains. *Set thy face* is a figure of speech and means that Ezekiel was to focus his attention upon the object mentioned and then write as the Lord directed him.

Verse 3. The thought of the preceding verse is maintained in this, and

the impersonation is extended to include other geographical parts of the land. None of them has any responsibility in the corruptions being condemned, but the impression of guilt should be greater before the mind of the guilty ones by such an all-out picture of the scene. The particular complaint is literally denoted by the words *high places*.

Verse 4. The altars and idols were literally destroyed as the nation went down in captivity. But that fact may well be regarded as a sign of the complete cure from idolatry that was brought about by the exile in the land of Babylon. See the historical note at Isaiah 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 5. These dead bodies being laid before the idols would not be as a sacrificial offering, but as a token of the uselessness of false gods. If such deities could not preserve the physical lives of their worshipers, they surely could not provide them any spiritual help.

Verse 6. The weakness of false gods was to be further shown in that they could not protect the homes and cities of the country. It is a poor head that cannot take the proper oversight of its own body, yet these images that were worshiped by the people of Israel were powerless to preserve even the altars erected to their worship.

Verse 7. The sight of slain men right in the midst of the multitude of idols would prove their frailty. The logical conclusion that such a situation should suggest is that *I am the Lord*, meaning the God of Israel is the true Lord.

Verse 8. The *remnant* promised is numbered in Ezra 2: 64. The captivity in Babylon lasted 70 years and the ravages of that period reduced the population of Israel from some millions to this number.

Verse 9. *Shall remember me among the nations* was sadly fulfilled by the children of Israel after they got into the land of Babylon. Their dejected frame of mind is forcefully described by a prophecy of David in Psalms 137. *I am broken*. Strong defines the original for the last word, "A primitive root; to burst (literally or figuratively)." Of course it is used figuratively here and means the Lord was deeply disappointed over the conduct of his people. *Whorish heart* means their lusting after false gods, as re-

ligious unfaithfulness is commonly compared to moral corruption in the Bible. *Shall loathe themselves* refers to the complete cure from idolatry that was accomplished by the captivity. (See the notes at Isaiah 1: 25.)

Verse 10. The main object the Lord had in view by the whole work of the captivity was to convince Israel that He is the only true God. *Do this evil* means something painful, not anything wrong morally.

Verse 11. Strong says the original for *smite* means to strike, literally or figuratively. Ezekiel was to do this "acting" with his hand and foot as a gesture of emphasis. It would be a sign of the Lord's determination to impose a punishment upon the disobedient nation. The three items named were commented upon at Jeremiah 14: 12 and other places previously considered in this Commentary.

Verse 12. A pestilence, however, could occur from conditions other than famine, and the Lord threatened to bring it upon some of the people who would not be hemmed by the siege. The general thought is that no one can escape the chastisement that He determines against the unfaithful servants.

Verse 13. *Slain men among their idols* was to signify the weakness of the false gods the children of Israel had been worshipping. The presence of these dead bodies in the same area with the idols would be proof of the helplessness thereof. *Hills and mountains* are named because they were favorite spots on which the idols and their altars were built. *Trees* also were used as desirable places for the idolatrous service, and they selected a *green* or living tree, which Strong defines, "to be . . . figuratively prosperous." Something alive might suggest a source of good whereas a dead one would not. There is nothing about a dead tree that would suggest anything to be worshiped. *Sweet savor* refers to the incense that was burned in sacrifice to a god because of its fragrant odor.

Verse 14. Concerning *Diblah*, the Funk and Wagnalls Bible Dictionary says the following: "No such place is known and the true reading may be 'to Riblah' in the extreme north of the Lebanon region, making the whole expression mean: 'from south to north, i.e., from one end of the land

to the other." The significance to us is that God threatened a widespread desolation over the land as a punishment for their idolatry.

EZEKIEL 7

Verse 1. *Moreover* occurs frequently in the Authorized Version but seldom has any word in the original; whenever it does, it means "a repetition or continuance." It is a writer's casual way of saying he has something more to say.

Verse 2. *Land* is from a word that means literally the soil, but the application is to the people who inhabit it. It is a common way of referring to a land or country when the writer really means the people. It is true that if physical damage should be brought upon the soil it would be a misfortune to the people who depend on it for a living. To threaten an end to the land means the end of its productiveness for the inhabitants. Such a fate awaited the land of Israel, for it was to be taken over by a foreign nation. *Four corners* is a figure of speech meaning the entire area.

Verse 3. The antecedent of *thee* is "land" in the preceding verse. The application of the judgments upon the land also is explained in that verse. *Recompense . . . thine abominations* means the land was to be treated according to the abominable practices that it had harbored or encouraged.

Verse 4. The immediate purpose of most of the judgments upon Israel was to convince them that *I am the Lord*. The reason this was the outstanding issue was the national sin of idolatry of which the people of God were guilty. If they are impressed with the fundamental fact that God is the only true One, the conclusion would be established that idolatry is wrong in every particular.

Verse 5. *Only* is from *ECHAD* which Strong defines, "Properly united, i.e. one; or (as an ordinal) first." *Evil* does not mean moral wrong, but some kind of adversity. The verse means that one great calamity was at hand, which we are to understand was the destruction of Jerusalem and the complete subjugation of Judah.

Verse 6. *It is come* signifies the same thought as the preceding verse does; that the final downfall of the nation was about due.

Verse 7. Usually the word *morning* when used figuratively means some-

thing favorable; that a new day has come. But in the present case it is an unfavorable term because it signifies that *the day of trouble* had dawned. *Sounding again* is from one word and is defined "a shout" in Strong's lexicon. The thought is that no shouts of joy will be heard on the mountains, for it is to be a time of trouble.

Verse 8. *Shortly pour out* was a literal prediction, referring to the destruction of Jerusalem at the 3rd and final stage of the captivity.

Verse 9. *Eye shall not . . . have pity* sounds harsh, but it refers to the same penalty about to be imposed upon Judah in the loss of her capital city. That which will make it just is the fact that it was called for by *their ways of iniquity*.

Verse 10. These terms are all used figuratively and denote the same thought as that in the preceding verse; namely, the final overthrow of Jerusalem.

Verse 11. *Rod* means a ruling influence, and violence had become the ruling element in the nation. This was chiefly because the ruling or leading classes of men had become violently corrupt in their practices.

Verses 12, 13. Transactions in real estate will not be important, whether a buyer thinks he has obtained a bargain or a seller imagines he had to sell at a sacrifice. The foreign nation will have charge of the land and no deals will be of any force.

Verse 14. When a movement was about to be made in ancient times a trumpet was sounded as a signal to all interested parties. (Jeremiah 6: 1.) The people in Jerusalem were theoretically ready to travel yet no one was disposed to face the foe. The wrath of God was very much in evidence by the presence of the invading army, or at least by indications that it would be present at any time.

Verse 15. *The sword* was that of the Babylonians that was to hem the city of Jerusalem by a siege. That would throw the inhabitants into the grip of famine which usually causes a pestilence because of undernourishment.

Verse 16. A number would be able to escape, both of those in the city and also of the ones scattered out over the open country. However, to escape the contact with the sword would not mean complete satisfaction.

They would be forced to flee for refuge to places of safety among the mountains. Their mournful state is likened to that of a dove whose characteristic cry is known to all. But the bawling of the people of Judah was to be embittered by the knowledge that it was for their own sins.

Verse 17. This weakness would be the mental reaction from the distressful situation. It would be the sadness of defeatism and loss of morale.

Verse 18. This verse is another reminder of David's prediction in Psalms 137.

Verse 19. When the people of Judah find themselves captured by the army of Babylon, they will realize that all of their wealth will avail them nothing. It will be impossible to buy their freedom and hence they might as well cast their money to the ground. The thing that caused the downfall of the people was the worship of idols. Many of them were made of silver and gold, hence they need not count on purchasing their deliverance with this corrupting material.

Verse 20. God had given his people one of the most beautiful temples ever possessed by any nation. The *majesty* of the Lord was in evidence all through the structure and the whole setup was adapted to the worship of the true God. But the people corrupted the holy building with the *images of their abominations* which they used in their practices of idolatry. *Therefore . . . far from them.* This beautiful building that had been blessed with the glory of the Lord was to be taken from them.

Verse 21. The temple was to be given *into the hands of strangers* (the Babylonians), and they *shall pollute it* (2 Kings 25: 9).

Verse 22. God was to turn his face away from his unfaithful people and the holy temple that He had placed among them. *They* (the Babylonians) would be suffered to enter the place where only high priests ever entered and that on only one day a year.

Verse 23. *Make a chain* was a prediction of the enslavement of the people by a foreign nation. It would be as a punishment for the violence and other crimes committed in the land and city.

Verse 24. *Worst of the heathen.* The first word is defined in the lexicon as meaning bad either naturally or morally. Both phases of the meaning

could properly be applied to the Babylonians, and they were the ones whom the Lord was bringing against his own people. *Make pomp to cease* refers to the proud leaders in Judah who were destined to be humiliated by the captivity.

Verse 25. When the Lord decrees a state of trouble for unfaithful servants, it is then too late to seek for peace or any opportunity of avoiding the chastisement.

Verse 26. In their time of trouble the people would gladly have received some instruction and consolation from the teachers. It will be too late then, for even the priests and prophets had been corrupt, and God will not honor them with any vision.

Verse 27. The king and priests and prophets, also the people in general will all be rejected by the Lord because they all have conspired against Him. (See Jeremiah 5: 31.) All of this was to come upon the people *according to their deserts.*

EZEKIEL 8

Verse 1. *Sixth year* is dated from the year that Jehoiachin was taken off his throne and taken to Babylon, at which time Ezekiel also was taken. According to chapter 1: 2, 3 Ezekiel began his writing after he had been in Babylon five years, hence the present chapter was written after he had been there six years. *Elders* comes from *zaqen* and Strong defines it with the single word "old." The *elders* among the Jews is a term that has an indefinite meaning. The original law of Moses makes no provision for them as an official or ruling class, but later they became a very influential group. Sometimes the word is used with reference to age and at other times it refers to the leaders or representative men. The context must determine the meaning of the word in each case. Ezekiel was about to be given an important communication from the Lord and he was sitting in the presence of these elders. Though they were in the land of captivity, they had not lost their "seniority" among the Jews. *Hand . . . fell upon me* means that God took charge of the prophet to display before him a vision concerning the people of Judah.

Verse 2. God never appears in person before fleshly man, but does the work through a spiritual representative. Such a personage was sent to

Ezekiel for the momentous occasion at hand. (See a similar incident in Revelation 1: 14, 15.)

Verse 3. *Spirit lifted me up* and in the visions are important keys to the meaning of this verse. By them the reader will understand that Ezekiel never actually left Babylon at all, and this must be constantly kept in mind or great confusion will result. The prophet saw the things described in a vision right while he was bodily in Babylon, in the same manner in which John saw things in Heaven while he was bodily in the Isle of Patmos. *Image of jealousy* means an idol, and it is called by this name in the sense of Exodus 20: 5, where God forbade the making of any image to worship because He was a jealous God.

Verse 4. God's glory would certainly be inside the gate of Jerusalem since that was the capital of the nation that belonged to Him. *In the plain* refers to the events described in chapter 3: 22.

Verse 5. The idolatry of ancient times consisted of three principal forms, and all objects of false worship were under one or more of the three. One was the worship of man-made idols, another was the worship of invisible or imaginary beings, and the third was that of things in creation. The first were made of metals, wood and stone; the second consisted of such as Baal, Ashtoreth, Tammuz, etc., and the third included animals, rivers, living trees, and planets ("host of heaven"). Our present chapter exhibits the three forms, and this and the preceding two verses include the first form.

Verse 6. Ezekiel had never manifested any tendency toward idolatry, and the vision which the Lord was showing to him was not for his personal benefit. But he was expected to report the scenes to his fellow countrymen and write them for the information of mankind in following generations. (The same was true of John and the book of Revelation.) *That I should go far off* means that God was deserting the house which his people had polluted with their idols.

Verse 7. The three forms of idolatry described at verse 5 are not treated in the same order in this chapter, which is no important item. Their description is the main thing because no special preference was observed

by the idolaters. Having pointed out the first one described, in verse 5, the third one will come next in the chapter beginning with the present verse. *Hole* is from *CHOR* which Strong defines, "A cavity, socket, den." This was a place in the wall through which one could see but not intended as an opening for entrance.

Verse 8. *Dig* is from *CHATHAR* and is defined by Strong, "A primitive root; to force a passage, as by burglary." When Ezekiel was brought to where he could see the hole or cavity mentioned in the preceding verse, he was told to force his way through the wall. When he did this he was brought into sight of a door.

Verse 9. The door proved to be an entrance to an apartment containing *abominations that they do here*, a detestable exhibition of the unlawful worship.

Verse 10. The aforesaid abominations consisted of pictures or drawings on the walls of the apartment. These portrayals were general and included living creatures which were worshiped, as well as the other idols of the house of Israel.

Verse 11. *Ancients* is from the same original word as "elders" in verse 1, and the reader is requested to see the comments at that place. There were 70 of these men including Jaazaniah, who was a prominent man, and these were engaged in burning incense to their idols.

Verse 12. Despite the foolish example of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3: 8), and ignoring the clear declarations of David in Psalms 139: 7-12, these corrupt elders thought they could find a material hiding place for their idolatrous practices. The Lord had indeed forsaken the place as far as any endorsement was concerned, but that did not mean such a place would escape the all-seeing eye of Him.

Verse 13. God wished Ezekiel to have a complete vision of the corrupt state of the people of Judah. In a few more years the temple was to be demolished by the Babylonians, and the prophet should be furnished with a detailed view of conditions that provoked the Lord to deliver his people up to such a fate.

Verse 14. This verse presents another form of idolatry to which reference was made in the comments on verse 5, that of invisible gods. Ezekiel was

taken to another spot where he saw *women weeping for Tammuz*. Strong's definition of the last word is, "Of uncertain derivation; Tammuz, a Phoenician deity." A marginal comment is some Bibles says, "In a lewd and idolatrous manner, lamenting the death of Tammuz or Adonis, supposed to be Baalpeor." This comment is supported by various works of reference that I have consulted among which is Smith's Bible Dictionary, from which I shall make the following quotation: "Jerome identifies Tammuz with Adonis, of Grecian mythology, who was fabled to have lost his life while hunting, by a wound from the tusk of a wild boar. He was greatly beloved by the goddess Venus, who was inconsolable at his loss. . . A festival in honor of Adonis was celebrated at Byblus in Phoenicia and in most of the Grecian cities, and even by the Jews when they degenerated into idolatry. It took place in July, and was accompanied by obscene rites." Much of the information on this point is drawn from mythology but it is evident that the verse deals with the case of idolatry designated at the beginning of this paragraph.

Verse 15. The prophet is informed that he is yet to see another display of idolatry being practiced by the people of Judea.

Verse 16. This verse includes an item on sun worship, which is one of the three forms of idolatry mentioned in the comments on verse 5. The sun is an object of creation and is in the same class as the planets and other things of nature that were worshiped as gods first by the heathen, then by the Jews. *Backs toward the temple* was an insult to the Lord, for it was an attitude in which these men turned from the true God and gave their homage toward the east where they would see the sun.

Verse 17. Having given Ezekiel a full and detailed vision of the evil conditions in Judah, the Lord "puts it up to him" to form a conclusion on the subject. However, God states his own conclusion and affirms (in question form) that what Judah is doing is no *light thing*—it is not something to be regarded lightly. Certain trees were considered sacred by idolaters, and these corrupt men of Judah were showing their insolent contempt for the true God by exhibiting a desire to smell of such trees in connection with their worship of the sun.

Verse 18. This verse adds nothing

new to the threats that God had previously made against his people. It is a summing up of the conclusions already formed and uttered with the emphasis that is implied in such a frequent repetition.

EZEKIEL 9

Verse 1. The reader should be cautioned against confusion over what is going on in these chapters. Beginning with chapter 8 and continuing through 11, Ezekiel was seeing things performed in a vision, as if he had been taken to Jerusalem where the events were supposed to be happening. In reality, the prophet has been in the land of Chaldea or Babylon all the time. (See chapter 11: 24.) So bear in mind as we are considering the various performances along in these passages that they are what Ezekiel was seeing in the vision. It is true, however, that many of the events and conditions that were shown the prophet in a vision in the land of Babylon, were actually existing in the land of Judea. With these explanatory remarks for the clarification of the matter, I shall proceed to comment on the verses. *Have charge over the city* means those whose duty it was to execute any decrees that may have been made concerning it. These men were ordered to come forward, armed for the task placed upon them.

Verse 2. Upon the order mentioned in the preceding verse, six armed men came forward. All of this indicated that they would be used to execute the decrees of God. Another man was in the company of these six and he was *clothed with linen* which indicated that he represented the priestly or ritualistic class of men. The brazen altar was used for the offering of bloody sacrifices, therefore it was appropriate that this group of seven men should take their position by the altar. The priests would make an account of the creatures to be considered with reference to the altar service, hence the inkhorn hanging at his side for convenient use.

Verse 3. *Glory of God . . . from the cherub* refers to the glory that was bestowed upon the ark in the beginning of the Jewish Dispensation. (See Exodus 25: 22; 2 Samuel 6: 2.) This glory moved to a position of communication with the man clothed with linen (representing the priesthood). Such a move indicated that the Lord was about to inspire the man with

the inkhorn so that he could do some writing or marking.

Verse 4. Before any general destruction or calamity is brought upon mankind by the Lord, he always makes provision to spare those who are worthy. We may recall the cases of Noah and the flood, Lot in Sodom, the Israelites in Egypt, and the plan of salvation as an escape from the corruption in the next world. In keeping with that principle, the Lord was making provisions to spare certain ones from a general slaughter which these six men would soon be told to execute. The ones to be spared were described as those *that sigh and cry for all the abominations* that were being done in Jerusalem. These men were not responsible for the corruptions that had crept into the religious and public life of the city, hence they were to be spared from the severe punishment about to be inflicted upon the majority. The reader should consult the long note offered in connection with 2 Kings 22:17. This exception was to be indicated by being marked upon their foreheads by the man with the inkhorn.

Verse 5. *The others* are the six men mentioned in verse 2. They were to follow the man with the inkhorn who was to be marking the ones exempted from the slaughter. The executioners were charged to smite the others without pity.

Verse 6. No age or sex was to be spared in the slaying by these six men. The only exception they were allowed to make was those who had the mark upon them. *Begin at my sanctuary*. This was because the greatest blame was laid upon the leaders and officials of the Lord's service. They were to be held most guilty because of their position. The thought is similar to that in 1 Peter 4:17, 18.

Verse 7. The house of the Lord had been defiled doctrinally by the abominable idolatry of these evil men, now it will be fitting to defile it physically by filling it with their dead bodies. So the men were again told to go forth and slay in the city.

Verse 8. As the men were performing their duty of slaying the inhabitants of the city, the prophet was left alone and he became prostrated by the scenes. Falling upon the ground he prayed earnestly and expressed anxiety over the terrible situation.

Verse 9. The Lord explained his great fury for the information of the

prophet. Just at that time Israel (the 10 tribes) was in exile and had been for more than a century, yet her sins came up for remembrance now in connection with those of Judah, some of whose men were still in Jerusalem.

Verse 10. The people of Israel and Judah had shed blood in their evil practices of idolatry, but God was determined to shed their blood in the righteousness of His indignation over the false worship that was going on.

Verse 11. The men sent forth to execute the decree of God did their duty, and the man with the inkhorn came back with his report of the same.

EZEKIEL 10

Verse 1. The objects named in this verse are used figuratively and refer to the glory that is to be attributed to the Lord.

Verse 2. *He* is a pronoun standing for the Personage described in verse 1; the man to whom he spoke was the one with the inkhorn. We have previously learned (chapter 9:2) that this man represented the priestly services of the house of God. The regular order of those services had been discontinued since the invasion of Judah by the Babylonians, but there were other things needed to be done and this man would be the appropriate one to do them. The *wheels* and *cherub* will be explained later in this chapter. *Coals of fire* is figurative and refers to the fiery wrath of God, because the literal fire in the Mosaic service was on the brazen altar and not in the inner court (verse 3). *Scatter them over the city* indicated that God's wrath was to be poured out over the place in general.

Verse 3. There is a popular saying, "Wherever there is smoke there is fire." The saying may well be reversed and, with a slight change in the wording, make it say, "Wherever there is fire there may be a cloud (of smoke)." Verse 2 reveals the fire of God's wrath and this verse speaks of the cloud that arose from that fire. It was so extensive that it *filled the inner court*.

Verse 4. The cloud of this verse was different from the preceding one. This was described as springing from the cherub (not the fire) and was *the glory of the Lord*. This cloud, also, filled the area of the court.

Verse 5. *Voice of the Almighty God* indicates that He had some connec-

tion with the institutions being represented in the imagery. (See Daniel 4: 17.)

Verse 6. Upon being commanded to get the fire, the man with the inkhorn entered the place containing the wheels.

Verse 7. The cherub participated in the activities by placing the fire in the hands of the man clothed with linen and who had the inkhorn. That indicated that the work of the man was approved by the institutions represented by the cherubs and wheels.

Verse 8. The appearance of a *man's hand* indicated the institutions in the imagery possessed the skill of human beings.

Verse 9. These wheels do not introduce any new subject matter as we shall learn in course of this chapter. *Color of a beryl stone* is merely a comparison to the brilliancy and many-sided faces for reflection of that stone.

Verse 10. These four wheels refer to the "four world empires" and the creatures of chapter 1: 5, and the wheel in the midst of a wheel is explained in verse 16 of that chapter. The following verses of this chapter will also deal with those empires, and many of the same symbols will be used that were used in the former chapter. There may be some variation in a part of them, but that is because more than one trait can be said of different creatures and things, and a writer may select one, now another, for his comparison, and all of them would be true. Let the reader please see the comments on verse 10 of the first chapter.

Verse 11. This apparently impossible movement refers to the universal spread of the world empires. A thing that would be physically impossible may be supposed in a symbol, if it will truly represent a possibility in some spiritual or other intelligent institution. If an object had a head on each of its four sides, then the body of that object could follow the head in any of the directions without turning about.

Verse 12. Naming the several parts of these creatures or institutions was for the purpose of emphasizing the completeness of the quality soon to be mentioned. *Full of eyes round about* indicates that quality to have been intelligence.

Verse 13. The key in this verse is

in the words *O man*, and the meaning is that the wheels were called upon to give attention.

Verse 14. The description of each of the four creatures in this verse differs in only one item from the corresponding picture in chapter 1: 10. That has an ox while this has the cherub, but there is no difficulty involved, for both traits were possessed by these institutions being represented. Having the face of a *cherub* would indicate they were invested with something heavenly (1: 24; Daniel 4: 17), *man* indicates intelligence and also that the institutions included humanity, *lion* means boldness and *eagle* indicates exaltation and fleetness.

Verse 15. This verse settles the identity of the creature with that described in chapter 1, and represents the "four world empires" named in the first chapter.

Verse 16. The performances of the *cherubims* and *wheels* in this chapter are in the same line as those of the living creatures and wheels in chapter one. The figure is a representation of the four world empires. The co-operation between these objects is for the purpose of emphasis.

Verse 17. *They* and *these* are pronouns standing for the cherubims and wheels. The original word for *spirit* means life, and the clause means the cherubims and wheels had the same life as the living creatures that the prophet saw by the river Chebar.

Verse 18. *Departed* is not used in the sense of desertion, but the glory fixed itself upon the creatures.

Verse 19. The effect of the *glory* upon the cherubims is stated here. It caused them to *mount from the earth* or be exalted. Such a thought corresponds with the idea that God was interested in the four world empires. (See Daniel 4: 17.) *Every one stood* indicates an attitude of reverence for the demonstration.

Verse 20. This is virtually the same statement as verse 15.

Verse 21. This verse also is a repetition of previous statements, and the central thought in the *four faces* is the world-wide extent of the empires. *Hands of a man* indicates that the creatures were composed of human beings.

Verse 22. The concluding verse is a summing up of the imagery that has

been considered throughout the first and present chapters of the book.

EZEKIEL 11

Verse 1. The vision was continued and Ezekiel saw the same men who were mentioned in chapter 8: 16, with one other named specifically. They were all leading men of Judah who were engaged in the worship of the sun which was one form of idolatry.

Verse 2. The men not only practiced that which was wrong, but planned and advised others in it and thus were guilty of conspiracy.

Verse 3. The main idea these evil men advocated was one of opposition to the warnings of the Lord. They were making light of the predictions that Jerusalem was to be overthrown, and expressed themselves by the figurative language of the last clause of the verse. It means as if they had said, "There is nothing in the threatening the prophet has given us. This city is all the caldron we will need to fear."

Verse 4. Ezekiel was told to prophesy against these evil men and their claims.

Verse 5. *Spirit . . . fell upon me* means the prophet was inspired to make his prediction against the men. The passage was introduced with the assertion that the Lord knew what was in their minds.

Verse 6. These evil men had been guilty of murder and caused men's dead bodies to be laid in the streets. But they had caused these deaths in their wicked contention against the others who wished to pay respect to the word of the Lord.

Verse 7. A caldron is a large kettle or boiler that is used for cooking the flesh of animals. The language was used figuratively and compared the city to the caldron and the citizens to the flesh to be boiled therein. The Lord admitted that these men had really made such use of the city and its unfortunate citizens, but denied that such a fact was the fulfillment of the divine predictions. It was warned that He would bring the citizens out of this "caldron" and thus disprove the rebellious declarations that Jerusalem was the only one they would need to fear.

Verse 8. Their fear of the sword of the enemy was used as an excuse for trying to hide behind the walls of Jerusalem. God warned them that the

city would not save them from the sword for they were to be exposed to it through the divine decree.

Verse 9. The strongest walls that man can build would be no surety against the judgments of God. *Hands of strangers* means those outside of their own country, and in this case it referred to the Babylonians.

Verse 10. The judgments to be brought upon Israel would be started within their own *border*, which means they would be made to suffer even before leaving their land.

Verse 11. Jerusalem was only a city in the *border* or territory extending beyond the city. The experiences which these evil men said would be confined within the city were destined to include many outside of the city. In fact, the whole territory of Judah was to suffer. In that sense the Lord affirmed, *this city shall not be your caldron*. (See the comments on verse 3.)

Verse 12. Over and over the motive, *shall know that I am the Lord*, was stated to the people of Judah. That was especially fitting among a people who had been led off into the worship of strange and false gods.

Verse 13. A partial demonstration of the predictions Ezekiel had been hearing and which he delivered, was made by the sudden death of one of the leading men. The human side of the prophet showed itself by his complaint to the Lord of what looked to him like a threat of complete destruction of Israel.

Verse 14. This action or remark of the prophet brought another message from God.

Verse 15. The justice of what God was doing against the inhabitants of Jerusalem was indicated in this message to Ezekiel. They had assumed sole connection with the Lord and had virtually disfellowshipped all the other people of the country. For this reason they deserved the special judgments.

Verse 16. *Them* is a pronoun that stands for the people in general who had been imposed upon by the leaders in Jerusalem. At the very time Ezekiel was seeing this vision, he and the bulk of the nation were already in the land of Babylon, and that by the decree of the Lord. But He was not going to forsake them entirely while in the heathen land. *Sanctuary* means a place or means of security. Among those who had to go into captivity were many who were personally

righteous and who were assured of the care of the Lord. It is appropriate the reader again see the note at 2 Kings 22: 17.

Verse 17. From this verse through 20 the subject is the return from captivity, with special mention of certain results to be accomplished by the exile. The same people for whom the Lord promised to be a "sanctuary" in the preceding verse were to be brought back to their own country. The great Babylonian Empire was composed of various countries of the civilized world, and the captives were scattered more or less over those sections. That is the reason for the prediction that the Lord would assemble them out of the countries.

Verse 18. *Take away all the detestable things* is a prediction of the complete cure from idolatry. For the historical fulfillment of this prediction see the quotation in connection with Isaiah 1: 25, volume three of this Commentary.

Verse 19. A complete change of heart is the meaning of this verse. We know that the human heart as to the body is literally flesh, therefore we must understand this language to be figurative. It means their heart (mind) had become hardened in sin and the captivity would humble them and make them become yielding to the law of God.

Verse 20. The difference between a *statute* and an *ordinance* as defined in the lexicon is so slight that we may well consider them in the same sense. A statute may be regarded as the more fixed and formal of the two, but when they come from God they both mean the rule of life which He expects his servants to follow. *Shall be my people*. These Israelites were always the Lord's as far as being a race or nationality according to blood, but now they are to become his people again in the sense of forming a nation or government, something they had not been for 70 years.

Verse 21. There were some of the Jews who would not give up their love of sin and they were destined to be given over to the ravages of the exile. That is why the period of the captivity was to reduce the nation to a remnant. (See Ezra 2: 64.)

Verse 22. These *cherubims and wheels* are the same that were mentioned in chapter 10: 14, 15, and they represent the four world empires. *The glory of the God of Israel was over*

them because He is interested in the procedure of the governments of the world.

Verse 23. The story included in the vision was about finished, so the spirit of the Lord's glory departed and occupied an exalted place near the city.

Verse 24. Notice the passage says Ezekiel was brought in a vision into Chaldea (or Babylon). In reality or bodily he had been there all the time. This verse means that the vision was ended and Ezekiel was to act literally in communicating his message to the people or captives among whom he was then living.

Verse 25. *Them of the captivity* means the Jews who were literally in captivity along with the prophet who had been taken there at the 2nd stage of the captivity.

EZEKIEL 12

Verse 1. Instead of using a vision God spoke directly to the prophet.

Verse 2. Ezekiel and most of the Jews were in Babylon at the time he was doing his work as a prophet. At the same time there were still some left in Jerusalem, for that city had not yet been destroyed. That event was about due and would be the 3rd stage of the captivity. But in spite of the two events that had taken place, referred to as the 1st and 2nd captivities, as well as other evidences of God's truth, many of the Jews doubted that their capital would really be destroyed. Some of them in Babylon even professed to hope that they would soon return to Jerusalem which they would find unharmed. Eyes and ears which see and hear not, means they refused to use their own senses to perceive the truth.

Verse 3. The prophet was told to do some more "acting" which we have previously seen. (See at 1 Kings 20: 35.) In this case it was to emphasize the prediction that the people still left in Jerusalem would soon be moved out and taken to another place. *Stuff* means the outfit that one would use or need when going from one place to another. That is, the articles one would especially need were he going to spend some time in a strange locality. With these articles Ezekiel was to go through the motions of moving in the sight of the rebellious house or people.

Verse 4. *Day and even* are both named in a significant manner. He was to use the day in making the

preparation, and when evening came he was to go out with the movements of one who had been banished from his native land.

Verse 5. The town where Ezekiel and other captives were living would be enclosed with a wall. He was to make an opening through that wall large enough for a man to pass through, then let the people see him leave by way of the opening.

Verse 6. Covering his face while going through this performance would indicate that the prophet was not seeing his own way in it, but was being directed by an unseen force. This would serve as a *sign* to the Israelites; the word is from מוֹפֶתֶת which Strong defines, "A token or omen." By such an unusual performance of the prophet it was hoped to impress the people that something important was about to take place.

Verse 7. This verse merely records the carrying out of the orders which the prophet had received from the Lord.

Verse 8. The scenes described in the preceding verses produced some interest among the people as the night was passing, and in the morning the Lord spoke again.

Verse 9. God knew the people had asked the prophet for an explanation of his actions, and He was ready to furnish the answer.

Verse 10. *Burden* is a figure of speech and means an important prophecy or other message was about to be delivered. The *prince in Jerusalem* was Zedekiah, who was left on his throne there by the king of Babylon, but who was reigning only as a subject-king under Nebuchadnezzar. There were also some of the inhabitants of the city left in it and they were included in *the house of Israel that are among them*.

Verse 11. This verse connects the acting of the prophet with the event that was to be its fulfillment. Ezekiel was to tell his people that it was performed in their sight as a *sign*. (See the explanation of this word at verse 6.) *Them* and *they* are pronouns that stand for the persons mentioned in the close of the preceding verse. The prediction was that they were to go into captivity, meaning the "3rd captivity."

Verse 12. The apparent secrecy that Ezekiel maintained would prove to have foreshadowed some of the ac-

tions of Zedekiah. He had been warned to be submissive to the king of Babylon since the whole transaction of the captivity was of the Lord, but he thought he could elude the enemy and escape. *Dig through the wall* is what Ezekiel actually did as a sign, but it is used figuratively of Zedekiah. However, he did attempt to escape by means of the wall, and did it *in the twilight* or night. The fulfillment of this is recorded in 2 Kings 25: 4 and Jeremiah 39: 4.

Verse 13. This *net* referred to the forces of Babylon which the Lord was using in the overthrow of Jerusalem and its acting king. The apparent difficulty in the closing clause of this verse will be made clear by 2 Kings 25: 6, 7; Jeremiah 32: 4.

Verse 14. Some of the men of war in Jerusalem thought to elude capture by following Zedekiah in his flight. This verse predicts their failure, and the historical account of it is in 2 Kings 25: 4, 5.

Verse 15. Again we see the chief motive that was behind these great demonstrations against the unfaithful people of Israel from time to time was to make them *know that I am the Lord*.

Verse 16. These *few* were the "remnant" referred to frequently and the fulfillment is at Ezra 2: 64. See the note at Jeremiah 14: 12 regarding the *sword, famine and pestilence*, regarded as one form of judgment upon the evil nation.

Verse 17. *Moreover* means the same as furthermore. The Lord had something more to say to the prophet, and it was to be in connection with his next work.

Verse 18. This verse directed Ezekiel to do some more "acting." He was not in any personal want but was to deal with the conditions of famine that were to come upon the people still left in Jerusalem. The *carefulness* means he was to use the provisions sparingly as if they were being rationed out to him.

Verse 19. *People of the land* meant the Jews then in Babylon with the prophet, and *inhabitants of Jerusalem* were those still in the city but who were doomed to be soon removed. Ere that event took place they were to undergo the pangs of famine.

Verse 20. Some cities besides Jerusalem were still lingering on the verge of total destruction, and they,

too, were soon to feel the final blows from Babylon.

Verses 21, 22. The Jews persisted in denying the warnings that had been so often uttered to them and which had been backed up by so much evidence of being from God. Just at the moment, most of the nation was in the land of Babylon, having been victims of the first or second stage of the captivity. And yet, when the prophet declared that all Jerusalem and its remaining inhabitants were to be overthrown, they either denied the truth of it altogether, or else were saying that it was not to be for a long time. If a threatened judgment upon man does not come as soon as he expects, then the seeming delay is interpreted to mean that the prediction is false. Solomon had such a condition in mind when he wrote Ecclesiastes 8: 11, and the same thought is set forth in 2 Peter 3: 4 regarding the end of the world.

Verse 23. *Proverb* is used in the sense of something that is repeated frequently as if it were taken for granted to be a truth. But the Lord declared that it would be caused to cease, for the *days are at hand* when the threatened event will occur. All of Ezekiel's writings thus far were done between the 2nd and 3rd stages of the captivities, and that period altogether was only eleven years. But most of that had passed at the time we are now studying, hence the final downfall of the capital city was truly *at hand*.

Verse 24. *Vain vision and flattering divination* refers to the false predictions and unauthorized assurances that the evil leaders had been giving to the people. The actual fall of the city would certainly put an end to that.

Verse 25. *In your days* denoted that the very people to whom these threats had been made would live to see their fulfillment and would personally suffer in them.

Verse 26. The frequent repetition of such language as this verse will keep us mindful that the prophet was being inspired by the Lord in all his utterances.

Verse 27. The attention of the prophet was called to the clamors of the people, relative to the far-off date of the affliction that has been made against them.

Verse 28. Ezekiel was assured that the fulfillment was not far off, and

the reader may see the account of its fulfillment in 2 Kings 25: 1, 2.

EZEKIEL 13

Verse 1, 2. Ezekiel was himself a prophet in Israel, but he was to prophesy against the evil ones who were deceiving the people into a false feeling of security. *Out of their own hearts* means that these false prophets were not inspired of the Lord but were speaking their personal thoughts. They were to be called upon to cease issuing this unauthorized manner of statements and to hear the word of God.

Verse 3. *Having seen nothing* means they had not received any vision from the Lord, but were devising their own foolish predictions.

Verse 4. The fox is a destructive creature (See Song of Solomon, 2: 15) instead of a helpful one, and these false prophets were compared to them.

Verse 5. These prophets should have been concerned about the conflict threatening their city, even as a true husbandman would be, concerning the gaps he discovered in the hedge surrounding his vineyard. Instead, they not only were indifferent about the city's danger, but were even denying that there were any "gaps" to be closed.

Verse 6. The false prophets were not given any message from the Lord, but professed to have seen visions of the lot awaiting their city. *Seen vanity* means the things they professed were useless and *lying divination* denotes a deceptive form of speech. The sin of these false prophets was made worse by their claiming to have been inspired by the Lord. Such a claim would make Him contradict himself, for he had led Ezekiel to prophesy the near downfall of Jerusalem, and now these men claimed to have been inspired to say it was not coming soon if at all.

Verse 7. The central thought in this verse is to call attention to the inconsistency of the false prophets. That error is described by the comments in connection with the prophet's statements in the preceding verse.

Verse 8. *Seen lies* does not mean they had seen the lies of others, for that kind of action would have been to their credit. The passage denotes that the false prophets were lying as to what they professed to have seen.

Verse 9. *Divine lies*. The first word is from QACAM which Strong defines,

"A primitive root; properly to distribute, i.e. determine by lot or magical scroll; by implication to divine." It refers to some form of trickery by which these false prophets confused the people and caused them to believe the lies. *Not be in the assembly* denotes that such men would not be recognized in any of the affairs of the nation. And when the period of the captivity is over and the "remnant" comes back, these deceivers will not be among them, for they will have perished in the exile.

Verse 10. This verse is figurative and refers to the general attitude of confidence that was shown by the people in Jerusalem. That condition of "peace" was the wall and the mortar was the lies of the preceding verse. *Untempered* is from TAPHEL which Strong defines, "To smear; plaster (as gummy) or slime; (figurative) frivolity." A smeary or pasty material would not make a strong protection for a wall, hence it was a fitting comparison for the useless lies by which the false prophets had built up the "wall" of confidence in the minds of the people.

Verse 11. The purpose of daubing a wall was to form a coating to protect it from the effects of the weather. In keeping with the figurative description adopted in the preceding verse, the Lord declared that the weak mortar would be penetrated by the storm of *overflowing shower* and *hailstones* and *wind*. These figures had reference to the military storming of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army (2 Kings 25: 1-4).

Verse 12. A flimsy covering over a wall might look as well as the best, but when the wall collapses the deceptive nature of the plaster will be exposed.

Verse 13. This is a repetition of the thoughts in verse 11.

Verse 14. *Foundation* is defined in the lexicon as being figurative or literal, and its use here is the former. The chief motive for the great demonstration is again repeated; it is that all may be convinced that *I am the Lord*.

Verse 15. The verses are still on the subject of the downfall of Jerusalem that was due to occur soon, but it is also continued in figurative language; the untempered mortar meaning the false predictions, and *they that daubed* it the lying prophets.

Verse 16. This verse is the Lord's

own interpretation of the figurative terms that were used in the preceding ones. A "calamity howler" is an undesirable person, yet he may not do as much harm as one who *sees visions of peace* when in reality a serious disaster is threatened. Such a character will lull the people into a false sense of security and hence they will not make the preparation necessary to meet it.

Verse 17. *Set thy face against* denotes that Ezekiel was to manifest his personal disapproval of the way the people were taking up with the delusions being preached.

Verse 18. All unusual or figurative language must be interpreted in the light of known facts. *Armholes* is rendered "elbows" in the margin and the lexicon agrees with it, for the original means a joint of the arm or hand. (See the comments at Jeremiah 38: 12.) *Kerchiefs* is rendered "veil" in the lexicon and refers to some kind of covering for the head that would enclose the wearer in a state of mystery. The thought of the verse is on the false peace that had been given the citizens of Jerusalem by the lying prophets. A pillow attached to the elbow would suggest a position of rest and ease while lying around, and that was a symbol of the state of contentment that was created in the minds of the victims. The women co-operated with the false prophets by making the pillows.

Verse 19. This whole verse is in the form of a question, but it is really an accusation of the Lord against the false prophets and other leaders. They were taking advantage of the trusting people for the sake of their own personal gain.

Verse 20. See the comments at verse 18 on the meaning of *pillows*. *Fly* is defined in the lexicon as denoting the rising of a bird, having been stirred up by some apparent cause of interest. But it was a case where the person making the appearance did so in order to get the fowl entangled in a net spread unseen to it. *I will tear them* means that the Lord was going to expose the deception that the false prophets had imposed upon the people and make its true nature manifest.

Verse 21. The *kerchiefs* or mystic veils were to be torn off, which also means the Lord would penetrate the shroud of deception that had been spread over the dupes.

Verse 22. In all situations there will be some righteous persons who try to resist the influence of false teachers. Such persons will anger the would-be deceiver and it will cause him to threaten some severe calamity to come upon them and in this way *make their heart sad*. But the wicked ones who deserve to be condemned will be encouraged by the false prophets to look for *peace*, and this will influence them to feel that nothing is wrong with their conduct and the result will be that they will not reform. (See the note at 2 Kings 22: 17, volume 2 of this Commentary.)

Verse 23. *Shall see no more vanity* means that an end was to be made of their vain (empty or false) predictions. *Divine* is a verb and the phrase means they would not be permitted to deliver any more *divinations* or false visions.

EZEKIEL 14

Verse 1. This action was done before and is explained at chapter 8: 1.

Verse 2. As these elders were sitting before Ezekiel, the Lord delivered another message which the prophet was to give over to the hearers. Whether any or all of them were guilty of the things to be charged or not, the information was timely.

Verse 3. These elders had come to the prophet on the pretence of wanting some information from God. The heart is the intelligent part of a man and from which the motives of his actions spring. (See Matthew 15: 19.) These men sitting before Ezekiel could not always have an idol present before them, but their heart was devoted to them and thus they had set up *their idols in their heart*. *Should I be enquired of by them* means that such men had no right to seek any communication from God.

Verse 4. God would not recognize such men in the usual manner, that is, through the established service of a prophet, with the expectation of obtaining any favor at his hands. Instead, He proposed to take charge of the case and handle the pretenders directly as they deserved as regarded such treatment that was coming to them.

Verse 5. Since these men had set up their idols in their heart, that would be the place for God to make his attack. Such is the meaning of *take the house of Israel in their own heart* which He declared would be done.

Verse 6. This verse should be considered in connection with verse 4. It all means that God would answer these pretended enquirers through the prophet to some extent, but the answer would not be as a recognition of the rights of the evil men, for they were not entitled to such notice. But instead of this, the prophet was told to admonish them to repent and give up their love of idols.

Verse 7. This verse explains in what sense the Lord would answer *by himself* as he announced in a preceding verse; it was to be by some direct judgment upon the wicked people of Israel. This was to be a practical rebuke to them because they thought they could by-pass Him and get their information through the prophet.

Verse 8. *Make him a sign* denotes that God would bring some humiliating punishment upon the man who had tried to ignore Him. This punishment would make him an example ("sign") to others and cause him to be the object of their sneers.

Verse 9. *I the Lord have deceived that prophet* applies to a case where a man has so persisted in his false teaching that God would suffer him to believe his own falsehood. The result of such a course would be his own undoing. Paul reveals a similar attitude of God toward the followers of the "man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2: 11.

Verses 10, 11. The most important thought in this verse is the joint responsibility of the false prophet and those who go to him for information. The passage declares that the punishment of the one will be *even as* that of him who *seeketh unto him*.

Verses 12, 13. This passage again gives an explanation of the Lord's statement to the prophet that he would answer the people *by himself*. He determined to punish the land by a shortage of the needs of life, this judgment to be considered to be against the country as a whole.

Verse 14. When general calamities are brought providentially on communities, the Lord provides special care for those who are personally innocent. But even they cannot extend the favor done because of their own virtues to those who are unrighteous; such is the teaching of this verse. It is another phase of the principle that responsibility is strictly individual as far as it pertains to moral conduct.

Verse 15. *Noisome* is from a Hebrew

word that means "evil or bad," and here it is applied to beasts that are fierce and destructive. God sometimes used such means to punish persons who were guilty of wrong. (See 1 Kings 13: 24; 2 Kings 2: 24.)

Verse 16. This verse is identical in thought with verse 14.

Verse 17. The Lord brought the sword upon the land by having a foreign army to make a hostile attack. This has been done on numerous occasions in the history of Israel, such as the Assyrians in 2 Kings 17 and the Babylonians in chapters 24 and 25 of the same book.

Verse 18. The same principle of individuality is taught here as in verse 14.

Verse 19. A prominent instance of using a pestilence as a punishment is recorded in 2 Samuel 24: 15.

Verse 20. Once more the thought in verse 14 is repeated here.

Verse 21. Famine, pestilence and the sword were frequently threatened as a punishment upon Israel. In this verse another instrument is named, the *noisome* (bad) beasts. This would be especially applicable where the land in general was to be penalized, since wild beasts would not have much access to the citizens of the city.

Verse 22. The *remnant* consisted of the number left after the ravages of the captivity had done their work, and the record of it is in Ezra 2: 64.

Verse 23. When all of the sad experiences have been suffered by the people of Israel, they will be able to look back over the history of their national conduct. When they do so and recall also the many warnings they were given but which were not heeded, they will realize that God did not punish them *without cause*.

EZEKIEL 15

Verses 1, 2. *Tree* is from an original that the lexicon defines as "wood" in general, hence the phrase means "the wood of the vine." The question form of the statement means to imply that a vine is inferior to the trees of the forest.

Verse 3. A vine at its best is not fit for any substantial use such as a piece of furniture for supporting the vessels of household living. In this sense it is less important than the regular trees, because they would fur-

nish material that could be made into strong utility racks.

Verse 4. If the vine needs to be used at all, about the only thing that can be done with it is to use it as fuel. *Both ends and midst* is said to indicate how completely the vine would be affected were it cast into the fire.

Verse 5. If the vine in its original condition is not useful for any good purpose, it certainly would not be after being put through the fire.

Verse 6. The preceding illustration is used to compare the city of Jerusalem with her inhabitants; they are the vine and the heathen nations are trees of the forest.

Verse 7. The nations are compared to the forest trees when contrasted with Jerusalem. In the next section of the illustration, however, they will be used as the fire into which the vine (Jerusalem with her inhabitants) will be cast. *One fire and another fire* refers to the fire of the siege and also that which will overtake them *who go out*. (See 2 Kings 25: 3-7.)

Verse 8. The land was to be made desolate by having its populations removed away into the Babylonian captivity.

EZEKIEL 16

Verse 1. This is a very unusual and interesting chapter, in which the Lord supposed a situation pertaining to human relations to illustrate His relations with Judah, the 2-tribe kingdom. It is true that some of the items are out of the ordinary as to the general events in the field of romance, but we have previously seen that even figures of speech may be so managed as to cover the actual facts in the subject being illustrated. But the central thought that runs through the long parable is true to conditions and actions that either do or could exist in actual life. Let us keep in mind that the marriage relation with its various privileges and obligations is compared in the Bible to the union of mankind with God. By the same token, the corruptions of the marriage relation in temporal affairs are used to compare the abominations of idolatry that provoke the jealousy of God.

Verse 2. This verse is a solemn charge to Ezekiel; he was to cause Jerusalem to realize the greatness of her abominations and unfaithfulness.

Verse 3. Nations, like individuals, may rise from very humble circum-

stances to a position of dignity and favor. If that rise is caused solely by the unselfish favor of another nation or person, such advancement will be no just cause for the favored one to become proud or have a feeling of importance. Instead, such nation should show its appreciation by the most faithful devotion. This verse shows the insignificant and obscure origin of Jerusalem (or Judah). She was born in Canaan which was a country of much unworthiness before the Lord took it over and dignified it by His oversight. *Amorites* and *Hittites* were two of the inferior heathen peoples who inhabited the land of Canaan at the time God's people appeared. The terms *father* and *mother* are used figuratively to conform to the parable of family relations that has been adopted on the present occasion. We are supposed to think of a babe who is born of a very ordinary father and mother, in a land out of which no great personage would be expected to come. (For a like comparison see John 1: 46.)

Verse 4. This verse represents a possible though very unusual circumstance. It is the case where a babe arrives who was not wanted and of whom its parents are ashamed even though they have nothing of which to be so proud. They have such a feeling of contempt for the helpless creature that they do not give it the usual treatment of cleansing and surgical care usually accorded every newborn infant. They do not even furnish it with the swaddling band which was commonly used at such times, but which was a very meager article of clothing at best.

Verse 5. Not only did the parents of this unfortunate creature fail to administer to its needs, but none of the neighbors offered to lend a helping hand. Nor was that all; the infant was cast uncleansed and unclothed into the open field where it might have been the prey of wild beasts.

Verse 6. The man who was to represent God in this great parable was one whose affairs caused him to make various journeys through the country; on one of his trips he passed by the infant described in the preceding verses. He saw the miserable condition of the neglected creature and had compassion on it. *I said . . . live.* A story like this could not include all the details connected with the case. We are not told how the traveler could make his kindness effective

but in some way he arranged that this baby girl could live in spite of the filthy and neglected condition. Having made the necessary preparation for the survival and growth of the babe, the traveler went on his way.

Verse 7. Through the arrangements referred to in the preceding verse, the girl baby experienced the things described in this which took place in the course of some years; such is the significance of *I have caused thee* that begins this verse. The developments indicated took place between the first and second journeys of the traveler through the community. *Multiply* is used because the parable really refers to the nation of Judah, although the imagery is that of a babe and her development into the adolescent age. *Excellent ornaments* means the attractiveness of a girl growing toward womanhood. Some of those ornaments are specified; female breasts, also long hair, which is one of the God-given ornaments of women (1 Corinthians 11: 15).

Verse 8. The baby girl has passed through childhood and adolescence and has reached *the time of love*, which means she has matured and become of marriageable age. Her benefactor then falls in love with her and offers to receive her as his wife. In ancient times there were no formal marriage ceremonies directly connected with the union of a male and female. Their fleshly relations made them one and entitled them to live together as husband and wife. By that token, the spreading of one's skirt over another signified the intimacy that was to start the couple on their journey in life as a united pair. Hence we have that action regarding the skirt mentioned in this verse and the phrase *thou becamest mine* is so used. (See Ruth 3: 9.)

Verse 9. In spite of the advancement that nature had made for this neglected girl, she had not become completely rid of the undesirable conditions that had been imposed upon her at the time of and after her birth. But after the man became so intimately interested in her, he gave her further attention to prepare her for the life with him as his life's companion in the marriage relation.

Verse 10. It would be proper for a man to take personal interest in and take part in the selection of clothing of his wife; he would wish her to have the most delicate robes even of such materials as silk and linen.

Verse 11. No ornaments of jewelry could be too good or costly for the woman whom a man loves, who has given herself to him and who has merged her being with his in the most intimate and sacred relation possible to the human body.

Verse 12. The *crown* was not used in the sense of authority, but as a token of the glory that he recognized it meant to him to have the love and association with such a creature. (See 1 Corinthians 11: 7.)

Verse 13. The husband continued his favors upon the woman he loved. The actual subject of the parable was indicated by the closing words, *thou didst prosper into a kingdom*. We know that a wife would not develop into a kingdom, so the idea is plain that God's relation with Judah was the subject of the illustration. But His love and favor toward that nation could not be described so as to overdraw the truth, even by the most extreme devotion that an ardent husband could lavish upon a wife whom he loved with his whole heart.

Verse 14. The terms and descriptions running through the chapter will be those directly applicable to a wife, yet the language will occasionally become so literal that we will know the prophet is considering the kingdom of Judah in her relations with God. This verse deals with such a thought when it says *renown among the heathen*. It is true that the kingdom which had Jerusalem for its capital became renowned in many parts of the earth. (See 1 Kings 4: 21; 10: 1, 6, 7.)

Verse 15. The husband continued his traveling to and fro and hence could not always be in the company of his wife. But if she were true to him she would not take advantage of his absence to receive the attentions of other men; that is where the wife of our story showed her disloyalty. She seemed to forget all of the tokens of love and unselfish service which her husband had shown to her in the first years of her life. It was evident that the favors thus lavished upon her had "spoiled" her and turned her head in the direction of unlawful lovers. She even admitted the men passing by to come in to her and commit fornication. Let the reader bear in mind that the idolatry of Judah is what the prophet was really considering, because that abomination is likened in the Bible to moral unfaithfulness.

Verse 16. This husband had given the fine clothing to his wife for her use as a virtuous woman but she abused the privilege. She changed them in such a way as to attract the attentions of evil men seeking lustful intimacy.

Verse 17. The wife was not satisfied with unlawful intimacy with strange men, but fashioned for herself some images of men that she might admire them in her private life. What added to the greatness of such abomination was the fact that she formed those images out of the precious metals that a loving husband had provided for her personal adornment as a wife.

Verse 18. She covered the unlawful images with the fine garments that her husband had given her to clothe her own body.

Verse 19. Let us keep in mind that the prophet is comparing the unfaithfulness of a wife to her true and loving husband with the faithlessness of Judah toward God. She took the dainty foods which her husband had provided for her use, and set them before these images of men that she had made from the precious metals, in a make-believe performance of religious sacrifice such as was done usually before other idols.

Verse 20. The lawful intimacy of this wife with her husband had produced sons and daughters for him. In her mad devotion to idolatry she sacrificed these sons and daughters. (That the people of the Lord actually did make human sacrifices, see the note at 2 Kings 16: 3 in volume 2 of this Commentary.) This unfaithful wife was asked if she regarded such whoredoms (spiritual fornication or idolatry) as a light matter.

Verse 21. If it were possible for a woman to be the sole producer of children, it would be bad enough for her to offer them in the fire as a sacrifice. But this woman had sacrificed *my children* said her husband.

Verse 22. Ingratitude is condemned very severely in the Bible (Judges 8: 34; 2 Chronicles 24: 22; Isaiah 51: 13; Jeremiah 2: 32; 23: 27; Romans 1: 21; 2 Timothy 2: 3). The corrupt interests this wife had acquired turned her into an ingrate of the worst kind, in view of the lowly and helpless condition from which her husband had raised her.

Verse 23. This wronged husband was deeply affected by the wickedness of his unfaithful wife. In the midst of

the figurative parable the prophet injected a few words of direct significance from the Lord, to warn the unfaithful wife (Judah) that great woe was in store for her.

Verse 24. The word *place* occurs in the A.V. here and in a number of other verses but it has no original as a separate word. *Eminent place* is from one original word and literally means a higher spot of some kind. Idolatry is compared to moral evil, especially in the marriage relation, hence the conclusion is that this eminent place meant some provision for the entertainment of men in fornication.

Verse 25. *Head of the way* means the street corners, they being places to attract the eyes of the passers-by on the several thoroughfares. *Opened thy feet* refers to the voluntary position taken by a harlot in yielding her body for the act of adultery. *Beauty to be abhorred*. This wicked woman had made advances to *every one that passed by*, and that made her to be detested even by the men who practiced immorality. Men seeking the unrighteous indulgence will finally tire of a woman who goes too far in her brazen solicitations.

Verse 26. Since idolatry was compared to the sin of fornication, we would expect the comparison to be continued by naming some of the guilty partners. Those partners would be the idolatrous nations with whom Judah committed her spiritual lewdness, and a number of them will be cited; the Egyptians were the ones named here.

Verse 27. Some of the nations with which Judah committed spiritual fornication (idolatry) were suffered to torment her. The Philistines are named here in that connection, and an account of it may be read in 2 Chronicles 28: 18, 19. *Ashamed of thy lewd way* was true, for even the Philistines did not go to the extremes in adopting gods foreign to their own nation (See Jeremiah 2: 11) that Judah did.

Verse 28. *Unsatisfiable* means to be difficult if not impossible to be satisfied. Judah was not content with her own idols but looked elsewhere for gratification. In this inflamed desire for spiritual adultery she turned to the Assyrians.

Verse 29. This verse is somewhat of a summing up of the extensive corruptions of the nation. *Canaan unto Chaldea* takes in all the territory

from the home land to that country where the bulk of the Jews were already in captivity, and to which the remaining ones in Jerusalem and its vicinity were soon to be taken.

Verse 30. *Imperious* means to be domineering or overbearing. An imperious woman of loose morals would be determined to procure the gratification of her lust by any means possible. The extent to which this wicked woman went for that purpose will be seen in some verses that follow.

Verse 31. *Eminent place and head of the way* is explained at verses 24, 25 which the reader should see. This unfaithful wife was worse than the ordinary public women. They engage in prostitution for the sake of money, but this wife *scorned hire*.

Verse 32. Ordinary harlotry is bad enough, where a professional woman practices it for the sake of money. But the woman of our parable was a married woman with a husband who was true to her and who loved her very deeply. Not only so, but he was one who possessed the strength of functioning to the fullest degree and who could and was willing to give her complete satisfaction in their intimate relations. Yet that did not satisfy her; instead, she turned her polluted gaze toward strange men.

Verse 33. The depth of this woman was shown in another manner. As a rule, men are willing to hire the professional harlot to contribute to their lust, while this corrupt wife even scorned taking money from the strange men. But she did not stop at such depravity; she actually offered them gifts to induce them to come and be intimate with her. Another thing that added to the blackness of her abominable life (if that were possible), was the fact that she hired those strange men with the gifts that had been furnished her by her faithful husband (verses 17-19).

Verse 34. The Lord summed up the special corruptions of this unfaithful wife in this verse. She was not in the class of regular harlots but was so bad that even other loose women would not associate with her. They practiced their trade for the money they made from it while this woman did it out of a strict desire for lustful gratification. In such a manner of trade the other women would have no part with her.

Verse 35. While most of the language will continue to be in terms

adapted to the marriage relation, we should keep in mind that the idolatry of Judah is really the subject. That will account for the direct and literal expressions that will occasionally appear in the verses.

Verse 36. An instance of the thought offered in the preceding verse occurs in this. Here we have *whoredom* and *idols* mentioned in the same connection, though the first pertains ordinarily to the marriage relation and other things involving morals, and the second pertains literally to the corruptions that have been the basis of the parable all along. *Blood of thy children* is a literal reference to human sacrifices that idolaters made in ancient times. On this item see the information offered at 2 Kings 16: 3 in volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 37. *Taken pleasure* in the way of spiritual fornication, regardless of her personal feeling toward her lovers as to sentimental affection. *Hast loved*. An unfaithful wife might have an affectionate sentiment for some of her guilty partners as well as enjoy the immoral association with them. *Hast hated*. By the same token as that just indicated, an unfaithful wife might have immoral love (fornication) with a person whom she would hate or abhor sentimentally. It is true that the people of God had been taught to have that attitude toward the Ammonites and Moabites (Deuteronomy 23: 3, 4), while they were instructed not to feel that way toward the Edomites (verse 7). And yet God's people committed spiritual fornication (idolatry) with the gods of these nations. *Discover thy nakedness* is a figure of speech, meaning that these same strange nations would be allowed to see the humiliation of this unfaithful wife (Judah), even though they had been intimate with her frequently in their idolatrous cohabitations.

Verse 38. Judah was to be treated as an unfaithful wife. A jealous husband sometimes exhibits his feelings by physical violence upon the unworthy woman who had once professed to love him only. Likewise the Lord was going to bring the strangers (idolatrous nations) against Judah and some of her citizens would be slain (2 Kings 25: 7).

Verse 39. The first part of this verse was literally fulfilled when the Babylonians took and destroyed Jerusalem. The second part is in the figures that

were used in verse 10 of this chapter. The glorious favors that God had bestowed upon Judah and Jerusalem were taken over by the army of Babylon.

Verse 40. This verse is a direct and literal reference to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem that was soon to be made by the Babylonians.

Verse 41. For the fulfillment of this see 2 Kings 25: 8-10. *Sight of many women*. Idolatry was compared to fornication and idolatrous nations to immoral women; hence this phrase refers to the heathen nations that would witness the downfall of Jerusalem.

Verse 42. *Jealousy shall depart* was looking forward to the time when Judah would no longer be a worshiper of idols, since such worship was the cause of the Lord's jealousy according to Exodus 20: 5.

Verse 43. *Days of thy youth* refers to the early years of the nation, described figuratively in verses 6-14, where Judah is represented as a young girl who had been deserted by her parents and then taken into the care of this wronged husband.

Verse 44. It is a common thing to hear such a comparison made as this. Some may do so merely as a coincidence, while others will think that depravity is inherited. Still others will regard the situation as one where the daughter was influenced by the character and practices of the mother.

Verse 45. See verse 3 for explanation of this parentage. If idolatrous nations were compared to immoral women, they would all be related to Judah who was in that class, hence *sisters* means the various heathen people around her.

Verse 46. One word in the definition for *elder* is "great." Samaria was indeed greater than Judah in that she had 10 tribes out of the 12. Also because the 10-tribe kingdom was the first of the two to make idolatry a national affair when she set up the idols at Dan and Bethel. (1 Kings 12: 29). Sodom would be *younger sister* (by contrast) on the same principle that Samaria was elder.

Verse 47. *Not walked after their ways* means that Judah did not stop at becoming as bad as Samaria and Sodom, but went on and became worse.

Verse 48. Sodom was considered less guilty than Judah on the principle of

the responsibility due to the difference in opportunity. Jesus taught this identical lesson in Matthew 11: 23, 24.

Verse 49. The corruptions of Sodom were described in order to make the guilt of Judah appear still greater, since that had been already declared to be worse than the sins of Sodom.

Verse 50. The history of Sodom's destruction is in Genesis 19.

Verse 51. *Neither half of thy sins* is to be understood in the same light as the thoughts in verse 48. Judah had many advantages for spiritual encouragement not least of which was her possession of Jerusalem and the temple service. Also, she had seen the years of service to idols which Samaria had experienced and should have observed how useless such a service is. In view of all this the Lord regarded Judah with greater condemnation and pointed the finger of shame at her.

Verse 52. *Sisters* means the other idolatrous nations who did not have the advantages for knowing better than Judah had. This fact is the explanation of the phrase *more righteous than thou*.

Verse 53. Much of this verse and others following is figurative or general in its application. *Sodom* was not actually ever restored, but God was promising to extend his mercy to those who had disobeyed the law that was binding upon them.

Verse 54. Judah had encouraged the inferior nations in their sinful course by the example she had set. However, while being more or less responsible for the abominable life manifested by the other nations, Judah professed to abhor them in their evil ways. When the time came that it would all be changed by the powerful hand of the Lord, Judah was to be humiliated over her own wicked conduct.

Verse 55. Judah as well as the other groups that had dishonored God was destined to be placed in a better condition, but the comparative improvement at that time will be measured by the extent of responsibility that each group had borne.

Verse 56. Judah had felt above Sodom in the years she was a powerful kingdom, although that wicked city was to be justified rather than Judah in view of the principle of responsibility that has been discussed in the preceding verses.

Verse 57. This verse continues the thought begun in the preceding one, and the attitude of Judah toward Syria and the Philistines is to be regarded in the same sense as Sodom because it is principles of action that are being considered.

Verse 58. *Hast borne* is past tense in grammatical form but is prophetic in thought. Judah was to bear the penalty of her *lewdness* (idolatry) at the hand of the Babylonians and by the decree of God.

Verse 59. *As thou hast done* denotes the reason for dealing out the punishment to Judah; that it will be what her conduct deserved.

Verse 60. After the chastisement has reformed the wayward wife, her husband will receive her to himself again. *Remember my covenant* is a reference to the days of their first love, when the husband pledged his constancy for the young wife. He had never broken that promise though she had betrayed his confidence.

Verse 61. This verse is a prediction of the cure from idolatry. See the note at Isaiah 1: 25 for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Judah was to be united with her former associates after the captivity. *Not by thy covenant* signifies that Judah had not made any agreement that would have entitled her to this reunion.

Verse 62. One meaning of *establish* is to confirm. God had covenanted with Judah to bring her back to her home land after the captivity had cured her of her iniquity. In so doing it would prove that He always makes his word good. The final fact that would be proved by this restoration would be that all might know that *I am the Lord*.

Verse 63. The human memory is very frail at times, especially when some obligation would place a heavy or difficult line of duty upon the individual. The long period of affliction imposed upon Judah by the captivity was to make such a deep impression upon the people that they would never forget it. Yea, they were to remember with shame how unfaithful they had been and be thereby held back from any complaints. It will be well for the reader to see Nehemiah 9th chapter in connection with this prediction of the penitent mind that would be manifested after the return from the captivity. By this state of mind and by their avoidance of idolatry from this time onward, the Lord

was *pacified* toward his people as predicted in this verse.

EZEKIEL 17

Verses 1, 2. *Riddle* and *parable* are used for the same story. The distinction is slight, but the latter merely means a comparison, while the former indicates that the story will be somewhat puzzling. The parable has to do with the affairs of God's people in connection with the Babylonians and Egyptians. The Biblical history that corresponds with it is in 2 Kings 24 and 25.

Verse 3. The *great eagle* was Babylon, *Lebanon* was Jerusalem and the *cedar* was composed of the leading men or princes of the city. Of course all of these terms were used figuratively and will be referred to by their proper names before the chapter is finished. Since Babylon was represented under the figure of an eagle, in describing its greatness the use of corresponding figures would naturally be maintained. A flying creature that could soar from the region of the Euphrates and arrive so successfully at the distant point of Jerusalem, would require the kind of wings described.

Verse 4. This verse is a prediction of the captivity that was soon to be effected over the leading citizens of Jerusalem. *Land of traffic* was literally true of Babylon. Situated at the Euphrates and Tigris, and also not far from the gulf, she was in a position to deal with the merchants of the world.

Verse 5. When Nebuchadnezzar first made his attack upon Palestine he did not entirely destroy the capital and other cities. He took charge of the country and allowed the Jews still to have a king of their own people. He also permitted some of these chief men to occupy places of importance in Jerusalem, and the kingdom of Judah continued to reign in its own land. *Fruitful field* and *great waters* are figures of speech to indicate the favorable situation that the nation was allowed to enjoy even though the king of Babylon was over the whole realm.

Verse 6. This verse is a picture of the relative prosperity of Judah under the domination of the *great eagle* which represented Babylon. *Vine of low stature* means it prospered as a spreading vine, but was not permitted to raise its head to the equal of Baby-

lon. *Turned toward him* means that Judah had to look to Babylon as a superior.

Verse 7. The *great eagle* was Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who would have come to the side of Judah had he been able; this fact is also revealed in 2 Kings 24: It may be seen also that Judah would have been eager to have the support of Egypt, which is the meaning of *branches toward him* in this verse.

Verse 8. This verse shows the prosperous state of Egypt and what that country could have done for Judah had the Lord not interfered.

Verse 9. The central idea in this verse is similar to the preceding one. In spite of the many natural resources of Pharaoh's kingdom, that monarch would not be able to save Judah from her overthrow when God decreed it to be otherwise.

Verse 10. Maintaining the figurative form of a vine for Egypt, the writer predicted that the plant would not prosper, which means it would not succeed in the plans for coming to the aid of Judah.

Verses 11, 12. The *king of Babylon* corresponds with *great eagle* of verse 3; *Jerusalem* is to identify *Lebanon* of that verse, and *princes* was called *the cedar*. The events pictured are recorded in the closing chapters of 2 Kings.

Verse 13. *King's seed* is indefinite and refers to the leading men in Jerusalem whom the king of Babylon pressed into service. However, among these leading men there was one (Zedekiah) who was appointed to sit as acting ruler in Jerusalem.

Verse 14. *Kingdom be base* denotes that the realm of Judah was to be subject to the rule of Babylon even though the acting king was suffered to remain in Jerusalem.

Verse 15. Zedekiah thought he could get help from Egypt against the king of Babylon. He sent *ambassadors into Egypt* according to this verse, and the same is recorded in Jeremiah 37: 7 as a bit of history included in that prophetic book.

Verse 16. *King dwelleth that made him king* refers to the king of Babylon, for in 2 Kings 24: 17 we have the record of that appointment. This verse predicts that Zedekiah was to die in the very land of him who had given him his appointment as king.

Verse 17. It was predicted that the

attempted alliance with Egypt would prove disappointing. When God decrees that his people are to receive some chastisement for their unfaithfulness, it is useless for them to think they can avoid it by calling for help from others, for numbers and other might count nothing against Him.

Verse 18. Zedekiah had made an agreement with the king of Babylon to serve him while remaining on the throne in Jerusalem. He broke that covenant by calling on Egypt for help, and such an act was against the will of God, for it was the divine will that Babylon be given possession of Jerusalem and her people.

Verse 19. The oath that Zedekiah made with Nebuchadnezzar was the same as if it had been made with the Lord, since He had decreed that the Babylonians were to conquer.

Verse 20. *Spread my net* refers to the pursuit and capture of Zedekiah when he sought to escape by fleeing in the night (2 Kings 25: 4-7).

Verse 21. Some of Zedekiah's men tried to escape with him, but they were captured and taken from their king. This event is recorded in 2 Kings 25: 5.

Verses 22-24. These verses should be grouped in a bracket and given a two-fold interpretation. The first is a prediction of the return of God's people from captivity. The second is a prediction of Christ as King and Redeemer over all earth spiritually.

EZEKIEL 18

Verses 1, 2. There was no basis for the saying about the fathers' eating sour grapes and setting the children's teeth on edge. But it was a convenient way of shifting personal responsibility to blame the wrong on inheritance from the fathers. Such a theory never was true, but the falsity of it had not been exposed as clearly as the Lord threatened to do next.

Verse 3. The Lord declared he was going to take away all occasion for such a saying. *As I live* means the thing predicted was to be as sure as the fact that the Lord was a living Being.

Verse 4. *All souls are mine* signifies that God would have no reason to punish one soul on behalf of another since one of His beloved servants would be as precious as the other. The force of the last clause will be realized if the pronoun is emphasized and made

to read, *the soul that sinneth IT shall die*; that is, one soul will not have to die for the sins of another.

Verse 5. Justice is described in this verse as consisting of doing that which is lawful and right in one's conduct toward his fellow man.

Verse 6. *Eaten upon the mountains*. The connection indicates this means the eating in the feasts instituted in the idolatrous services. The idolaters often selected mountains or other "high places" as points for setting up their idols. The last clause of the verse would have been a violation of Leviticus 18: 19.

Verse 7. It was lawful to accept a pledge from another to secure an obligation but it was wrong to retain it overnight (Exodus 22: 26).

Verse 8. The general meaning of this verse is to take advantage of the misfortunes of another and make a gain thereby.

Verse 9. The *statutes and judgments* of the Lord means the divine laws enacted for the conduct of His people. The man who does them has the promise that he will live, while the one who disregards all of such regulations will be the soul that sins and IT was condemned to die.

Verse 10. A man who begets a son who goes wrong will not have to answer for the sins of that son; provided, of course, he does what he can to instruct his son aright.

Verse 11. Many of the wrongs previously mentioned are repeated because of the importance of the subject. *Eaten upon the mountains* is a reference to the idolatrous feasts that were performed on the various "high places."

Verse 12. *Spoiled by violence* means to use force in taking from another his property. *Not restored the pledge* refers to the law which required a lender to return a pledge at the end of the day.

Verse 13. It was unlawful under the law of Moses to exact *usury* (interest) of a Jewish brother. Instead, if a loan was made to him, the lender could require a pledge in the form of some article of value, but even that must be returned at sundown.

Verse 14. A father was not made to answer for the sins of his son. By the same token, if a father was a doer of wrong deeds, it did not furnish the son any excuse for doing the like. The son should *consider* the bad ex-

ample set by the father and profit by it instead of following in the same line of conduct.

Verse 15. This verse is the same in thought as verse 6.

Verse 16. To *oppress* in the sense that is condemned means to take undue advantage of another. One way in which that could be done was to retain a pledge beyond the legal hour which was stipulated by the law to be at sundown.

Verse 17. *Taken his hand from the poor* denotes he has refrained from oppressing the poor, such as charging him usury or interest on money loaned to him. If a son follows these righteous principles in life he will not be punished because of his father.

Verse 18. It was likewise true that the good deeds of a son would not benefit an unworthy father. The son would "live" in the favor of God, but the father would have to die on the ground of his own responsibility.

Verse 19. The first part of this verse is a protest from the people because of the old notion that a son should bear the blame for his father's evil deeds. The last part is God's reply, and it is a restatement of what has been already declared.

Verse 20. The first sentence is an identical repetition of the closing clause of verse 4. This verse as a whole is a summing up of the several verses on a most important subject, that of individual responsibility.

Verse 21. This verse introduces another phase of one's responsibility as regards his personal conduct, but it still leaves the individual item where it was. No man will need to die for the sins of another, it is only the *soul that sinneth* that shall die. Yet even such a person needs not die, notwithstanding his past sins. Repentance or reformation of life is always open to all men and if such a course will be adopted the sinner may be forgiven his evil conduct and live in the favor of God.

Verse 22. When God forgives a man the matter is dropped. There is a popular saying uttered in prayers where the petitioner asks God to forgive our sins "and remember them against us no more." Such a statement is an insult to the Almighty, for it implies that God will promise to forgive and yet might remember our sins against us after declaring they had been forgiven. It puts God on a

level with hypocritical man who agrees to "bury the hatchet," but who leaves the handle in sight.

Verse 23. The primary object in all scriptural discipline is the possibility of reforming the sinner (1 Corinthians 5: 5; 2 Corinthians 7: 12; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14, 15; Hebrews 12: 6-11; 13: 17). God does not obtain any pleasure out of the punishment of his creatures (2 Peter 3: 9), but inflicts it solely for their good.

Verse 24. This verse is akin to verse 22 at one very important point. When a wicked man repents and is forgiven, none of his former sins are mentioned against him. Likewise, if a righteous man backslides and deserts his life of righteousness, he will be dealt with according to his sins just the same as if he had never been a righteous man. It is one of the weaknesses of mankind to overlook the evil doing of a person for the sake of his previous record. It will be heard say, "We know he is not doing just right now, but we still remember the good he has done." Such persons are pretending to have a better memory or know better how to deal with a sinner than does the Lord. He declares he will not consider the former good deeds of the backslider after he takes up a life of sin but that *he shall die* in his sins.

Verse 25. Any accusation made against the Lord would be false, but this one was especially foolish in view of the declarations just made about the dealing meted out toward man. It shows that He treated all persons in an impartial manner in that a man's past conduct, whether good or bad, was not used as a basis for the treatment of him at present. In spite of this, the people of Israel accused God of using ways that were *not equal*, which means that he was partial in his dealings.

Verse 26. The conclusion that is in this verse is that when a man dies *IN* his iniquities, they are to be regarded as the cause for the penalty of death imposed.

Verse 27. Much repetition may be observed in this chapter, but human beings are so forgetful they need to be reminded frequently of the same truth. It should be seen that throughout this long passage one principle is out in front, and that is that man's fate is largely in his own hands, he will be dealt with according to his deeds.

Verse 28. Repentance is not some-

thing a man does unthinkingly or on the spur of the moment, but it is *because he considereth*. It is true that repentance must start in the mind (2 Corinthians 7: 3, 10), but if it is sincere it will manifest itself by a life of reformation and turning from the ways of unrighteousness.

Verse 29. In spite of the fairness of this principle in God's dealings, his people charged him with unequal or partial treatment of them.

Verse 30. God determined to proceed in the manner decreed and judge each man *according to HIS ways*, and not in consideration of the conduct of others. The fairness of this principle is evident in that it gives each individual an opportunity to avoid personal disaster by turning from his sins.

Verse 31. Repentance is an active and practical something. A sinner must accomplish it himself by putting away the evil things of his life; no one can do it for him. The New Testament teaches the same principle in 2 Timothy 2: 19-21 and many other passages.

After man has purged his manner of life by sincere reformation, God will purge him from the guilt thereof by forgiveness.

Verse 32. The primary object of discipline is discussed at verse 23.

EZEKIEL 19

Verse 1. The prophet was told to make a lamentation for the princes of Israel, which means Judah in this case since the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel had been in exile more than a century at the time of this writing.

Verse 2. The lamentation was to be in the form of a parable, using the lion species of animal for the comparison. The *mother* was the nation of Judah that was considered a lioness *among lions* or other kingdoms. The princes or chief men of the nation of Judah would be referred to as *whelps* in the figurative language of the parable.

Verse 3. This verse singles out one of the whelps and the context indicates it means Jehoahaz. (See 2 Kings 23: 30.) The figurative form of speech is continued, hence the evil conduct of this king is described as that of *catching prey* which really means that this king *devoured men* as is literally stated.

Verse 4. The conduct of this evil king (whelp) attracted the attention

of other nations and the statement that *he was taken in their pit* is recorded in 2 Kings 23: 33.

Verse 5. There is a space between this and the preceding verse that is not apparent in the language. After Jehoahaz was dethroned, his brother Jehoiaxim was put in his place and reigned 11 years, and he was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin who reigned but 3 months. For some reason unknown to me, these two rulers are not considered distinctively in the parable. The things that will be said of the *whelp* of this verse were not all true of the mentioned kings, but they were true of the last king in Jerusalem and his name was Zedekiah. *Waited . . . hope was lost* indicates that the return of Jehoahaz was looked for by some but it was in vain. It had been decreed (Jeremiah 22: 30) that no descendant of Jehoiachin was to reign in Judah, hence the nation had to use another *whelp* who was Zedekiah.

Verse 6. The figures are still drawn from the life of a lion but the verse refers to the actual conduct of Zedekiah who was then on the throne in Jerusalem.

Verse 7. Zedekiah was not a very acceptable ruler in the eyes of his countrymen, and even some of the foreign nations began to look upon him with mistrust.

Verse 8. Finally *the nations* (meaning the units of the empire of Babylon) came against Zedekiah and laid siege to his capital which fell as a prey of war.

Verse 9. Zedekiah tried to evade capture and fled his capital by night, but he was taken by the army of Babylon who *spread their net over him* (2 Kings 25: 4, 5). *In chains* refers to the shackles which they placed upon the fallen king of Judah, after which they took him to Babylon (2 Kings 25: 7). Much of this chapter so far is literal history and it may be read in 2 Kings 24 and 25. But the last part about Zedekiah is prophecy for he had not yet been taken from his throne at this writing.

Verse 10. *Thy mother* means Judah as the producer of kings and princes such as have been considered. The verse is a figurative description of the prosperous state of Judah under the blessings of God. *In thy blood* refers to the early hours of her life when the special favor of God was bestowed upon her. (See chapter 16: 6, 22.)

Verse 11. Here are some more figures and they refer to the standing that Judah enjoyed as a nation among nations. This state of exaltation seems to have filled her with pride and a disregard for her obligation to the Lord.

Verse 12. The closing verses of the chapter pertain to the final overthrow of Jerusalem which was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, which event was to complete the 3rd stage of the great 70-year captivity. *Plucked up in fury* refers directly to the heat of the Babylonian attack. *East wind* suggests the blast of the Babylonian army since that force came from the east. *Fire consumed* is a literal prediction and its fulfillment is recorded in 2 Kings 25: 9.

Verse 13. The *wilderness* was the land of Babylon which would be *dry and thirsty* as far as any national favors were concerned.

Verse 14. *No strong rod to be a scepter to rule*. When Zedekiah was taken from the throne of Judah, there never was a successor until the time of Christ, who was to have the right to reign, but as a spiritual ruler. (See chapter 21: 24-27.) Christ was produced through the tribe of Judah and was to be the last king of that people.

EZEKIEL 20

Verse 1. *Seventh year* is dated from the dethroning of Jehoiachin, at which time Ezekiel was taken into Babylon. This sitting of the *elders of Israel* is similar to the instance given in chapter 14: 1.

Verse 2. The Lord, being aware of the purpose of these elders, will tell the prophet how to address them.

Verse 3. The speech was to be about the same as was given at the former instance. These people were not worthy of the attention they could have received had their conduct been of the proper kind.

Verse 4. Ezekiel was told to refer them to the abominable conduct of their fathers. This would not have been held against them had they profited by the mistakes of their fathers and learned the lesson that such an example teaches.

Verse 5. With this verse the Lord begins an account of his dealings with Israel from the time they saw His signs and wonders in the land of Egypt.

Verse 6. The history starts with the

time the people were preparing to leave the land where they had been for four centuries. *Lifted up mine hand* refers to the means the Lord used to procure the release of his people from the land of bondage. *Glory of all lands* denotes the general desirableness of the land of Canaan, but which God had reserved for his own people.

Verse 7. The Egyptians were idol worshipers and during a stay among them of several centuries the Israelites had taken up with the corrupt practices. As they were leaving that country the Lord admonished them to cut off the evil manner of life. *I am the Lord your God* should have been sufficient reason for their giving up the vain gods of the heathen from whom they had just been rescued.

Verse 8. The children of Israel did not obey the admonition to put away their idolatrous interests. They had not been made free from Egypt but a few weeks until they made the golden calf, suggested no doubt by their life in that country. Yea, even before getting out of that land they manifested an inclination to cling to their evil practices and the Lord's anger was provoked to the uttermost.

Verse 9. But He would not bring his chastisement upon them while in that land, for to do so would be a pollution in the midst of the heathen. Such is the meaning of what God *wrought for his name's sake* by showing the divine power in the midst of that nation that had been accustomed to devotions paid to idol gods.

Verse 10. After thus demonstrating his love for his people, God sent them forth out of that country to travel a while in the wilderness.

Verse 11. There is very little practical difference between *statutes* and *judgments*. The first refers especially to a fixed law to be enforced upon the subjects, the second considers the ability and right of the Lord to decide what is the proper conduct. In the application of them both to man the whole thought is that God knows best what is good for man and has arranged a code of rules for his conduct. The result of such a life will be that man will *live* in the sense of enjoying the favor and protection of God. The propriety of some of these laws may be evident to the human mind while others would have to be accepted upon faith in God's wisdom.

Verse 12. This language refers to the time the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt. Of that time it is said by the Lord, "I gave them my sabbaths." This means that the observance of the sabbath days had not been required of God's people. Moreover, Nehemiah 9:14 indicates they had not even known about such a practice as keeping a sabbath day prior to the law of Moses. It was to be a *sign* between the Lord and his people. The word means something visible as an evidence of a relationship between the parties involved. By observing the sabbath days the children of Israel showed to the world that God was guiding them in their program of life.

Verse 13. This verse describes in a general way the spirit of lawlessness displayed by the children of Israel soon after they were released from Egypt. *Despised my judgments* means they belittled them and treated them as if they were unimportant. The extent of their error is denoted by the Lord's words that the very rules which the Israelites belittled were so important that a man might *live in them*.

Verse 14. *But I wrought* means the Lord worked out his plan in order that His name would not be disgraced in the minds of the heathen.

Verse 15. The men responsible for the conspiracy against the Lord were all caused to die in the wilderness, thus being unable to reach the land of promise.

Verse 16. When men rebel against the righteous commandments of the Lord it is generally due to some other interests. In this case the verse explains it by saying *their heart went after their idols*.

Verse 17. God chastised his people while in the wilderness and many thousands of them died. But the nation as a whole was not wiped out but succeeded in reaching the land promised to their fathers.

Verse 18. The children were not to be punished for the sins of their fathers unless they followed in the evil ways set before them, and even then it would be in punishment for their own conduct and not for that of the fathers. For this reason they were admonished *not to walk in the statutes of their fathers nor serve their idols*.

Verse 19. Being the Lord God of these people was cited as the reason

they should walk in the statutes and judgments He had given them.

Verse 20. Sabbath as a sign is explained at verse 12.

Verse 21. This verse is a repetition of the charge of rebellion previously made against the children of Israel.

Verse 22. *Withdrew mine hand* means God refrained his hand from punishing his people as they deserved. This was done for the sake of His own name that it might not be polluted in the midst of the heathen.

Verse 23. *Lifted up mine hand* here is figurative and refers to the Lord's determination to punish his nation finally by scattering them among the heathen.

Verse 24. The children of Israel turned away from the law of God, then became devoted to idols.

Verse 25. It might puzzle us to read that God would give people a law that was not good. The key to the verse is the sense in which the word *gave* is used. The lexicon says the original has a wide range of meanings. One way in which a thing may be "given" is to step out of the way and let a person who is stubborn have his own way in order that he may be taught a lesson by his own experience. God has used such a plan more than once when his creatures persisted in walking according to their own rules which are designated *statutes* in this verse. (See Psalms 81:12; Acts 7:42; Romans 1:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:11.)

Verse 26. *I polluted them* denotes that God pronounced his people as a polluted group because of their idolatrous practices. They had stooped to the most abominable form of the heathen worship, that of offering human sacrifices.

Verse 27. The word translated *blasphemed* is defined "to revile" in the lexicon, and it has also been rendered "reproach" in other passages in the King James version. God regarded it as a reproach against Him for his own people to take up with idols.

Verse 28. This verse is a description of the idolatrous conditions the Israelites found in Palestine when they entered it. They had been warned against just such things and hence had no reason to be taken by surprise. However, they fell right in with the situation and participated in all the abominable practices of the heathen.

Verse 29. *Bamah* is a word of indefinite origin and occurs only in this place. It is used in a derisive manner with reference to the high places that were approached by idolatrous worshippers.

Verse 30. The question form of the language really was intended as an accusation of the things named. The generation of Ezekiel's day were accused of following in the footprints of their sinful forefathers.

Verse 31. With all these pollutions clinging to these people they were in no position to come to God for information. They had already been litted the instruction that was offered them in their law, hence it would be inconsistent for them to approach the Lord as sincere inquirers.

Verse 32. They had determined in their own mind to be as the heathen who served false gods that were made of wood and stone. They were foolish enough to think they could succeed and continue as a nation while relying on such false gods. But this verse informs them that such a thing *shall not be at all*.

Verse 33. This verse through 37 is a prediction of the captivity. The rule to be had over them was to be accomplished through the Babylonians in whose land they were to dwell throughout the historic 70-year captivity.

Verse 34. The captivity was intended to act as a season of discipline for the rebellious people of God. While in that state they were destined to feel the fury of Him whom they had disobeyed.

Verse 35. *Wilderness of the people* is a figure of speech, based on the event when they were led out from Egyptian bondage into the wilderness. (See verse 10.) The present passage applies to the history connected with their exile in Babylon.

Verse 36. In this verse the Lord makes his own comparison between the time of Egypt and that of Babylon.

Verse 37. *Pass under the rod* is another figure of speech and the meaning is that God would take account of his people. The figure is drawn from the practice of a shepherd who caused his sheep to pass under his rod as he counted them. The ones thus enumerated were to be retained as heirs to the covenant that promised a restoration to the favor of God after the chastisement of the captivity had met its purpose.

Verse 38. The principal item in this purpose mentioned in the preceding verse was the cure of idolatry and that is the subject of this verse. *Purge out from among you the rebels* refers to those who would still be favorably disposed toward idolatry. They were to be weeded out from the other Jews and also be drawn away from the land of Babylon. However, they were not to be permitted to reenter the land of Israel since only those who were weaned from idols were to be thus rewarded. This helps to explain why only a remnant was permitted to return (Ezra 2: 64).

Verse 39. This verse should be considered in connection with verse 25. It was a part of the treatment for idolatry that the nation be compelled to continue its corrupt practice even while in captivity.

Verse 40. This and some following verses predict the return from captivity. Mountain in symbolic language means a government. After the captivity the Lord's people were to return to their own land and restore the religious way of life that was directed by the law. *There . . . offerings*. While in Babylon the Lord would not accept any sacrifices from his people, but when they will have returned to their own country their offerings will be received.

Verse 41. By accepting and blessing the offerings of the Jews in Jerusalem, the heathen would have before them the evidence of the high standing of that people.

Verse 42. Another evidence of the favor of God will be the fact of the restoration of the Jews to the land from which they had been taken 70 years before.

Verse 43. The outstanding effort of the captivity was to rid the Jewish nation of the corruption of idolatry. (See the historical note on this subject in connection with comments on Isaiah 1: 25, volume 3 of this Commentary.)

Verse 44. Israel did not receive the severe treatment her conduct deserved, which is the meaning of *not according to your wicked ways*. But the Lord wished to take care of his good name and hence held back part of his fury.

Verses 45, 46. The 10-tribe kingdom had been in exile for more than a century. It was known in history as the northern kingdom as it related to the kingdom of Judah. The latter was

in the south part of Palestine, and as Ezekiel was writing its capital had not been destroyed, hence the present passage directed at Jerusalem as the south.

Verse 47. The imagery of a forest was selected for the present passage hence the destruction of the kingdom of Judah was spoken of as the burning of the trees.

Verse 48. *Shall not be quenched* means that God's decree to overthrow the kingdom of Judah was bound to go through.

Verse 49. Ezekiel expressed a fear that this form of speech would not be taken seriously by his people; that they might think he was speaking with no end in view.

EZEKIEL 21

Verse 1, 2. The words *set thy face toward Jerusalem* will be understood by remembering that Ezekiel was in Babylon all the time he was writing, having been taken there at the time of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the 3rd and final stage of the 70-year captivity had not taken place, hence Jerusalem was still standing and the last of its kings, Zedekiah, was yet on the throne as a subject king under the Babylonians. Because of all this, much of Ezekiel's writings was prophecy though its fulfillment was about due and the remaining Jews were being warned to be prepared.

Verse 3. This verse was directed against the *land of Israel* in general, though its principal application was to the city of Jerusalem which was the capital and which was yet standing as per the preceding paragraph. The *righteous* and *wicked* were to be cut off in that all classes regardless of personal character had to share in the national downfall. It is a proper time again to read the note offered in connection with 2 Kings 22: 17, volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verse 4. *All flesh* is to be understood in the light of *righteous* and *wicked* as explained in the preceding verse. *My sword* refers literally to the sword of the Babylonians, but is so designated because God was using that nation as his instrument for chastising his people.

Verse 5. *All flesh* and *my sword* are explained in the preceding verse.

Verse 6. *Breaking of thy loins* is figurative and means his entire being was to feel the bitterness of the conditions for which he was sighing.

Verse 7. The sighing described in the preceding verse was a form of "acting" which has been spoken of a number of times, and it was for the purpose of making an impression upon the people. When they inquired the reason for the demonstration the prophet was to tell them it was because of the *tidings*. Of course that referred to the news of what was to come yet upon the city and the people remaining in it.

Verse 8, 9. The same subject is indicated in this paragraph and it pertains to the sword of the Babylonians. To *furbish* means to polish the body of the blade and to *sharpen* would affect the edge. The idea is that God would use the sword of the Babylonians and that it would have been put in the best condition for use.

Verse 10. By furbishing the sword it would be caused to glitter, thus making an impressive appearance in the sight of the victims. One use of a *rod* was as a scepter in ruling, but the scepter in the hands of *my son* (meaning Zedekiah still on the throne) was to be of no avail when the sword of the Babylonians came against it.

Verse 11. *He hath given it to be furbished* means that God had decreed that the sword of the Babylonians was to be effective in its work against Judah.

Verse 12. *Cry and howl* was for the same reason as "sigh" in verse 6. The impending calamity about to come on Jerusalem will be great and bitter and the prophet was instructed to indicate it by his physical expressions. In ancient times many actions were done to indicate the feelings of a person, such as to *smite upon the thigh*.

Verse 13. *Sword contemn* (belittle) *the rod* means the sword of Babylon would overcome the authority of Zedekiah. See the comments on verse 10.

Verse 14. *Sword be doubled* is an emphatic way of describing the success of the sword of Babylon. It was destined to slay many of the *great men* in Jerusalem. *Entereth private chambers* indicates the thoroughness of the work of the Babylonian army.

Verse 15. *I have set the point of the sword against all their gates* denotes that God had given the sword of the Babylonians the mission of attacking Jerusalem and her walls. There was to be no escaping from the attack since God was back of it.

Verse 16. The Lord is still address-

ing himself to the prophet, and in some figurative way is going to describe his actions toward the people. *One way or other* is a figure and the meaning is that there will be no way of turning that will not see the dealing to be meted out under the decree of the Lord.

Verse 17. *Smite mine hands* has the same significance as "smite upon the thigh" in verse 12. God was very determined to carry out his fury on those who provoked it.

Verse 18, 19. *Two ways* represents the king of Babylon in his march out of Babylon and coming to a point where two directions appeared before him. He is undecided as to which course to take but the prophet is told to choose it for him. We have learned that God takes a hand in the affairs of the nation (Daniel 2: 21; 4: 17), thus He will decide the present question for the king of Babylon. That decision will be that the Babylonian forces will be directed to follow up both ways since the numerous forces of Nebuchadnezzar would enable him thus to act.

Verse 20. This verse designates the two ways mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and shows they were to lead against the Ammonites and Judah. For a detailed explanation of the part the Ammonites played in the plans of the Lord, see the comments on Jeremiah 49: 1.

Verse 21. This verse deals with the state of uncertainty in the mind of the king of Babylon which was discussed at verse 19. *Use divination* refers to the way the king was using to bring him to a decision as to which way to choose, when the Lord intervened and made the decision for him. *Looking in the liver* refers to an ancient superstition of consulting the internal organs of various creatures in arriving at decisions. Myers' Ancient History (page 344) says the following on this subject: "From Etruria was introduced the art of the haruspices, or soothsayers, which consisted in discovering the will of the gods by the appearance of the entrails of victims slain for the sacrifices."

Verse 22. On one hand the king of Babylon saw the indication that he should go against Jerusalem. He was to advance against the capital city of Judah with strong military equipment that could lay and execute a siege.

Verse 23. *Be unto them a false divination* means the people of Jeru-

salem will at least pretend not to take the matter seriously. They will console themselves with the idea that the king of Babylon has been misled by false divination. But the Lord will remind them of their evil conduct and thus assure them that the so-called false divination will prove to be true, and that they (people of Jerusalem) may be taken, the Lord will carry out the results indicated by the signs.

Verse 24. The false security the people of Jerusalem had imagined for themselves was to be exposed. Their iniquity was not forgotten by the Lord and for that cause they were to be taken with the hand, meaning the hand of the Lord was in the work of the Babylonians in this final stage of the captivity.

Verse 25. This wicked prince was Zedekiah who was still on the throne in Jerusalem, ruling under the authority of Babylon but that rule was soon to have an end.

Verse 26. A *diadem* is a band worn on the forehead of a ruler, and a *crown* is the article worn on the top of the head to signify his authority. Zedekiah was still wearing this crown at the present writing although his reign was about to close. *Take off the crown* was a prediction and an order. The prediction was that Zedekiah was soon to lose his crown and that it would be by the decree of the Lord. *Not be the same* means the crown will not continue in the same line it has been enjoying as to its temporal scope. *Exalt and abase* indicates a reversal of conditions regarding the government of God's people.

Verse 27. To *overturn* means to overthrow and the threefold use of the word indicates emphasis. The antecedent of *it* is "crown" in the preceding verse and it is the thing God was about to overthrow. With the downfall of Zedekiah and Jerusalem the final stage of the 70-year captivity will be accomplished and Nebuchadnezzar will not leave any other man on the throne of Judah. Such is the significance of the words *shall be no more*. However, while the throne of Judah as a temporal kingdom was never again to be, yet something else was to take its place which is introduced by the word *until*. Following up with the subject thus introduced by the word *until* the Lord declared a person would come whose right it is, meaning it would be his right to have the throne, and when that person comes God will give it him. That great per-

son is Christ and he is the same person predicted in Genesis 49:10. This last passage together with our present verse makes the important prediction that Zedekiah was to be the last king ever to reign over Judah until Christ (the Shiloh of Genesis 49:10) came, and then He would reign as a spiritual king.

Verse 28. The place of the Ammonites of the transactions of the Lord has been described, and the reader may see it in fuller detail at Jeremiah 49:1.

Verse 29. The gist of this verse is that there were false prophets among the Ammonites as well as in Judah. They gave their people false assurances of peace, and their predictions seemed plausible because Nebuchadnezzar was seen to direct his course toward Judah and that would seem to remove any threat to other places.

Verse 30. The question is asked of Ammon if he thought that God would withhold the sword just because the diviners had predicted it so. The question was then answered in the negative and the Ammonites were warned of judgment in their own land.

Verse 31. The threatening continues and the Ammonites are notified that their judgment will be like a fire. The judgment will be executed by the services of other heathen armies whom the Lord designates as *brutish men*.

Verse 32. The fire threatened is largely figurative and refers to the heat of God's wrath. That heat was to be poured out against the Ammonites in the form of destruction in battle, conducted by the forces acting as an agency of God.

EZEKIEL 22

Verses 1, 2. The prophet is again told to direct his writing against the *bloody city* which means Jerusalem which was still standing. He was to recall to her the many abominations of which she was guilty, both physical and spiritual.

Verse 3. The city of Jerusalem not only harbored many idols, but also shielded men who were guilty of bloodshed against the helpless citizens.

Verse 4. *Caused thy days to draw near* referred to the closeness of the final downfall of the city. *Made thee a reproach* is past tense in form and to some extent it was so, for the bulk of the men of Judah were already in

Babylon. However, the last act of the great drama was yet to come when the city would be destroyed by the army of the Babylonians.

Verse 5. When a great city like Jerusalem is utterly destroyed it always causes much comment from the people of the countries. Some might make remarks that were prompted by sincere regret that so great a city should come to ruin. Others would speak in derision and exultation as over the downfall of a dreaded rival.

Verse 6. The princes or leading men in Israel (Judah) used their advantage of position and prestige to carry out their personal wicked designs. Such a course included the shedding of innocent blood of which they were frequently accused by the inspired prophets and other teachers.

Verse 7. *Set light* means to make light of or belittle, and these wicked leaders in Jerusalem lost almost all "natural affection." If a man would lose respect for his own parents it might be expected that he would have very little regard for others. Hence these wicked leaders used oppressive measures against the visitors to their city, and also took advantage of the fatherless and widows.

Verse 8. These men *despised* (belittled) the holy things pertaining to the services of the temple. They *profaned* the sabbaths by ignoring the observance due the sacred days and by using the time in carrying out their wicked devices for gain.

Verse 9. There are three unrighteous practices mentioned in this verse. One is the peddling of gossip that led to the shedding of innocent blood. Another is to *eat upon the mountains* which means to participate in idolatrous feasts, and the other pertains to practices of immorality.

Verse 10. Ordinary lewdness was not enough for these wicked men, but they invaded the sacred rights of their nearest relations. They were so vicious in their immoral indulgences that they violated Leviticus 18:19.

Verse 11. This verse refers to the general and promiscuous practice of immorality. No rank of social or blood connection furnished any protection against the assaults of these abominable characters who were blind to all sense of decency.

Verse 12. It is bad enough to shed blood in anger or on the spur of the moment, but these men deliberately did so for the sake of bribes. Their

greed for gain was so great that they violated the law against usury in order to obtain it. They also took advantage of the urgency of a man's condition to extort money from him.

Verse 13. *Have smitten mine hand* refers to the gesture that was used in ancient times to emphasize the intensity of God's feelings against wicked men.

Verse 14. *Can thine hands be strong* was the Lord's way of telling them they would not be able to resist the wrath that He would soon bring against them.

Verse 15. This verse has direct reference to the captivity. It was to be accomplished in the Babylonian Empire which is a singular word, but that great institution was composed of many *countries*, hence the mention of that subject in connection with the scattering among the heathen. *Consume thy filthiness* applies specifically to the cure of idolatry which the captivity was to accomplish.

Verse 16. *Inheritance* is from CHALAL which Strong defines, "To bore, i.e. (by implication) to wound, to dissolve; figuratively to profane a person." The verse means that Judah would be humiliated in the sight of the heathen by her corrupt conduct.

Verses 17, 18. *Dross* is the worthless material that is found in silver ore, and the article is used to illustrate the sunken value of Judah in the Lord's sight.

Verse 19. These evil men of Judah were destined to be put through the fire of God's chastisement, and they were to be seized upon while in the midst of Jerusalem.

Verse 20. Not that these people were to be left in Jerusalem, except until they would be subjected to the siege and made to feel the heat of God's wrath.

Verse 21. The comparison of these verses is drawn from the work of the smelter, where fire is used to separate the dross from the silver.

Verse 22. The men of Judah were to be subjected to the test in order to learn about the wrath of the Lord. The warnings that had been repeatedly given them by the Lord through the prophets had fallen on deaf ears, so a physical test of chastisement was necessary to bring them to their senses.

Verses 23, 24. *Land not cleansed* has reference to the many pollutions both

physical and moral of which the land was guilty. *Nor rained upon*. In those times God sometimes punished the land by withholding the rain (1 Kings 8: 35; Deuteronomy 11: 17).

Verse 25. These were the false prophets who joined with other leading men in a conspiracy to defraud the people. They had practiced their wicked devices for personal gain even to the shedding of innocent blood.

Verse 26. These priests had some encouragement for their unlawful conduct in the false teaching of the prophets. Jeremiah 5: 31 shows a conspiracy between the evil priests and prophets. One of the surest indications of degeneracy is the confusing of clean and unclean things. Profane things might mean simply the things of a temporal nature and not necessarily wrong. But when the holy or sacred things are put on a basis with the profane or temporal, great corruption results.

Verse 27. *Ravens* is from TARAPH and Strong defines it, "To pluck off or pull to pieces." The idea is the princes were vicious in their activities against the helpless. The terrible nature of this situation is shown in the fact that all this violence against the victims was for the sake of temporal gain.

Verse 28. This comparison to untempered mortar in the case of false teaching was used in chapter 13: 9-11 and commented upon in that place. The false prophets claimed to have received some vision from the Lord, whereas He would not even make any use of such persons in such important matters as pertained to the welfare of the nation.

Verse 29. *The people of the land* would have reference to those citizens who had advantages over the others. *Oppression* is from a word that is defined "fraud" in the lexicon. They used deceitful means to get hold of the possessions of the *poor and needy*. They did not stop at defrauding their fellow citizens, but extended their fraudulent dealings to the *strangers* which means people who were visiting the country.

Verse 30. *Make up the hedge* is figurative and means to build up the weakened condition of the city. No man could be found who was able to remedy the condition.

Verse 31. *Have poured out* was both history and prophecy. Most of the national ruin had taken place but

some of it was still in the future. *Own way have I recompensed* means the Lord imposed upon his unfaithful people the judgment that was due them in view of the way they had acted. The Lord is always compassionate toward the creatures of His care, but when they become impenitent and ungrateful for divine favors, they must expect to receive the punishment their sins deserve.

EZEKIEL 23

Verses 1, 2. This entire chapter is on the subject of spiritual adultery which always means idolatry in the Old Testament. The figures and other terms will be directly those pertaining to the unfaithfulness of women in the marriage relation, but I am anxious that the reader always bear in mind that the real subject is idolatry. After all, the comparison is wholly fitting. When a woman becomes the wife of a certain man she cannot share her affections, either mentally or bodily, with any other man without being guilty of adultery against her husband. Likewise, when a man or group of men profess to have become united with God in their religious life, they have no right to patronize any other god or participate in any strange religious activities. If they do so they are guilty of spiritual adultery. So let me once more caution the reader not to get lost to the real subject as he sees the detailed picture of immoral conduct presented in this chapter. The women are the kingdom of Israel and Judah.

Verse 3. *Committed whoredoms in Egypt*. The two separate kingdoms had not come into existence when the children of Israel were living in Egypt and did not for a number of years. But these people were infected with the disease while there and participated in the unrighteous conduct. Its effect upon them was indicated by their making the golden calf in less than three months after leaving the land. The expressions in this verse refer to the unlawful intimacies permitted by an unfaithful wife preparatory to the act of adultery.

Verse 4. We are given the names of the two women involved in the unholy case at hand. *Samaria* and *Jerusalem* are named because they were the capitals of the two kingdoms. *Aholah* is called the elder because the 10-tribe kingdom was formed first, it being the one that revolted from the lawful standard in Jerusalem.

Verse 5. *When she was mine*. Immorality is wrong in any woman, but it is worse when she commits it against a man to whom she has been united in the lawful relationship. The *Assyrians* are named because at the time the 10-tribe kingdom was practicing her unfaithfulness (idolatry) the territory under consideration was under the control of that empire.

Verse 6. *Aholah* was attracted by the fine appearance of the men in the strangers' camp. Many a wife has been lured away from her husband by the showy appearance of another man.

Verse 7. The prophet combines the spiritual with the literal corruption in this verse. He accuses Aholah of whoredom with the Assyrians, and immediately says it was *with all their idols she defiled herself*. (See the comments at verses 1, 2.)

Verse 8. *Neither left she* means she had never left off the abominable practices she had learned in Egypt. Thus this unfaithful wife did not stop at the unlawful intimacies with one man, but took in others and so multiplied her pollutions.

Verse 9. This verse refers to the captivity of the 10-tribe kingdom by the Assyrian Empire. The account of this is in 2 Kings 17th chapter.

Verse 10. Aholah had *doted* on the Assyrians which means she had encouraged them to make "advances" toward her. Following the encouragement they *discovered her nakedness* which means they "went all the way" and had unlawful intimacies with her. After satisfying their lust on her they took her children from her and also slew her with the sword. Literally this means the Assyrians slew the leading men in the 10-tribe kingdom and took the other citizens into exile. *She became famous* means she became a conspicuous person by reason of her notorious conduct. In the language of the world on such a subject she became known and was familiarly referred to as a "character" and was mentioned with a shrugging of the shoulders.

Verse 11. This verse does not mean that Aholibah (Judah) actually committed more idolatry than did her sister, for such was not the case. Every king of the 10-tribe kingdom without exception was an idolater and encouraged it among his subjects. But Judah had a number of faithful kings who tried to stem the tide of corrup-

tion. The contrast is made on the basis of the superior advantages that Judah had over Israel. With increased advantages or opportunities come greater responsibilities. Judah had the bad example of Israel and its results before her eyes and should have profited by it. Besides, she had possession of the temple and the lawful priesthood to strengthen her and that should have bound her closer to the Lord in a faithful life. But she seemed to overlook all these factors and committed the abomination of false worship. That is why it is said that she became *more corrupt*.

Verse 12. No doubt the people of Judah were interested in the gods of the Assyrians, but it was the Babylonians (or Chaldeans) that had to do with the chastisement of the unfaithful nation. However, at the time of which Ezekiel was writing the country called Babylon was under the control of Assyria and that is why it is said *she doted upon the Assyrians*. The attractions described are the same as were explained in verse 6.

Verse 13. *Took both one way* means Aholibah followed in the same way that was practiced by her sister Aholah.

Verse 14. *Increased her whoredoms* is explained at verse 11 in the light of the degree of responsibility. *Chaldeans* (or Babylonians) are mentioned because at the time Judah reached her crisis that empire was actually in power.

Verse 15. The attractiveness of men lured her away from devotion to her husband, in the same way that her sister had been enticed as per verse 6.

Verse 16. *Doted upon them* means she gave improper encouragement to them as her sister had done according to verse 5. She even became the aggressor and sent messengers to them with "suggestions."

Verse 17. Such an attitude would be sure to interest men already disposed toward such indulgencies. They accepted the invitation and came to her and committed adultery with her. In actual practice it means the heathen nations would be glad to join with the people of Palestine in idolatrous practices.

Verse 18. *Discovered her nakedness* means she voluntarily assumed the position necessary for the act of adultery. *Mind was alienated* has the same meaning that is contained in cases where a husband charges a man with

"alienating the affections of his wife." Idols had alienated the mind of Judah away from the true love for God.

Verse 19. Some women will recall with shame their "youthful follies" and will try to make amends by a virtuous life in later years. But this wife recalled with pleasure those disgraceful years and sought to repeat them.

Verse 20. A *paramour* is an unlawful lover which is here applied to the false gods of heathendom. The terms about *flesh* and *issue* are used to picture a woman who is so lustful that the more beastlike a man is the more she would crave his advances.

Verse 21. This verse repeats the thoughts of earlier verses, referring to the unlawful intimacies permitted by a young wife to strange men.

Verse 22. Sometimes a corrupt woman will tire of her paramours and will "break" with them (*from whom thy mind is alienated*). But they cannot always be cast off so easily and will come back to cause trouble for the woman. Likewise, there came a time when Judah would fain have remained distinct from Babylon. But the Lord determined that she must continue her idolatrous practices with that heathen group, even doing so after being taken into their land for a period of exile.

Verse 23. This verse gives a list of the heathen peoples with whom Judah had committed idolatry (spiritual adultery) at one time or another. Most of them had been swallowed up by the great Babylonian Empire at the time of Judah's captivity.

Verse 24. This is a literal prediction of the siege that the Babylonians planted about Jerusalem. *Chariots* and *wagons* are vehicles used for conveyances of men and materials in military operations. *Wheels* is from a word that indicates something very impressive because of its size, and somewhat like a whirlwind in its encircling formation. The other articles named are those used by soldiers in a siege or other war activities.

Verse 25. When God's jealousy is mentioned we are reminded of Exodus 20: 5 where the subject is idolatry. That is the subject of this present chapter, described and condemned in the form of adultery. This verse predicts the severe treatment that Jerusalem is to receive from the Babylonians in the last stage of the 70-year captivity, including a bitter siege of more than two years.

Verse 26. In line with an unfaithful wife that plays the part of a harlot, she is represented as having attired herself with gaudy and attractive garments as a lure for men. This verse shows that she will be stripped of those garments by these men.

Verse 27. *Make thy lewdness to cease.* Since idolatry is the real subject of all these comparisons, this expression is a prediction of the cure from idolatry that will result by casting his wife (Judah) into the hands of her evil associates. This prediction was fulfilled according to the historical quotation given in connection with Isaiah 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 28. *Whom thou hatest* is to be understood in the same sense as *mind* is *alienated* that was explained at verse 22.

Verse 29. Men will sometimes tire of the very woman who has catered to their lusts, then they will "turn on her" and mistreat her with a vengeance. Likewise, the very heathen with whom Judah had played the harlot (idolatry) were to be given possession of her and they were to hold her as a captive for 70 years.

Verse 30. All these calamities were to come upon Judah as a punishment for her unfaithfulness to her husband who was the Lord.

Verse 31. *Give her cup* means that Judah was to receive the same cup or punishment as Israel and that was to be captivity. This was just, since she had taken up the same walk of life as that followed by her sister Israel.

Verse 32. *Deep and large and it containeth much* is used by way of emphasizing the statements of the preceding verse. The emphasis is certainly appropriate, for the subjugation of an established kingdom and the transferring of its population into a foreign land would be a very great humiliation and cause much comment.

Verse 33. *Drunkenness* is figurative and means they would be overwhelmed with humiliation and sorrow, even as the sister (Israel) had been a century before.

Verse 34. The language is still figurative, using a cup as the basis of the figure. With that form of imagery in view, the emphasis is expressed by representing them as being so greedy that they crush the cup by their action. *Pluck off breasts* indicates a gesture of despair by snatching at their breasts. Such a movement was an an-

cient custom used in times of great sorrow or astonishment. (See Luke 18: 13; 23: 48.)

Verse 35. When God's servants turn to other persons or objects with their devotions it is because they have forgotten Him. Jesus taught this truth in Matthew 6: 24. *Bear thy lewdness* has a twofold bearing. One is that they would have to bear the punishment due their sins, and the other is they would have to continue their lewdness which was idolatry, for they actually did have to continue that in the captivity.

Verse 36. *Will thou judge* is in the form of a question, but it really is an order from the Lord to judge the two women. The prophet was to charge them with the abominations they had committed against Him.

Verse 37. This verse combines the figurative with the literal terms for the same abomination. It explains the adultery of these women (Aholah and Aholibah; Samaria and Jerusalem) to be the practice of idolatry. They carried the service to the extent of offering their own children in sacrifice to the idols.

Verse 38. These wicked women went so far as to bring their immoral practice into the house provided by their husband, which is the meaning of the phrase *defiled my sanctuary*, for that was the house provided to shelter the sacred furniture.

Verse 39. These women are still being regarded as unfaithful wives, though this verse drops the figures and states the literal facts. The people of God actually made sacrifices of their children, and also set up idols in the temple.

Verse 40. These unfaithful wives were worse than the usual cases, for they even sent messengers to strange men to solicit their intimacies. This item is commented upon more fully at verse 16. When the men answered the invitation with their presence they found the women adorned with the "make-up" of impure characters.

Verse 41. After decorating their bodies in a suggestive manner, the men found them occupying a *stately* bed, one that belonged properly to the use of persons of special honor, there to receive the embraces of these strange men. Near the bed was a table on which were the materials with which they could refresh themselves at intervals with their unlaw-

ful intimacies with these wives of another person.

Verse 42. So inordinate were Aholah and Aholibah that they accepted men of both high and low rank. In order to give themselves an appearance of dignity, these men adorned themselves with hand decorations, and for the appearance of royal standing they wore crowns on their heads.

Verse 43. Men who are intent on full gratification of their lusts do not generally care for a worn out and old woman. These wives of the Lord were old at that business, hence He asks if these men will be satisfied with them.

Verse 44. *A woman that playeth the harlot* is usually one who is attractive from the standpoint of youth and who has plenty of sex appeal. These women had so adorned themselves that they made so great and favorable an appearance as to lure the men on. Consequently they went in unto them and committed adultery.

Verse 45. These women were guilty of spiritual adultery (idolatry) and of literal bloodshed. Hence righteous men were to judge them according to their just deserts. This does not mean the men would be righteous as to their personal character, but in executing God's judgment against the women they would be doing right.

Verse 46. This verse is an explanation of the preceding one. God was to use a foreign group to bring the unfaithful kingdoms into judgment and take them into exile.

Verse 47. The things predicted here actually came to pass according to the historical account given in 2 Kings 25th chapter.

Verse 48. *Cause lewdness to cease* is a prediction in figurative form that God's people would be cured of idolatry by the captivity. See the historical fulfillment of it at Isaiah 1: 25, volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 49. The figurative and literal terms for the same thing are again used in this verse. *Lewdness* means the same as *idols* and the unfaithful people of the Lord were to *bear the sins*, which means they were to bear the punishment due their sins.

EZEKIEL 24

Verse 1. The specific date of this chapter is given which is the *ninth year* after Ezekiel was taken to Babylon. The exact day and month of that

year are also given, and on that day the siege of Jerusalem began.

Verse 2. Ezekiel was in Babylon and hence would have no knowledge of the exact movements of Nebuchadnezzar without the message from the Lord as here stated. To clarify the memory of the reader I will again state that the third stage of the 70-year captivity had not occurred, but it was about due and was to be started with a siege.

Verse 3. In illustrating what was soon to take place the people were to be impressed by a parable. This was to be done through the use of some more "acting" as we have previously seen in the history of the prophets. Ezekiel ordered someone to put on a pot or large kettle and put water in it. Such an action would mean that some process was to be done for the purpose of boiling something, and that was in order to effect some kind of purifying. If the fleshy parts of animals are boiled the objectionable portion will come to the top in the form of *scum* which can then be removed.

Verse 4. The city of Jerusalem was illustrated by the pot, and the pieces put into it were men of the nation. They were to be "boiled" or tested in order to remove the *scum* (wickedness) from them. Things that are physically impossible or at least highly improbable, may be supposed to happen in a parable. Thus the city of Jerusalem was the boiling pot to begin with because it was in that city where the characters were that needed to be purified by boiling. However, the actual purifying effect was to take place in Babylon, and for that particular phase of the whole transaction we must transfer the boiling vessel from Jerusalem to Babylon. In all other respects, though, the descriptive remarks apply to Jerusalem and the citizens remaining therein and in connection with it because of the many impurities in their lives.

Verse 5. *Choice of the flock* means the leaders or head men of the city. The word *burn* is from an original that means also "to pile." *Bones* is defined in the lexicon as meaning the body. The language means the pieces were to be piled round in such a way that would cause them to get the effect of the fire.

Verse 6. *Bloody city, to the pot.* For the explanation of this phrase see the comments on verse 4. *Let no lot fall upon it.* That is, make no

exceptions among the pieces (the men of Jerusalem), for all of them must be put to the test in order to have the "scum" (wickedness) boiled out of them; all must either be killed or taken into captivity in Babylon.

Verse 7. The law of Moses (Leviticus 17:13) required that the blood of animals killed lawfully should be poured upon the ground and covered with dust. This was evidently as an act of respect, on the same principle that a dead body is buried honorably, since the blood is the life (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11). But these murderous adulteresses were even defiant in their disrespect for the innocent blood they had shed. They did not give it the courtesy of being covered out of sight by being absorbed in the ground, but poured it on a rock where every drop would be visible as a glaring proclamation of their arrogance.

Verse 8. Since these wicked women thus exposed disrespectfully the blood of innocent victims, the Lord in fury decreed that their guilty blood should likewise be exposed to the public view by spreading it upon a rock.

Verse 9. The *bloody city* is Jerusalem and the parable of the boiling pot is again referred to. The fury of God was to be manifested by making the fire great.

Verse 10. The thought of the preceding verse is continued in this. *Spice it well*. This was to make it more desirable so the foe would be more greedy in devouring it.

Verse 11. Here a slight change is made in the use of the parable. The enemy is to devour the desirable pieces that have been boiled, leaving the scum in the kettle. Then the pot is to be put back on the fire that the *brass* (the material of which the vessel is made) may get hot again. It was then to burn the scum right into the pores of the metal and thus be consumed.

Verse 12. She (Judah) had wearied or overworked herself in her eagerness to speak lies. This refers to the false prophecies and other misleading teaching that her outstanding men had done which had lulled the people into a state of false security.

Verse 13. The filthy lewdness refers to her idolatry which was never to be purged out of her until it was done by the Lord in the land of captivity. *Because I have purged thee* is in the sense as if it said "for this cause

(namely, thy lewdness) I will purge thee (of idolatry) in the boiling pot of national chastisement."

Verse 14. There are no new thoughts offered in this verse, but several declarations of the determination of the Lord to carry out his threats on his unfaithful wife.

Verses 15, 16. Here we have a case where the Lord does some "acting" in the place of the prophet. *Desire of thine eyes* means something that he would desire to look upon, which it will be seen means his wife. It was doubtless a severe blow and seems regrettable that such a thing was made necessary by the cruel unfaithfulness of these wicked women. But God made a greater sacrifice when he gave his own Son to die in order to accomplish a universal benefit. And so the death of Ezekiel's wife was so necessary in the estimation of God that the prophet was forbidden to make any visible or audible complaint.

Verse 17. *Make no mourning for the dead* did not mean he was not allowed to have any feeling of grief, but that he was to make no outcry over it. In that sense he was to be dumb; not that he could not speak if occasion required. The closing expressions of the verse means he was to conduct himself in a normal manner and not act like one in mourning. *Eat not the bread of men*. When death enters a home it is customary for neighbors to relieve the family of the burden and worry of household tasks by coming in and providing the meals. Ezekiel was restricted from accepting any such favors, because that would be an outward demonstration of mourning.

Verse 18. There are two mornings spoken of in this verse, one was on the day when God was to take away "the desire of his eyes," the other was the morning of the next day. In the first morning Ezekiel spoke to the people about what was to happen and in the evening of that day the "stroke" came which was the death of his wife. The next morning the prophet started his attitude of apparent indifference as *I was commanded*.

Verse 19. The conduct of Ezekiel was so unusual for one whose home was darkened by death, and especially by the death of one's companion. This caused the people to ask him for an explanation of *what these things are to us*.

Verse 20. The prophet replied by telling them it was according to the *word of the Lord*. He had to speak in order to give them such a reply, which shows that the dumbness that was attributed to him for a period of years was not a physical defect imposed upon him. He was to be *dumb* or silent as to making an audible complaint.

Verse 21. Ezekiel continued the explanation of his strange conduct upon the death of his wife. In doing so we are given a clue as to the purpose of both the death of the prophet's wife and of the conduct he was directed to maintain. It was a symbol of what was to befall the people of Judah and the attitude they were to manifest. They, like the prophet, were to lose something that was dear to them namely, their capital city with its citizens. *Profane my sanctuary* means the holy city and temple were to be given over into the hands of the heathen who would strip them of their belongings and put a stop to the sacred ceremonies.

Verse 22. The people of Judah, like the prophet, were not to make demonstrations of grief over their loss. This was to preclude their accepting any favors from others who might be disposed to offer them, such as food and the comforts of life.

Verse 23. *Tires* is from *PEER* which Strong defines, "An embellishment, i.e. fancy head-dress." It would not usually be worn in times of distress, but these people were commanded to wear them just the same as if nothing had happened. *Not mourn nor weep* had reference to the formal outward demonstrations in the sight of the general public. But they were permitted to *mourn one toward another*, which means they could have their grief if they (people of Judah) kept it among themselves.

Verse 24. *Ezekiel is unto you a sign*. This gives the key to the situation, that the misfortune of the prophet and his conduct concerning it, was to be an example of how the people of Judah were to act upon the misfortune of losing their city.

Verse 25. The preceding verse informed the people of Judah of the connection between them and Ezekiel, and this verse, addressed to the prophet, informs him when the "sign" is to be carried out. It is to be when the Lord takes from them *the desire of*

their eyes which we understand to be their capital city of Jerusalem.

Verse 26. *He that escapeth* means one who escapes from Jerusalem at the time of its capture and destruction. Ezekiel will still be in Babylon when that misfortune occurs, just as he was at the time all this "acting" was being done. The one who escapes will go to Babylon and tell the prophet by word of mouth of the destruction of Jerusalem, which will have been revealed to him that same day by inspiration.

Verse 27. *In that day . . . be no more dumb* means that the restrictions which Ezekiel had been under, explained at verse 17, will be lifted and he will be permitted to express himself according to his feelings.

EZEKIEL 25

General remarks. The writing against the people of Judah is now interrupted and for several chapters the prophet will give God's judgments against some heathen nations. The next time he writes concerning Judah it will be chiefly of a reassuring tone. But before taking up that line it will be appropriate to publish the Lord's denunciations against these foreign peoples because they had been so hostile against His people. It will be well, therefore, to regard these chapters as an interval in the general book of Ezekiel, and the comments will be made as if the several chapters were an independent document. It will also be seen that the chapters in this interval are not always chronological as to dates. We will now study the chapters as they come.

Verses 1, 2. *Set thy face* is a figurative way of telling Ezekiel to prophesy against the Ammonites. These people were distantly related to Judah but had been hostile against them and were considered their enemies.

Verse 3. God has always been jealous of his own people and would tolerate no rejoicing when they met with any misfortune. This verse explains why Ezekiel was told to *set his face* against the Ammonites. They had said *aha* when the land of Israel was made desolate and when the temple was defiled by strangers. That is an expression of derision and indicates a feeling of rejoicing over the misfortunes of God's people.

Verse 4. *East* is defined in Smith's Bible Dictionary as referring to the lands lying immediately eastward of

Palestine namely, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Babylonia. The *men of the east*, therefore, means the people of those territories who were to come against the Ammonites, destroy their buildings and consume their products.

Verse 5. Rabbah was the chief city of the Ammonites, and it would be a reproach to have it reduced to a stabling place for the beasts of service. The people in general were destined to become a couchingplace or place for resting for the flocks.

Verse 6. The bodily acts described were condemned because they were done in a tone of rejoicing over Judah's experiences. *With all thy despite* means they had a feeling of contempt for God's people.

Verse 7. *I will stretch out mine hand* indicates that God would be the cause of the defeat coming upon the Ammonites. That people was a heathen nation, itself, but the word is used in the general sense and the prediction meant that another nation was to be used as an instrument of the Lord for the purpose of chastisement.

Verse 8. Moab and Seir were two countries bordering against each other and joined in their belittling of Judah, which was bound to bring down the wrath of God upon them.

Verse 9. *Open the side* means the Lord decreed a general attack upon these people, beginning with the frontier cities named in this verse.

Verse 10. Verse 4 threatened the Ammonites with invasion by the *men of the east* and the lands of Moab and Seir are here destined to meet the same fate.

Verse 11. The primary motive of all these instances of chastisement is stated, which was that people would *know that I am the Lord*.

Verse 12. The Edomites were indirectly referred to in verse 8 where Seir ("Edom was called *Mount Seir* and Idumea,"—Smith's Bible Dictionary) and Moab are included in the same prediction. In the present verse they are considered as a separate people.

Verse 13. When God decrees that one nation shall come against another, that is regarded as the work of His hand. *Teman* and *Dedan* were districts in the Edomite country located in opposite directions from each other. The last clause of the verse means that the slaying of their men would take place from one of these sections to the other.

Verse 14. Sometimes the Lord chastises one heathen nation by the services of another, but in the case of the Edomites it was to be accomplished *by the hand of my people Israel*. In performing this service they would be manifesting the vengeance of God. (See Romans 12: 19; 2 Corinthians 7: 11.)

Verse 15. The Philistines were a People who lived near the Mediterranean Sea. *With a despiteful heart* means to do something "for spite," and these people were charged with that in their dealings with God's people. *Old hatred*. According to the lexicon the first word may be defined either by "old" or "perpetual." The history shows that either definition may apply, for the hatred of the Philistines against the Israelites was continually manifested from the beginning of their residence in Palestine and that would make it old.

Verse 16. The *Cherethims* were life-guards according to Smith's Bible Dictionary and the lexicon of Strong agrees with it. Doubtless they were employed by the Philistines to serve and support them against the people of God. The present prediction threatened to take this support from them as a punishment for their hateful conduct.

Verse 17. Again the chief purpose of God in his chastisements of evil nations is stated, and it is that *they shall know that I am the Lord*.

EZEKIEL 26

Verse 1. The chapters in the "interval" (see "General remarks" at the beginning of Chapter 25) are interspersed with dates, but they are not always chronological. All of them, however, are dated from the captivity of Jeholachin at which time Ezekiel was taken to Babylon. The present chapter is the eleventh year since that event, and it happens to be the last year of the reign of Zedekiah. There is no particular connection between these dates and the predictions uttered against the various nations. All we know is that the Lord saw fit to give us some of the dates.

Verse 2. Phoenicia was a narrow tract of country north of Palestine and lying along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Its principal cities were Tyrus (or Tyre) and Sidon and especially the former. Because of its outstanding importance it has been referred to in the prophecies and his-

tories, even when the writers may have been considering the country in general. There are several chapters devoted to this nation and city beginning with this verse. See chapter 25:3 for the meaning of *aha, Gates of the people* is a figurative expression used because of the position of the city as a commercial center. *Turned unto me.* The first person is used because Tyrus is the speaker, gloating over her imagined supremacy in her traffic against Jerusalem.

Verse 3. *Therefore* expresses the conclusion of the Lord against Tyrus. He decrees that many nations were to come against this city, so many and so powerful that it is compared to the waves of the sea dashing up against the land.

Verse 4. In connection with this verse I shall make a quotation from Smith's Bible Dictionary, and I request the reader to note especially the words *walls, dust and rock* as he reads the quotation because they are important words in the verse of the present paragraph. "At that time [Alexander's attack in 332 B.C.] Tyre was situated on an island half a mile from the mainland; it was completely surrounded by prodigious [huge] walls, the loftiest portion of which on the side fronting the mainland reached a height of not less than 150 feet; and notwithstanding the persevering efforts of Alexander, he could not have succeeded in his attempt if the harbor of Tyre to the north had not been blockaded by the Cyprians and that to the south by the Phoenicians, thus affording an opportunity to Alexander for uniting the island to the mainland by an enormous mole. (The materials for this he obtained from the remains of old Tyre, scraping the very dust from her rocks into the sea, as prophesied by Ezekiel, Ezekiel 26: 3, 4, 12, 21, more than 250 years before.)"

Verse 5. *Spreading of nets* refers to the act of washing out their nets by fishermen and spreading them out to dry. Such a use of a place would indicate that the region was practically barren, its inhabitants having been either slain or deported. *Midst of the sea* has reference to the new city of Tyre that was built on an island half a mile out into the sea when the inhabitants of the city on the mainland realized they were losing the contest to Nebuchadnezzar. *Become a spoil to the nations* means the reduced condition of the city would expose her to

the nations who would take advantage of her lot and take her possessions to themselves. In corroboration of the many statements in this verse and elsewhere about Tyre, I shall give a quotation from history. The emphasis will be mine, added for the purpose of directing the attention of the reader to words of special significance. "With Jerusalem subdued, Nebuchadnezzar pushed with all his force the siege of the Phoenician city of Tyre, whose investment [formation of a siege] had been commenced several years before. In striking language the prophet Ezekiel (29: 18) describes the length and hardness of the siege: 'every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled.' After thirteen years Nebuchadnezzar was apparently forced to raise the siege." Myers, Ancient History, page 72. "Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the great merchant-city, Tyre, which was still rich and strong enough to hold out for thirteen years. Ezekiel says that Nebuchadnezzar and his host had no reward for their heavy service against Tyre, and the presumption is that the city capitulated [surrendered] on favorable terms." Britannica, Volume 18, page 808. "Accordingly, at the time we are speaking of, she (Tyre) was in a condition to resist, thirteen years together, a monarch to whose yoke all the rest of the East had submitted. It was not till after so many years that Nebuchadnezzar made himself master of Tyre. His troops suffered incredible hardships before it; so that, according to the prophet's expression, 'every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled.' Before the city was reduced to the last extremity, its inhabitants retired, with the *greatest part of their effects*, into a neighboring *ISLE*, half a mile from the shore, where they built a new city; the name and glory of which extinguished the remembrance of the old one, which from thenceforward became a *mere village*, retaining the name of ancient Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar and his army having undergone the utmost fatigues during so long and difficult a siege, and having *found nothing in the place to requite them* for the service they had rendered to Almighty God in executing his vengeance upon the city, God was pleased to promise by the mouth of Ezekiel that he would give them the spoils of Egypt for a recompence." Rollin's Ancient History, volume 1, page 472. "The Tyrians also offered submission, but refused to allow Alexander [The Great] to enter

the city and sacrifice in the temple of Hercules. Alexander was determined to make an example of the first sign of opposition that did not proceed from Persian officials, and at once began the siege. It lasted *seven months*, and, though the king, with enormous toil, drove a mole [huge wall laid in the sea] from the mainland to the island, he made little progress till the Persians were mad enough to dismiss the fleet and give him command of the sea through his Cyprian and Phoenician allies. The town was at length forced in July, 332; 8,000 Tyrians were slain, 30,000 inhabitants sold as slaves, and only a few notables . . . were spared. Tyre thus *lost its political existence*, and the foundation of Alexandria presently changed the lines of trade and gave a blow perhaps still more fatal to the Phoenician cities." Britannica, volume 18, page 809. Myers' Ancient History, page 275. Josephus, Antiquities, 11-8-3.

Verse 6. The original for *daughters* has a very wide range of meanings, even including "cities" and "townships." Land or earth cannot be literally *slain by the sword*, so the evident bearing of the clause is that not only will Tyre be attacked and her citizens slain, but the ones living in the surrounding areas will be killed. The purpose is to make the people realize that *I am the Lord*.

Verse 7. This verse specifically predicts the attack by Nebuchadnezzar on the city of Tyre. For the historical fulfillment of this prediction, see the long quotation in connection with verses 4, 5. *From the north* is explained by the historical note offered in connection with Isaiah 14: 31 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 8. *Daughters in the field* is explained at verse 6. *Fort and mount* means the embankments raised against a city, and *buckler* means a pointed instrument for the purpose of bodily defense in close-up conflict.

Verse 9. *Engines of war* were large instruments for the hurling of stones with the intent of battering down the walls. The *towers* were the structures erected in the most important places and the *axes* were for the purpose of cutting them down.

Verse 10. The great number of horses in the cavalry of the Babylonians is indicated by the dust they could stir up. It was to be so dense that it would envelop the people of Tyre. The *noise* would not literally shake the walls. The idea is that they

would shake at the time of the noise, and the physical cause would be horses and chariots and other instruments and men of the invading army.

Verse 11. These horses were both the ones that drew the war chariots and those that carried the cavalrymen. The men in both divisions of the service were to use the sword against the common citizens of the city, and likewise the *garrisons* or fortified groups of soldiers were to be slain.

Verse 12. The invaders were to take possession of the personal effects and also were to seize upon their commercial wares. They were also destined to wreck the houses, both the ones used for storage and the ones used as homes. *Dust in the midst of the water* is explained at verse 4.

Verse 13. In captivity the people of Judah would not feel like singing or playing on their instruments. This state of mind is well described in the 137th Psalm.

Verse 14. *The top of a rock* would be a bare spot with no earth or other substance for supporting life. It would be fit only for uses such as the spreading out of nets for drying. Such a circumstance is used to describe the desolate condition Judah would be in after the Babylonians conquered them.

Verse 15. The Lord's feeling against Tyrus was so intense that the city is named 14 times in course of the chapters in this "interval." *Isles* is from an original that Strong defines "a habitable spot," and it means the people of various areas will shake or be shocked at the downfall of Tyrus.

Verse 16. *Princes of the sea* refers to the merchants of Tyrus whose traffic was conducted on the sea. In Isaiah 23: 8 they are spoken of as such where the passage says "whose merchants are princes." *Thrones and robes* are figurative and so used in view of the control that the merchants of Tyrus had over the sea traffic. In the place of such gorgeous or showy garments they were to wear those of *trembling*. That will be caused by the attack of the nation that God will bring against them.

Verse 17. *They* refers to the people of the "isles" as explained in verse 15. The *lamentation* here signifies the same as "shake" in the other verse. The frequent reference to the sea in one form or another is due to the position of Tyrus geographically. The city was located on the shore of the

mainland at first, then it was situated on the island half a mile out into the sea. Such a location gave her an advantage over others in regard to sea traffic. But the city was very boastful of her advantage and became overconfident of her power against other cities.

Verse 18. The word *isles* still means habitable spots wherever located, but in this verse it has both meanings. They were isles because they were surrounded by the water of the Mediterranean Sea, and they were inhabited spots, hence were "isles" in that sense and their people were concerned in the predictions being made.

Verse 19. *Great waters shall cover thee* is both literal and figurative. The enemy army would be so overwhelming that it would be like a flood. And by destroying the walls and other structures of the city, the waters of the sea would actually flow over it.

Verse 20. *Pit* means a state of obscurity or forgetfulness, and such a lot was decreed against Tyrus. *With the people of old times* means people of earlier times who had gone down in defeat under the attacks of hostile forces. *Set glory in the land of the living*. By putting an end to the greatness of Tyrus so her glory will be dead, God's own glory will shine in the lands where national life still shines.

Verse 21. Nothing new is contained in this verse; it is a summing up of the desolate condition to be brought by the Lord upon Tyrus.

EZEKIEL 27

Verses 1, 2. The first verses are almost identically alike in many of the chapters of this book, hence I have combined it with the second verse after a comment in one or two places. And it will be well to make occasional reference to its significance, notwithstanding the general grouping just stated. The thought should be observed that Ezekiel received his instructions from the Lord and so his writings are inspired. On the phrase *son of man* see the comments at chapter 2: 1. *Lamentation for Tyrus* does not signify the personal sentiments of the prophet, although he may have felt some of them because of his humane temperament. The thought is that he was to predict a lamentable condition to come upon that city.

Verse 3. *Entry of the sea*. Tyrus was on the shore of the Mediterranean

Sea and that gave the city a great advantage in commerce. She could trade with foreign ports without any land transportation, then send her land conveyances inland with the wares obtained oversea and exchange them for manufactured products. This fact is meant by the phrase *merchant of the people*, and the situation filled her with pride and caused her to say boastfully, *I am of perfect beauty*.

Verse 4. *Borders* means boundaries and the main thought in the verse is that Tyrus had full use of the sea for her traffic. Her *builders* or workmen and men in the service of the city used the advantages of the sea to bring their beloved metropolis to the highest possible perfection.

Verse 5. Having the "range" of the sea at her command, that encouraged these builders to make vessels for that purpose. And here we can see another advantage in being situated on the seacoast. It was near the famous forests of the Lebanon district and hence in easy access to some of the best materials for shipbuilding.

Verse 6. The oak timber was another good material connected with the building and propelling of ships in the special item of oars, for those parts would require strength to resist the strain of pulling. Cedar and fir are not so strong, but that quality was not important for the body of a ship; it was lighter in weight and hence better adapted to a vessel that was to float on water. The *benches* refers to the decks which were made of ivory, and this is another indication of the city's luxurious condition.

Verse 7. No ordinary material was used for sails although it might have served the purpose very well. But this city with such a "high standard" in her ambitions obtained linen that was produced in Egypt, which was of especially high quality. Smith's Bible Dictionary has the following to say of this product. "Egypt was the great center of the linen trade. Some linen, made from the Egyptian *byssus*, a flax that grew on the banks of the Nile, was exceedingly soft and of dazzling whiteness." (See 1 Kings 10: 28). *Blue* and *purple* are colors but the expression has reference to the fabrics that were so colored. *Elishah* was a place supposed to have been inhabited by the descendants of a son of Javan who had that name (Genesis 10: 4). These fine goods and dyes were obtained from this territory because they were of exceptional quality. *Covered* is from

MEKACCEH, and a part of Strong's definition is, "an awning from the sun."

Verse 8. Because of the prestige of Tyrus she could "have her pick" of men for service. The inhabitants of *Zidon* (another city of that nation) and *Arvad* (a small island near the Phoenician coast) were skilled well enough for the general service expected of mariners, but the more particular business of guiding the ships was left to the trained and skilful men of the city of Tyrus.

Verse 9. *Calkers* were those who looked after leaks in a vessel and also supplied any extra girders that might appear to be necessary for the support of the ship. The *ancients of Gebal* were men selected for this important work because their age and experience made them more reliable.

Verse 10. The significance of naming these places in the several verses is to show the extensive resources of man power which Tyrus possessed. These men referred to in this verse took personal interest in the security and also the attractiveness of the chief city of Phoenicia.

Verse 11. The men of *Arvad* are mentioned in verse 8 who were used in the service of handling the work on board the ships. The same place furnished other men to guard the walls of the city. *Towers* were structures erected in important spots for the purpose of defense. The men who would be assigned to such a post would need to be brave and able in repelling a foe. *Gammadims* is from the Hebrew word GAMMAD which Strong defines, "A warrior (as grasping weapons)." A shield is a protective armor and these warriors were provided with such articles so well that they had them to hang round on the walls, indicating the completeness of their equipment.

Verse 12. *Tarshish* was a town on the western coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This seaport produced the metals named in the verse, then transported them over the sea to Tyrus and exchanged them for the goods on sale in her markets.

Verse 13. *Javan*, *Tubal* and *Meshech* were originally the names of men, but at the time of our verse the names stand for the groups of descendants coming down from them. Those groups supplied Tyrus with slaves, and material or inanimate articles.

Verse 14. *Togarmah*, like the names in the preceding verse, was the name

of a specific man, but who had a host of descendants who formed a group that retained the name of their ancestor. In conjunction with the statements of this verse, I shall cite the statement of Smith's Bible Dictionary. "His [Togarmah's] descendants became a people engaged in agriculture, breeding horses and Mules to be sold in Tyre."

Verse 15. *Men of Dedan* means the group of people who descended from that man, who traded in the markets of Tyrus. *Isles* is defined in the lexicon as "a habitable spot." A great many places or groups have been and still will be specified as those dealing in the markets of Tyrus. The prophet interrupts that line to make a general statement concerning the extensive commerce of the city in the words, *many isles were the merchandise of thine hand*. *Present* is used in the sense of a return payment for value received. *Horns* is said of the ivory because the shape of the elephant's tusk resembles a horn, and the article was evidently transported in its natural form.

Verse 16. This verse is along the same line as the others of the chapter. Syria brought the products of her country to the city of Tyrus and exchanged them for the manufactured wares of that great seaport.

Verse 17. Among the many peoples and countries who traded with Tyrus was that of God's nation. There is not much difference between *Judah* and *land of Israel*; the first is a division of the second. *Minnith* is a place east of the Jordan that produced wheat which was taken to the market in Tyrus. Other products of Palestine are named among the ones carried to the Phoenician city. *Pannag* is said to be of uncertain meaning, but the nearest suggestion is in Strong's lexicon where he says it is "probably pastry." The other products are called by their usual names.

Verse 18. *Damascus* was the chief city of Syria which was an important country on the east border of Phoenicia. *Hebron* was a city near Damascus and Smith's Bible Dictionary says it was "celebrated as producing the finest grapes in the country." This product as well as a fine quality of wool was taken to Tyrus and exchanged for her wares.

Verse 19. *Dan* was a son of Jacob and *Javan* was a descendant of Noah, but both words came to be names of towns. The people of those places

traveled to and from between their communities and Tyrus to deal in the markets of that Phoenician city. *Bright iron* is rendered "wrought iron" in the Revised Version, which indicates it was iron that had been refined to some extent. *Cassia* was the bark of some kind of tree that had an aromatic odor. *Calamus* was a plant of the reed family and one of its uses was that of making paper for writing and other purposes.

Verse 20. *Dedan* has already been mentioned (verse 15) as one of the traders with Tyrus, but that verse is not very specific as to its products. The present verse tells us that the article it took to Tyrus was *precious clothes for chariots*. The last word has a very indefinite meaning in the lexicon, including men who ride in chariots and those who ride on horses as cavalymen. The phrase means some fine covering for the bodies of these men.

Verse 21. *Arabia* was on open country and its people worked in the production of sheep and goats. It is not strange, therefore, that such things were taken by them to be offered in exchange for the wares of Tyrus.

Verse 22. *Sheba* and *Raamah*, like some other words, were originally names of certain men, but finally were applied to groups of people who descended from them. They were among the ones who traded in the market of Tyrus.

Verse 23. Some of the names in this verse were once those of men, but at the time of this writing all of them referred to towns or countries. *Were thy merchants* means they traded with Tyrus, exchanging with each other their respective products.

Verse 24. The gist of this verse is that the places mentioned in the preceding verse made cedar chests, filled them with fine clothes, bound them shut with cords, and then took them to Tyrus to exchange for her manufactured merchandise.

Verse 25. *Sing* is defined in the lexicon, "To turn, i.e. travel about (as a harlot or a merchant)." Considering the general subject, and the correct rendering of the original for *sing*, the clause means the ships of Tarshish "travel for thee because of thy market." The result is that Tyrus is replenished or made richer, and is able to make a glorious appearance in the midst of the sea. However, the various success of the merchandising of Tyrus

filled her with pride and a feeling of independence which caused the Lord to decree her downfall.

Verse 26. Up to the present time the subject matter has been the prosperous state of Tyrus. The Lord was sorely displeased with the city and decreed to humble her by a series of defeats at the hands of other nations. But as a partial reason for the chastisement of this enemy of His people, he had the prophet present to her a long list of the resources from which she had obtained her wealth and other advantages. After presenting to the proud city this picture, He changes the subject and begins to portray to her some of the calamities that are to befall her. In some of the verses the terms and imagery are those that belong to the sea and the business and activities of it. In some there is a mixture of the two kinds of illustrations. The comparisons cannot always be meant literally, for no history shows Tyrus ever to have suffered the ruin at sea that is herein set forth. The selection of terms, however, is appropriate, since the whole history of the city is one of the sea and of the traffic by Tyrus thereon. Let the reader bear in mind that while the language will be that of a sea and a ship and the men managing it, the real subject usually is the "ship of state," and the sea is the world of business and politics, and the mariners are the men in high places in the city. Hence in the present verse the *rowers* (rulers) have brought the city into *great waters* (in contact with others nations). The *east wind* (nations from the east) *hath broken thee* (defeated the city) *in the midst of the sea* (in the power of the besiegers).

Verse 27. This is one of the verses with a mixture of literal and figurative terms. *Fall into the midst of the seas* is figurative and refers to the defeat of Tyrus at the hands of attacking nations. The *calkers* are the men supposed to manage the affairs of the city, while the other terms are literal.

Verse 28. This short verse is an interesting combination of the literal and figurative. *Suburbs* is from MIGRASH and Strong defines it, "A suburb (i.e. open country whither flocks are driven for pasture); hence area around a building, or the margin of the sea." The literal territory surrounding Tyrus was to be taken over by the enemy and that would cause the men of the city to cry out in despair. Such an event will be like a

ship that has been attacked and defeated, which would cause the pilots to raise a wail that could be heard all around the shore of the sea.

Verse 29. This verse describes (figuratively) the utter dejection the men of Tyrus will manifest when their beloved city is overthrown by the enemy.

Verse 30. This describes in literal terms the actual behaviour the men of Tyrus will show at the defeat of their city. The use of *dust* and *ashes* and *sackcloth* was an ancient custom resorted to in times of great distress or anxiety.

Verse 31. This verse describes some more of the customs of old times to express grief. They actually shaved off the hair of the head to produce artificial baldness.

Verse 32. This verse is all literal, even the reference to the sea, since the city of Tyrus was finally situated on an island half a mile out into the sea.

Verse 33. This refers to the extensive trade that Tyrus once had with other cities. The business was conducted by vessels that *went forth out of the seas*.

Verse 34. The first part of this verse is figurative and refers to the "seas" of enemy nations. This circumstance will literally cause the downfall of the commercial success of Tyrus, which will mean the loss of her main support.

Verse 35. *Isles* means "habitable spots," and the people in those places will be overwhelmed at the downfall of so great a city as Tyrus. *They shall be troubled* will be natural, for if so powerful a city as Tyrus can be thus brought to ruin, what might be the fate of other cities less strong?

Verse 36. *Never shall be any more* is comparative, for Tyrus does exist even at the present time (1949). But it never regained its independence or commercial power, and was always a subject under other nations.

EZEKIEL 28

Verses 1, 2. The *prince* of Tyrus refers to the king of the city (see verse 12) who was very boastful. His successful dealings with nations and cities over land and sea had filled him with pride. *I am a god* is a strong wording for the actual feelings of the king, meaning he regarded himself as a sort of superman. The prophet was directed to declare unto this proud

king of Tyrus that he was only a human being.

Verse 3. This verse is what is known in literature and oral speech as irony, a form of expression in which the author says the very opposite of what he means. It is a very pointed kind of rebuke, and generally is employed where the person addressed is regarded as being unworthy of more serious consideration. Job used such a form of speech in his reply to the three friends. (See Job 12: 2.)

Verse 4. The king of Tyrus was not as wise as he thought, yet he was not unintelligent, for he had succeeded in attracting the commerce of other cities. He had dealt with them in such a manner as to make a considerable profit.

Verse 5. The fact of gaining riches would not have caused the king to be condemned, but it was his pride of heart over it that condemned him. This principle is taught in the New Testament (Mark 10: 24; 1 Timothy 6: 10, 17).

Verse 6. *Set thine heart . . . as God*. He had let his heart at least pretend to think he was equal with God, because of his success in the accumulation of riches.

Verse 7. *Strangers* means persons of another country, and the terrible kind of people of such a country as that would be the kind used in the matter. The wisdom of the king of Tyrus will not be any defense against the sword of the enemy.

Verse 8. *Pit* is from a word that means obscurity or forgetfulness. Many of the men of Tyrus were destined to die a literal death, but also the city was to die figuratively in that it would lose its greatness never to be fully regained. (See the comments on the last verse of the preceding chapter.)

Verse 9. The king of Tyrus was very boastful and tried to believe that no being was as good as he. The Lord represents him as being so vain that he would even maintain his superiority while in the presence of the force that had him in subjection.

Verse 10. Physical circumcision would mean nothing to a citizen of Phoenicia, hence there would be no point in threatening him with some treatment by an uncircumcised person. History shows that when God uses an uncircumcised man to execute His wrath upon an individual it is considered a deep disgrace (1 Samuel

31: 4). Hence the word is directly connected with *strangers* in this threatening prediction against the king of Tyrus. Another thing, it would be logical to expect God to impose his severest punishments upon the uncircumcised person because that means an unconsecrated one.

Verse 11, 12. *Take up a lamentation* is explained at chapter 27: 2. *Sealest up the sum* is a strained rendering of the original. The first is from CHATHAM which Strong defines, "to close up," and the last is from TOKNITH which the same authority defines, "admeasurement," and that is from still another Hebrew word that means "a fixed quantity." The phrase has to do with the conduct of the king of Tyrus, and of his changed state of mind after he became evil affected by his many successes. The key to it is in the words *till iniquity was found in thee* in verse 15. He had manifested a degree of wisdom and God had favored him with many good things because his conduct was pleasing to Him. But when great power and riches came to him he became vain and discarded his good judgment and wisdom; he "sealed it up" or ended it.

Verse 13. A few verses will describe the high standing the king had while his heart was right. The reference to Eden and mention of precious stones and metal is largely figurative and said to explain the subject by comparison.

Verse 14. This verse, like the preceding one, is figurative, portraying the favor of God that was bestowed on the king of Tyrus while he was worthy of it. We have evidence elsewhere in the Bible that God takes an interest in the affairs of earthly governments and their rulers. (See Daniel 4: 17; 5: 18, 21, 26.) The terms of this verse are also comparative and the *mountain of God* means the government of Tyrus was given to this king by the God who "rules in the kingdoms of men" as stated in the passages cited in the preceding verse.

Verse 15. This verse is explained in the comments on verse 12.

Verse 16. *Merchandise . . . violence*. The connection between these words is in the fact that the prosperity of Tyrus filled her with pride and that in turn caused her to become wicked and violent. *Cast out of the mountain*. See verse 14 for comments on *mountain* and the relation of Tyrus to it. The favorable condition was to be

reversed on account of the evil turn in the conduct of the city.

Verse 17. Briefly speaking, the pride of Tyrus over the successes caused the city to destroy her good character. *Lay thee before kings* is a prediction of the subjugation to be suffered by Tyrus at the hands of foreign kings, such as Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander and possibly some others of less note.

Verse 18. *Defiled thy sanctuaries*. By her corrupt conduct and state of mind, the once fair name and standing of Tyrus was defiled. It was brought about by the prosperous results of the vast traffic on the sea. *Fire from the midst of thee* denotes that Tyrus would be "burned" by the fire of her own iniquity.

Verse 19. *Shalt be a terror* is explained at chapter 27: 35, and *never shalt be any more* is commented upon in the last verse of that chapter.

Verses 20, 21. Zidon was another city of Phoenicia about 20 miles north of Tyrus. It is otherwise spelled Sidon and is often referred to in other parts of the Bible including the New Testament. It was inferior to Tyrus yet was an important city in ancient times. The Lord had the prophet to deliver some warnings against that place because it had oppressed His people.

Verse 22. The primary object of all demonstrations against the city was that *they shall know that I am the Lord*. We can realize the need for such a display of power because of the almost universal tendencies toward idolatry in those days.

Verse 23. *Pestilence* (disease) and *the sword* (warfare) were to be brought upon the city of Zidon. This was to be accomplished through the services of some other strange people whom God would use as his agency in the matter.

Verse 24. Pricking brier refers to the bitter opposition that the Zidonians had waged against God's people. Some of the early accounts of the persecutions brought by these people against the children of Israel are recorded in Judges 3: 3. It is true God sponsored that oppression of His people to chastise them, but the Lord never would tolerate the personal motive the heathens entertained against them though they were carrying out the divine plan when they oppressed His people.

Verse 25. We have two verses that predict the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity. For about four chapters the prophet has been making accusations and predictions against the heathen nations that had mistreated His people, and soon he will resume his writing along that line. But God has always been jealous for the nation that was called by His name, and has been careful to let the other nations know of the divine care that is always over the Israelites. Many of the heathen people knew of the exile in Babylon of those people, and some of them even rejoiced over it. But the Lord determined to take their rejoicing over the unfortunate people away from them. Hence while this prediction was written in the book that could be read by the people of Israel, the immediate use of it was for the information of the heathen against whom He had been and still will be addressing the warnings. That explains why the challenging words *in the sight of the heathen* are inserted amid the prediction.

Verse 26. *Shall dwell safely* does not guarantee that Israel would never have any difficulty with other nations for she did. But she had no trouble in taking possession of the native land after the rulers in power came to understand the situation. (See the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.) The temporary difficulties that were intimated a few lines above were removed and the people of God went forward with their work of reconstruction and reformation. They even obtained material help and legal support from the heathen in their grand program of restoration. That is the meaning of the last half of the present verse, and once more the divine purpose was to be accomplished which was to make the people *know that I am the Lord*.

EZEKIEL 29

Verse 1. The prophet drops back a year in his prophecies and writes this passage in the *tenth year* which means the tenth year after he was taken to Babylon. He resumes his predictions against the heathen nations because of their mistreatment of Israel.

Verse 2. The next nation to be predicted against is Egypt and the writing is directed against *Pharaoh*. That does not mean any particular man for all the kings of Egypt took that name during a certain period, in the same manner as that of the Caesars of

Rome or the Edwards and Henrys of England.

Verse 3. The lexicon defines *dragon* as a sea monster, and of course it is not applied literally to Pharaoh. The River Nile was virtually the life and support of the country by its deposit of silt on the land. This was caused by the annual overflow of the stream bringing the deposit down from the mountains, and also the moisture needed for vegetation was supplied by the flooding of this stream over the farm land. So important was the river to the life of the country that the Egyptians came to rank it among the most beloved of their gods. This called for the figurative phrase *lieth in the midst of his rivers*. The king even went so far as to claim the river as his own, and to make other vain and absurd statements.

Verse 4. We understand this language to be figurative, but all figures of speech are based on some literal facts or at least something that would be literally possible. The literal fact in the present case is the attachment of the king of Egypt and his people to the Nile and the creatures living in it, even to the extent of regarding them as gods. Hence the imagery is that of a great monster (the king) living in the river and mingling with the fish of the stream. By the same token, also, the capture of the king is likened to the taking of a large water creature which would be done by putting hooks in his jaws. *Fish . . . stick unto thy scales*. If the fish of a stream should stick to the body of a monster living therein, they would have to share the same fate with him when he is drawn out of the water. Likewise, the people of Egypt who adhered to Pharaoh in his wicked plots, would have to share with him when he is caught by an invader.

Verse 5. A fish cannot live long out of water, and so maintaining the imagery of water and fish in the illustration of the king of Egypt, it is predicted that he will be drawn out of his beloved river and cast out into the open field. Of course if a fish is left in the field it will become the prey of beasts and fowl, just as the king of Egypt was destined to become the victim of some other person.

Verse 6. *Been a staff of reed to Israel*. The Israelites turned their attention to Egypt when threatened with danger (chapter 17: 15) and that displeased the Lord.

Verse 7. It was not according to the will of God for his people to lean upon Egypt for support. However, since that nation evidently encouraged them to do so, it was like breaking a promise for it to come short of the assistance intimated that it would give. This failure was one cause of the Lord's wrath against that nation and it called forth His predictions against it which are here being recorded.

Verse 8. *I will bring a sword* refers to the attacks that were to be made upon the country of Egypt. When God uses a certain man or nation or army to accomplish an end, or even when He only predicts that it is to occur, it is often spoken of as if He is the one who does it. In the present case we shall see that God will be the cause of the particular invasion into Egypt.

Verse 9. In a land where people "worship the creature (created thing) more than the Creator," it is very necessary that they be taught to *know* the true Lord.

Verse 10. *Rivers* being in the plural form is not accidental for it is used in that sense a number of times in this chapter. The original word is defined by Strong as follows: "Of Egyptian origin; a channel, e. g. a fosse [ditch], canal, shaft; specifically the Nile, as the one river of Egypt, including its collateral [contributory] trenches." When the Nile overflowed something had to be done to take care of the water or it would be wasted. Hence the people of the country made these artificial channels to carry the precious liquid to the various parts of the land, even to the providing of small ditches that would bring the water to the very plants. All of these channels are called *rivers* and hence the word is used in the plural. The reader should see the historical evidence on irrigation quoted at Deuteronomy 11: 10, 11, volume 1 of this Commentary. The prediction is that Egypt was to be made *utterly waste*, but we shall learn soon that a specified period was to be decreed for the desolation. The location of *Syene* and *border of Ethiopia* makes the prediction mean that Egypt would be laid waste from one end to the other.

Verse 11. The specified period of time referred to in the preceding verse is named in this one, and the prediction is that the desolation will last *forty years*.

Verse 12. Only an inspired prophet

could make such a definite prediction as the present verse records. This prediction is corroborated by history and I shall give a quotation as follows: "The king of Babylon, taking advantage therefore of the intestine divisions which the rebellion of Amasis had occasioned in that kingdom, marched thither at the head of his army. He subdued Egypt from Migdol or Magdol, a town on the frontiers of the kingdom, as far as Syene, in the opposite extremity where it borders on Ethiopia. He made a horrible devastation wherever he came; killed a great number of the inhabitants, and made such dreadful havoc in the country, that the damage could not be repaired in forty years. Nebuchadnezzar, having loaded his army with spoils, and conquered the whole kingdom, came to on accommodation [settlement] with Amasis; and leaving him as his viceroy [representative] there, returned to Babylon." Rollin's Ancient History, volume 1, page 232.

Verse 13. The desolation brought upon Egypt, like the captivity upon the Jews, was for the purpose of chastisement and not intended to be permanent. Thus the prediction is made of its restoration to national and industrial life after a time.

Verse 14. While Egypt was to return to national life it was not to come back to the height that it originally enjoyed but was to be a *base* or low kingdom. Verse 12 states that the Egyptians were to be dispersed among various countries, which occasions the prediction of the present verse about being brought back to Pathros, which was a part of Egypt.

Verse 15. The debasement of Egypt was to be comparative, not that it would cease to have any greatness at all. This verse expresses it by the phrase *not exalt itself above the nations*; it was to be subject to the influence of other countries.

Verse 16. *No more the confidence of the house of Israel* means that God's people will be convinced they cannot rely on Egypt for support. While they had at times in the past looked to it, the Lord was displeased and such iniquity was remembered by Him.

Verse 17. There is a long jump in the chronology of the writing of Ezekiel just for a more specific date of certain explanations to the prophet. God had told him that Egypt was to be visited with invasion and desolation, but that prediction was in the

future as regards its fulfillment. Now the Lord sees fit to explain some things at this date which was after the prophet has been in Babylon 27 years.

Verse 18. When God uses one nation to chastise another He does not forget that agency if it renders faithful service. The Lord had directed Ezekiel to predict the successful invasion of Nebuchadnezzar into Egypt, but had not told him the reason for selecting that king as the instrument for the punishment of that country. That explanation is given in this verse, that it was to repay him for his faithful service against Tyrus, at which he did not reap any gain. It is necessary for the reader to see the long note quoted at Chapter 26: 4, 5, noting especially the words *found nothing in the place to requite them*, which definitely agrees with the present statement. *Serve a great service* is further explained by the clause *every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled*. This refers to the labor and hardships suffered in preparing a siege and attacking the walls with the battering-ram. In carrying baskets of material for the forts (which were carried on the head) the hair would be worn off that part of the body. A battering-ram was a large piece of timber with some hard substance on the end. This piece of timber was often used by being borne on the shoulders of the men, and that would wear the skin from their shoulders.

Verse 19. As a reward for his hard and faithful service against Tyrus, the Lord predicts that Nebuchadnezzar will invade Egypt and reap much from the spoils of the country. Again let the reader see the note referred to in the preceding verse.

Verse 20. *Have given him* is in the sense of something already done though it is prophecy, or at least some features of it are. *They wrought for me* denotes that when the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar were carrying on the siege against Tyrus, it was regarded as work being done for the Lord.

Verse 21. When *horn* is used figuratively it means power or influence. When the people of Israel see the fulfillment of the prophecies that were delivered by Ezekiel, they will respect his place as a prophet of God. That will cause them to listen to his words and in that sense he will be given *the opening of his mouth*. As a further result of the entire circumstance,

they will be made to know that I am the Lord.

EZEKIEL 30

Verses 1, 2. The prophet is told to express lamentation or *howl* in view of what is to happen to Egypt. *Worth* has no word in the original as a separate term, but is included with the same one for *woe* and means the same as saying "Ah, alas!"

Verse 3. The events just predicted are to take place in the near future from the time Ezekiel is writing this. *Time of the heathen* means the time when the nations are to come together in the manner alluded to in the predictions just made by the prophet.

Verse 4. Two chapters are given to Egypt, this and the preceding one. Ethiopia is included because that country lies just south of Egypt and became an ally in times of trouble. That is why its people will be in *pain* or fear when they see the people of Egypt being slain by the invading Babylonians.

Verse 5. *Libya, Lydia* and *Chub* were parts of Africa that were allied with Egypt for common support. If would follow, then, that when the land of Egypt is attacked, these allies will have to suffer with it.

Verse 6. The remarks offered in the preceding verse are verified in this. It is expressly stated that *they also that uphold Egypt shall fall*. It is as bad in God's sight to endorse an evildoer as it is to be the actual doer of it (Romans 1: 32).

Verse 7. *Shall be in the midst*. None of the cities of Egypt were to be actually moved into the territory of others. The expression means these cities were to share the same fate as the other cities suffered; would be in the same condition.

Verse 8. The fire to be set in Egypt will be the destructive raids of the Babylonians. The *helper* or allies of Egypt were destined to be defeated, and the whole transaction will cause the people to know that I am the Lord.

Verse 9. *In that day* refers to the day when Egypt would be attacked by the Babylonians. The Lord will then send men in ships to terrify Ethiopia for having been an ally of Egypt in her evil attitude toward the interests of His people.

Verse 10. *Multitude to cease* is a prediction that Nebuchadnezzar will

attack the spoils of the country as well as its citizens. It will be *by the hand of the Babylonian king*, but he will be acting as the agency of God.

Verse 11. *He and his people* means Nebuchadnezzar and his military forces. *Terrible of the nations* is said of the Babylonians who had the reputation of being a fierce people. The Lord is going to bring these forces against Egypt to throw the country into a state of desolation and national humiliation.

Verse 12. In some way the Lord will interfere with the irrigation system of the country which will result in assisting the Babylonians in their attack upon the land. The effect of this interference with the watering program will be to lay waste the land.

Verse 13. The general subject of this chapter is the fate of Egypt, and the several verses specify certain cities or parts of the country. The prophet also reveals God's wrath against the idolatry that the country had practiced for centuries. The Egyptians worshiped everything in nature, both living and nonliving, and also set up their idols made of stone and other materials. God decreed that the man-made idols should be destroyed. That would teach them the uselessness of such gods, and also would prove that it is vain to rely on the things in nature as a means of superhuman assistance. The modern name for *Noph* is Memphis, which was an important city even then.

Verse 14. *Pathros* was a division of the country, and *Zaan* and *No* (Thebes) were cities, and the Egyptians had their idolatrous worship practiced in all of these places. God's jealousy against all forms of idolatry is so intense He will not tolerate it.

Verse 15. *Strength* is from an original word that Strong defines, "A fortified place; figuratively a defence," and the city of *Sin* is so described. The prediction is that with such a city on which to rely, it nevertheless will prove a failure as help for the Egyptians when the Lord brings the invading army against it.

Verse 16. This *fire* is explained at verse 8 where it is shown to refer to the upheaval that will be raised by the Babylonians. When it is started the people of these cities will *have great pain* which means they will be terrified by the presence of the invading forces that will be laying waste their strongest cities.

Verse 17. The *captivity* is not a formal or national one such as the Israelites were then suffering in Babylon, but refers to the capture of the citizens by the army of Nebuchadnezzar. *Aven* and *Pi-beseth* were cities where many of the *young men* or heroes of the country resided. These "braves" were to be destroyed by the Babylonian sword.

Verse 18. Smith's Bible Dictionary says the following of *Tephnehes*: "It was an important town, being twice mentioned by Jeremiah with Noph or Memphis. Here stood a house of Pharaoh-hophra before which Jeremiah hid great stones. Jeremiah 43: 8-10." The prediction is that even as strong a place as this city will be *darkened* which means to be subdued. *Yokes* is used in the sense of power or control, and this will be overthrown when Nebuchadnezzar comes into the country. The city will have her pride brought down by the death of her chief men, and her daughters shall be scattered among the cities of the various other heathen countries.

Verse 19. Again the main purpose of the judgments to be brought against an offending nation is stated, which is to make the people *know that I am the Lord*.

Verse 20. Another date is given for the message that God was giving to Ezekiel. The *eleventh year* is dated from the time the prophet was taken to Babylon.

Verse 21. *Broken the arm* means to destroy the force of the king of Egypt. *Shall not be bound up* is modified by the words *to be healed* following immediately. The idea is that nothing can prevent the calamity that is declared to be coming upon Pharaoh. *Roller* means bandage and the statement means the same as the preceding one explained above.

Verse 22. The Lord is using the imagery of a swordsman in the present form of speech. A man is holding a sword in his hand with the intention of using it against the approaching foe. But the Lord will strike and break the swordsman's arm which will cause the sword to fall from the hand holding it and it will fall to the ground.

Verse 23. If the ability to use their weapons is taken from them, the Egyptians will be helpless and will be at the mercy of their attackers.

Verse 24. Not much new is added in

this verse, but a specific statement of what is to happen to the land of Egypt is made. *I will strengthen* denotes that God will cause the weapons of the king of Babylon to be successful when he attacks Pharaoh. That will fulfill the prediction that was made to Ezekiel in chapter 29: 18.

Verse 25. God will perform two and opposite acts as regards Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh. He will strengthen the arms of the former and weaken those of the latter. Either one of these would have indicated defeat for Pharaoh, and hence the two will make it doubly certain and guarantee the fulfillment of the prediction.

Verse 26. Being utterly disarmed, the Egyptians will have no recourse on which to rest. As a result they will be scattered out in various places where they will languish for the period indicated in chapter 29: 12, 13.

EZEKIEL 31

Verse 1. The present message is dated in the same year that the one against Tyrus has, and it means the *eleventh year* after Ezekiel was taken to Babylon.

Verse 2. *Speak unto Pharaoh*. I do not take this to mean that the prophet was to make a personal contact with the Egyptian king. Ezekiel was in Babylon when he wrote this which is several hundred miles from Egypt and personal communications would be difficult if not impossible except by some miraculous performance. Furthermore, a like expression is found regarding the Ammonites and Tyrus, and we would not suppose that separate documents were sent to those places. The phrase could better be understood in the sense of "speak (or write) concerning Pharaoh." The whole book of Ezekiel was to become a unit in the Bible and the instruction of prophecy and its fulfillment was to be for the benefit of the world. *Whom art thou like* is in question form, but the thought is that the Lord announces He is going to make a comparison.

Verse 3. Care should be taken not to lose our "bearing" through the most of this chapter. It will be stating some things that actually happened to the Assyrians, but the purpose is to liken the case to Pharaoh. The Assyrians were a proud and cruel people and boasted of their strength, yet they were brought down in spite of their greatness. The parable

as a whole is concerning Assyria and Egypt, hence, while the verses are directly applied to the former, some of the illustrations will be drawn from the conditions in the land of Egypt, since that country is really the one the Lord is denouncing at present. The illustration of a *cedar* is used because of the nature of that tree. Strong defines the original, "A cedar tree (from the tenacity of its roots)." We shall see the appropriateness of the illustration as we proceed in our study of the chapter. The *top* in a kingdom is the king and the *thick boughs* refers to the citizens of the nation, especially the princes and other leading men. This describes the position that the king of Assyria had in the day of his power (and of course is true of Pharaoh at the time the prophet is writing this).

Verse 4. The king of Assyria had a strong background in the day of his greatness, growing with the roots in the waters. (See Psalms 1.) The reference to waters is made because Egypt (which is the actual subject of this parable) depended upon the Nile with its canals and smaller channels.

Verse 5. The exaltation of Assyria is still being used to illustrate the pride of Pharaoh. And since he is the one who is actually the object of God's fury, the terms are those connected with a body of water such as the Egyptians possessed.

Verse 6. As a large tree would support and shelter many fowls, so the Assyrian Empire included in its folds many people of the world. This fact caused the king of Assyria to be filled with pride, just as Pharaoh was puffed up over his gains by the support from the Nile in its resources for irrigation.

Verse 7. A tree that lacks moisture will not be *fair* (beautiful), while one that can daily drink from "earth's sweet flowing breast" will leaf out and put on growth of foliage and shoots for new life.

Verse 8. The king of Assyria is still being compared to a tree that excels all others. Carrying out this imagery it is said that the trees in the *garden of God* (garden of Eden) could not *hide* ("over-shadow"—Strong) him. This comparison is very appropriate, for the trees in that first garden are spoken of as very desirable (Genesis 2: 9). Other trees are mentioned also as being inferior to this one of Assyria.

Verse 9. *I have made him fair*. It

was the will of God that the king of Assyria (likewise the king of Egypt) should have great power (See Daniel 2: 37; 4: 17; 5: 18; Romans 13: 1) provided he would use it right. *Trees* . . . *envied him* will be understood to be figurative and is another way of stating the superiority of Assyria (and Egypt for whose sake the comparison is being made) over other kingdoms.

Verse 10. True greatness is not to be condemned, but it is wrong for a man to exalt himself, or to become proud over any greatness that he really possesses. The king of Assyria did this and provoked the Lord to wrath.

Verse 11. The king of Assyria (who was Saracus at this time) was a "heathen" as well as were others, but the original means "nations" also, and the prediction means he was delivered into the hands of other heathen. The *mighty one* was Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar. At this place I believe it will be well to make a quotation from history. This will give information from a secular source that will help the reader. There will be items that are related to the present verse and also some others to follow, therefore I urge the reader to give close attention and thus be prepared to refer to it as occasion may suggest. "Saracus, who came to the throne towards the end of the seventh century B. C., was the last of the long line of Assyrian kings. For nearly or quite six centuries the *Ninevite* [capital of Assyria] kings had now lorded it over the East. There was scarcely a state in all Western Asia that during this time had not, in the language of the royal inscriptions, 'borne the heavy yoke of their lordship'; scarcely a people that had not suffered their cruel punishments, or tasted the bitterness of enforced exile. But now swift misfortunes were bearing down upon the oppressor from every quarter. Egypt revolted and tore Syria away from the empire; from the mountain defiles on the east issued the armies of the recent-grown empire of the Aryan Medes, led by the renowned Cyaxares; From the southern lowlands, anxious to aid in the overthrow of the hated oppressor, the Babylonians joined the Medes as allies, and together they laid close siege to Nineveh. The city was finally taken and sacked [plundered], and dominion passed away forever from the proud capital (606 B. C.)"—Myers Ancient History, page 66.

"Nabopolassar (625-605 B. C.) was the founder of what is known as the Chaldean Empire. At first a vassal king [subject or dependent king], when troubles and misfortunes began to thicken about the Assyrian court, he revolted and became independent."—Myers Ancient History, page 72.

Verse 12. This verse will be the better understood after a glance at the historical quotation just made in the preceding paragraph. *Strangers* in the Bible means people from the outside or of another nation. This was fulfilled by the various foreigners who invaded Assyria and undermined her.

Verse 13. *Fowls* and *beasts* are figurative terms and refer to the nations who attacked the land of Assyria. *Remain* is an allusion to the continual ruin that was the lot of Assyria after being invaded by the hostile peoples.

Verse 14. *To the end* means the purpose of this revolution was to humble the king and country of Assyria from their position of pride. *Trees* and *waters*, etc., are figures used because, while Assyria is the one immediately in the mind of the Lord, it is for a comparison to Egypt which did boast of her River Nile with its canals and ditches.

Verse 15. The imagery of trees and water is being maintained throughout this passage because the chief subject is against Pharaoh and his country. And it is true literally that they boasted of their power as a nation, and that power was due to this great stream frequently mentioned. The *grave* means the national ruin of the country, and the *mourning* is the general state of regret that such a powerful empire would be brought so low after having been a great governing force so many years.

Verse 16. *His fall* refers to the downfall of Assyria which caused the reactions that are described in figurative terms. The nations all wondered at such a remarkable revolution, and all of them had a feeling of relief because they had stood in awe of such a powerful and heartless empire. *Hell* is from *SHEOL* and *pit* is from *bowr*. Both are used figuratively in this place and mean that Assyrian greatness was to be buried and forgotten.

Verse 17. *They* refers to the allies of Assyria as is indicated by the words *dwelt under his shadow*. The Bible teaches that if one person asso-

ciates with another who is evil, or if he sympathizes with and approves of his conduct, he is held responsible and must share in his fate. (See Romans 1: 32; 1 Corinthians 15: 33.)

Verse 18. The key to the entire comparison of this chapter is in the words *this is Pharaoh*. All of the things said of the king of Assyria were actually true and were known to be so, although they had taken place several years previously. The Lord used that great upheaval in history to compare with the fate which He was soon to bring upon Egypt. The first phrase of the verse is in the form of a question but it is really an assertion as if it were worded "to whom thou art like." If the reader will connect this statement with the one underlined above, he will have the thought the prophet has been getting ready for in the wonderful parable or comparison. God had predicted most of the things that happened to Assyria and they came true, which ought to be a warning that His predictions against Pharaoh will likewise be fulfilled.

EZEKIEL 32

Verse 1. *Twelfth year* is dated from the time Ezekiel was taken to Babylon. This would correspond with the year following the death of Zedekiah who was the last king to sit on the temporal throne of Judah.

Verse 2. *Say unto him* [Pharaoh]. See the comments at chapter 31: 2 for explanation of such an expression. *Take up a lamentation* denotes that the fate of Pharaoh is to be lamented. A lion on land or a monster in the water would be something to be feared, and the king of Egypt is likened to them. A troublesome creature in the waters would cause them to be defiled, and likewise the king of Egypt had caused a defilement among the nations.

Verse 3. This verse is a direct prophecy of the invasion into Egypt of the forces of Babylon. The Lord calls them His *net* because the actions of the army of Nebuchadnezzar will be by the divine decree.

Verse 4. This verse is the same in thought as chapter 29: 5.

Verse 5. *Height* is from RAMUWTH which Strong defines, "A heap (of carcasses)." The verse is a strong statement of the extent of the slaughter that will be made of the Egyptians by the Babylonians.

Verse 6. The terms are used figuratively and are based on the literal conditions and facts of the land of Egypt. The Nile furnished the main resource for agricultural assurance, and the king and his people were boastful of their fortunate lot. With this in view, the prediction threatened to reverse the conditions, and instead of the water of the river of which the king boasted (*wherein thou swimmest*), the land was to be moistened with the blood of the people. This is said with reference to the bloodshed that will be done by the Babylonians. The terms are strong as most figures of speech are, but the amount of bloodshed was really bound to be great.

Verse 7. The literal things predicted are the overthrow of Pharaoh and the slaying of his people. *Put thee out* is rendered "extinguish" in the margin of the Bible and the lexicon agrees with it. This national blackout is expressed in the figurative use of terms connected with the natural universe.

Verse 8. The figurative description continues to be used with reference to the general defeat of Pharaoh and his country. If the sun and other lights in the heavens above the earth should be put out the earth would be thrown into darkness. Likewise, when Pharaoh and his leading men are put down by the predicted invasion, the country will be thrown into political darkness.

Verse 9. The attack that Nebuchadnezzar will make upon Egypt will cause her people to be scattered among the various nations. The original word for *vex* has a stronger sense than this, and the lexicon says it means "to trouble; by implication to grieve, rage, be indignant." When people are driven from their native homes and virtually "wished" on strange communities, the circumstance will not be taken favorably.

Verse 10. *Amazed* is from SHAMEM and the first definition of Strong is, "to stun." The overthrow of an ancient and powerful kingdom such as Egypt will have this stunning effect on other nations. *Tremble . . . every man for his own life* will be a natural result, for when so great a revolution is brought before their eyes the question will arise whether a similar calamity may come upon them.

Verse 11. *The sword of the king of Babylon* will be what Pharaoh will see, but it will also be the Lord's sword since He will be using that king as

an instrument to execute the divine decree against the nation deserving the chastisement.

Verse 12. *The mighty* means the army of Nebuchadnezzar because it is a very strong military force. *Spoil* is from a word that is defined "to ravage" in the lexicon. (See the comments and historical note at chapter 29: 12, 13.)

Verse 13. The streams of Egypt were held sacred by the people, hence anything that would lower their importance or use would be regarded as a reproach. *Trouble* occurs twice in this verse but they come from different originals. The first means "confusion or uproar"; the second is defined "to roil [stir up the dregs] water." A beast would only defile a stream of water, while a man could create an uproar or commotion even though he was near one of these bodies of water that he professed to worship. The meaning of the prediction is that neither of these activities will be done for a period because both man and beast will be removed by the invader.

Verse 14. *Deep* is from SHAQA and Strong's first definition is "to subside." If the men and beasts are removed from the land by a foreign army, the described condition of the water will cease and it will be allowed to become *deep* or settled. The movement of oil would be smooth and it is used to compare the condition of the streams after the men and beasts have been taken from the land.

Verse 15. The main purpose of the chastisement from God is again stated, that the people of the land may be taught to *know that I am the Lord*.

Verse 16. *Lamentation* is from QIYNAH which Strong defines, "A dirge (as accompanied by beating the breasts or an instrument)." These literal performances are used to illustrate the attitude of the daughters of the nations at the desolation of Egypt.

Verse 17. The following prediction was made in the same year as the one we have just considered but was a few days later. The prophet is always careful to let us know the source of his information; that it is *the word of the Lord*.

Verse 18. To *wail* means about the same as "to lament" in some previous verses. *Cast them down* is a way of saying "predict that they will be cast down." This form of speech is used

in Jeremiah 1: 10 and Ezekiel 43: 3. When an inspired man predicts that a certain thing will happen, it is virtually the same as if he will be the doer of it, for the Lord will see that all such predictions are carried out. The lexicon defines the original word for *nether* as "lowermost," and *pit* is defined in the same lexicon, "a pit hole (especially one used as a cistern or prison)." The people of Egypt were doomed to be taken into custody by Nebuchadnezzar and in that sense they will be prisoners. In other words, the land of Egypt was destined to go down in shame and her greatness was to be forgotten as other countries before had suffered.

Verse 19. This verse means the same as if the Lord said reproachfully, "Whom do you think you are; the most beautiful of nations?" Then the inspired answer is given, that the nation should be laid or classed with the uncircumcised or unfit.

Verse 20. *They* refers to the Egyptians who were doomed to be slain even as others who were *stain by the sword*.

Verse 21. *Him* is a pronoun that stands for Egypt and the king. *Strong among the mighty* refers to the valiant powers that had already gone down to *hell*, which is used in the same sense as "pit" in verse 18, and refers to the state of forgetfulness into which many nations had fallen. When *uncircumcised* is used figuratively it means unconsecrated or unacceptable.

Verse 22. *Asshur* (or Assyria) *is there* means that she had gone down into this state of forgetfulness or desolation. (See chapter 31: 3, 11.)

Verse 23. The pronoun *whose* refers to "company" in the preceding verse who are said to have gone down with Asshur. *Set in the sides of the pit* is all figurative and refers to the desolated condition that had come upon various kings and nations. The phrase means that the "company" or citizens were about their king, and all of them near each other in this figurative grave or pit. *Caused terrors in the land of the living* is explained at verse 10 of this chapter.

Verse 24. *There is Elam* means that she is another country that had gone down into the pit of forgetfulness. This nation was located in the neighborhood of Assyria and Persia and it was at one time an important power. See verse 21 for the explanation of

uncircumcised, and verse 18 for the meaning of *nether*.

Verse 25. *Bed* is from MISHKAB which Strong defines, "A bed (figuratively a bier); abstractly sleep." It here is used with reference to the same state of forgetfulness that had been predicted for other evil countries. *Graves round about him* denotes that the king of Elam and his people had gone down together into the "pit." *Though their terror . . . land of the living* signifies that the national death was preceded by a period of terror at the presence of the attacking forces.

Verse 26. *Meshech* and *Tubal* were some more of the heathen peoples who incurred the wrath of God. They had been doomed to the same ruin as other nations suffered.

Verse 27. *Not lie with the mighty* indicates an undignified burial. *Swords under their heads* refers to an ancient practice of burying distinguished warriors with their weapons. These people had been denied the honor of having their swords buried with them, but instead, *their iniquities* were "interred with their bones."

Verse 28. This is the same reference to a dishonorable grave. *The uncircumcised* means the unacceptable, who were destined to meet death by the invader's sword.

Verse 29. The Edomites were descendants of Esau and were always hostile against Israel. A more extended description of Edom's fate is in chapter 25: 12-14.

Verse 30. The *Zidonians* dwelt near the sea and were north of the people of Israel. The fate that happened to these foes was similar to that decreed against other heathen nations. *With their terror they are ashamed of their might* means that in spite of their terrible might they were brought down to shame.

Verse 31. *Pharaoh . . . shall be comforted*. The heathen nations were generally hostile against each other, and by that same token each would rejoice at another's defeat.

Verse 32. More than a chapter is devoted to the condemnation and predictions against Egypt. No additional fate is here made as a threat against that country. The brief statement of its doom is made to explain why the country will "be comforted" at the downfall of the Zidonians.

EZEKIEL 33

Verses 1, 2. For 8 chapters the prophet has been writing against various heathen nations that had mistreated God's people. Some of that writing is in the form of predictions of things to come upon them, and other parts are a summary of what had previously taken place, and written by way of warning to future generations. Ezekiel now resumes his writing to his own countrymen. The general trend of the passages will be favorable and intended to give encouragement to the people of Israel. However, the seriousness of responsibility on the part of a prophet and teacher will be given attention. The subject will necessarily include some remarks concerning the responsibility of the people under the work of the teacher or prophet. The first lesson on the subject of responsibility is drawn from the work of a watchman in times of danger, especially the dangers of war. At such times a man is placed in one of the watchtowers and equipped with a trumpet to use as a signalling device.

Verse 3. The duty of this watchman is to be always on the alert and observe any approach of the enemy. When he sees such a danger he is to blow a warning signal with the trumpet to notify the citizens that danger is near.

Verse 4. The blowing of the trumpet moves the responsibility from the watchman to the citizen. If he ignores the signal of warning and is taken by the sword of the enemy he will have to take all of the blame for his death.

Verse 5. *His blood shall be upon him* means he will be responsible for his own downfall. No blood shall be shed by any other person in his behalf.

Verse 6. Here is a rule that does not "work both ways." If the watchman fails to sound the warning, his neglect of duty will not save the life of the citizen. Besides that, the watchman also will be required to answer for the death of the victim.

Verse 7. So far the Lord has been speaking to Ezekiel in general terms on the responsibility of a watchman, now He comes to particulars and tells the prophet that he is being made one. His duty is to watch over the *house of Israel*, and deliver to them the words of warning that he receives from God.

Verse 8. The relation of a watchman

to his people in times of literal war is being used to illustrate a subject far more important. The matter of a man's personal conduct and its consequences is the thing the Lord would have the prophet consider. He was to warn the wicked man that death would be his lot if he did not repent and turn from his wickedness. If Ezekiel fails to deliver the warning the wicked man will die even though he is not made aware of his danger. Besides that, the negligent prophet will be held responsible for the death of the wicked man.

Verse 9. If the watchman warns the wicked man and he does not profit by it, he will die *in* or because of his iniquity. However, the watchman will have done his duty and will not be held responsible for the death of the victim.

Verse 10. This verse is a complaint of the house of Israel. They seem to think that the Lord is asking that which is impossible for them. They are expected to *live* in the service of God and yet He causes them to waste away in their sins. Their conclusion is that God wishes them to die, but that will be denied in the next verse.

Verse 11. The Lord declares that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but just the opposite is what is desired. That is why the wicked man is exhorted to turn from his evil way. *Why will ye die* is a challenge to the evil man to show a reason for his decision to die. No reason can be given, for nothing lies beyond death that will repay him for his unwise course. Neither can he make the excuse that it is unavoidable, for the Lord not only is giving him full warning of what is before him, but also has promised to help him in his efforts to avoid it.

Verse 12. The gist of this verse is that as a man terminates his life, so will be his lot ever afterwards. If he turns from a wicked course and does good the rest of his days, the Lord will not hold his former sins against him. On the same principle, if a righteous man backslides and ends his days in sin, his previous good deeds will not save him when the test comes to determine his lot.

Verse 13. The paragraph comprised in verses 3-9 looks especially to the phase of responsibility of a watchman toward the people under his charge. This verse introduces the special

thought of God's attitude toward the promises of good or threats of evil that have been announced to man. The promises or warnings of the Lord are made on conditions, either expressed or implied. Hence the promise of life made to a good man is not so fixed that he cannot come short of that promise. If he becomes so confident over his former good deeds and record of them that he begins to do wrong, the promise of life will be revoked. This overthrows the doctrine titled "Once in grace always in grace," for man's favor with God depends on faithfulness to the end.

Verse 14. This verse indicates that a wicked man does not need to give up in despair just because the Lord has told him he must die; he is encouraged to turn from his sins. We should notice the wicked man has a two-sided duty to perform if he is to obtain mercy from God. Not only must he turn from active sin but also he must *do that which is right*, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isaiah 1: 16, 17.)

Verse 15. This verse teaches the same lesson as the preceding ones, but it goes into particulars and specifies certain things the wicked man must do in order to obtain divine mercy and be made reconciled to the Lord.

Verse 16. This verse teaches the same lesson as chapter 18: 21, 22. It refutes the theory that an unrighteous man cannot do anything for his own salvation; that if he is doomed "from all eternity" to perdition, nothing can be done to change it.

Verse 17. The word *equal* is from an original that is defined "to balance" or be consistent and impartial. See the comments at chapter 18: 25 for further explanation on this subject of God's manner of dealing with the children of men.

Verses 18, 19. This is explained at verses 13-16 and elsewhere.

Verse 20. As a specific denial of the accusation made by the people that God is unequal or unfair, He declares that Israel will be judged "every one after his ways," not according to some decree made before the man was born. Since a man's *ways* are his own doing, that places his fate within his hands whether good or evil.

Verses 21, 22. *Twelfth year of our captivity* means that dated from the taking of Jehoiachin to Babylon, at which time Ezekiel was taken. Eleven

years after that event king Zedekiah was taken and Jerusalem was destroyed, completing the third and final stage of the great captivity. That means therefore, that the present verse is located at the next year after Jerusalem was destroyed, expressed by the words *the city is smitten*. This verbal news was brought to Ezekiel by one who escaped at the time Nebuchadnezzar closed in on the city and completed the overthrow of the great capital of Judah. The distance from Jerusalem to Babylon is great enough that nothing strange will be thought of its requiring until the next year for the messenger to reach the presence of the prophet. It had been prophesied (chapter 24: 26, 27) that one who escaped would bring just such a message and here it is. It had also been prophesied (same passage) that when that message was delivered to Ezekiel he would be *no more dumb*. See the comments at chapter 24: 17, 27 for explanation of dumbness. The man who escaped was not depended on to break the news to Ezekiel as the first information, for the Lord told him about it the evening before according to the present verse. But the coming of the man with the message was to be the signal when the prophet was to consider himself free from the restrictions he had been under since chapter 24: 15-18.

Verses 23, 24. The reasoning of the people is in the form of a complaint. They refer to Abraham having possessed the land of Palestine although he was but one man. But here is a large multitude that should possess it since they are heirs of Abraham, but instead they are inhabiting *wastes* (in Babylonian captivity) and not enjoying the land that was promised to Abraham's descendants.

Verse 25. The prophet was told to explain to the people why they were being denied the land of their inheritance. It does not mean they were doing all the things charged against them at the time Ezekiel was writing, for they were captives in a foreign land. They could not practice all these things there, except some of their idolatrous performances, and that was because the Lord willed it so to teach them a lesson. But the things listed are the ones they did while they did live in their home land. *Eat with the blood* violated Genesis 9: 4, Leviticus 3: 17, and they practiced that while back in their own country. *Idols . . . and shed blood* includes the

guilt of bloodshed in general, but it especially applies to the slaying of their children to make sacrifices of them for their idols.

Verse 26. *Stand upon your sword* refers to their use of the sword to accomplish their abominable advantages over their weaker brethren. Not satisfied with this iniquity, they committed adultery with the wives of their neighbors.

Verse 27. The greater portion of the nation of Israel had been taken to Babylon when Ezekiel began his writing, and in that sense were suffering the *wastes* mentioned in this verse. But the third stage of the 70-year period had been accomplished only recently, and there were still a great many who were left straggling in the wastes or desolated spaces in Palestine. A few had escaped the immediate effects of the invasion and were hiding in forts and caves and other places in an effort to shelter themselves. But although they might elude the invaders, they were doomed to feel the hand of God through His judgments upon them which would cause them to perish.

Verse 28. This verse is a general prediction of the desolated condition the whole land of Palestine was destined to suffer during the great captivity.

Verse 29. The Lord was determined that his people should not forget Him. They had special need for that lesson since they had given so much of their time and devotion to the strange gods that were worshiped by the heathen around them.

Verse 30. The Jews who were in exile in Babylon were more curious than sincere in their pretended inquiry for information. They would come to the prophet as if they really longed for instruction (chapter 8: 1; 14: 1; 20: 1), but after receiving it they refused to abide by it.

Verse 31. The people not only failed to accept the words of the prophet but acted hypocritically about it. They pretended to admire Ezekiel for giving them the information, but in their heart they were interested in the things of personal interest.

Verse 32. *A very lovely song* is a figurative description of the opinion the people pretended to have of Ezekiel's words. Their motive for such a pretended attitude could not have been sincere since they refused to abide by the admonitions that he

gave them. By taking this false interest in him they hoped to obtain some more information, but without the purpose of profiting by it. Because of this the Lord defeated their attempt to deceive the prophet by enlightening him on the subject.

Verse 33. A prediction becomes an evidence of the truth when it is fulfilled and not before. Hence this verse offers the conclusion and assurance to Ezekiel that he will finally be shown to have been a prophet of God.

EZEKIEL 34

Verses 1, 2. *Shepherd* is from *RAAH*, which Strong defines as follows: "A primitive root; to tend a flock, i.e. pasture it; intransitively to graze (literally or figuratively); generally to rule; by extension to associate with (as a friend)." The word has such a wide range of meaning that it will apply to the kings and prophets and priests in Israel because of their position of leadership among the people. In such a relationship they could and should have guided them aright, and have instructed them in the right ways of the world by feeding them on the proper spiritual food. But instead, they looked to their personal interests and made use of the advantages that were intended for all the congregation and thus "fed themselves instead of the flock."

Verse 3. The items in this verse are literal in their nature and in the use that is generally made of them just as the statement shows it. But the passage is used figuratively to illustrate the selfishness of the shepherds in their treatment of the flock that was depending upon them for guidance.

Verse 4. A good shepherd would look after the sheep and administer whatever services their condition might require. But instead of thus guarding and assisting them, these leaders had been harsh and overbearing. It was because of this general corrupt life led by these leaders that even the things they did that would otherwise have been acceptable were rejected by the Lord. On this subject the reader should see the long note quoted at Isaiah 1: 10 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 5. It is a duty of a shepherd to protect his flock against wolves and other wild beasts. These selfish shepherds of Israel neglected their obligation and allowed the people to

be exposed to the beasts (idolatrous nations) around them.

Verse 6. Some of the terms in this verse are used with a mixture of the literal and figurative senses. A flock that is neglected will literally be scattered among the hills and it was thus figuratively with Israel. And since the real iniquity in the country was idolatry which was often practiced on the hills, that phase of the subject is literal and pertained to such "high places" in the worship of the false gods.

Verse 7. The Lord is directing the present message especially to these shepherds, and they are called upon to hear His word by the mouth of the prophet.

Verse 8. *As I live* is a phrase that occurs numerous times in the Bible, and means that the thing about to be stated is as sure and true as the existence of God. It is a form of oath along the line of Hebrews 6: 13. Under such an oath the Lord charged the selfish shepherds of Israel with partaking of the food intended for the flock.

Verse 9. This verse takes the same comments as verse 7.

Verse 10. *I am against the shepherds* denotes the Lord's disfavor for the conduct of the shepherds, not that He is to be regarded as their personal enemy. *Require my flock at their hand* means they will be held responsible for the sad state of the flock because of their part in causing the situation. *Cease from feeding the flock* refers in the first place to the removal of those shepherds from the position of importance that they have been occupying. In the second place, the Lord is approaching a prediction that will reach far beyond the days of these shepherds over fleshly Israel. Such a subject will be introduced in the latter half of this chapter. We have observed it to be a practice of God through the inspired prophets to pass directly from ancient to modern Israel. That is due partly to the fact that many of the experiences, both favorable and unfavorable, of both Israel's are similar. A favorable experience of fleshly Israel will be predicted first and then we shall read of a most wonderful favor that will concern spiritual Israel.

Verse 11. From this verse through 16 the passage is a prediction of the return from the Babylonian captivity. The several verses will be commented upon in their order. *Search . . . seek*

them out. The Babylonian Empire was composed of various countries, and in course of the 70-year period the Jews became scattered among many of them.

Verse 12. The Lord promises to gather his flock out of these different countries as a good shepherd would do for his sheep that had been scattered. *Cloudy and dark day* refers to the gloomy period of the captivity.

Verse 13. The terms of this verse are literal, the *people* and *countries* being those mentioned in the preceding verse. *Own land* means Palestine from which they had been exiled all the years of the great captivity. The geographical terms, *mountains, rivers* and *inhabited places* were parts of Palestine, and the Jews were to be restored to them that they might again enjoy them.

Verse 14. This verse combines the literal with the figurative sense in predicting the future of fleshly Israel. She will actually enjoy the land of Palestine for temporal purposes, and at the same time will be treated justly in spiritual matters.

Verse 15. God will not depend upon selfish shepherds to care for the nation but will take close supervision over it. *Cause them to lie down.* A sheep will not lie down as long as he is unsatisfied with nourishment, therefore the act of lying down indicates a gratified appetite in the midst of plenty. (See Psalms 23: 1-3.)

Verse 16. The gist of this verse is a promise to help those who need and deserve help. *Destroy the fat and strong* means the Lord will judge the selfish shepherds who had been feasting at the expense of the weaker sheep of the flock.

Verse 17. The rulers and other outstanding men were not the only members who took advantage of the weaker ones. Among the "common people" or unofficial members of the flock there were some who were selfish and defrauded the others hence the Lord declares He will make a distinction between different members of the flock. The *cattle* refers to the weaker members of the flock and the *he goats* the stronger.

Verse 18. The imagery for purposes of illustration is still that of a pasture and the creatures living therein. These selfish ones among the Israelite nation are compared to the strong he goats that eat the best of the pasture regardless of the needs of others. But

they did not stop at that in their cruel selfishness. After satisfying their own greedy appetite with the best of the field, they trampled the remaining part with their feet. And after satisfying their thirst with the deep or pure water, they waded into the other watering places in order to defile them.

Verse 19. Hunger will drive one to eat that which would otherwise be regarded as extremely repulsive. (See Job 6: 7.) Hence the weaker members of the Lord's flock had to eat and drink of the food and water that had been made foul by the wicked and selfish members of the group, which caused God to decree a distinction between the two classes in the flock.

Verse 20. Beginning with this verse and running through verse 31 will be given the prediction mentioned in the comments on verse 10. Christ and his church under the New Testament rule is the subject of the passage as will become evident in our study of the verses. However, the imagery of shepherds and all that pertains to that occupation will still be referred to for illustrations. The injustices of unworthy characters among the Lord's professed servants are carried over for consideration, and He is going to see that such evils will be guarded against in the great institution to come.

Verse 21. An overbearing animal will push with its *side, shoulders* and *horns* in order to crowd out a weaker one. Thus the "he goats" had behaved in fleshly Israel, but the Lord was determined that such irregularities would not be permitted in the new service under the son of David. (See Matthew 23: 8-12; 20: 25-28.)

Verse 22. *Shall no more be a prey* has a twofold bearing. It promises that Israel shall not be taken away into heathen captivity again; also that the Lord's sheep will be cared for and prepared against the captivity of sin. (See 1 Corinthians 10: 13.)

Verse 23. David, according to the flesh, had been dead four centuries when Ezekiel wrote this prophecy, hence he would not be intended as the shepherd to be set over the Lord's people. The apostle Peter makes the same point in Acts 2: 25-34, explaining to his audience that such reference to David with regard to the kingdom always means Christ. This is because of the high position occupied by the great king and patriarch of the former

ages. David was the first man of the tribe of Judah to sit as king in Jerusalem; and the one who was to reign over spiritual Israel beginning at Jerusalem had been foreordained of God to come from the same tribe and a descendant of David. Because of this, it became the practice of the prophets and other inspired men to speak of Christ directly as David, and to refer to His throne as the throne of his illustrious ancestor (Isaiah 9: 6, 7; Psalms 132: 11; Luke 1: 32; Acts 13: 23; Revelation 3: 7). This verse makes it very clear, therefore, that the prophet is predicting the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, which great event started at Jerusalem and is recorded in Acts second chapter.

Verse 24. The comments in the preceding verse on *David* apply here. *Will be their God* has special significance as a contrast with the false gods that ancient Israel worshiped. The new kingdom that will be established under the son of David will have the recognition of God in its divine origin and reign. God has always offered to be the supreme One for any individual who would serve him.

Verse 25. *Covenant of peace* is the one that Paul writes about in Hebrews 8: 8-12, which he cited from Jeremiah 31: 31. *Evil beasts* is figurative and refers to the spiritual protection that the Lord will provide for the citizens of the new kingdom. *Sleep in the woods* (or forest) is a figure to indicate the safety that was to be enjoyed by the people of the kingdom of Christ.

Verse 26. Rainfall at the proper time was very important in Palestine and the fact is referred to figuratively. The promise is, not only that a shower will come down, but it will come *in his season* or just when it is needed. *There shall be showers of blessing.* This statement has been made a part of a familiar church song, but it is 19 centuries out of date. It is a part of the prediction of the New Testament institution and hence has been fulfilled many hundreds of years ago. It is unscriptural to speak of something that "shall be," when the scriptures teach that it has already been fulfilled and that the Lord has carried out his promise.

Verse 27. This verse was literally fulfilled when the Israelite nation was released from Babylonian captivity. But its more important fulfillment came when the kingdom of Christ, of which the present group of verses is

a prediction, was established with Him as its king. The figures of speech refer to the spiritual benefits that were promised for the citizens of that kingdom.

Verse 28. This verse is more along the same line as the preceding ones. It does not promise that Christians will never have any troubles, but that they will feel secure in spite of all their persecutions.

Verse 29. I shall offer some critical definitions in this verse before making the comments. *Plant* is from MATTA which Strong defines, "Something planted, i.e. the place (a garden or vineyard), or the thing (a plant, figuratively of men); by implication the act, planting." *Renown* is from SHEM which Strong defines, "An appellation [name], as a mark or memorial of individuality; by implication honor, authority, character." From these definitions we may conclude the common translation is correct. It will be well to note the language of Jesus in Matthew 15: 13 where the word "plant" is also properly rendered. The entire illustration means the church or kingdom of Christ which is compared to a plant, and that the Lord was the one who would plant it. It further means that every plant (church or kingdom) that God did not plant or start shall be destroyed by Him.

Verse 30. The benefits that will come to the faithful members of Christ's kingdom will be such that no human source could supply. Hence they will know that *I the Lord their God am with them* and that the institution is of divine origin.

Verse 31. The flock is to be in the Lord's pasture and therefore they will be *men* and not literal cattle. For that reason they may expect to obtain benefits in that field that mere man could not provide; they would have to come from the Lord.

EZEKIEL 35

Verses 1, 2. For some time the prophet has been writing against the wicked men in the nation of the Jews, especially the leaders among them. Now a chapter is given to Edom or Seir and certain condemnations will be uttered against that nation because of its hatred for God's people. *Set thy face against* means for Ezekiel to turn his attention against the nation that had disrespected God's people.

Verse 3. *Mount Seir* is a geographical term and refers to a tract of land

lying east of the Dead Sea. It is often mentioned by name of Edom because the Edomites occupied that land for many years.

Verse 4. The prophet was told to predict a desolation for that land. A brief condemnation was made against it in chapter 25: 12-14, but a more detailed prediction is made here before the interests of Palestine are to receive further attention.

Verse 5. Edom had cherished a hatred against Israel for a long time and had been constant (*perpetual*) in it. He had shown that hatred by shedding the blood of the children of Israel. What made the mistreatment of Israel worse was the fact that the heathen nation took advantage of them in times of calamity.

Verse 6. *Sith* is an old rendering of a word that means "since" or any other word with a similar bearing. The verse means that since or inasmuch as the Edomites seemed to welcome bloodshed, the Lord will impose upon them an abundant share of it.

Verse 7. *Cut off . . . passeth out . . . returneth* means the land will be made so desolate that it will put a stop to coming and going. There will be nothing to encourage any kind of traffic and hence it will cease to be done.

Verse 8. Of course this verse is a strong statement not to be taken literally. The meaning is that dead men will be seen in all the places named.

Verse 9. Since the hatred of Edom for God's people was *perpetual*, so the desolation of the country was to be permanent. The purpose of such a chastisement was to make the people of the land know that I am the Lord.

Verse 10. The *two nations* and *two countries* refers to Judah and Israel, into which the Jews were divided after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 12). Edom was vain enough to think he could possess the lands of those countries. *Whereas the Lord was there* is the expression or comment of the prophet. It is Ezekiel saying, "Edom thought he could take that land, which was impossible since the Lord was there."

Verse 11. God proposed to deal with the Edomites according to the anger which they had shown toward His people. His judgments against these enemies of the Israelites will be a demonstration of the divine power.

Verse 12. The things the Edomites had said about the land of Israel might all have been true, but their motive in saying them was displeasing to God. He never would tolerate a spirit of triumph against His people no matter how much they deserved the chastisement or misfortunes. And such an attitude would be doubly offensive if it was claimed that the loss or misfortunes were brought for the benefit of the foes.

Verse 13. *Boasted* means the Edomites had magnified their own importance. They did that when they made the claim expressed by the closing statement of the preceding verse. *I have heard them* is a significant fact. God is everywhere with his infinite knowledge and will bring to account all the thoughts and words of wicked men.

Verse 14. The whole earth was to rejoice at the desolation of Edom.

Verse 15. This verse repeats the thoughts of the preceding one. It should not be regarded in the sense of "returning evil for evil" or as an act of retaliation, but as a just punishment of Edom for his wicked attitude toward God's people. *Seir* and *Idumea* are names that applied to the land occupied by the Edomites, the second word being another form of Edom.

EZEKIEL 36

Verse 1. Mountains, rivers, etc., are inanimate objects and incapable of receiving any communication of an intellectual character. Notwithstanding, this chapter through verse 15 is addressed to them and it will be necessary to keep that in mind in order to understand the sentence construction. We will bear in mind, of course, that all the good things that are said to and about the land are for the sake of the people of Israel who are again to return from captivity to their own land.

Verse 2. The land of Palestine had been made desolate by the heathen nations, the Assyrians and Babylonians, and they were boasting about it as if it had been solely through their own superior strength that it was accomplished. *Aha* is an expression that implies a feeling of derision and triumph.

Verse 3. *They* [the heathen nations] *have made you* [mountains of Israel] *desolate*. The Lord's motive in giving the land into the hands of the heathen was to chastise Israel. The motive of the heathen was that they might take

possession of it for their own personal profit. Such a motive was wrong and the Lord determined to repossess the land for His people. *Infamy* means slander and the land of Palestine was so spoken of by the people of the world.

Verse 4. God was grieved and made furious because of the haughty spirit of the heathen, although He had used them as instruments in chastising the disobedient Israelites. He therefore delivered a favorable prediction to the *mountains, hills, rivers, valleys* and other parts of the desolated land.

Verse 5. This verse is a summing up of the complaints that God had against the people of Idumea (Edom) and the other heathen nations. *Appointed my land into their possession* means these heathen countries claimed the possessing of the land of Palestine was by their own appointment, whereas they were able to obtain it only because God willed it so. The evil attitude in the matter stirred up the *fire of God's jealousy* and He was determined to "take the side" of the oppressed land. The foregoing verses of this chapter may well be regarded as introductory to the special prophecy that God is about to make on behalf of the land of Palestine. They state the reasons for the predictions which will now follow.

Verse 6. For the sake of brevity we will consider the word *land* as including the mountains and rivers and all other geographical parts of the country. *Ye (the land) have borne the shame of the heathen* means the nations had desolated the land and that provoked the Lord to jealous fury.

Verse 7. When a nation is subdued it is held up to shame in the eyes of others. God had decreed that all the heathen who had desolated His land should be thus shamed.

Verse 8. The land of Palestine had not been damaged by the heathen, but it had been made to lie uncultivated. That was in order for it to enjoy its sabbaths. (See Leviticus 26: 34, 35, 43.) The most significant thought is in the words *to my people*. Even had the land produced anything in the 70-year captivity, the people of Israel could not have used it because they were exiles in a country far away.

Verse 9. This verse is virtually the same prediction as the preceding one.

Verse 10. Remember, the pronoun *you* stands for the land of Palestine. The *men* to be multiplied upon it will be those of the Israelites who will be

permitted to return from captivity, to rebuild and inhabit the cities as before.

Verse 11. This verse continues the prediction that Israel will increase in population upon the land. *Settle . . . old estates*. The last word has no separate one in the original. The clause means that the people of Israel will settle on this land as they formerly did. Once more, the great object to be obtained is mentioned, *and ye shall know that I am the Lord*.

Verse 12. This verse is virtually all literal and contains its own explanation to a great extent. The Lord promises the land that His people will be permitted to walk upon it and possess it. *Bereave* is from SHAKOL, which Strong defines as follows: "A primitive root; properly to miscarry, i.e., suffer abortion; by analogy to bereave (literally or figuratively)." The statement represents the land to have previously cast out the people who were living in it. That was entirely just, for they had mistreated it by defrauding it of its 7th-year rest for so long. It is as if the land said to the Jews: "You have overworked me until I have been cheated out of 70 years of rest; now you must leave me until I regain that many years." The prediction of the verse is that such a revolution will never occur again.

Verse 13. When misfortune comes upon a man he sometimes will blame it upon another person or thing, when perhaps he is to blame himself. And so it was that when Israel was cast out of her own land she was inclined to accuse it for the calamity. (A similar circumstance is found in Numbers 13: 32 with the 10 spies who returned to Moses.)

Verse 14. However the preceding accusation may be, it shall not occur again, for nothing like a national removal from the land will be done in the future.

Verse 15. The land of Palestine is still the thing to which the language is addressed. The same assurance is given that it will receive its rightful citizens again, thereby being freed from the shame under which it will have lain for 70 years.

Verses 16, 17. A few verses will consist of a direct message of God to Ezekiel in the nature of explanation and for his information. He recounts the events in the history of Israel while they were still in their own land. Their conduct was so corrupt that the

Lord likened it to the condition of an unclean woman.

Verse 18. This verse explains why the house of Israel is at the very time all in the land of Babylon, except the comparatively few stragglers yet to be rounded up and taken if there should be any such still in Palestine.

Verse 19. *Dispersed through the countries.* The Babylonian Empire was made up of many small countries and kingdoms, and the captives were scattered out among them by the Babylonians after they brought them from Palestine.

Verse 20. When the Israelites came into the region of the heathen they were made the subject of sneers by those foreign people. They [the heathen] *profaned my holy name* refers to the scoffing remarks that were made by these heathen folks among whom the Lord had made his people to come. They belittled the unfortunate people of Israel by remarking that they had been thrust out of the land although they were the Lord's people. But we have seen more than once that God would never tolerate any rejoicing over His people regardless of how much they deserved the chastisement. Because of all this He has pity for his people and has determined to bring them out of their captive condition after they have been put through the necessary trial. Very logically, then, the next subject that God will give the prophet to deliver to Israel is that of the return, which will take up all the rest of this chapter which we will study verse by verse as they come in order.

Verse 21. The house of Israel was reproached by being taken captive among the heathen, and also the *holy name* of God was profaned by the situation. Hence He was concerned from that double viewpoint and decreed to reverse the conditions in time.

Verse 22. The house of Israel will be receiving better treatment than it deserves when God comes to its rescue and puts an end to the captivity. But the holy name of the Lord is at stake and He must restore it to its proper position in the eyes of the world. *Ye have profaned* does not mean the Israelites purposely belittled God's name while in Babylon, for the opposite was the case. Psalm 137 shows the deep regard they had for everything that pertained to Him. But the mere fact that God's people had to be cast among the heathen because of their unfaithfulness was a reproach to His name.

Verse 23. *Sanctify* comes from QADASH and Strong defines it as follows: "A primitive root; to be (causatively make, pronounce or observe as) clean (ceremonially or morally)." According to the definition the word can apply to that which is already clean and holy, as well as to cause something to be so. That is why a writer may properly speak of sanctifying the Lord and his name. The great name of God had been profaned among the heathen and He purposed to clear it of all such a cloud, and prove to the whole world that the name of Jehovah is and always has been clean and holy. The condition that implied any question about the Lord's name was the enslavement of His people in a heathen land. They must be rescued from such impure surroundings and be separated from all the moral and religious taint clinging to them.

Verse 24. This identical prediction has been made a number of times (Deuteronomy 30: 3; Jeremiah 23: 3; Ezekiel 11: 17; 20: 41; 34: 13). It is a prophecy that was to be fulfilled when the Jews were released from their bondage in the various countries that made up the great Babylonian Empire.

Verse 25. This verse pertains to the same people and conditions referred to in the preceding one, not to anyone of our day. God's people had been corrupted by the false worship of the heathen among whom they had been living for 70 years. It was required of the Jews that if they came in contact with something that was sinful and unclean, they should be purified by the use of a solution called *water of separation* (Numbers 19). In allusion to that ceremony the Lord promises to cleanse his people from their pollutions obtained from contact with idolatrous nations. Since the prediction was to be fulfilled upon the whole Israelite nation living at the end of the captivity, and also since a full record of that great purifying event is in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we know the sprinkling of clean water on them was figurative. The result of their entire experience was to cleanse or cure them from idolatry. See the historical note on this subject at Isaiah 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 26. A complete change of heart is the meaning of this verse. We know that the human heart as to the body is literally flesh, therefore we must understand this language to be figurative. It means their heart (mind) had become hardened in sin and the captivity was going to humble

them and make them yield to the law of God.

Verse 27. The reformation that the captivity was destined to bring about in the lives of the people of Israel was to result in a better spirit or mind toward God. They were to have such an abhorrence for heathenism that the law of God will be their delight, thereby causing them to walk in its instructions.

Verse 28. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah give the history of the re-possession of Palestine by the Jews. *Be my people* means they would be a group of people forming a nation, and that it would recognize the Lord as the true God instead of the heathen gods whom they formerly worshiped.

Verse 29. The leading thought in this verse is the promise of prosperity in the land. God had at certain times punished his people by bringing a famine on the land (Ruth 1: 1; 2 Samuel 21: 1; 1 Kings 18: 2; 2 Kings 6: 25; 8: 1). Sometimes it was brought about by bringing a hostile army in to lay siege to the cities, and at the other times the Lord caused it directly by withholding the rain in its season. The prediction is that the land will not again be so visited.

Verse 30. This is virtually the same thing promised in the preceding verse, with the added thought that a famine in a country encourages it to be re-proached.

Verse 31. This verse makes another reference to the cure from idolatry that was to result from the 70-year captivity. (See the note cited in verse 25.)

Verse 32. This verse takes the same comments as verse 22.

Verse 33. The bearing of this verse is that Israel would not be permitted to reinhabit the cities of Palestine until they were cured of the chief evil of idolatry.

Verse 34. The land did *lie desolate* during the captivity because the Lord desired it to regain the rest supposed to be coming to it under the law of the sabbatical year.

Verse 35. *Eden* is derived from a word defined "pleasure" in the lexicon. It is used figuratively to describe a place that is "pleasant to the sight" (Genesis 2: 9). The thought is that the land of Palestine, so long in a state of desolation, was again to be put under cultivation.

Verse 36. The renewal of the land into a state of fruitful life was to be

proof that God is able to do a thing after He has spoken it.

Verse 37. There was a time when God ignored his people when they made inquiries of him (chapter 14: 3; 20: 3, 31), but after their reformation they will be heard. The further assurance is given that when they make their petitions known they will be favored with an increase of population.

Verse 38. The flocks that would appear at Jerusalem at the time of the solemn feasts would be the best in quality, because no other kind was accepted for that service. This is a comparison to the condition of things after the return from Babylonian captivity and settlement in the home land.

EZEKIEL 37

Verse 1. Various imagery has been used in course of the prophetic writings to describe the predictions being made. Some of them are related to the departure from Palestine and others to the return. There were always some people who doubted the truth of these predictions and even proclaimed loudly that they would never come to pass. We have seen the exposure of the false prophets who made light of the idea that any foreign force could take Israel into captivity. Now at this writing the thing has occurred and the nation is actually languishing in a foreign land. But many of them seem to have forgotten all those predictions notwithstanding they are actually fulfilling them by their own situation. Now then, they are just as doubtful about the prophecies of the return and are sighing and bemoaning their fate and saying that they will never get out of their lost estate. Hence the Lord is going to do some "acting" with the co-operation of the prophet, and demonstrate that even a nation that is dead can be brought to life again. He is going to do so by putting life and flesh on some dead bones. *In the spirit* means that Ezekiel will see in a vision the things that are about to happen.

Verse 2. The prophet was shown a valley that was full of bones, and he says they were *very dry*. They were so represented because they stood for the nation of Israel that was to spend 70 years in the valley which was Babylon. In that length of time all the flesh and moisture would be decayed and gone from the bones.

Verse 3. *Can these bones live* was asked of Ezekiel to represent the state of mind the house of Israel had at that

time. The answer *thou knowest* is the prophet's way of saying that things which seem impossible to man are possible with God.

Verse 4. *Prophesy upon these bones* means for him to direct his speech to and for the dry bones. In the preceding chapter the Lord directed a prophecy to the land of Israel, in this He addresses Israel herself who is in the form of dry bones. The purpose is to give encouragement to the Jews in exile who are represented by the dry bones, and who are told to *hear the word of the Lord*.

Verse 5. The language is addressed to the bones because they represent the children of Israel in Babylonian captivity, and are in a state of discouragement bordering almost on total despair. Hence the Lord tells these dry bones that their breath will enter into them which will restore them to a living condition.

Verse 6. The parts mentioned here had been removed by time and decay leaving only the dead, dry bones. Again the main point is that *I am the Lord*.

Verse 7. When the sinews and flesh of a body have decayed and dried up it will leave a mass of disconnected bones. These will be lying about in a state as if none of them was related to the others. Before the former life of the body can be restored, the bones must resume their attachment for each other in the proper position. Hence the prophet heard the sound caused by the rustling of these bones as the various members sought its "next of kin" in the anatomy of its own peculiar structure. Let us imagine a valley where the bones of several thousand bodies have been lying around for years, dried up and lifeless. Then let us picture a power that causes all these bones to begin moving toward their proper joints, and we will have some idea of why Ezekiel heard the *noise* and felt the *shaking* of these bones in their act of assembling.

Verse 8. But a group of dry bones that is even carefully assembled, each one forming the joint for which it was created, would immediately fall apart again were not something added to hold them together. Hence the prophet saw the flesh for the immediate union come upon the bones, and the skin around them for a general binding. So far the form of the body is complete, but as yet it is a dead body—flesh, skin and bones only, having nothing within to enable it to move.

Verse 9. *Wind, winds and breath* are all from RUWACH and Strong's definition follows: "Wind; by resemblance breath, i.e., a sensible (or even violent) exhalation; figuratively life, anger, unsubstantiality; by extension a region of the sky; by resemblance spirit, but only of a rational being (including its expression and functions)." We can understand the verse means that the breath of life was ordered to enter into these bodies which had just been formed in the preceding verses. When a word is added to give the expression *four winds*, it means the four quarters of the earth into which the people of God had been scattered. *Breathe* is the verb form and has virtually the same meaning as the words already defined. That is, the breath of life was told to enter the dead bodies that they might live.

Verse 10. *Prophesied* is used because the event ordered to be done was to be in the future. It was still half a century away and would be accomplished after the 70-year captivity has expired.

Verse 11. The Lord gives Ezekiel the interpretation of the foregoing symbols, leaving nothing to guesswork or uncertainty. The second half of this verse is a statement of facts being done at the very time the prophet is writing. That makes history out of the circumstance, and since history shows the fulfillment of a prophecy, I will suggest that the reader connect this with the famous prophecy of Psalm 137.

Verse 12. *I will open your graves* is figurative and refers to the national graves of which Isaiah wrote in chapter 22: 14 of his book. That passage is commented upon in the 3rd volume of this Commentary. Of course the fulfillment of this national resurrection means the return from Babylonian captivity, recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Verse 13. *Ye shall know . . . when*. A prophecy does not become an evidence until it has been fulfilled, hence the Lord says that He will be known as the Lord when this great deliverance has taken place.

Verse 14. *Put my spirit in you* means the spirit of life for the nation will be given to Israel from God. But even the condition of life would not be completely satisfactory if one had no place to live. Hence this nation that is to be brought to life again is promised the privilege of returning to its own land.

Verses 15, 16. The preceding vision

was for the purpose of demonstrating the surety of the national resurrection and the possibility of the departure from the grave which was Babylon. Having given unusual but visible proof of that great event, the next subject is a description of the return with specific attention to certain features of the revolution. From this paragraph through verse 23 the passage should be labeled "the return," and the several verses will be commented upon in their order. While doing this, it should be remembered that many things that are said are true of both fleshly and spiritual Israel; the first application, however, will be to the former. In the introduction of the long bracket the prophet is directed to do some "acting" in sight of the people. He is to use a stick in his acting and it is to represent a certain portion of the children of Israel, then take another stick to be for the other part of them. The house of Israel had been divided into 2 kingdoms (1 Kings 12) and they were known as Judah and Israel when considered as separate kingdoms; they also had other designations at times. Ezekiel is to write *Judah* on one stick, and *Ephraim* (because the capital of the 10-tribe kingdom, Samaria, was in the territory possessed by that tribe) on the other.

Verse 17. There is an erroneous doctrine in the world pertaining to the so-called "lost 10 tribes." It is maintained that the 10 tribes who went into captivity under the Assyrians were lost and that only the 2 tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were able to return to Palestine. There is not the slightest foundation for such a notion. On the other hand there is much evidence of the existence of the 12 tribes, and the present verse with the context is a positive denial of the mentioned false notion. Here are 2 sticks that are expressly named for the 2 groups of Israel, the 2-tribe and the 10-tribe kingdoms. It is also stipulated that both sticks are to be joined in such a way as to form one stick. If this means that the 10 tribes were "lost" then also the 2 tribes were, which nobody believes. It is true that in the second or spiritual application there is to be but one tribe (that of Christ who was a descendant of Judah according to the flesh), but that is as true of the 2-tribe kingdom as it is of the other. More on this union of the 2 sticks further on in the chapter.

Verse 18. This verse shows that Ezekiel was to do his acting in the sight of the people. The fact of their asking

for the meaning of the demonstration will indicate that everything was done "above board," that it was not an act of trickery but was all in plain sight. The thing that they could not understand was the purpose or meaning of the scene that they had so plainly witnessed.

Verse 19. This verse explains the actions of verse 17. The 2 sticks became one in the hands of Ezekiel, and the 2 groups of Israel were to be one *in mine hand* says the Lord. God knows the whereabouts of all things and persons, and He is able to bring all the 12 tribes together.

Verse 20. It is carefully directed that Israel shall see the performance of Ezekiel.

Verse 21. This verse is a general statement with a literal meaning. The Babylonian Empire was made up of numerous groups from the four quarters of the civilized world. The dominions that were once the Assyrian Empire now belonged to Babylon, and that would naturally embrace the remnants of the kingdom of Israel that had been taken by Assyria, recorded in 2 Kings 17. All of God's people scattered throughout the various localities of heathendom were to be given the privilege of returning to the home land in Palestine after the fall of Babylon and end of the 70-year captivity.

Verse 22. *Make them one nation . . . neither divided into two kingdoms.* The subject of the 2-tribe and 10-tribe kingdoms has not been changed in the message, hence we have a final evidence that the theory of the "lost 10 tribes" is false.

Verse 23. The most important result to be accomplished by the captivity was the cure from idolatry. The first clause of this verse repeats the prediction of that fact and the historical evidence is quoted at Isaiah 1: 25. See the comments at that place in volume 3 of this Commentary.

Verse 24. The comment has been made (verse 16) that some things in this chapter would apply to both fleshly and spiritual Israel. The remainder of the chapter is a prominent specimen of that truth. In a general sense this group of verses applies to fleshly Israel restored to the land of Palestine with Jerusalem as the capital. Because of this the reference is made to David since Jerusalem was his capital. Also because under his *one* capital all the 12 tribes were to be ruled after the return from Babylon. And it applies more significantly

to spiritual Israel because David was the ancestor of Christ who was to be king and shepherd over all the flock of God.

Verse 25. The fleshly and spiritual sense of the prophecy are combined in one statement. Fleshly Israel did occupy the land of Palestine after the return from captivity. It is also true that under Christ the son of David the people of God occupy the spiritual land of the kingdom of Christ, the church.

Verse 26. This *covenant of peace* is the one Paul writes about in Hebrews 8: 8-12 and Jeremiah in chapter 31: 31. *Sanctuary . . . evermore* means the kingdom that was pictured to Nebuchadnezzar and was predicted to "stand forever," Daniel 2: 44.

Verse 27. *Tabernacle with them* indicates the close relationship that was to exist between God and his people. The church is not far off, across the sea, up in the skies, in Samaria or Jerusalem, but anywhere that has "two or three gathered together in [into]" the name of Christ, which means by His authority and according to His law.

Verse 28. The literal heathen were shown that God was with Israel when He brought them out of the captivity, as may be observed in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. And today the world may behold an institution, the church, that has stood for 19 centuries.

EZEKIEL 38

Verses 1, 2. In this paragraph I shall endeavor to identify the persons and places that are mentioned, particularly Gog and Magog. On such a subject it is necessary to refer to authentic secular authors. The first quotation will be from Thayer's Greek Lexicon: "Gog, indeclinable proper name, Gog, king of the land of Magog, who it is said in Ezekiel 38 will come from the remote north, with innumerable hosts of his own nation as well as of allies, and will attack the people of Israel, reestablished after the exile; but by divine interposition he will be utterly destroyed." Funk and Wagnalls' New Standard Bible Dictionary says the following: "Gog, a name given to a race or people inhabiting some part of the 'northern' region. . . . In Ezekiel 38 and 39 God is associated with Meshech, etc., as Magog is in Genesis 10: 5, and probably both refer to the same people." Some other authors make reference to this matter but I believe this is sufficient for our purpose. These people were evidently

some wild or uncivilized ruffians from a territory far from the land of Israel. After the people of God were brought back to Palestine following the captivity, these barbarous people invaded the land and thought to do it much harm, associating with them certain other heathen groups as allies. It is against these people that Ezekiel is now instructed to write a series of predictions.

Verse 3. When considered as an individual, Gog refers to the leader among these barbarous people, or perhaps a line of kings with that common title, such as the Pharaohs in Egypt or the Edwards in England. He is singled out here as the one to whom the prophet is to address his predictions.

Verse 4. This verse predicts the counterattack that God will make against this army from the northern territory. After having rescued His people from captivity and settled them in their own land, certainly a rude force like this rough and uncivil horde will not be permitted to interfere with the peace of the country.

Verses 5, 6. These verses are grouped into one paragraph because they contain many of the allies of Magog that will join in attacking the land of Israel.

Verse 7. This verse is a form of challenge to Magog to make the best preparation possible. It is suggested (by way of taunt) that all these foreign allies stand by each other in the attack upon Palestine if they want to be sure of success.

Verse 8. *After many days* refers specifically to the days of the Babylonian captivity, and *the latter years* means the same. *Land that is brought back* denotes the restoration of the land of Palestine to the possession of Israel. *Against the mountains of Israel* means the hostile attack of Magog upon Israel's land. *Which have been always waste* refers to the condition of Palestine during the captivity. *They shall dwell safely* is the assurance from God that Israel shall maintain the possession of the land in spite of the invasion of Magog and its allies.

Verse 9. *Thou* refers to Gog or Magog; one is the country and the other is its king. The verse repeats the prediction previously made that Palestine was going to be invaded by this barbarous company, likened to a *storm* and large *cloud*.

Verse 10. The movements of this band of heathen from the north will

not be from a sudden impulse, but will be the result of *things come into thy mind*; will be deliberate.

Verse 11. *Unwalled villages* means the unfortified towns in which the people of Israel will be living with a feeling of security. They will have reason to feel that way after the captivity because God has promised them the security. The people of Magog (or Gog, as I use the terms interchangeably) will imagine they can take advantage of this apparent defenseless condition of the Israelites.

Verse 12. This verse tells the subject of the deliberations which the people of Magog had as stated in the preceding one. The Israelites will have acquired cattle and goods after their return from Babylon and these invaders will plot to get them. That is, it is here predicted they will do so at the time following the return.

Verse 13. *Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish* were mercantile people and were heathenish as were the people of Magog. For that reason they would be sympathetic toward any movement attempted against the people of God. This verse represents them as inquiring of the people of Magog about their purpose in coming into the land of Israel. The language is in question form but the thought is that they hoped the invaders would take these things from the people of Israel. Being merchants themselves, they were envious of the prosperous condition of the Israelites and took delight in the prospect of seeing them spoiled. The *young lions* is figurative and means the princes and other leading men of these merchant nations.

Verse 14. *Therefore . . . prophesy* is the proper form of speech because the things that Ezekiel is to write are to take place many years in the future. *Shalt thou not know it* is another expression in question form, but the thought is that the good condition of Israel will be known by Gog. We know that such is the meaning, for the following verse proceeds with the activity the heathen country will manifest on account of that knowledge.

Verse 15. These hostile people will come equipped with a strong force, consisting of both horsemen and foot soldiers. They will also be accompanied with *many people* which means their allies, some of whom are named in verses 5 and 6.

Verse 16. *In the latter days* agrees with "prophecy" in verse 14, and means that the things predicted will

be later than the period of Israel's exile. *I will bring thee against my land*. God never forces a good man to become a bad one, but He does sometimes use an evil person to carry out a divine purpose. In this sense these wild people of the northern country were to be used in the way described *that the heathen* (other peoples) *might know the Lord*. *Be sanctified in thee* means that the Lord's goodness will be made manifest to these other countries when they see how He deals with this wicked army. (See the definition of "sanctified" at chapter 36: 23.)

Verse 17. *Of whom I have spoken in old time*. At the time Ezekiel is writing this passage, no prediction had been made specifically against God, but similar writing had been done against other heathen nations. Moreover, the statement italicized will be in the past tense when the time of its fulfillment comes.

Verse 18. *Fury come up in my face* means God's fury will be manifest to those concerned. It will be made evident before their eyes by the things He does to the abominable invaders into the home land of Israel.

Verse 19. A good parent will chastise his child very severely when his conduct deserves it, but he will not tolerate any criticism (even though it is correct) from outside persons. Likewise the Lord will not endure the attacks or even sneers of the heathen directed against His people. *Shaking in the land of Israel*. Not that the people of Israel will be shaken, but the invaders will be thus treated who will then be trespassers in the land of Israel.

Verse 20. We know the predictions are still against Gog and the allies that will be with him when he comes to attack the land of Israel. Much of the language, therefore, must be taken figuratively. If the *fishes, fowls* and *beasts* were literally disturbed, and the *mountains* were demolished in the land of Palestine, then the people of Israel would suffer as well as Gog. The conclusion is therefore reasonable that it is all an ideal picture of the disturbances which God will cause Gog to encounter with reference to his own situation.

Verse 21. One means of bringing defeat to an unrighteous group is to cause its own members to attack each other. (See Judges 7: 22; Isaiah 19: 2.)

Verse 22. Such calamities as are described here could be poured out upon

Gog and his associates without disturbing the people of Israel or Palestine in general.

Verse 23. The most important point to be made in these divine demonstrations will be to make all men know the Lord and to distinguish Him from all false gods.

EZEKIEL 39

Verse 1. This verse takes the same comments as chapter 38: 1, 2. The repetition will serve as emphasis and indicate the intensity of God's feeling against Gog.

Verse 2. *Leave but sixth* part is rather of indefinite meaning according to the lexicon. But it is clear the prediction means that the army of Gog will be almost totally destroyed. *Will cause thee to come* has the same meaning as "bring thee against my land" in verse 16 of the preceding chapter, which see. *Upon the mountains of Israel* will be explained at verse 4.

Verse 3. The bow and arrow was one of the weapons of combat in ancient times. *Cause thine arrows to fall* is equivalent to saying they will be disarmed.

Verse 4. *Fall upon the mountains of Israel* might seem like something unfavorable was to happen to Israel. The context shows it to have been opposite to that in its meaning and that the damage will have come to one who falls. (See a similar use of language in Matthew 21: 44.) It is like the result when a man would get a fall and light upon some injurious substance. That sense is intended in our verse for the result of the fall is to give the bodies that fall as prey to ravenous birds and beasts. The fall so bruised the victims that they were fit for nothing but to be used as food by other creatures that live on flesh.

Verse 5. The flesh of a mangled body is useless except as food for flesh-eating creatures, therefore these carcasses were to be cast out into the field for that purpose. This is the figurative picture of the circumstances, and its meaning is that the forces of Gog will be destroyed.

Verse 6. *Magog* is the country from where the above army of invasion came. Its people were *dwelling carelessly* which means they were feeling secure and were not thoughtful of any possible danger. *Isles* denotes "inhabited spots," and the meaning is that the various places within the domain of Magog will feel the force of God's wrath.

Verse 7. The Lord now turns his attention to His own people and the prophet will write some predictions concerning them. To clarify the matter so that the reader may find his "bearings" as to the date, remember that Ezekiel writes this after the whole nation has been brought to Babylon and the greater part of the 70-year captivity is in the future. This explains the clause *I will not let them pollute my holy name any more*. It is a prediction of the cure from idolatry which was effected by the captivity. As a prediction he could say *I will not let*, etc. The way the Lord would prevent it was by holding them in captivity until every trace of love for idols was burned out.

Verse 8. *It is come* is still prophecy and not history although the language sounds like it. The force of the statement is that an inspired prediction is as sure as if it had taken place. *This is the day* is as if the Lord said: "I have been predicting that an important day was coming for my people and this is a description of that day." Then some verses will follow that

Verse 9. The subject is still the successful resistance of Israel against the forces of God. That success is pictured as being so great that they will be able to make fuel out of the weapons that were intended to be used against them.

Verse 10. The language here is strong and somewhat figurative, but the actual success of Israel was intended by the Lord to be very unusual. It is so represented by saying that the material for fuel out of the weapons of the enemy will be so plentiful that it will not be necessary to go to the forest for any of it.

Verse 11. *Graves in Israel* is a prediction that great numbers of the army of God will be slain right in the country where they expected to slay its citizens. *Stop the noses of the passers*. Noses has no word in the original, and the various translations I have consulted leave the phrase indefinite. It seems clear, however, that the number of those who had to be buried of the people of Gog was to be so great that the attention of travelers will be attracted.

Verse 12. As a further indication of the great number of the people of Gog to be slain, it will take the men of Israel 7 months to bury them. *Cleanse the land* is said from a sanitary standpoint, for if that many corpses were

left on the surface it would cause much danger to health.

Verse 13. It was seen in the verse preceding this that very many men of Gog were to be slain, and that the task of burying them would be great also; for this reason most of the people would be needed in the work. *Be to them a renown.* God will glorify Himself by destroying these wicked invaders, and by co-operating with him in this disposal of the dead bodies the people will share in that glory. The New Testament teaches the same principle in Romans 8: 17; 2 Corinthians 1: 7; 2 Timothy 2: 11, 12.

Verse 14. There is no separate word in the original for *employment*, but *continual* is represented and means men who were in constant search for dead bodies to bury. *Bury with the passengers* means the people passing through the land would finally be invited to help in this great task of burying the dead. However, it was to be after the 7 months' work was over that the extra help was invited, and a part of the assistance they were to render was to search to see if any dead had been overlooked in the course of the burying period of 7 months.

Verse 15. *Passengers* means the men passing through who were invited to join in the search for any stray bodies that might have been overlooked. If they came across such bodies they were to set up some kind of a marker so that the others whose special work was to handle the corpses would see them and bury them out of sight. *Hamon-gog* is not strictly a geographical name, but is used to designate the place where so many of the people of Gog were buried, *Hamon* meaning "a crowd" according to Strong.

Verse 16. The word for *city* is an indefinite one and means any locality that is marked by some unusual sight. In this case the sight was that of such a great number of graves; the word *Hamonah* meaning the same as *Hamon* which is a multitude.

Verse 17. The dumb creatures are invited to a rich feast provided by the Lord, consisting of the flesh of men who had come into Palestine on behalf of Gog. The preceding verses will explain how such a feast was possible. The number of slain men was to be so great that it would require 7 months to bury them. In that length of time many of the bodies would be stripped of their flesh (see *done* in verse 15), the result of the activities

of these creatures that had been invited by the Lord to come and feast themselves. *Sacrifice* does not indicate a religious performance, but the word means a slaughtering of the men of Gog, and that will supply the meat for the beasts.

Verse 18. The *mighty* and *princes* were the great men in the army of Gog that were to furnish meat for the beasts. *Rams* and other animals named are figurative and the terms are used in allusion to the creatures that were used under the law to be served at the feasts prescribed by the Lord.

Verse 19. The words *fat* and *blood* refer literally to the parts of the bodies, but they are used somewhat figuratively. Under the law no one was permitted to eat fat nor blood, but they must be offered to God as a sacrifice. The idea is transferred to these creatures that have been invited to the feast. The words *my sacrifice* give us the explanation of the matter, for if it is the Lord's sacrifice then He can consistently make whatever use of those materials that is considered proper.

Verse 20. The line of thought continues in this verse. *My table* is used in the same sense as *my sacrifice* in the preceding verse. The Lord prepares a table supplied with the bodies of men and horses taken from the army of Gog. He then invites the dumb creatures to feast themselves upon these articles.

Verse 21. The slaughter of the men and horses of the army of Gog will be known to the other *heathen* or other nations. And especially, as there will be such a great number that it will take 7 months to bury the men, the witnesses will be impressed with the glory of the Lord who has wrought such an imposing scene.

Verse 22. Once more the main object of all divine demonstrations is stated, which is that they *shall know that I am the Lord*.

Verse 23. *The heathen shall know*, etc., has this logical meaning. The heathen (or nations in general) knew that Israel had been in exile with one of those strange nations for 70 years. They might have concluded it was because the Lord wanted to show his favor for the heathen world. But when they see the great destruction of the people of Gog (another heathen group), they will know the mentioned conclusion was wrong. They will then be able to form the correct conclusion namely, that *Israel went into captivity*

for their iniquity, and not as a favor to the Babylonians.

Verse 24. It was according to their [Israel's] *uncleanness* that God hid his face from his people, and let them be held in captivity for 70 years.

Verse 25. As soon as God's wrath was satisfied against his people, His mercy and love for them came into action and the captivity was brought to a close. The terms *Jacob* and *whole house of Israel* are very significant. Let the reader refer to the comments in chapter 37: 15-22 regarding the so-called lost 10 tribes, and connect them with the italicized words in this verse. It will be clear to all that the *whole house of Israel* does not mean 2 tribes only.

Verse 26. Regardless of the form of language as to past, present or future tense, the reader should remember that Ezekiel is writing about half a century before the end of the captivity. The purpose of the predictions is to encourage the people of Israel who had fallen into a state of despondency. (See at the valley of dry bones and 137th Psalm.) But they are given to understand that they must *bear their shame* as a matter of chastisement before being released.

Verse 27. God promised to bring his people out of the enemies' lands.

Verse 28. *Have left none of them any more there.* It is true that even after the 70-year captivity was ended, many Jews remained in that country according to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But they were voluntary citizens of Persia and not captives.

Verse 29. *Neither will I hide my face any more from them.* There were numerous times afterward when God was displeased with his people and punished them very severely. But the nation as a whole was never taken in a body from their home land as it was in the Babylonian captivity.

EZEKIEL 40

General remarks. The last 9 chapters of Ezekiel form a group that has been considered to be among the most puzzling passages in the Old Testament. In matters of "doctrine" or conclusions as to the personal conduct of man in relation to God no uninspired writer should be regarded as an "authority." The use that may and should be made of such writers is to seek their assistance in learning the facts and truths that pertain to the meaning of language that is used by the

inspired writers. This is especially important as it pertains to statements that depend for their meaning upon history, and on lexicon authority as to the meaning of foreign words. I have consulted some half dozen such works with regard to the chapters now before us. Some of them insist on attaching a great deal of spiritual significance to them as being a picture of things pertaining to Christ and his church, even reaching over into the eternal age. Doubtless there will be found to be some parts of the group that may properly be so interpreted, and when I am convinced that such is the case I shall make my comments accordingly.

There is one point on which all of the mentioned writers agree, and that is that the chapters as a whole are an ideal prediction of the reconstruction period after the 70-year captivity, particularly including the rebuilding of the temple. I believe they are correct in that matter and shall make my comments from that viewpoint.

In studying descriptive compositions that are admittedly ideal and figurative, we should be careful not to make a literal application of the various statements. In symbolic language it is permitted to picture conditions that would even be impossible if taken literally. (See the comments on the first chapter of this book.) This use of illustrative speech is done in parables, in which certain actions or circumstances may be supposed that never did or perhaps never could actually happen, in order to compare some spiritual or moral principle that could occur. One purpose in making these extremes and physically impossible descriptions of things is to give emphasis to the facts and truths they are really intended to represent. Doubtless there will be other observations come to mind as we proceed with the chapters before us that could properly have been included in this introduction. However, I shall very earnestly insist that the reader go over this general statement a number of times before entering into the study of the verses, taking special interest in its several remarks and considering the whole composition as a key to the chapters.

Verse 1. This verse establishes the date of the present prediction. To understand it we must again refer to the three divisions or stages by which the great 70-year captivity was accomplished, for the people of Judah were

not taken in Babylon all at the same time. (See comments on the 24th and 25 chapters of 2 Kings in volume 2 of this Commentary.) Ezekiel was taken at the second stage which was 11 years before the city was smitten at the early stage. It is a simple case of addition to see that an event that came 14 years after the third stage would be 25 years after the second, which the prophet terms *our captivity* because he was taken to Babylon at that time.

Verse 2. Ezekiel did not go bodily into the land of Israel, but went only in the visions of God. This is similar to the experience of John in Revelation 1:10; 4:1, 2, who never actually left the island of Patmos, but saw and heard things in a vision. The prophet was shown the things in a vision and he saw a very high mountain (mountain meaning kingdom in symbolic language) and near it was a city.

Verse 3. Brass is a mixture of two or more metals mostly copper, hence the rendering would properly be that word. It is capable of being brought to a high polish, hence is a fitting material to represent something that is attractive. This man had two measuring devices in his hand, a tape measure and a reed or rod. The first was for longer distances and the second for closer and specific dimensions. The mere existence of a measuring instrument of any kind indicates that something is to be "checked" by the standard in force. The man stood in the gate which indicated that he was to be admitted into the place with authority for measuring it.

Verse 4. The gist of this verse is that Ezekiel was to give his undivided attention to what was soon to be said and done before him. *Thou brought hither* means the prophet had been put into a vision right there in the land of Babylon. The revelations about to be made to him will be for the information and encouragement of the people of Israel who were in a state of dejection from their bondage in the strange land.

Verse 5. Ezekiel saw a house surrounded by a wall that was to be measured with the reed mentioned in verse 3. Cubits as measurements of length were of different standards in ancient times. Most of them were based on the human body, beginning at the elbow and extending toward the tip of the fingers, or else reaching only as far as the wrist. The reed which

the prophet saw was made on the basis of the cubit that extended from the elbow to the wrist, plus a few inches more, namely, a handbreadth. The measuring reed in the hand of this "man" was equal to 6 of the cubits described. The building was measured with this reed and it was one reed wide and one reed high.

Verse 6. The man entered the building to do some measuring of various parts of it. The point I wish to notice is that each of the parts the man measured was of the same dimension which was *one reed*.

Verse 7. Again the unity of measurements was observed, that they were each *one reed*. There was a space of 5 cubits (a little less than one length of the reed) between the chambers or rooms, but each of the rooms themselves was *one reed*. Here is an instance where the thing described was mathematically impossible (consult the KEY), for the rooms in a building could not each be the same in size as the whole structure. But such a thing would be possible were the measurements being checked by a law of principles and not of material proportions. The point is that God does not have a "double standard" in his dealings with mankind.

Verse 8. The porch was the same in size as the several parts of the building. See the comments in the preceding verse on the subject of principles of standards.

Verse 9. There could be no logical or mechanical reason for varying from the rule of *one reed* in some parts of the structure to be measured. Neither can we always see any special application of the peculiar descriptions given. In all cases, however, when the reader is confronted with some apparent contradictions or other puzzling statements, he should consult the KEY at the beginning of this chapter.

Verse 10. In giving the measurements of different parts of the structure the idea of unity will be frequently noticed, which is the case in the present verse as we see the term *one measure* is used twice.

Verse 11. Even in the instance where the figures differ from some others, we may observe the fact that only one basic standard of measurement is used; that is always the "regulation" unit of *cubit* or a multiple of it, or else an integral part of it. Such a rule is like the Lord's plan today, which is to require His people to use

one rule only in gauging their speech and conduct; that one rule is "the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4: 11). But this divine rule does not make the same amount of demand of each person, it is to be according to his ability. But whatever difference of talent there may be, each servant of God must be measured by the same rule which is indicated in Philippians 3: 16.

Verse 12. A reference to verse 5 shows that a measurement of 6 cubits is the same as one reed. In this verse the idea of unity in the principles of an authoritative standard is maintained. We have either the whole reed or a recognized portion of it which is a cubit.

Verse 13. We usually think of a *gate* as meaning an opening in a fence or other external protective wall. The lexicon, however, defines it merely as an opening whether a gate or door. In the measurements of this verse the distance from one chamber to another lacked one cubit of being 4 reeds, and the doors were lined up so as to be directly facing each other.

Verse 14. In this chapter the word *post* is always from the same original and is defined in the lexicon as any part that is constructed as a prop or support for some other portion of a structure; the posts of this verse were 10 reeds high.

Verse 15. *Face* is from a Hebrew word that Strong says has many applications. But one part of his definition is that it refers to something that turns, which probably is the reason it is used in connection with the *gate* of this structure. The distance between the entrance gate to the porch over the inner opening was 50 cubits or 8 reeds.

Verse 16. *Narrow* means somewhat closed in the way of a lattice, and a *window* was a place that was perforated. This may be understood by remembering that glass and other transparent substances for admission of light had not been devised in those times. It is reasonable to suppose that the kind of windows just described would not admit the amount of light that could be done with transparent glass. That is why they had to have them *round about*. The *palm trees* were some kind of ornaments either carved or painted upon the posts.

Verse 17. The word *court* occurs a number of times in the Old Testament and it is from CHATSER which Strong defines as follows: "A yard (as inclosed by a fence); also a hamlet (sim-

ilarly surrounded with walls)." Hence in this verse Ezekiel was taken into the open space surrounding the building which was paved. On this pavement there were 30 chambers which Strong defines as "a room in a building (whether for storage, eating or lodging)." There would doubtless be frequent calls for just such a service.

Verse 18. The general pavement described in the preceding verse was on a level with the gates, and they were therefore conveniently related to the floors of the chambers. The *lower pavement* of this verse was by the sides of the gates and not directly connected with the chambers as to the height.

Verse 19. The *lower gate* was one that corresponded in elevation to the *lower pavement* of the preceding verse. The distance from this lower gate to the wall of the inner court was 100 cubits or more than 16 reeds.

Verse 20. These courts all were inclosed by some kind of wall and they were provided with gates. All of these gates were measured in order to be "checking" on them to see how they compared with the standard adopted of a cubit or multiple of it.

Verse 21. There were three little chambers on each side of the gate that is mentioned in the preceding verse. The *posts* were reinforcing parts added to strengthen the porch and arched covering over the pavement. This combination or unit was an oblong, being 50 by 25 cubits or about 75 by 37 feet.

Verse 22. *Their windows* means the windows of the preceding verse, and the *arches* were the porches or shaded covering over the windows. The dimensions of these parts were the same as those described in verse 16.

Verse 23. *Over against* means it was opposite to the other gates in a way that caused the three to face each other. There was a considerable space taken up with this unit of the great structure, for it was 100 cubits or about 150 feet.

Verse 24. The parts of the structure described in this verse were similar to those stated in verse 21, which is indicated by, *according to these measures*.

Verse 25. The windows were perforated or latticed places for the admission of light. *Like those windows* denotes that the windows of the building as a whole were made along the same line, which is in harmony with the

principle of uniformity which the Lord generally maintains in His works.

Verse 26. This last gate seems to have been higher than the area immediately adjoining it, for it required 7 steps to reach it. The *palm trees* were ornamental items that were either carved or painted on the posts.

Verse 27. This side was similar to the others in that it had both an inner and outer gate; the gates were 100 cubits or 150 feet apart.

Verse 28. Ezekiel and the "man" are still at the south side and the prophet is witnessing the measuring of the gate from the viewpoint of the inner court. *According to these measures* means he used the same standard that he did in the other places.

Verse 29. *Little chambers* are still the smaller rooms or resting places that were situated in various convenient places connected with the building. The windows and arches (covered porches) were like the others in both form and dimensions.

Verse 30. Lest the reader's memory be dulled by the many repetitions and become confused by the different measurements, I shall again explain that these *arches* were parts that were in the nature of porches or porticoes. They served as a protection for the gates, as well as to add beauty to the architecture by conforming to the principles of symmetry and thus pleasing the eye when beholding it.

Verse 31. These arches or porches served as an overhead shield or protective covering for the parts where they were erected. One of them extended toward the outer court and the posts of it were ornamented with the likenesses of palm trees. The elevation of this porch was 8 steps above the adjoining area.

Verse 32. The prophet was taken from one side of these structures to the other. He has been on the north and south, now he is brought into the inner court toward the east. *According to these measures* means the same standard of measurements was used that was adopted at the beginning of the inspection.

Verse 33. The *little chambers* were the small resting places that were built round at the outer border of the pavement. They were all covered by arches or porches, reinforced by the posts. These porches were provided with windows or perforated spaces and the entire unit was built *according to these measures* or in harmony with

the authoritative standard issued by the Lord which consisted of 6 cubits to a reed.

Verse 34. The present work of inspection was in the inner court according to verse 32, but the arches or porches were extended toward the outward court. Since these arches were a sort of shield for the walkways, we are not surprised to find them in so many places. These arches were supported by the posts which were ornamented with the same kind of engraving or painting that we have seen in the other places. This walkway was higher than the surrounding area so that it required 8 steps to reach it.

Verse 35. Again the "inspector" went to the north gate and applied the same standard of measuring tape that was used in other instances.

Verse 36. The measurements and other details observed here are the same as they were at the other gates generally speaking. There was a wonderful uniformity in all of the major parts of the great building.

Verse 37. *Utter* means the exterior and the thought is that the posts were provided for the porch to the extent of the outside area. There were two rows of the posts and all of them had the ornaments of palm trees, and it was necessary also to make 8 steps by which to reach the floor of this walkway.

Verse 38. *Washed the burnt offering*. The law of Moses required that animals intended for sacrifice on the altar must be washed (Leviticus 1: 9, 13; 9: 14).

Verse 39. The people of Israel were promised their release from captivity after the proper period of chastisement, at which time they were to return to Palestine and resume their worship of the true God. That would include the offering of animal sacrifices, and these tables were provided for the slaying of the victims.

Verse 40. A great many beasts would be slain to meet the services of the people and many places of the entries to the building, 8 tables in all.

Verse 41. The location of the tables was in groups of 4 tables each.

Verse 42. The tables were hewn out of solid stone and were one and a half cubits square by one cubit high. The stone being less porous than wood made them more sanitary. The instruments needed in preparing the animals were kept on the tables. *Burnt offering . . . sacrifice*. For practical pur-

poses these words may generally be used interchangeably, but when a distinction is made one means something voluntarily brought to the service while the other is specifically required. However, the two are so interwoven in their application that I shall quote the definition from Strong for each. *Offering* is from QURBAN and defined, "Something brought near the altar, i.e., a sacrificial present." *Sacrifice* is from ZEBACH which is defined, "Properly a slaughter, i.e. the flesh of an animal; by implication a sacrifice (the victim or the act)."

Verse 43. *Within* means just inside the porch where hooks and they were used for convenience in handling the parts of the sacrifices.

Verse 44. These singers were the persons who conducted the services that had been started by David. This group was provided with some of the chambers or resting places on the inside of the court. These "booths" were located by the side of the north gate and they faced toward the south. Then another was at the side of the east gate, and it faced toward the north.

Verse 45. These chambers were used also by the priests and their work was classified, one group having charge of the temple.

Verse 46. The other chamber was for the priests who served at the altar. *Sons of Zadok* means those who descended from that line of the priesthood.

Verse 47. This court was different from the one mentioned before. It was 100 cubits square and contained the altar upon which were burned the various sacrifices.

Verse 48. *He brought me* means the "man" introduced in verse 3 who was conducting this inspection tour for the information of Ezekiel. *Porch of the house* means an entry to the main building. It had large posts or columns on each side, seven and a half feet in thickness, for strength and massiveness in appearance.

Verse 49. This entry was a magnificent structure. It was 30 feet long and about 17 feet wide. Its floor was higher than the adjoining area and was reached by steps. In addition to the reinforcing posts there were pillars on each side of the entrance.

EZEKIEL 41

Verse 1. The heading on the pages of most Bibles, also the statements in works of reference, give to this chap-

ter as a whole the subject of the temple. I believe that to be correct and will make my comments accordingly. In writing on that subject, however, the prophet makes occasional references to the temple of Solomon and the tabernacle built by Moses. It will assist the reader if he can take the time to read the description of those buildings as given in Exodus, chapters 25-30 and 1 Kings 6. But the descriptions that are in the present chapter will be found much more complicated and indefinite than the ones referred to. (See the KEY again.) The *posts* in this temple correspond to the boards of the tabernacle that Moses made.

Verse 2. The door was 10 cubits or 15 feet wide. The sides of the door, which means the door jambs, were 5 cubits or seven and a half feet square. *Length thereof* means that of the room to which the mentioned door was the entrance.

Verse 3. The measurements of this verse are what he found on the inside part of the entrance structure.

Verse 4. The dimensions of this *most holy* place were the same as those in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6: 20).

Verse 5. The wall of this was 6 cubits or 9 feet thick, and all round the wall of the building there were chambers or rooms that were 4 cubits wide. These were similar to the chambers of which we read in the preceding chapter.

Verse 6. The chambers were three stories high and were attached to the wall but not built as a part of it. No doubt such an arrangement was had so that each chamber could be made steady but not weakened by being merged with the other material.

Verse 7. The three-storied groups of chambers were unique in their plan, for each one was wider than the one under it. In going from the ground floor or pavement to the top story, the stairway was on the inside so that it was necessary to ascend by way of the middle story. Such a plan might give the unit a top-heavy appearance, and that would explain why it was braced by being fastened to the side wall.

Verse 8. The side chambers were built upon a raised platform that was a reed thick. *Great* is not from a word that means size; it is one that signifies something as a connection. The thought is that this platform that was supporting the chambers was in addi-

tion to the main wall or foundation of the building.

Verse 9. Much of the arrangement of this whole architecture was done so as to please the eye. For instance, it would look somewhat abrupt to have the platform on which the chambers were resting to extend wide enough only to hold them, but instead, there was an extension so as to give a margin of 5 cubits.

Verse 10. The chambers were not crowded up against each other in a way that would suggest any shortage of room; there was a space of 20 cubits between them.

Verse 11. These chambers had each a door on the side and one on the north. They were entered from the platform which was described in verses 8 and 9. This would be another reason why the chambers should not be jammed up against each other.

Verse 12. At one end of the building we have been studying was another that may be regarded as an addition or annex; it was 105 feet wide. Its wall was 8 feet thick and the whole annex was 135 feet long.

Verse 13. This verse is a summary of certain portions of the general structure that Ezekiel has been observing. The main house was 150 feet long, and besides this, there was an extension in length of 150 feet.

Verse 14. *Separate place* is from one original and refers to some part of the building on the east side. *Face* is evidently used figuratively because it was the rule to "face" the east with important buildings.

Verse 15. *Against the separate place* means that part near the place noted in the preceding verse. Strong defines the original for *galleries* as "a ledge or offset in a building." These were extensions of some kind on the outside of the main building and served as a walkway or arcade, and they reached 100 cubits or 150 feet.

Verse 16. Transparent glass was not known in those times, hence the *narrow windows* or latticed loopholes were provided to serve these arcades. There were three stories to these arcades and all of them were ceiled with wood. This ceiling not only covered the top as is usually done, but the walls also were ceiled from the ground up as far as the windows, and some kind of covering was made for the windows.

Verse 17. The ceiling described in

the preceding verse extended over the parts named in this. *By measure* denotes that the ceiling was measured to harmonize with the areas already described and checked by the adopted standard.

Verse 18. These *cherubims* and *palm trees* were for ornamentation, and for added attractiveness the two kinds of ornaments were placed so as to alternate with each other. The cherubims had each two faces which will be explained in the next verse.

Verse 19. We usually think of a person who is "two-faced" in an unfavorable light, but such is not always necessary, even when the faces are not alike. Things may differ without being contradictory, and hence they may co-operate with each other in a common interest. By having two faces the cherubims could see the palm trees from two viewpoints or with two kinds of interests. The palm tree was one of the most admired of all the plants that grew in Palestine. It is referred to in poetic speech as a symbol of peace, and it was literally used for food and other practical purposes. Since the tree therefore was useful for both man and beast, it was appropriate that the faces of the cherubims would be those of a man and a lion.

Verse 20. The wall of the temple from the ground to the height of the door had these ornamental engravings or pictures of lions and palm trees.

Verse 21. This verse means that the general appearance of the posts or supporting columns, and the face or front of the building, were uniform and were square or 4-sided.

Verse 22. The *altar of wood* was for the purpose of burning incense, hence did not require to be covered with metal. *Table before the Lord* is in allusion to the altar of incense that was in the tabernacle, and located against the vail covering the ark of testimony where the Lord was represented by the glorious light.

Verse 23. There were two apartments in the temple hence the need for two doors.

Verse 24. The doors were what are called "folding doors" today.

Verse 25. These doors had the same kind of ornamentation engraved on them as was on the walls. The *thick planks* were the kind used as stepping pieces or thresholds.

Verse 26. The *narrow windows* were the same kind of latticed or perforated

spaces that we have observed, because there was no transparent material in use at that time. The *thick planks* is from a different original from that in the preceding verse, and means some boards suitable for a protective covering or projection over the windows.

EZEKIEL 42

Verse 1. The *utter court* means the outer one that was on the north side. The *separate place* was the one commented upon in chapter 41: 12. There was one of the chambers at this place and Ezekiel was taken into it.

Verse 2. The dimensions stated here identify the place as the one described in chapter 41: 13 and the reader may see the comments at that place.

Verse 3. The separate place referred to was *over against* or near the point of the 20 cubits connected with the inner court, also near the pavement provided for the outer court. At this location was a three-storied unit of galleries or projecting ledges.

Verse 4. Running along the rows of chambers there was a passage that was 10 cubits wide, and the doors of the chambers opened out upon this walk.

Verse 5. These upper chambers were *shorter* to harmonize with the decreasing width of the building near it.

Verse 6. Many of the units of the structure were in threes but the reason for it is not stated. This place *had not pillars* as other parts had. For this reason the writer states it was *straitened* or contracted more than either lower or middle story.

Verse 7. The outside of this unit of chambers was a wall 50 cubits long, corresponding with the extent of the chambers.

Verse 8. The two fifties of cubits agreed with the 100 cubits that were before the temple so that there would be no unevenness in the combination.

Verse 9. It should be remembered that we are now reading about the chambers assigned especially for the priests, hence there was an entry into them provided that went under the chambers from the outer court.

Verse 10. *In the thickness* denotes the width of the chambers, and they were *over against* which means they were near the *separate place*, a description of which has been given elsewhere.

Verse 11. The main thought in this verse is one of uniformity of design

and appearance. The dimensions and *fashions* of the parts are said to have a *like appearance*.

Verse 12. The fact of observing things of different sides did not reveal any great difference in general design. Instead, the statement is made that the one was *according to* the other in most cases.

Verse 13. *Holy chambers* furnishes the key to the particular purpose of these parts of the great structure. They are regarded as *holy* because of what was to take place in them namely, the ritualistic services of the Mosaic religion.

Verse 14. When the priests enter these chambers to perform their holy work, they are required to lay aside their personal garments and put on the ones prescribed for the sacred service, and that service was *for the people* as stated here.

Verse 15. *Prospect* means the direction in which the gate faced, and the man measured the area around this gate.

Verse 16. *Reed* is used in a general sense and means that the place was measured with a rod, and according to Moffatt's version it was about 500 cubits.

Verse 17. The north side was evidently measured with the same length rod as the east and it revealed it to be the same dimension as the other.

Verse 18. The south side was the same as the preceding ones already measured.

Verse 19. This completed the four sides and the symmetry of the spot was maintained by keeping the four sides equal in extent.

Verse 20. The four sides that have been measured were supplied with a wall extending throughout their entire boundary. *Sanctuary* means the holy part and *profane* refers to the part that was not sacred because it was not specifically used by priests.

EZEKIEL 43

Verse 1. Ezekiel was not taken to this gate to see it measured this time. The building having been measured and hence officially "checked," it was ready for use and the prophet was brought here with this in view.

Verse 2. If there is any figurative significance in the *east* as being the direction from which the *glory of God* came, it is due to the fact that the sunlight comes from that point. This

glory of God was destined to show itself in due time on behalf of His people, and it was to have its effect upon the great country that was holding the people of the Lord in subjection at the very time that Ezekiel was writing this.

Verse 3. *When I came to destroy the city* is correctly rendered in the margin, "When I came to prophesy that the city should be destroyed." (See the comments on a like passage in Jeremiah 1: 10.)

Verse 4. The glory of the Lord that came from the east entered even into the house that had been measured with the reed.

Verse 5. Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord enter the house, and then he was transported into the inner court where he could behold the greatness of that glory, which was so great that it filled the house.

Verse 6. Ezekiel has reference to both the Lord and the man who has been doing the measuring. The latter stood by him and the Lord did the speaking.

Verse 7. This verse is a prediction that was to be fulfilled after the captivity had been completed. The land of Palestine with the temple in Jerusalem is that which is referred to in the forepart of the verse. The personal location of the throne of God is in Heaven, but also wherever His worship is instituted the throne of the Lord is represented. That holy place had been defiled by the idolatry (spiritual whoredom) of Judah, but that was to be ended permanently by the 70-year captivity. See the historical note on this subject at Isaiah 1: 25 in volume 3 of this Commentary. *Carcases* is from PEGER, which Strong defines, "A carcase (as limp), whether of man or beast; figuratively an idolatrous image." This indicates that the idolatrous people of Judah may have represented their corrupt devotions by buying some images of their gods in the high places where they had the altars erected.

Verse 8. The gist of this verse is that the people tried to mix the true with the false religion, and such a practice was always abominable in the sight of God. (Leviticus 10: 10; 11: 47.) *Have consumed them* means they had lost their national standing by being exiled from their own land.

Verse 9. This exhortation came at the time when the great 70-year captivity was fully started, but the

greater part of it was in the future. Since the people heeded the admonition given them, the verse may properly be regarded both as a warning and a prediction which was fulfilled according to the note cited at verse 7.

Verse 10. *Be ashamed of their iniquities* is another passage that is both an admonition and a prediction. That they became ashamed of their record is indicated by the language in the 137th Psalm and Ezekiel 37: 11. This attitude is also very evident in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah which are a record of things after the captivity.

Verse 11. *If they be ashamed* is a very significant phrase. The law of the Lord never has much effect on the life of an unrighteous man as long as he is interested in his evil life. But if and when he becomes ashamed of that life, he will be willing to give his attention to something good. The people of Judah (or Israel) were destined to become ashamed of idolatry and willing to turn back to the true God. Their former temple with its services having been destroyed, it was necessary that a restitution or restoration be made which the Lord purposed to have done. As an encouraging prediction for these people, Ezekiel was told to show to them the pattern of the restored institutions. He not only was to write out a report of what had been revealed to him, but was to do so *in their sight*.

Verse 12. Some details will be added to the foregoing chapters on the reconstruction of the divine institutions and the laws to regulate them. Strong says the original for *mountain* is sometimes used figuratively. This verse means the whole territory where the house is to be rebuilt is to be regarded as holy.

Verse 13. The altar meant is the one to be used for animal sacrifices. *Cubit is a cubit and an hand breadth* is explained at chapter 40: 5.

Verse 14. *Settle* means "a border" or ledge projecting from the face of the altar that would relieve the broad plainness of the instrument and add to its attractiveness. There were two of these borders; the first one started two cubits from the bottom and it was a cubit wide. Then four cubits up from that border was the next one a cubit wide.

Verse 15. After the top ledge the altar extended 6 feet higher, and on

the four corners of the altar there were horns, one on each corner.

Verse 16. The altar as measured here was 12 cubits or 18 feet square.

Verse 17. The altar was 12 cubits long and the *settle* or ledge was 14 cubits long, which means that the ledge was one cubit in its extension beyond the side of the altar. The ledge had a border about it that was half a cubit, probably something added to give it a finished appearance. At the bottom of this altar there was a flange or base all round the piece that was a cubit broad. The *stairs* means the approach to the altar, not steps as we usually think of the parts, for that was forbidden by the law of Moses (Exodus 20: 26) which was the basis for the present institution.

Verse 18. Having given the details of construction for the altar, the Lord announced to Ezekiel that he would be told about the proper services to be done on it.

Verse 19. Priests, Levites; that is to be understood from the fact that while all priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests. At the time of which the prophet was writing they were restricted to the line of Levites coming down from Zadok (1 Chronicles 24: 3). The kind of animals that might be offered was the same as the law of Moses had designated (Exodus 29: 10).

Verse 20. The carcass of a beast was to be burned on the altar, but the blood was to be used as a cleansing agent. It was to be put on the various parts of the piece of furniture in the services to *cleanse and purge* it.

Verse 21. *Appointed place* denotes that the sacrificial services could not be performed at just any place that might suit the worshiper. The law of Moses prescribed the procedure that would be accepted and no change would be received and blessed after they returned from the captivity and resumed their religious practices for the Lord.

Verse 22. The repetition of animal sacrifices was calculated to impress the worshiper with the necessity of being thorough. The beast to be used must be one that is without blemish the same as required by Moses.

Verse 23. Another repetition is required even after the altar had been cleansed. It signified that the fitness of the divine institutions is not all that is required, but the worshiper

must also be present with the suitable preparation.

Verse 24. *Before the Lord* means to do it in the presence of the altar, for the Lord would not recognize the offering if done in another place. See the comments on "appointed place" in verse 21. *Salt* may be referred to from both a literal and figurative viewpoint. It is a literal preservative, and when considered figuratively it denotes permanence in the thing with which it is connected.

Verse 25. These stipulations were similar to the requirements made in the law of Moses. (See Exodus 29: 35; Leviticus 8: 33.) The first 5 chapters of Leviticus give the details of many of the principal sacrifices the Jews were required to offer, and other items are to be found in later chapters of that book.

Verse 26. *Seven* is a symbol of completeness and it or a multiple of it is very prominent throughout the Bible. The altar was to be purified first, then the people were required to prepare themselves by being sincerely consecrated.

Verse 27. The initial service of 7 days was not to be the end of their religious activities. After that *and so forward* the offerings were to be offered on the altar under the supervision of the priests.

EZEKIEL 44

Verse 1. Chapter 43: 5 tells of the "man" taking Ezekiel to the inner court, and the present verse shows that he was *brought back* towards the outside again where he found the gate shut.

Verse 2. Chapter 43: 4 gives us the reason the east gate was shut; and it is so stated here. The Lord is the One whose right it is to use that gate, and it was to be closed to the people in general.

Verse 3. This gate was for the special use of the prince which would mean whoever was a leading man or one in a leading position among the people of Israel.

Verse 4. Wherever one looked about the holy building he would see evidences of the glory of the Lord. *Fell upon my face* was an ancient custom when a person wished to manifest great respect for another and humility in himself. We need not suppose that one performed any violent action such as would cause an injury to the body. But the act was done in such a decided

manner as to leave no doubt about the genuine humility of the worshiper or any person who wished to give special recognition to another.

Verse 5. This verse is virtually the same as chapter 40: 4.

Verse 6. *Let it suffice you* means for them to realize that they had already committed enough abominations, and they should be content to change their ways.

Verse 7. When circumcision is used figuratively or spiritually, it means consecration and devotion to duty unto the Lord. The people of Israel had become so inconsistent in their practices that the Lord regarded them as uncircumcised.

Verse 8. According to chapter 40: 45 the priests were the lawful keepers of the holy place. But these men had put others in their place, men who were not qualified either officially or morally for the holy work.

Verse 9. Under no condition was a stranger (one outside the nation) to be permitted to participate in the offering of sacrifices. This was not only because they were uncircumcised in the flesh, but also were unfit with regard to their character.

Verse 10. The Levites were the ones who had been appointed by the Lord for the services about the altar. However, they had corrupted themselves by going after the worship of idols and hence became abominable to God. *Bear their iniquity* means they would suffer the consequences of their unrighteous life.

Verse 11. *Yet they shall be ministers*, etc. It was the Lord's decision that the tribe of Levi should have exclusive charge of the priesthood, and their unfaithfulness did not make it lawful for anyone outside to meddle in the altar services.

Verse 12. The outside people had no right to be substituted for the lawful priesthood that was vested in the tribe of Levi; yet the unfaithfulness of that group was destined to bring forth the judgment of the Lord. They mixed the true worship with that of idols and for that reason God said *I have lifted up mine hand against them*.

Verse 13. Just as Ezekiel was writing this verse, the Levites were in Babylon where they were destined to remain for nearly half a century longer. While in that country they will not be permitted to perform the services of the sanctuary. And even after the return from captivity, the individuals

who were stained with idolatry will not be permitted to *come near unto me* saith the Lord; that will be reserved for others.

Verse 14. However, these demoted persons will be required to perform some service.

Verse 15. In all cases of iniquity there have been exceptions although they were generally in the minority. We may note the instance of Lot and his family, Noah and his family, and the ones predicted by Jesus to be in evidence at the day of judgment. Thus it was when the people of Judah went astray as a nation, there were some priests who *kept the charge of the sanctuary*, and they are now promised the honor of being near the Lord to minister unto Him.

Verse 16. The *table* is the altar described in chapter 41: 22.

Verse 17. These worthy persons of the sons of Zadok were to be admitted into the sanctuary for the purpose of performing the services belonging to the priesthood. The wearing of linen instead of wool would be in accordance with the law of Moses.

Verse 18. The 28th chapter of Exodus gives the instructions for making the garments of the priests. It may be noted that linen was used extensively, while no mention is made of any woolen material for any of the garments.

Verse 19. This verse corresponds with verses 13 and 14 in chapter 42.

Verse 20. *Neither shave . . . nor grow long* may seem to be a contradiction but it is not. The first refers to a practice of shaving the hair down to the skin in certain places about the head. It was a heathenish custom and God's people were forbidden to follow it (Leviticus 19: 27). The second part of the citation means they were not to neglect the hair altogether but were to *poll* it which means to trim it off so that it would not be regarded as long hair. (See 1 Corinthians 11: 14.)

Verse 21. The reason for this law is given in Leviticus 10: 9.

Verse 22. This verse likewise is on the same basis as the law of Moses. The restriction against marrying a widow was not applicable in the case of one who had been married to a priest before.

Verse 23. *Holy* and *profane* differ from each other in that the latter means only the thing is temporal or

earthly and not religious. It does not mean necessarily that it is something wrong morally. The sons of Aaron failed to distinguish between fire that was obtained from some ordinary (profane) human source, and that which was on the altar which was holy because it came from God (Leviticus 9: 24).

Verse 24. The priests were to render decisions when a controversy arose between the people, but it was to be *according to my judgments*. They were not to make laws regarding the conduct of the people, for their authority consisted only in making the application of the law of the Lord.

Verse 25. The law of Moses regarded a dead person unclean, but this meant especially from a ceremonial standpoint. There were men outside the priesthood who could take care of the dead and the priests could remain clean and always be ready to perform their own particular office. But for their near relatives an exception was made because the nearness of the relationship would sometimes make it necessary to touch them.

Verse 26. When it was necessary for a priest to handle a dead body, he was not permitted to resume his official service until he had been cleansed, which required a period of 7 days including certain ceremonies.

Verse 27. The 19th chapter of Leviticus should be studied in connection with the present group of verses, because it gives the law of cleansing under the Mosaic system. When the priest has completed the term of days required for his cleansing, he is to begin his activities by offering a *sin offering*. (See Leviticus 4: 1-12 for the regulations on this subject.)

Verse 28. *Be unto them for an inheritance*. The Levites were not given possessions of estates as were the other tribes, because they were to be employed in the services around the house of God. *I am their inheritance* means that instead of having land from which to obtain a living, they would be cared for by the Lord through the provisions of that service which He required of them. (See 1 Corinthians 9: 13.)

Verse 29. This verse states some of the details of how the priests lived from their service to God. From the sacrifices which the people of Israel brought to the altar the priests took certain portions for their food.

Verse 30. *Oblations* is another name

for offerings which the people were required to bring to the service. Before they could make use of the products of the soil and herds, they must take the best of the fruit and turn it over to the priests.

Verse 31. The priests were restricted according to this verse in regard to the eating of certain things. For that reason the people would know better than to bring such articles to the service since these men had to "live of the things of the altar."

EZEKIEL 45

Verse 1. The figures and descriptions are so out of proportion to what the literal meaning could be here, I shall insist that the reader again see the KEY at the beginning of chapter 40. The whole passage is still an ideal and figurative description of the restoration work that was to be done after the release from Babylonian captivity. But although that is the over-all subject with perhaps very little significance attached to the details of the description, I shall try to explain the meaning of them. This verse begins the redistribution of the land which is an allusion to the division that was made by Joshua after the entrance of the children of Israel into Palestine. Almost all important operations that the Israelites performed were started with a sacrifice of some kind which is the meaning of *oblation*. The first portion was to be allotted to the Lord and it is called an *holy portion*. *Reeds* has no word in the original, but Moffatt's translation renders the numbers of this verse as eight and a third by six and two-thirds miles. This tract was to be regarded as holy ground.

Verse 2. Within the plot of holy ground described in the preceding verse there was to be a space reserved for the *sanctuary* (holy place) that was 500 reeds square, and it was to have some "spare" space of 50 cubits or 75 feet all around.

Verse 3. This verse states the same dimensions as in the first verse and adds some particulars as to its use, that it was to be used as a holy place.

Verse 4. The priests were the ones who had charge of the holy things and they were to have their dwelling places within this territory.

Verse 5. The extra space extending beyond the plot described for the sanctuary but within that measured off in verses 1 and 3 was to be used for the priests in which they would have erected 20 chambers or rooms.

Verse 6. This verse designates a strip of land to lie alongside that which is assigned to the priests, and it was to be for the use of the *whole house of Israel*, something like an open campus or common grounds.

Verse 7. The measurements of this verse are virtually within the restrictions already indicated. The added thought is the use to be made of this strip which is for the *prince*, which means the man in a leading position before the people.

Verse 8. *Prince* is from *NASI* and Strong defines it, "Properly an exalted one, i.e., a king or sheik." In the King James version of the Bible it has been translated by captain, chief, governor, prince, ruler and others. It may or may not designate an official, but among the Jews it was used for both. The use of it in our present passage means one who has some rule over the people. The Lord predicts that his people would not be oppressed by this class of head men after the return from the captivity.

Verse 9. At the time this scripture was being written the people of Judah (or Israel) were in captivity and the princes did not have the opportunity to oppress them. The warning admonition was to chastise the wicked head men for their past wrong doing and to command them about their conduct in the future.

Verse 10. The *ephah* and *bath* were measures of quantity in ancient times. The princes used fraudulent standards and thus imposed upon the people under them. God decreed and predicted that such transactions would not be repeated after the return.

Verse 11. The Lord not only commanded that just measurements should be used, but gave instructions about what would constitute such standards. Strong says that an *ephah* is "a measure in general." It seems that some of the units of capacity were allowed to vary at different times and places, and that would give rise to questions as to justice in dealing with the people. The Lord put such disputes at rest by setting the standard for weights and measures. He ordained that whether the *ephah* or *bath* be used in a transaction it should be the same capacity which was a tenth of a homer.

Verse 12. *Maneh* is a unit of indefinite capacity and was to be recognized according to the custom in force in any given community. A shekel was

to consist of 20 *gerahs*, but as to the number of shekels required to make up a *maneh*, whether 20, 25 or 15, the prevailing practice must be observed by the princes in their dealing with the people.

Verse 13. An *oblation* means an offering for the service of the Lord. If it consisted of grain it must be measured according to the standard set in verse 11.

Verse 14. The oil in use was olive oil and it was valuable because of its many purposes. It furnished light, was used as food and was valuable for medical treatment. The offering of it was therefore the giving of a thing of value. A *cor* was "a deep round vessel" in which the olive oil was stored.

Verse 15. The animal sacrifices had been instituted under the Mosaic law and the regulations are written in the beginning chapters of Leviticus. In the present case the Lord was very lenient and required them to offer only one lamb out of each two hundred. However, the requirements were the same as formerly in that the animal must be one that was well fed, which is the idea in the phrase *out of the fat pastures of Israel*.

Verse 16. *All the people* means the foregoing offering was to be for the congregation in general; none were excused from the obligation.

Verse 17. The *prince* in this case would be the priest "on duty" at the time. The people were to bring their gifts to headquarters for the service, then the priest would officiate or preside in the services at the altar.

Verse 18. The first day of the month was a special holy time under the Mosaic law, and that was the date stipulated by the Lord for this service of consecration of the land after returning from the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 19. Putting blood upon the door posts of a house is a formal way of consecrating the house. It is also a signal of the importance attached to the inside of the house. This recalls the ceremonies that took place in Egypt on the night of the first pass-over when the first born of the families was to be slain (Exodus 12).

Verse 20. The word *simple* is from *PETHAI* which Strong defines, "Silly (i.e., seducible)." It is used in this verse to denote one who does not use his mind about his conduct, not that he is really lacking in brain power. Such a person is not regarded with as

much criticism as one who deliberately does wrong.

Verse 21. This feast is identical with that prescribed in the law of Moses. The details of that feast are recorded in Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23.

Verse 22. The *prince* would be the priest in active service in this case.

Verse 23. This 7-day feast is also described in Leviticus 23.

Verse 24. The word *meat* means "meal" and it is so rendered in the margins of some Bibles. The formula for this offering, which was wholly vegetable except the salt, may be found in Leviticus 2. It was to be added to the animal sacrifices named.

Verse 25. This feast of 7 days in the seventh month is called the feast of tabernacles in Leviticus 23: 34. It was instituted to commemorate the experience of the children of Israel who dwelt in tents or tabernacles during the 40 years they were going through the wilderness.

EZEKIEL 46

Verse 1. A gate could be shut and not be fastened, and there is nothing said about that subject. However, the fact of its being opened on the sabbath indicates that the Lord's business was going on.

Verse 2. Sometimes the *prince* may be also the priest since the word has a general meaning. But both names are used in this place which leaves the first to mean a ruler or other outstanding man among the Jews. He will be required to make offerings for the Lord's service and the priest will be the one to preside at the altar.

Verse 3. *The people* means the unofficial Jews of the nation, and they were all required to contribute to the Lord's work. These offerings were to be made at the entrance of the gate and not in their private homes. Not all sabbaths were the days of the new moons, but every new moon marked the day as a sabbath, according to Numbers 28: 11; 1 Samuel 20: 5, 18, 24, 27).

Verse 4. The details of the burnt offerings are given in Leviticus 1. All the animals for the sacrificial altar must be perfect and the best of the herd or flock.

Verse 5. The *meat* (meal) offering was offered in connection with the animal sacrifice. This vegetable offering was accompanied with a small amount of olive oil.

Verse 6. *The day of the new moon* was the beginning of the month and was a holy or sabbath day. Like other special days, it was celebrated by offering animal sacrifices.

Verse 7. *According as his hand shall attain* means that a man was required to give according to his ability. Whether many or few, all animals must be without blemish and be offered with a small amount of olive oil as in verse 5.

Verse 8. The Lord was particular about some apparently incidental matters. The prince was told by what gate he should enter and leave the building.

Verse 9. This "one way" requirement is another one of the unusual regulations imposed by the Lord. We are able at least to realize that much confusion would be avoided by not trying to reverse one's direction in the midst of so many coming and going.

Verse 10. The prince was to become one of the crowd generally speaking, but that was not to interfere with his own personal activities as stated in verse 1 and 2.

Verse 11. This small amount of grain (*meat offering*) was added to the animal.

Verse 12. The law made a distinction between freewill or voluntary offerings and those specifically required. (See Leviticus 22: 23; Numbers 15: 3.) But the distinction did not exempt the worshiper from all restrictions as may be seen in this verse.

Verse 13. This verse refers to the well known "daily sacrifice" that was a prominent ordinance in the law of Moses (Exodus 29: 38-42).

Verse 14. This *meat* offering means the same as in other places which was a small amount of meal or ground grain. *Perpetual ordinance* means it was to be a continuous practice as long as the nation had an existence.

Verse 15. *Continual burnt offering* means the same as "perpetual ordinance."

Verse 16. The main point in this verse is that a gift of real estate from a prince to his son was to be permanent. That is, no circumstance was to alter that gift so as to turn it back to the prince.

Verse 17. The year of *liberty* was the same as the jubilee described in Leviticus 25. In that year certain readjustments were made in the relations of property and also of servants,

and that is what is meant by this verse.

Verse 18. The *prince* did not have the right to use his position in a special favor to even his own sons. He could not cut off even them from the enjoyment of their inheritance no matter how much reason he would think he had so to do. Being restricted from such an act as to his sons, the temptation would be to defraud the people not related to him of their possessions so as to give them to his sons, and this verse is a law against such an injustice. *That my people be not scattered* states one of the Lord's motives for the regulations just described. If the people were assured of the uninterrupted possession of their property, they would not be induced to scatter out to find houses and lands.

Verse 19. Having revealed to Ezekiel the foregoing laws and ordinances for observance by Israel in the future, the man brought him through the entry of the side gate. The purpose of this movement was to show the prophet the spot where some of the ordinances that he had been hearing were to be carried out.

Verse 20. Some of the sacrificial offerings were boiled and others were baked or roasted in an oven. The parts that were to be consumed by fire were offered on the altar. Hence there were different places used in the preparation and use of the materials furnished by the people and turned over to the prince or priest. It will give the reader some light on this subject if he will examine carefully the first 5 chapters of Leviticus, also some verses in the 6th and 7th chapters of that book.

Verse 21. *Court* is a rather indefinite word whose general meaning is any space enclosed by a fence or wall or otherwise marked off from the surrounding area, hence in this verse we read of courts within a court. Moffatt renders this, "at the four corners of the court there were four small courts."

Verse 22. This verse refers to the same smaller courts referred to in the preceding verse and adds some information about their size and other arrangement. Each of the courts was 40 by 30 cubits in size. *Joined* is rendered "bound to" by Young which is a reasonable translation, as we know they were near the main wall of the larger court.

Verse 23. There is no separate original word for *building*, but *row* is

from *ruwa* which Strong defines, "to arrange in a regular manner." *Made with boiling places under the rows* means the arrangement in the definition of *row* had provision made at the bottom for boiling the flesh of the sacrificial offerings.

Verse 24. By way of explanation the "man" told Ezekiel the above-named "rows" were the places (fireplaces) where the *ministers* ("attendants") were to boil the sacrificial offerings that were brought by the people.

EZEKIEL 47

Verses 1, 2. The entire book of Ezekiel was written after he was taken to Babylon at the time of Jehoiachin's captivity. The first half of the book consists to a great extent of chastisement of Israel for the many corruptions committed by the nation. The next half is an extended prediction of the release of Israel from Babylonian captivity and the rebuilding and restitution of the ordinances of the Lord that will have gone down in national ruins. The whole document is a mingling of literal and figurative passages and intended to encourage the unfortunate people not to lose heart because of their sad state of affairs. Many popular commentators think that the last chapters are a prediction of things to come in the age after the judgment day. Evidently this is because of the similarity of the figures used to the ones in Revelation 21 and 22. There is a striking resemblance between the figures but that is because all of the grand provisions of God for the children of men require the finest of pictures to represent them to the human understanding. As to how far the following portions of this book should be regarded in the light of the present or the eternal ages, I now insist that the reader again consult the KEY at the beginning of chapter 40. The present verse begins the ideal picture with the waters that issued from the house of the Lord. I do not understand that any special significance is to be attached to the directions of the flow of these waters, because so many directions and places are mentioned. It would indicate the general greatness of the favor of God whatever that is.

Verse 3. The preceding verses indicate the widespread extent of these waters; this one begins to tell how deep they were. It reveals that for every thousand cubits or 1500 feet at the start the water was ankle deep.

Verse 4. The good things produced

by man often diminish, while those from God never fail but rather do they increase. These waters were ankle deep at the start, and with each 1500 feet a great increase in depth was shown until they were waist deep.

Verse 5. This last 1500 feet brought the water to the depth that could not be waded, for it amounted to the volume of a river.

Verse 6. This paragraph is a pause in the procedure to call special attention of the prophet to the scene, also to conduct him to the bank of the river just described.

Verse 7. This verse begins the language that was referred to in comments on verse 1; that of the similarity of figures used to those in Revelation. Be sure to consult verse 1 again, and also the other notes referred to in that place. Nobody thinks the river and trees and other objects named in Revelation are literal in their meaning, neither should he think that of the ones used here. Both documents intend to picture some of the glorious blessings in store for those who become the objects of God's favor, whether they be the saved of earth after the day of judgment (as in Revelation), or the restored people of Israel after the return as in the present passage.

Verse 8. *Sea and waters* refers to people generally speaking, but the second word is used in a rather complex sense in this place. Both the people and the stream that flows around or before them are indicated by the waters. *Shall be healed* is one of the places where the similarity of figures is evident. In Revelation 22: 2 we read of a tree that is for the *healing of the nations*, and in our present text the waters that issue from the house of God have healing in them.

Verse 9. Whenever a writer adopts a certain imagery for his figurative description of a subject, he usually sticks to the terms that properly belong to the subject. Hence this verse, though really considering human beings, speaks about a *great multitude of fish* because they are the creatures that live in water.

Verse 10. The same imagery is continued and in the favors intended for God's people are compared to those that would be connected with a good body of water and the advantages connected with it. One favorable thing that would be expected of a desirable body of water would be a successful

experience for a fisherman; accordingly, we are told that the bank of this river will be occupied by *fishers* from *En-gedi* and *En-eg-laim*. These were towns near the Dead Sea where no fisherman could have any success at his trade. But now even they will find plenty of opportunity for their business because the healing waters from the headquarters of the Lord will heal the *sea* upon flowing into it, thereby encouraging the men to use their nets. Not only will the waters supply good fish for the fishermen, but the banks will provide a suitable place to *spread forth nets* for drying which would be necessary after a successful catch.

Verse 11. In spite of all the goodness of God in providing a remedy for the ills of mankind, there are some people who will not accept it. Such folks are here called *miry places* and *marshes* which will not be healed. *They shall be given to salt*. According to Deuteronomy 29: 23; Zephaniah 2: 9 and some other passages, salt is sometimes used to represent a condition of barrenness. Such was to be the lot of those who rejected the favors offered by the Lord.

Verse 12. This verse is almost identical in its terms with Revelation 22: 1, 2 and they are highly of the character belonging to ideal or figurative speech. For further comments on this subject see those on verse 1 of this chapter, and also the key at the beginning of chapter 40.

Verse 13. In "general remarks" at the beginning of chapter 40 a statement is made regarding the last 9 chapters as a group, classifying them among the highly figurative writings of inspired prophets. Such a view has been maintained and the comments have been made accordingly. The place has been reached, however, where an exception should be made to that classification. From here on to the end of the book the ideal or figurative form of speech will be dropped, except perhaps some statements that are unusually strong numerically for the purpose of emphasis, and the language will be a literal description of the redistribution of the land after the return from captivity. But while the nature of the language is literal, I do not know that every detail of the allotment was to be carried out. Having no specific history of the procedure as to the land after the return, I shall take up the verses in their order and offer such comments on any technical

statements that seem necessary. *Joseph . . . two portions*. This is according to a prediction that was made by Jacob in Genesis 48: 5, 22. This was because the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, were each to become a full tribe as indicated in the passage in Genesis just cited.

Verse 14. An inheritance is something that comes to a person by reason of his relationship (either by blood or law) to another. God had promised the fathers of the nation of Israel that the land of Canaan would be theirs for a possession.

Verse 15. The *great sea* is the Mediterranean forming one boundary.

Verse 16. The towns named were for the purpose of tracing the boundary.

Verse 17. Damascus belonged to the nation of Syria but it was just outside of Canaan. It is named here as another aid in establishing the boundary of the land.

Verse 18. The eastern boundary according to this description started from a point near Damascus, running through the territory called Gilead and following downward near the Jordan until it reached the Dead Sea.

Verse 19. This verse gives a general description of the south border, beginning at Tamar for the southeastern corner, and extending through a place called *waters of strife* (Numbers 20: 12), thence to the stream called "river of Egypt" (Numbers 34: 5), and on to the *great sea* which means the Mediterranean.

Verse 20. The west line was to extend from this junction of the south line with the *great sea* to the place of beginning.

Verse 21. Verse 13 said *twelve* tribes and this says *tribes* without stating any number. That is because two and a half tribes had taken their possessions on the east side of the Jordan, and the outline described in this chapter is all west of it.

Verse 22. One word in Strong's definition of the original for *inheritance* is "occupancy," which is evidently its meaning with regard to the *strangers* among the tribes. The actual possession of land was restricted to the people of Israel, but the Lord was always mindful of the sojourner among His people and instructed them as to how they should be treated (Exodus 22: 21; 23: 9; Leviticus 19: 10).

Verse 23. The word *sojourner* means one who is a temporary dweller in a

place. Hence the word *inheritance* would have the sense of "occupancy" only as defined in the preceding verse.

EZEKIEL 48

Verses 1-7. I have grouped these verses into one paragraph because no special explanation for them separately would serve any necessary purpose. The comment that seems most appropriate is that by assigning the land specifically to the separate tribes, the Lord gives us a lesson on the subject of individual rights amidst a community of people all of whom had rights that should be respected.

Verse 8. This *offering* is called an "oblation" in chapter 45: 1 which was to consist of certain portions of the land; a *sanctuary* is a holy place.

Verse 9. This verse merely states the specific size of the offering.

Verse 10. This special *oblation* was for the specific use of the priests. They were from the tribe of Levi and did not have any general possession of land as others.

Verse 11. Not all of the tribe of Levi were permitted to act in the priesthood, only the descendants of Zadok (chapter 40: 46). The reason for this special favor to them is given; they had remained faithful to the Lord previous to the captivity.

Verse 12. This priestly group was to have this assignment (or offering) of the land, and it was to be near the border of the other Levites.

Verse 13. The Levites as a tribe were to have this assignment, even though most of them would not be eligible for the priesthood.

Verse 14. This land must not be disposed of either by sale or trade, and neither should the products be *alienated* which means transported into another vicinity.

Verse 15. *Profane* is not a word with any special moral meaning, but is the opposite of sacred or is temporal; the space was for the people in general.

Verse 16. This area was 4500 cubits or about a mile square.

Verse 17. These *suburbs* consisted of open border that was about 400 feet wide, and it extended all round the other district described in the preceding verse.

Verse 18. The strip of land described in this verse was to be cultivated, and the food raised was for the support of those living in the space described above.

Verse 19. *Out of all the tribes* means that the entire nation was to contribute to the support of those who rendered service for the common good.

Verse 20. The entire reservation described in the foregoing verses was several miles square if measured by modern standards or terms.

Verse 21. Near this reserved territory was a strip that was for the use of the prince, which means some person in a position of leadership or other outstanding relationship to the rest of the nation. This area was to be regarded as an *oblation* or offering for the sacred service of God.

Verse 22. This part that was assigned to the prince is described as having come out of the sacred possession of the Levites. That was proper since it was to serve a specific use in the service rendered to the Lord.

Verse 23. Special consideration is given to Benjamin in that this particular group of assignments begins with the mention of that tribe. There might have been some remembrance of the fact that Benjamin was one of the tribes of the kingdom of Judah, and hence a part of the people who went into Babylonian captivity.

Verses 24-28. For comments on this manner of grouping verses see those at verses 1-7.

Verse 29. *Divide by lot*. In ancient times the lot was used to decide certain questions, and when resorted to by uninspired men it amounted to a "game of chance" only. Sometimes, however, the Lord authorized its use, and when that was done (as in the case here) He would see that the proper decision was reached (Proverbs 16: 33).

Verse 30. *Goings* is from TOTSAAH which Strong defines, "Exit, i.e., (geographical boundary.)" The verse means to designate the outer extent of the territory to be named.

Verse 31. The second chapter of Numbers gives the order of encampment for the children of Israel when they paused in their journey through the wilderness. There is a similarity between that arrangement and that described in this verse in that three tribes were to be grouped together in the four units.

Verse 32. It was not always the same three tribes as are named in Numbers, but the "goings out" in our case were the same in each of the sides. The tribe of *Joseph* is named in

this place but Ephraim and Manasseh will not be given here. That is because they were the sons of Joseph and each was at the head of a whole tribe. Hence if Joseph is counted there would not be any point in mentioning his sons in this report.

Verse 33. *Measures* is given an indefinite meaning in the lexicon. It would denote that whatever rule or standard was used on any given occasion, the thing being "checked for dimensions" would count up to the number given.

Verse 34. This verse brings the measurements round to the place of beginning. There being three gates on each of the four sides of the city reminds us of the description which John gives of the Eternal City in Revelation 21: 13.

Verse 35. *Round about* means the circumference which was 18,000 measures. *The Lord is there*. What an appropriate and important phrase by which to close up a great book! The greatest thing that could be said of any institution or place is that the presence of the Lord will bless it which would assure it of everything needed for joy and prosperity. If the Lord is not in the place nothing else will count for good. All through the ages God has provided something by which His presence could be realized and enjoyed by those who loved Him. In the Patriarchal Dispensation it was at the family altar; in the Mosaic era the Lord was present in the temple and tabernacle and it is promised in the present verse that the same Presence would be there to bless the people after returning from the captivity.

DANIEL 1

General remarks. The scope of time covered by this book begins 606 B.C., and extends to the beginning years of the Persians in Babylon. It is an interesting coincidence that this period is the same as that of the 70-year captivity of Judah, also of the entire period of the Babylonian Empire as a world power. Many commentators and other writers divide the book of Daniel into two equal divisions as to chapters namely, history and prophecy. That is probably correct from a general viewpoint, but both history and prophecy will be in evidence more or less in the comments all through the book, and in many instances the two will be seen to blend together. Of course many of the prophecies will look far beyond the scope of years

mentioned in the beginning of this introduction for their fulfillment. One more remark that should be made before taking up the several verses is that the various chapters and events of the book are not always chronological as to the years of their occurrence. Attention will be called to any such variation as each case comes up wherever it is thought necessary for clearness.

Verse 1. *Third year* should be considered in connection with 2 Kings 24: 1. It seems that Jehoiakim had formed some kind of mutual agreement with Babylon but that he broke that relationship after three years. That brought Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem with an army and that was the beginning of the "first captivity" which means the first stage of the noted 70-year exile. In Jeremiah 25: 1 this event is said to have occurred in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which might be confusing at first thought. However, if a thing takes place at the end of a man's third year, it could be thought of as as happening in his fourth year since the term third and fourth are just that indefinite in their force.

Verse 2. *The Lord gave* shows that Nebuchadnezzar's advance against Jerusalem was by the decree of God. The account in 2 Kings 24: 3, 4 goes farther than this verse and tells why it was done, that it was because of the sins that the nation had committed. This event was not intended to cause the complete ruin of Jerusalem, for it says that the king of Babylon took *part* of the vessels of the Lord's house with him.

Verse 3. The first *king* means Nebuchadnezzar and the next is Jehoiakim. *Ashpenaz* was an important servant under the king of Babylon, whose specific duty was to oversee the other servants or any others who might become subject to the king. This man was told by his master to bring from Jerusalem to Babylon some of the *king's seed*. That does not mean exclusively his bodily offspring, for we shall see that others were taken. But it includes men near the king within the royal family, and also some of his *princes* which means outstanding men in his service.

Verse 4. The terms Chaldeans and Babylonians may be used interchangeably for all practical purposes, although the latter is nowhere used in the book of Daniel. For the information of the readers I shall quote from

three works of reference: "The Chaldeans were a Semitic [descended from Shem] people who passed into Babylonia from the south, and occupied the whole seacoast region of South Babylonia."—Funk and Wagnalls, New Standard Bible Dictionary, article Chaldaea. "In the Old Testament, from the time of Jeremiah and the establishment of the new Babylonian Empire under Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar, the terms Chaldeans and Chaldees denote the inhabitants of Babylonia, or the subjects of the Babylonian Empire."—Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia, article Chaldeans. "It appears that the Chaldeans were in the earliest times merely one out of the many Cushite tribes inhabiting the great alluvial plain known afterwards as Chaldea or Babylonia. Their special seat was probably that southern portion of the country which is found to have so late retained the name of Chaldea. In process of time, as the *Kaldi* grew in power, their name gradually prevailed over those of other tribes inhabiting the country; and by the era of the Jewish captivity it had begun to be used generally for all the inhabitants of Babylonia. It appears that while, both in Assyria and in later Babylonia, the Semitic type of speech prevailed for civil purposes, the ancient Cushite dialect was retained, as a learned language for scientific and religious literature. This is no doubt the 'learning' and the 'tongue' to which reference is made in the book of Daniel, 1: 4. The Chaldeans were really the learned class; they were priests, magicians or astronomers, and in the last of the three capacities they probably effected [accomplished] discoveries of great importance. In later times they seem to have degenerated into mere fortune-tellers."—Smith's Bible Dictionary, article, Chaldeans. When considering the subject from a political or national standpoint the two terms are used interchangeably and I trust the reader will keep that truth in mind. When some special personal characteristics are under consideration, the Chaldeans will be spoken of as a distinct group of people. Hence in this verse we see the reference to these special subjects which Nebuchadnezzar wished to develop in the lives of the Jews who had been selected out from the general population in Jerusalem. The mental qualifications were not the only points the king wished these Jews to have. Their bodies were to be without blemish and they were to be well favored.