

## REVERENCE FOR GOD'S PROMISES: Studies from Ezekiel

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## INTRODUCTION

The book of Ezekiel is the third of the major prophets both in placement in the canon and in chronological sequence. Ezekiel is regarded as one of the major prophets of the Babylonian exile, having been deported to Babylon along with the group exiled in 597 B.C., when King Jehoiachin was also taken.

Read 2 Kings 24:14 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Daniel was the first major prophet to be deported by Babylon, being taken in 605 B.C. along with his friends, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael.

Ezekiel prophesied to the Babylonian exiles at the Chebar Canal during the last years of Jerusalem's survival and in the years closely following her destruction in 586 B.C. The prophet Jeremiah was also Ezekiel's contemporary, preaching similar messages to the people still in Jerusalem.

The ancient Near East of Ezekiel's day was a world of change and shifting power. As a youth, Ezekiel saw the demise of the Assyrian Empire, a short rise in Egypt's influence, and the growing dominance of Babylon. He was born during the reign of Josiah, who gave Judah its last period of glory. From that point on he watched Judah as it steadily declined, suffering a number of deportations, the second of which he fell victim to. His ministry to the exiles began before the final destruction of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel's name means God strengthens, a name appropriate to the man and his message. Ezekiel needed God's strength as he carried a message of judgment to a people who did not want to hear it. He also carried a message of strengthening hope after Jerusalem's destruction and the loss of God's presence in the temple.

We are told that Ezekiel was the son of Buzi and was a priest and probably the son of a priest. In the fifth year of his exile (593 B.C.) God called him to a prophetic ministry. If the thirtieth year mentioned in verse Ezekiel 1:1 refers to Ezekiel's age, as seems likely, his call to the prophetic ministry came at the age at which priests normally began their official service.

The latest date given to one of his prophecies is the twenty-seventh year of exile (Ezekiel 29:17), extending his ministry over a period of twenty-two years to 571 B.C. Except for a visionary visit to Jerusalem, Ezekiel's ministry was apparently limited to the dusty plains of Babylon, by the Chebar Canal at a place called Tel Abib. The Chebar was apparently a large irrigation canal connected to the

Euphrates that was used to water the area southeast of Babylon toward Nippur. Tel Abib was probably a ruined or abandoned town where the exiles were allowed to settle and build their homes.

This book, like those of the other major prophets, should be regarded as an anthology of messages, visions, and oracles that are organized thematically, rather than chronologically. Yet the major divisions of the book are centered around a chronological point in time: Jerusalem's destruction in 586 B.C.

The first section of the book (Ezekiel 1:1-24:27) is a series of messages proclaiming judgment on Judah and Jerusalem prior to Jerusalem's fall. The early exiles hoped that their return to Judah would come soon, for Jerusalem and its temple were still intact. The popular theology of the day assumed that God's presence in the temple there would protect Jerusalem from destruction. The people failed to see that they had negated their covenant relationship with God through sins of injustice (Ezekiel 9:9), violence (Ezekiel 7:23), sorcery and divination (Ezekiel 13:17-19), and idolatry (Ezekiel 7:20; Ezekiel 8:14, 16-18). Ezekiel proclaims Jerusalem's destruction as a remedy for the people's sin, and describes God's exodus from the temple, followed by Jerusalem's destruction. The second part of the book contains a series of oracles against the surrounding nations given at various times (Ezekiel 25:1-32:32).

All the nations were guilty of the sins that had brought judgment upon Judah; thus, they would all suffer the same fate. The final major section is a proclamation of Israel's restoration (Ezekiel 33:1-48:35). With the fall of Jerusalem described in Ezekiel 24, Ezekiel's messages of doom in the first section are vindicated. The reality of Israel's sin is realized by the people (Ezekiel 33:10), and God's message of hope begins (Ezekiel 33:11). God promises the coming of a good shepherd (Ezekiel 34:1-31); a new heart and a new spirit will govern the people from within (Ezekiel 36:24-27; cf. Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 18:31; Ezekiel 37:14; Jeremiah 31:33-34).

Then God promises the restoration and preservation of Israel through a vision of dry bones coming to life (Ezekiel 37:1-28), through the defense of his people against enemies out of the north (Ezekiel 38:1-39:29), and through a vision of the rebuilt temple and nation (Ezekiel 40:1-48:35). God will revive his people and reestablish his covenant with them out of mercy, but not until they have suffered the punishment of exile and separation from him.

Although all parts of Ezekiel's writing is important for us, in this class we will look specifically at messages applicable to our time: prophecy being fulfilled and prophecy not yet fulfilled. As we begin our journey into these prophecies, we will lay necessary groundwork for understanding. Here we begin our journey!

## EZEKIEL'S CALL AND COMMISSION

### Ezekiel 2,3

God addressed Ezekiel by calling him *son of man*, emphasizing the distance between them. It is amazing that God chooses to work his divine will on earth through finite, imperfect beings. We are made from the dust of the ground, yet God chooses to place within us his life and breath and to ask us to serve him.

We can only imagine what it was like for Ezekiel to experience this vision. Certainly there was much he did not understand, but Ezekiel knew that each part had significance because it came from God. When God saw Ezekiel's open and obedient attitude, he filled him with his Spirit and gave him power for the job ahead. God doesn't expect us to understand everything about him, but to be willing and obedient servants, faithful to what we know is true and right.

The world of business defines success in terms of giving customers what they want. Ezekiel, however, was called to give God's message to the people, whether they would listen or not. The measure of Ezekiel's success would not be how well the people responded, but how well he obeyed God and thus fulfilled God's purpose for him. Isaiah and Jeremiah also prophesied with little positive response.

Read the following verses and record your thoughts here:

Isaiah 6:9-12 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 1:17-19 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God's truth does not depend on how people respond. God will not judge us for how well others respond to our faith, but for how faithful we have been. God always gives us the strength to accomplish what he asks us to do.

God called His people "obstinate and stubborn" because they refused to admit their sin. Rebelliousness was the nation's primary characteristic at this time. Even when God pointed out their wrongdoing, the people ignored the truth.

Read Matthew 25:31-46 and write  
Your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

**If God is showing you an area of sin in your life, listen to Him and correct it!**

God gave Ezekiel the difficult responsibility of presenting his message to ungrateful and abusive people. Sometimes we must be an example to or share our faith with unkind people. The Lord told Ezekiel not to be afraid and rebel, but to speak his words, whether or not the people would listen. He also wants us to tell the Good News, whether it's convenient or not.

Compare with 2 Timothy 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_

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Three times God told Ezekiel not to be afraid. When God's Spirit is within us, we can lay aside our fears of rejection or ridicule. God's strength is powerful enough to help us live for him even under the heaviest criticism.

Ancient books were usually scrolls, one page (up to 30 feet long) rolled up simultaneously from both ends. Normally, scrolls had writing on only one side. But in this case, the warnings overflowed to the scroll's other side, showing the full measure of judgment about to descend on Judah. Compare with Revelation 5:1: \_\_\_\_\_

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In his vision, Ezekiel ate God's message and found this spiritual food not only good for him, but also sweet as honey. Read Revelation 10:8-10 and note the similar use of this image: \_\_\_\_\_

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After receiving God's word, Ezekiel was told to proclaim it. His hearers were to be the house of Israel. The parallel command in verse 11 implies that only those Israelites "in exile" were in view in this instance although often Ezekiel uses the term for those in Babylon and Israel. Ezekiel's message was for the entire "house" of Israel, although he specifically proclaimed it to a only a few of that household then in captivity.

**If you "digest" God's Word, you will find that not only does it make you stronger in your faith, but its wisdom also sweetens your life. You need to feed yourself spiritually just as you do physically. This means doing more than simply giving God's message a casual glance. You must make digesting God's Word a regular part of your life.**

God's specific task for Ezekiel was to speak God's words to Israel. Ezekiel was commissioned as a prophet, and in 3:4-9 he was equipped for his task.

Ezekiel's task did not involve language obstacles. He was not being sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language. Though being forced to go to another culture and nation would have been difficult because of the language problem, the prophecy determined for Israel would be in their own language.

At the outset God warned Ezekiel not to expect dramatic results from his ministry. This was not unique to him. Read the following:

Isaiah 6:8-13 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeremiah 1:11-19 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Ezekiel would be rejected by Israel because Israel had rejected God!**

Israel's spiritual deafness caused by years of exposure to and rejection of God's word had caused the people to be unwilling to listen.

Israel's response to God in the past was a warning of the response Ezekiel could expect. The nation's sin extended to the whole house of Israel. This does not imply that every Israelite had rejected God, because Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were all ministering faithfully. God was referring to all parts of Israel rather than every Israelite.

Rebellion had made its way into the royal household, the temple, the courts of justice, and into every city and town in the land. Though individuals here and there were still responding to the Lord, the nation as a whole had turned from Him.

Taking God's message of judgment to an unyielding people was a tough task. God encouraged Ezekiel by offering him the needed strength. The prophet need not worry about the weight of his assignment because God promised to make him as unyielding and hardened as they were. Do a word study on "hard" in 3:8 and write the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Compare with the translation of the name "Ezekiel" \_\_\_\_\_

God also said He would make Ezekiel's forehead like the hardest stone, harder than flint. Figuratively "forehead" expresses determination or defiance.

Cross reference to Isaiah 48:4; 50:7; Jeremiah 3:3; 48:45) \_\_\_\_\_

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Ezekiel's determination would not waver when beset by opposition. "Flint," the hardest stone in Palestine, was used by Israel for knives and other implements. Ezekiel's God-given strength and determination would withstand opposition.

Because God was empowering of Ezekiel, He could command him not to be afraid of them or terrified. Though opposition was certain to come, Ezekiel had nothing to fear. God's power was more than adequate to overcome the expected resistance.

Ezekiel was to proclaim to these exiles, "This is what the Sovereign LORD says." Ezekiel was responsible to proclaim God's word accurately regardless of the response. Some would listen, that is, obey, and others would fail to listen, that is, refuse to obey.

After seeing the vision of God, Ezekiel was transported back to Tel Aviv by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit lifted him up. The "Spirit" who transported Ezekiel was the same One who had entered into him (2:2). This was the Holy Spirit who divinely enabled God's servants in Old Testament times. Several times the Holy Spirit transported Ezekiel, probably spiritually rather than physically

Note other times in these verses: 8:3; 11:1, 24; 37:1; 43:5. Ezekiel was taken to various places to give him information.

Ezekiel began to describe the movement by the Holy Spirit as a loud rushing sound. After an interjection of praise, Ezekiel explained that the rushing sound was of the wings of the cherubim brushing against each other and... of the wheels. In describing his transport by God's Spirit, Ezekiel interjected, "May the glory of the LORD be praised in His dwelling place."

As Ezekiel was returned by the Holy Spirit, his own spirit was churning. He said, I went in bitterness and in the anger of my spirit. "Bitterness" carries the ideas of anguish, discontentment, and fierce anger. Read the various usages in these verses:

Genesis 27:34 \_\_\_\_\_

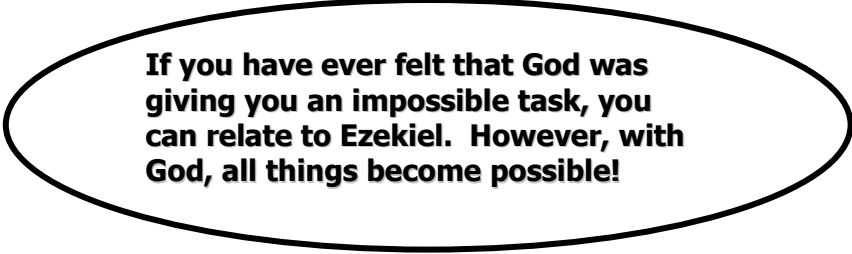
1 Samuel 22:2 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Samuel 17:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Of these possible nuances, the parallelism with "anger of my spirit" describes Ezekiel's emotion. As he associated himself with God he felt the same emotions toward Israel's sin as God did.

"The hand of the LORD" is a recurring theme, also mentioned in Ezekiel 1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1. The idea of "the hand of the LORD" (or "of God") occurs nearly 190 times in the Old Testament—referring to God's power or authority.

Ezekiel returned spiritually and sat among the exiles for seven days—overwhelmed. The character of the vision he had just seen and the awesomeness of the task before him left the prophet stunned. Ezekiel needed time to collect his thoughts and prepare himself for his ministry.



**If you have ever felt that God was giving you an impossible task, you can relate to Ezekiel. However, with God, all things become possible!**



# GOD'S INSTRUMENTS FOR PUNISHMENT

## Ezekiel 21:18-32

By the Holy Spirit, Ezekiel foresaw Nebuchadnezzar's march from Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar apparently determined by divination. The Lord would overturn the government of Judah, until His timing was completed. This seems to foretell the overturnings of the Jewish nation until the end of the age and the final restoration, one that we may be seeing today. The troubles of states and kingdoms, the wars and rumors of war, which make way for the Messiah's kingdom throughout the earth. The Lord guides nations and even in the middle of the most tremendous warnings of wrath, there is still God's heart of mercy toward sinful people.

Ammon evidently rebelled against Babylon about the same time as King Zedekiah of Judah. In 589 B.C. the nations of Judah and Ammon were among those who conspired against Babylon. Read Jeremiah 27:3 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Ezekiel gave this message to the exiles who had heard the news and were again filled with hope of returning to their homeland. Ezekiel said that Babylon's king would march his armies into the region to stop the rebellion. Traveling from the north, he would stop at a fork in the road, one leading to Rabbah, the capital of Ammon, and the other leading to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. He had to decide which city to destroy. Just as Ezekiel predicted, King Nebuchadnezzar went to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Nebuchadnezzar, following the tradition of the Babylonian cult religions, had three ways to get advice on the future.

1. Shaking the arrows, much like drawing straws, to see which course of action was right
2. Consulting an idol to see if some spirit might direct him
3. Having priests inspect the liver of a sacrificed animal to see if its shape and size would indicate a decision.

God made it clear that, because of open rebellion, Jerusalem's people would be taken captive. They felt secure in their city, but they would be forcibly torn from it and dragged in chains to Babylon.

The "profane and wicked prince of Israel" described by Ezekiel was King Zedekiah. Because he violated his oath of allegiance to Babylon, he would be deposed.

Find out everything you can about Zedekiah in scripture and record it here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Read the following verses to help:

Jeremiah 34:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeremiah 38:4-5 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeremiah 39:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Zedekiah was stripped of authority (his turban and crown were removed), blinded, and imprisoned for life in Babylon.

Read 2 Kings 25:4-7 \_\_\_\_\_

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The once-proud king was humbled. The lowly ("poorest people of the land) who were allowed to remain took his place in managing the land for Babylon. Read 2 Kings 25:12 \_\_\_\_\_

The right to rule in Israel was taken from Zedekiah, and the land was destroyed. Ezekiel's triple use of ruin stressed that Israel's throne was to be absolutely desolate. **It will not be restored until He comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to Him I will give it.** This prophecy recalls Genesis 49:10, which speaks of "the scepter" in the line of Judah.

The line of David would not be restored till the righteous, God-appointed King would come. There were no valid claims till Christ rode into Jerusalem to claim His rightful rule. Read the following verses and write your thoughts here:

Zechariah 9:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 21:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 19:11-16; 20:4 \_\_\_\_\_

The Ammonites and Israelites were usually fighting with each other. God told the Israelites not to ally with foreign nations, but Judah and Ammon united against Babylon in 589 B.C. (Jeremiah 27:3). God first judged Judah when Nebuchadnezzar first went to Jerusalem; but Ammon will also be judged, not for allying with Judah, but for watching Jerusalem's destruction with insulting delight.

**Christ will fulfill Ezekiel's prophecy; He will be the King of Israel.**

Ammon and Jerusalem, though enemies, had allied against Babylon. When Nebuchadnezzar decided to attack Jerusalem, Ammon was relieved and happy. They were thankful that Jerusalem would suffer in their place. In fact after Jerusalem's fall the Ammonites organized a coup that caused the death of Gedaliah, the governor of the land appointed by Nebuchadnezzar. Read about the treachery of the Ammonites in Jeremiah 40:13-41:10 and think through God's attitude toward those who wish harm on His people: \_\_\_\_\_

The Ammonites tried to set up another government in Israel that would be opposed to Babylon—probably so Nebuchadnezzar would again attack Judah instead of Ammon! The sword that had been polished for Jerusalem (Ezekiel 21:9, 11) would also reach Ammon. The Ammonites thought they had escaped Nebuchadnezzar's judgment but they would be punished. In God's wrath, He would hand Ammon over to brutal men, men skilled in destruction. These invaders are identified in 25:4 as "people of the East."

Research other places in scripture where this terminology is used and the people groups referred to in those passages:

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# THE SINS OF ISRAEL

## Ezekiel 22

In Ezekiel 22, God makes His case for judgment of Israel. We would do well to look to the causes, because they apply to our nation in our time.

### **(1) THE CAUSE OF JUDGMENT (22:1-16).**

God asked Ezekiel, "Will you judge her? Will you judge this city of bloodshed?" This is similar to the questions God asked him at the beginning of this section on Jerusalem's sin. Ezekiel was to function as a prosecuting attorney or judge, so he had to declare the facts of the case. He needed to confront Jerusalem with all of the detestable practices going on there.

God gave Ezekiel two charges to present against the city:

- a. shedding blood
- b. making idols.

Ezekiel mentioned blood or bloodshed seven times in this message to drive home the city's sin of extreme violence. These two sins opposed the Mosaic Law's standards for Israel's relationships with God and her fellow Israelites. Rather than loving God, Israel had turned to idolatry; and love for fellow Israelites had been replaced by treachery.

Jerusalem's sin would be punished—the end of her years had come. When she fell, her neighbors would mock her. The pride of this infamous city would turn to shame as she would be exposed in her sin before others.

Ezekiel cited sins that specifically violated some of the Ten Commandments. Read Exodus 20:1-17 and write here the commandments that had been broken:

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The list concluded with another sin, the root problem behind the others: you have forgotten Me.

The proud and insolent people who treated God's commands lightly would not be able to dismiss His judgment. Their courage would vanish when God would disperse them among the nations. Moses had warned Israel that national disobedience would eventually lead to dispersion.

Read Leviticus 26:27-39 \_\_\_\_\_

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Also read Deuteronomy 28:64-68 \_\_\_\_\_

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Israel had defiled God's Law; now It could be defiled in the eyes of the nations. After the nation was dispersed it would understand the character of the God she had scorned and forgotten: you will know that I AM God.

## **(2) THE MEANS OF JUDGMENT (22:17-22).**

Ezekiel's second message stressed that Jerusalem would become a furnace of affliction—a smelting furnace of judgment that would melt those who remained in it.

Israel had become worthless to God, for she was dross to Him—like the scum of copper, tin, iron, and lead left inside a furnace. Metallurgy was a developed science throughout the ancient Near East. When metals are heated in furnaces, the residue left on top after the pure metal sinks to the bottom is skimmed off as dross. To God, Israel was like dross—worthless because of her sin. Israel had failed to be refined.

The dross was the by-product of smelting, but God was going to resubmit the dross to the fire. Much as metals are gathered in a crucible to be melted in a fire, so God would gather the people inside the city and melt them. This thought is stated three times. Judah retreated to Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar invaded the land. The city became the crucible as God's fiery blasts of wrath and judgment blew on the people. God's judgment and destruction forced the people to acknowledge Him: And you will know that I the LORD have poured out My wrath upon you.

## **(3) THE RECIPIENTS OF JUDGMENT (22:23-31).**

This message names the recipients of the judgment: princes (v. 25), priests (vv. 26-27), prophets (v. 28), and people (v. 29).

In verse 24 the NIV has the Septuagint reading of **rain** instead of "cleansed" because "rain" seems to match **showers** better than "cleansed." However, there is no compelling reason not to follow the Hebrew "cleansed." Because of her disobedience Israel had not experienced cleansing (from sin); she had not received rain (blessings) in the day God sent His wrath.

The sins of her princes were mentioned first. The "princes" probably referred to the royal family, including King Zedekiah. The leaders used their power for material gain, ravaging the people. In their greed they took treasures and precious things; and they murdered, thus making many wives widows. Instead of being examples to the people, the leaders were corrupt despots.

The religious leaders were no better than the princes. Her priests do violence to My Law and profane My holy things. Cross reference to Zephaniah 3:4: \_\_\_\_\_

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The priests were not instructing the people in the ways of God, or enforcing the Law's statutes. They even shut their eyes to the keeping of God's Sabbaths. Abandoning God's precepts, they let sin run rampant among the people.

Other government officials besides those in the royal family were also guilty of unjust gain. Instead of equitably dispensing justice and upholding the rights of the disadvantaged, they were like wolves tearing their prey.

The prophets should have been God's spokesmen and denounced these wicked deeds; but (except for men like Ezekiel and Jeremiah) the prophets ignored those sins and gave the people false visions and lying divinations. They claimed to be speaking for God when the LORD had not spoken.

Finally, Ezekiel denounced the people, the commoners who followed their leaders' example. The populace too was involved in extortion and robbery, and in oppression of the needy. So rulers oppressed the common people, and the common people oppressed the helpless.

The corruption was so complete that when God searched for a man who could stem the tide of national destruction, **none could be found**. No one in a position of authority in Israel had the moral qualities to lead the nation appropriately. Obviously Jeremiah had these qualities, but he lacked the authority to lead the nation from the brink of disaster.

Israel's extensive decay demanded justice. God concluded this message against Jerusalem by vowing to pour out His wrath and consume the people with His fiery anger. Israel would suffer because of sin.

**A nation that rebels against God will  
experience His wrath and judgment.**



## WHO IS THE LEADER? Ezekiel 26, 27, 28

Ezekiel, chapters 26 and 27, expound the judgment and lament over Tyre. But, when we read more deeply, we discover the power behind the power. There was a leader of Tyre that was evil, had nothing good at heart, and wasn't human.

Begin your reading today with Ezekiel 28:1-10. As you read, particularly note the following:

1. What the ruler of Tyre is called in verse 2. Do a word study: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What sort of being is this leader? Look specifically at verses 2 and 9: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the sin of Tyre? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is going to happen to Tyre? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As you think through these sections, discover all you can about Tyre and Sidon. Particularly see who the ruler of these cities was during the time of Ezekiel and who had ruled them in the past. Find out how they figure in to any contact with Israel in the past and write your results here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now we will consider the "power behind the power." Continue your reading in Ezekiel 28:11-26. As you read, consider the following:

1. What is the ruler of Tyre called in verse 12? Do a word study: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What sort of being is this ruler? Particularly note verses 14 and 16: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What was the sin of this being? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Where has this being been in the past? Particularly note verses 13 and 14:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who do you think this ruler of Tyre is? \_\_\_\_\_

One of the elements of Satan's sin was his widespread dishonest trade. Do a word study on "trade" and record the result here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Satan's position in heaven involved broad contact with many elements of God's creation much as the prince of Tyre's position enabled him to contact many nations. Though Ezekiel was describing the "ultimate" ruler of Tyre, Satan, the purpose of the lament was to speak of the city's destruction. So he began to blend the characteristics of the satanic king with his human ruler. Satan would be cast to the earth (v. 17), and the king of Tyre would also be cast down before other kings, his enemies.

Satan's ultimate destiny will be the lake of fire . Read Revelation 21:10: \_\_\_\_\_

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The defeat and death of the human ruler of Tyre was pictured as being consumed by fire (Ezekiel 28:18). Both Satan's and Tyre's defeats would shock those nations who had followed them. They would be appalled because of Satan's and Tyre's horrible end.

## PROPHECY CONCERNING EGYPT

Ezekiel 30:1-19

This section of Ezekiel is one of the most hotly debated sections of scripture. Many believe that a future event of cataclysmic proportions is being described.

As you begin your reading for today, look up the following nations and find the names associated with them today:

Mizraim \_\_\_\_\_

Cush \_\_\_\_\_

Put \_\_\_\_\_

Lud \_\_\_\_\_

Libya \_\_\_\_\_

What does scripture say is going to happen to these lands? \_\_\_\_\_

Today we are going to carefully consider what Ezekiel said before this passage:

Ezekiel 29:8-12 'Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will bring upon you a sword and I will cut off from you man and beast. [9] "The land of Egypt will become a desolation and waste. Then they will know that I am the Lord. Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I have made it,' [10] therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia. [11] "A man's foot will not pass through it, and the foot of a beast will not pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years. [12] "So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands."

Notice the sin of Egypt being discussed in verse 9: \_\_\_\_\_

Notice the word "to" in italics between Migdol and Syene. The word is in italics because it is not in the original manuscript, which reads just "Migdol Syene."

Do a word study on "migdol" and write the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, research Syene. By what name do we know Syene today? \_\_\_\_\_

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One of the more interesting aspects of Ezekiel's prophecies is that we have no record of Nebuchadnezzar making Egypt desolate for 40 years. There is also no connection with the Nile in Nebuchadnezzar's conquering.

Migdol is mentioned in scripture in various places. The same Migdol is not meant in every case. Because the word means "earthen fortification" or "watchtower," it is used as the name for several places. Note where they are:

Exodus 14:2; Numbers 33:7,8 \_\_\_\_\_

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Jeremiah 44:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 46:14 \_\_\_\_\_

This has led several to believe that Ezekiel is prophesying a future destruction concerning Egypt and situated at Migdol Syene, or the earthen fortification of Syene, now known as Aswan.

The Aswan High Dam is a rock-fill and earthen dam located on the Nile River and creates Lake Nasser. It was built to stop the annual flooding of the Nile River. When it was completed, Egypt boasted, "For the first time in history, the annual Nile flood can be controlled by man."

Some have taken this to be "the Nile is mine," from Jeremiah 29.



The Aswan High Dam, 364 feet high, more than 2.5 miles long. The Dam was completed in 1970 and dedicated in 1971. It is one of the largest embankment dams in the world.



# PROPHECY AGAINST THE SHEPHERDS

## Ezekiel 34

Ezekiel 34 is a study on contrasts: the present false shepherds are contrasted with the coming good shepherd, Jesus.

God charged Ezekiel to prophesy against the present shepherds of Israel. The rulers of the people were often called shepherds. They were supposed to be strong, caring leaders who guarded their nation like a flock. Ezekiel first explained the sins of the shepherds (34:1-6), then pronounced judgment on them (34: 7-10).

### **Israel's leaders did not serve their flock.**

1. Their first error was to put their own interests above those of the people. They did not exhibit what the New Testament would later call "agape" love. Israel's kings had added to their wealth at the expense of the common people. They viewed the flock as a source of wealth to be exploited rather than a trust to be protected.

2. The second error of the leaders was their harsh treatment of the people. A shepherd was to lead his sheep to food, protect them from attack, nurse to health the injured sheep, and search for any that strayed and got lost. However, Israel's shepherds did not gently nurture the people. They rule harshly and brutally.

3. The third error of the rulers was their flagrant disregard for the people, letting them be scattered without looking for them. Three times in verses 5-6 Ezekiel mentioned that the sheep were scattered. The chief job of a shepherd was to prevent such a catastrophe. Ezekiel was probably alluding to the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities which had scattered Israel and Judah among the nations. The shepherds had been unable to prevent the very thing they were appointed to guard against.

Because the shepherds had neglected their task, the sheep were scattered. It was now time to call the shepherds to judgment for their actions. Holding the shepherds accountable for His flock, God would judge the rulers and remove them from their positions of power. They would no longer have opportunities to profit at the people's expense. God said, "I will rescue My flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them," in the sense of the leaders taking advantage of the people. This statement was a bridge to the next section.

The false shepherds had brought Israel to ruin. So God Himself would intercede and rescue His people.

### **The future true shepherd would do the job correctly!**

What the false shepherds failed to accomplish because of their greed, God would bring to pass. He would care for His flock, judge rightly between His sheep, and establish His covenant of peace.

The flock was scattered because of cruel and indifferent shepherds. If the sheep were to be rescued and restored, the Good Shepherd would need to rescue them Himself. "I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them."

God's first action would be to restore Israel to her land from the nations and to pasture her like sheep in good grazing land. God will do what the false shepherds had failed to do—tend, search, bring back, strengthen, and shepherd and all with complete righteousness and justice.

This prophecy was only partially fulfilled when Israel returned to her land after the Babylonian Captivity. It still awaits future complete fulfillment in the Millennium; however, we are seeing a partial fulfillment in the return of Israel to their land in 1948. Cross reference to Isaiah 66:20-24: \_\_\_\_\_

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In exercising His justice God said He would begin by judging between the individual sheep: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats.

But how will God differentiate one from the other? The character of the sheep is seen in their conduct. The wicked sheep are those that follow the conduct of the shepherds, oppressing the weaker sheep. They trampled the pasturelands and even muddied the streams so that other sheep were left with less-than-desirable vegetation and drinking water. These fat sheep were successful in brutalizing the lean sheep. The wicked sheep even butted all the weak sheep with their horns, to drive them away. God will not permit these wicked practices to continue. Instead He will rescue the oppressed and will judge the aggressors.



God will exercise His leadership by appointing a new shepherd. This shepherd, God stated, will be His servant David. David is referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel. Cross reference to the following:

Jeremiah 30:9 \_\_\_\_\_

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Ezekiel 37:24-25 \_\_\_\_\_

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Hosea 3:5 \_\_\_\_\_

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Also Ezekiel indicated that David will be the prince of the restored people. This same "prince" will then offer sin offerings for himself during the millennial period. (45:22; 46:4). Many believe that such actions would hardly be appropriate for the sinless Son of God, but they would be for David, and so they see this as a literal reference to a resurrected David. Think through other possibilities and write what you find here: \_\_\_\_\_

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God's care and protection will result in peace for His people. The peace that Israel has always longed for will be experienced. The uncertainties associated with desolate places, wild animals, other nations, and unpredictable weather will be alleviated. The land will enjoy peace and prosperity. Trees will bear fruit and the ground will yield its crops, and the people will be secure in their land, living in safety.

God's "covenant of peace" looks forward to the blessings Israel will experience in the Millennium. This covenant will establish Israel in her land permanently with David as her shepherd. Later Ezekiel stated that the covenant of peace will also involve the rebuilding of God's temple as a visible reminder of His presence. Cross reference to Daniel 9: 27 \_\_\_\_\_

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God will restore Israel because of her unique relationship to Him. **“You My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are My people, and I am Your God.”**

# PROPHECY OF THE DRY BONES

## Ezekiel 37:1-14

JERUSALEM, Israel - Speaking on the 65th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz in Poland last week, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu proclaimed the fulfillment of the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones. "The Jewish people rose from ashes and destruction, from a terrible pain that can never be healed," Netanyahu said at the ceremony. "Armed with the Jewish spirit, the justice of man, and the vision of the prophets, we sprouted new branches and grew deep roots. Dry bones became covered with flesh, a spirit filled them, and they lived and stood on their own feet, as Ezekiel prophesied. CBN News; February 3, 2010

No where is there greater evidence of Ezekiel's prophetic call than in the fulfillment of the "dry bones" prophecy. Many people, including the prime minister of Israel, believe that the rebirth of Israel as a nation in 1948 is exactly what Ezekiel saw in his prophetic message recorded in Ezekiel 37. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 AD, the Jewish people had no state until May 14, 1948.



Ezekiel 36:24-28 records a promise that God made to Israel. Read the verses, and record the promise here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It is clear that all parts of this promise have not yet been fulfilled; however, it does seem that there has been a beginning.

God asked the prophet a remarkable question: **Son of man, can these bones live?** Was there potential for life in these lifeless bones? Ezekiel knew that humanly speaking it was impossible, so his answer was somewhat guarded. Write his response here: \_\_\_\_\_

It was a great answer, because Ezekiel knew that only God can accomplish such a feat. God then directed Ezekiel to prophesy to these bones. The content of his message was God's promised restoration: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. Do a word study on "breath" and write the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Cross reference to Genesis 2:7 \_\_\_\_\_

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People disagree on whether God was referring to wind, physical breath, the principle of life, or the Holy Spirit; however, the results were obvious. God gave life to these dead bones. As Ezekiel was giving this prophecy, he saw a remarkable thing. The bones came together, flesh developed, skin covered them, breath entered them, and they stood up.

To what did this vision refer? God said it was about the nation of Israel that was then in captivity. Like unburied skeletons, the people were pining away and saw no end to their judgment. They felt hopeless and desolate. Their national hopes had been destroyed. Israel had "died" in Babylon's attack, and had no hope of resurrection.

The reviving of the dry bones signified Israel's national restoration. The vision showed that Israel's new life depended on God's power, not outward circumstances. As it did in 535 BC, it took a move of God for a restoration of Israel in 1948 AD.

Read Ezekiel 37:22,23 and record the reason God will do this for Israel here:

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Cross reference by reading Isaiah 66, particularly noting verses 20 and 21: \_\_\_\_\_

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## FURTHER RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

### Ezekiel 37:15-28

Although Israel saw the situation as hopeless (in their graves) Ezekiel's second sign in this chapter visualized God's restoration of the nation. First the sign was given in verses 15-17, and then explained in verses 18-28.

Ezekiel was told to take two sticks of wood and to write on one of them the name of Judah and on the other the names of Ephraim and Joseph. Ezekiel was then to hold them together like one stick.

Some have claimed that the two sticks represent the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph). However, this assertion ignores the clear interpretation in verses 18-28 and seeks to impose a foreign meaning on the sticks.

After Solomon died the nation of Israel split in 931 BC. The Southern Kingdom was known as Judah because Judah was its larger tribe and because the country was ruled by a king from that tribe. Read 1 Kings 12:22-24 \_\_\_\_\_

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The Northern Kingdom was called Israel, or sometimes Ephraim. Cross reference to Hosea 5:3, 5, 11-14: \_\_\_\_\_

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The reason is unclear, but may be because Ephraim was the strongest and most influential tribe or because the first king of Israel, Jeroboam I, was an Ephraimite (1 Kings 11:26).

Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 BC, and Judah was taken into exile by Babylon in 605, 597, and 586 BC.

The uniting of the sticks pictured God's restoring *and* reuniting His people in the land as a single nation. Cleansed from their backsliding... "they will be My people," God said, "and I will be their God." This is a recurring theme in Ezekiel: 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:27.

When united, Israel will be led by King David. Although there are those who believe that David will literally be resurrected, most believe that this is a fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, seeing Christ as the descendant of David. As God's servant, he will be their one shepherd.

Then God repeated the blessings to be bestowed on the people in the land. They will have an eternal inheritance there and David... will be their prince. God's covenant of peace will be established with them, and His presence will remain with them forever (contrast with the departing of His glory, Ezekiel 9-11). Cross reference to Isaiah 54:10 \_\_\_\_\_

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The visible reminder of God's presence will be His sanctuary, His dwelling place. Then again God added, I will be their God, and they will be My people. These promises anticipate the detailed plans for God's new sanctuary that we will see in Ezekiel 40-43. At this time, there is no temple in Jerusalem and so we know that this prophecy awaits a future fulfillment.

As we complete our study for today, cross reference to Zechariah 16:12-15 and write what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Look specifically at the roles of Joshua and Zerubbabel in Zechariah 16 and note their future fulfillment in Christ: \_\_\_\_\_

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Complete your reading for today in Zephaniah 3:14-20 \_\_\_\_\_

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# PROPHECY OF END-TIME WAR

## Ezekiel 38, 39

Many people believe that "Ezekiel's War" as these verses are described, is in reality also Armageddon. There are many reason to think otherwise. Begin your study for today by reading through chapters 38 and 39.



Israel has been trampled by enemies many times, but in the future Ezekiel describes a war in which God will intervene to insure Israel's safety. He will defend His people and judge her enemies in distant countries. Some of the countries mentioned in chapters 38 and 39 were already identified as trading partners with Tyre.

There is some confusion concerning the word "rosh" in 38:2 which can be translated "chief." Some translations indicate "chief" while other translations have taken the word as a proper noun and translated it "Rosh." Should the Hebrew word, which means "head," be taken as an adjective ("head prince," i.e., "chief prince") or as a proper noun ("Rosh")? The evidence seems to favor taking it as an adjective. "Rosh" never appears as a nation in any other biblical list of place names while all the other names are well attested.

Cross reference for national names in the following verses:

Genesis 10:1-7 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Chronicles 1:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Ezekiel 27:13-24; 32:26 \_\_\_\_\_

One exception might be Isaiah 66:19: \_\_\_\_\_

Should these names be connected with Russia? Some say yes; some say no.

First we need to identify the areas against which Ezekiel prophesied and then determine the countries that occupy those land areas today. Ezekiel would have had historical places in mind (not modern-day names) and these areas must be located in Ezekiel's time. However, while one must avoid dogmatic assertions, three reasons suggest including Russia within Ezekiel's prophecy:

(1) Some of the countries named by Ezekiel were located in what is now Russia.

(2) The armies are said to come "from the far north" (Ezekiel 38:6, 15; 39:2). This probably includes the land bridge between the Black and Caspian Seas, now part of the former Soviet Union.

(3) Ezekiel spoke of a coalition of several nations, many of whom are today aligned with or under the influence of the Russia. These include Iran ("Persia"), Sudan and northern Ethiopia ("Cush"), Libya ("Put"), and Turkey ("Meshech," "Tubal," "Gomer," and "Beth Togarmah"). All these nations (see 38:2-3, 5-6), will unite to attack Israel according to Ezekiel's prophecy.

When will this prophecy be fulfilled? No past historical events match this prophecy, so it still awaits a future fulfillment. Some think this attack on Israel should be identified with the attack of Gog and Magog at the end of Christ's millennial reign. Read Revelation 20:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_

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There are several flaws with this thinking:

(1) The results of Ezekiel's battle. do not coincide with the events that follow the battle in Revelation 20. Why bury the dead for seven months after the battle (Ezekiel 39:12-13) when the next prophetic event is the resurrection of the unsaved dead? (Revelation 20:11-13)

(2) Why would the people remain on earth after the battle to burn the weapons of war for seven years (Ezekiel 39:9-10) instead of entering immediately into eternity? (Revelation 21:1-4)

(3) The events after each battle are so different that two separate battles must be assumed. The effect on the people is different. In Ezekiel the battle is the catalyst God will use to draw Israel to Himself.



If the battle of Ezekiel 38-39 is not at the end of the Millennium, could it be at the second coming of Christ (Armageddon war)? Read Revelation 16:16 and record what you learn about that war: \_\_\_\_\_

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This also seems extremely doubtful. It seems best to place Ezekiel's battle of Gog and Magog in or immediately before the Tribulation period. Some internal markers indicate that it should at least be placed in the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period, some say at the 2<sup>nd</sup> seal. The attack will come when Israel is at peace: Ezekiel 38:8, 11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Daniel 9:27: \_\_\_\_\_

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Daniel clearly tells us that Israel makes a covenant with the Antichrist at the beginning of Daniel's 70th Week, and that the covenant is broken at the middle of the seven-year period, and the nation will suffer tremendous persecution. Cross reference Daniel 9 to Matthew 24:15-22 \_\_\_\_\_

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A two-fold question arises:

1. Does Ezekiel's war result in the seven year covenant that is broken at the 3 1/2 year point (a covenant because of the nations losing the war) OR
2. Is Israel at peace because of the covenant

In either event, this scenario provides the time needed to bury the dead and to burn the weapons of war. Read Ezekiel 39:9-13 \_\_\_\_\_

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So the battle described by Ezekiel may take place before or sometime during the first three and one-half years of the seven-year period.

Ezekiel was describing a battle that will involve Israel's remotest neighbors. They will sense their opportunity to attack when Israel feels secure. The nations involved in the attack will include the Russia, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Libya. Ezekiel first pictured the invasion by Gog and his allies (38:1-16), and then described the judgment of Gog and his allies (38:17-39:29).

Note the absence of Egypt in this prophecy. Unless there are other names for Egypt that we aren't understanding, Egypt seems to be mysteriously missing.

- ❖ Gog's attack on Israel will actually be orchestrated by God. God will use Gog and all his allies as pawns in His larger plans for Israel. Yet the idea for attacking Israel also will originate with Gog. Gog will act freely to accomplish his own evil goals. He "will devise an evil scheme."
  
- ❖ This attack will be against Israel, whose people will be gathered from many nations and will be living in safety. Gog and his allies will go against Israel in massive strength, advancing like a storm and a cloud.
- ❖ Gog's purpose in the attack will be to plunder and loot unwalled and unsuspecting Israel, which will be rich in livestock and goods, living at the center of the land. Israel's importance geographically, politically, and economically will be noticed. She will be a strategic target for any power wanting to control commerce between Asia and Africa.
  
- ❖ Gog's attack against Israel will come from all sides. Gog will come from the far north. With him will come his allies from the east (Persia = Iran), the south (Cush = Sudan, southern Egypt, and northern Ethiopia), and the west (Put = Libya).

This attack will be another means of God's displaying to the nations His holy character and sovereign power. In going against Israel, the nations will come to know God because He will show Himself holy. As a result of the unsuccessful attack Israel will be delivered and God glorified.

# THE TEMPLE

## Ezekiel 41-43

One of the most difficult things to interpret is whether these passages are literal or figurative. Following our desire to interpret literally when possible, we will consider a literal interpretation. There are at least seven reasons to do so:

1. A careful reading of Ezekiel 40-42 gives one the clear impression of a future literal Temple for Israel because of the immense number of details concerning its dimensions, its parts and its contents. Surely, if so much space in the Holy Scriptures is given to a detailed description of this Temple, we are safe in assuming that it will be as literal as the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon. The fact that its structure and ceremonies will have a definite symbolical and spiritual significance cannot be used as an argument against its literal existence. The Tabernacle was a literal structure in spite of the fact that it was filled with symbolic and typical significance.
2. Ezekiel was given specific instructions to declare what he saw to the house of Israel. That seems strange if the Temple were to symbolize only general truths. Even more significant is the fact that the Israelites were to "keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them." This is an exact parallel to the pattern of the Tabernacle which Moses saw in the Mount, and which God commanded him to construct. Read Exodus 25:8,9 \_\_\_\_\_  
  
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3. The Temple of Ezekiel 8-11 was the literal Temple of Ezekiel's day, even though the prophet saw it "in the visions of God" (8:3) while he himself was still in Babylon (8:1). In these four chapters we find mention of "the door of the gate of the inner court" (8:3), "the porch" (8:16), "the altar" (8:16), "the threshold of the house" (9:3), and "the east gate of Jehovah's house"

Without any indication of an ideal temple instead of a literal Temple in chapters 40-42, we find similar if not identical descriptive formulas being used: "in the visions of God" (40:2; cf. 8:3), "a gate to the inner court" (40:27; cf. 8:3), "the porch of the house" (40:48; cf. 8:16), "the altar" (43:18; cf. 8:16), and "the gate which looks towards the east" (43:3; cf. 10:19), through which the glory of the God of Israel is seen returning, exactly as He had departed, according to 10:19 and 11:23.

4. Ezekiel is not the only Old Testament prophet who saw a future, glorious temple for God's chosen people Israel, complete with animal sacrifices, in the Holy Land. Read the following prophecies and see if you can find any correlation:

Joel 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 2:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 60:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 9:24 \_\_\_\_\_

Haggai 2:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 56:6,7 \_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 60:7 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 33:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Zechariah 14:16-21 \_\_\_\_\_

5. God has definitely promised to the line of Zadok an everlasting priesthood. Read 1 Samuel 2:35 and 1 Kings 2:27,35 \_\_\_\_\_

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This confirms God's promise of an everlasting priesthood to Zadok's ancestor Phinehas (Numbers 25:13), which also confirms His promise of an everlasting priesthood to Phinehas' grandfather Aaron (Exodus 29:9; 40:15).

Furthermore, this promise of an everlasting priesthood was strongly confirmed by God through Jeremiah 33:17-22, who links the perpetuity of the Levitical priests with the perpetuity of the Davidic Kingship and the perpetuity of the earth's rotation on its axis! \_\_\_\_\_

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In view of these promises of God, confirmed again and again, it is highly significant that the Millennial Temple of Ezekiel will have the sons of Zadok as its priests! (40:46, 44:15). God apparently means what He says!

6. The Bible clearly teaches that while there is no such thing as an earthly Temple, an altar, or animal sacrifices in true Christianity (John 4:21, Hebrews 7-10), there are other verses to consider regarding Israel:

Matthew 24 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Thessalonians 2:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 11:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Hosea 3:4,5 \_\_\_\_\_

Daniel 9:24,27 \_\_\_\_\_

Revelation 20:9 and Revelation 11:1 \_\_\_\_\_

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7. The only real alternatives to the literal interpretation is to think that the temple is only figurative, a position usually taken by amillennialists.

## WATER FROM THE TEMPLE

### Ezekiel 47:1-12

The description of water Temple is vary like the description of water from the throne of God in Revelation 22:1 where water is described as water of life.

One feature in the Millennium will be a life-giving river flowing from the temple. Many think this refers *only* symbolically to the blessings that flow from God's presence. But nothing in the passage suggests that Ezekiel had anything in mind other than a literal river. The inclusion of details such as the fishermen and the salty swamps and marshes lend a touch of realism to the passage. These details become meaningless if the passage is only symbolic of spiritual blessing.

Joel had mentioned this river before Ezekiel's time, and Zechariah spoke of it after Israel returned from the Babylonian Captivity.

Read Joel 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Zecharian 14:8 \_\_\_\_\_

In the Millennium this river will be another visible reminder of God's presence and blessing.

Ezekiel was led from the kitchens in the temple's outer court back into the inner court to the entrance of the temple proper. There he saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. That stream of water, flowing out from God's presence, went eastward and passed south of the altar. Ezekiel left the temple complex by way of the north gate and saw the water flowing out of the temple on the south side of the east gate into the Kidron Valley.

Zechariah recorded that the water flowing from Jerusalem will divide, with half flowing east toward the Dead Sea and half flowing west toward the Mediterranean (Zechariah 14:8). Ezekiel followed only the branch that went toward the east.

The angelic being led Ezekiel toward the east along the riverbank. After 1,500 feet (1000 cubits) the water was ankle-deep; in another 1,500 feet the river was knee-deep. The angel measured another 1,500 feet and the water reached Ezekiel's waist. A fourth measurement of 1,500 feet farther to the east revealed that the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could walk across.

Ezekiel went back to the bank of the river and saw many trees on each side of the river. These waters will produce beautiful vegetation along their banks.

The millennial river will flow toward the eastern region and will go down into the Arabah, where it will enter the Sea. The "Arabah" is the Jordan Valley running south from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea and ultimately to the Gulf of Aqabah. The millennial river will merge with the Jordan River at the northern mouth of the Dead Sea.

As this new river enters the Dead Sea, the water there will become fresh. The Dead Sea, now some six times saltier than the ocean, will become completely fresh! This now-lifeless body of water will then support life so that where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will crowd the shores from En Gedi to En Eglaim. "En Gedi" is a settlement about midway down the western shore of the Dead Sea. The location of "En Eglaim" is uncertain. Suggested locations have included the southwestern shore of the Dead Sea near Zoar and an area on the northwestern shore south of Khirbet Qumran. Because of Ezekiel's focus on the water entering the Dead Sea at the northern end, the site near Qumran seems a possibility.

While the Dead Sea itself will be made fresh, the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. The lowlands near the Dead Sea will remain salt-crust. Salt is essential to life, and the Dead Sea area is Israel's chief source of salt. God will provide for all of Israel's needs.

Another way God will provide for Israel is by the trees on the riverbanks that will bear fruit year-round. The fruit will provide food and their leaves will provide healing. How healing will come from the leaves is not clear, but sickness will be virtually eliminated. God will use these trees to meet people's physical needs. Read the New Jerusalem parallel in Revelation 22:2 \_\_\_\_\_

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However, Revelation 21:2 tells us that there are two separate events being recorded. Read that verse and note the difference here: \_\_\_\_\_

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## DIVISIONS OF THE LAND

Ezekiel 47:13 – 48:9

God promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Palestine, and that promise has never been rescinded. Read Genesis 13:14-17 and 15:17-21 and record the promise here: \_\_\_\_\_

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How do you know that this promise is in full force and effect? (clue: who made the promise and what did it symbolize?) \_\_\_\_\_

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Israel's experiencing blessing in the land was conditioned on her obedience (Deuteronomy 28), but her right to possess the land has never been revoked.

When God inaugurates His New Covenant with Israel in the future, she will be restored to her place of blessing in the land. To prepare the people for this new occupation, God defined the boundaries of the country. He said, "Because I swore with uplifted hand", a gesture that often accompanied oath-taking, "to give it to your forefathers, this land will become your inheritance." Israel's borders during the Millennium will be similar to those promised her during the time of Moses. Compare with Numbers 34:1-12 \_\_\_\_\_

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The northern boundary of the land will run east from the Mediterranean, starting somewhere north of Tyre and Sidon (more precisely, "Mount Hor," Numbers 34:7).

The boundary line will go by the Hethlon road past Lebo Hamath to Zedad, Berothah, and Sibraim... as far as Hazer Hatticon... on the border of Hauran. The location of Hethlon is unknown, but many associate it with the modern town of Heitela, northeast of Tripoli in modern Lebanon. Lebo Hamath has sometimes been identified with the city of Hamath on the Orontes River in modern Syria. The word "Lebo" is then taken to mean "by the way of" rather than as a proper name. However, this identification is problematic because Hamath is about 100 miles farther north than the other cities mentioned by Ezekiel. It is better to take



"Lebo" as a proper name and to identify Lebo Hamath with the modern town of Al-Labwah in the Biqa Valley. Zedad should probably be identified with the town of Sadad about 25 miles north of Damascus. The locations of the towns of Berothah and Sibram are not known, but are said to lie on the border between Damascus and Hamath. Hamath (not the same as Lebo Hamath) is north of Damascus. So these cities are north of Damascus on the border between the territories held by Damascus and Hamath, probably near the town of Zedad.

Hazer Hatticon (Ezekiel 47:16) is probably another name for Hazer Enan (v. 17). It is located on the border between Syrian Damascus and the province of Hauran. Hauran may possibly be identified with a district east of the Sea of Galilee north of the Yarmuk River. Some say Hazer Enan is modern-day Al-Qaryatayn, an important desert oasis northeast of Damascus. So the northern border will stretch east from the Mediterranean Sea north of the modern city of Tripoli and will include what was then the northern border of Syria.

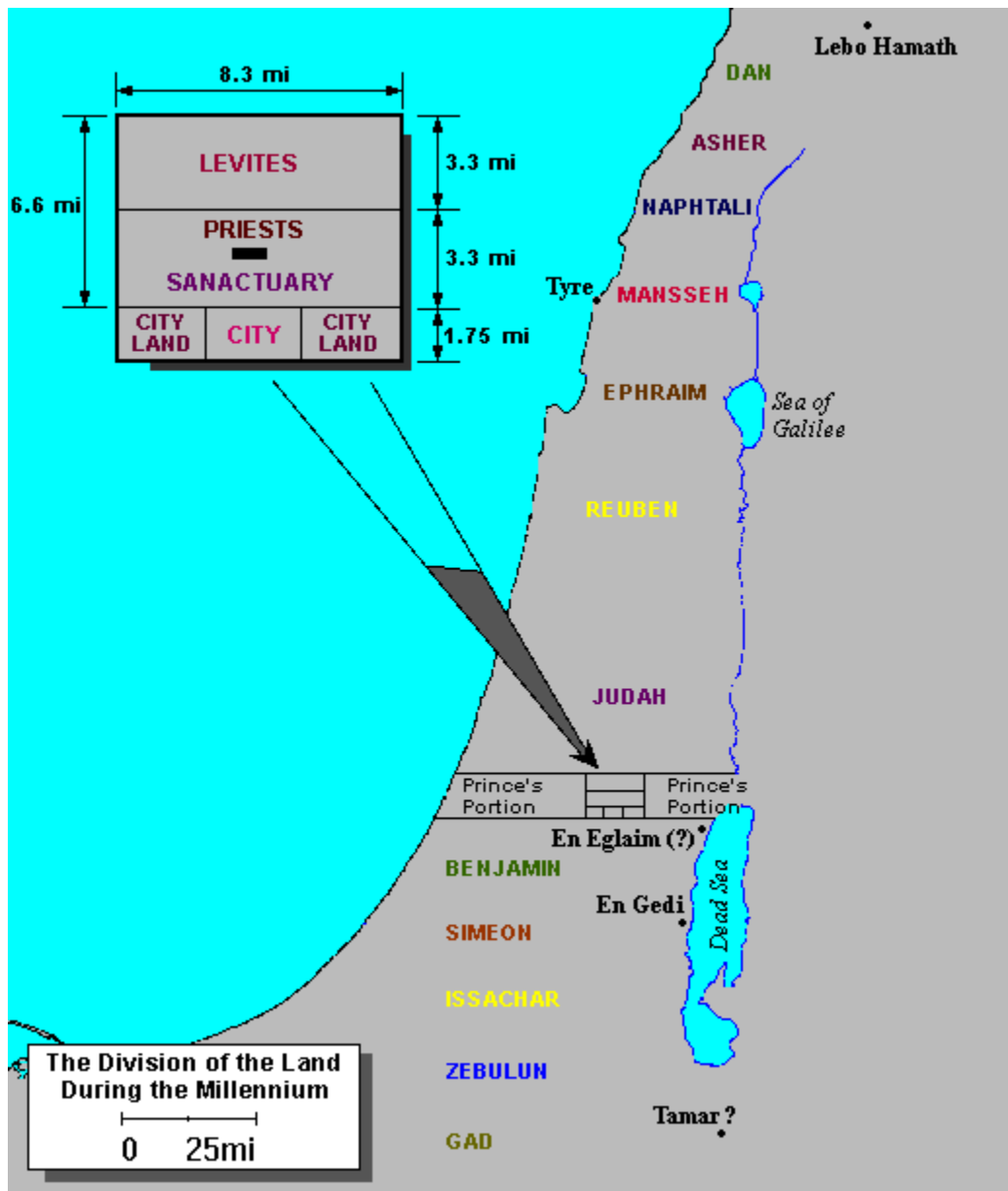
The eastern border will extend between Hauran and Damascus. The edge of Israel's territory will arch back from Hazer Enan along the southern border of Syria till it reaches the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee. From there it will go along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel, to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar. The eastern border will be the Jordan River and the Dead Sea. Gilead and the Trans-jordan area to the east of the Jordan will not be included in Israel's future inheritance. The exact location of Tamar, to which the eastern boundary will continue, is uncertain, but it may be south of the Dead Sea.

The southern border of Israel's millennial kingdom will extend from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribah Kadesh, then along the Wadi of Egypt to the Great Sea. Since "the waters of Meribah Kadesh" were at Kadesh Barnea, the southern border will stretch southwestward from Tamar to Kadesh Barnea. From there it will go to the "Wadi of Egypt." This is probably the Wadi el-Arish, not the Nile River. The words "of Egypt," not in the Hebrew, are supplied as an explanatory addition.

Ezekiel also included regulations for allotting land to resident aliens who will want to associate with Israel. Being considered native-born Israelites, they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. Though foreigners had always been allowed to live in Israel, in the Millennium they will be allowed to enjoy other privileges previously granted only to Israelites. Cross reference to Isaiah 56:3-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Though the Millennial Age will be a time of blessing for believing Israel, believing Gentiles will also enjoy God's blessing.

Additionally, God will give seven tribes portions in the northern part of the land. Proceeding from the north these tribes will be Dan (48:1), Asher (48:22), Naphtali (48:3), Manasseh (48:4), Ephraim (48:5), Reuben (48:6), and Judah (48:7).



## THE PROMISED LAND Ezekiel 48:1-35

Ezekiel 48 describes the Promised Land in some detail. Refer to the map at the end of the last chapter. Today, we will compare God's promises to the allotment shown by that map.

Genesis 15:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

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Look at the map below and determine countries impacted by this promise:



God told Joshua to lead the Israelites into the promised land (also called Canaan) and conquer it. This was not an act of imperialism or aggression, but an act of judgment. Here are some of the earlier passages in the Bible where God promised to give this land to the Israelites and the reasons for doing so.

Gen. 12:1-3 God promised to bless Abraham and make his descendants into a great nation

Gen. 15:16 God would choose the right time for Israel to enter Canaan because the nations living there then would be wicked and ripe for judgment (their sin would reach full measure)

Gen. 17:7-8 God promised to give all the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants

Exo. 33:1-3 God promised to help the Israelites drive out all the evil nations from Canaan

Deut. 4:5-8 The Israelites were to be an example of right living to the whole world; this would not work if they intermingled with the wicked Canaanites

Deut. 7:1-5 The Israelites were to utterly wipe the Canaanites out because of their wickedness and because of Israel's call to purity

Deut. 12:2 The Israelites were to completely destroy the Canaanite altars so nothing would tempt them away from worshiping God alone

Did Israel ever do this? \_\_\_\_\_

Of course, the burning question today is this: are the current claims of Israel to the land legitimate, and should Christians support the current nation. We are not living in the Millennium now, and we cannot require Israel to meet Millennial standards today, before the Lord has returned to earth.

The problem, of course, is that Israel was removed from the land in God's judgment. Historically, Israel's right to possess the land in any given generation, is conditioned on the nation's obedience to God. Today, most of those living in the State of Israel are there in unbelief. Does that mean the church should not support any of Israel's claims to the land? The answer is no, for two reasons.

First, as indicated earlier, God does announce a regathering of the people to the land in unbelief prior to the coming of the Messiah. Not only does Ezekiel 37:1-14 give us this information. Read Zechariah 12:1-13:1 and write what you learn here: \_\_\_\_\_

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The current restoration of the State of Israel seems to be a harbinger of God's end-time program. And, if that's the case, then God's hand is in the establishment of Israel.

Second, the Abrahamic covenant was established between God and Israel. God, and God alone, has the right to determine the level of blessing or cursing to be meted out to his people. But the Abrahamic covenant does have a component that applies to all the nations. God said, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse" (Genesis 12:3). Even when Israel was under

God's judgment, God still held nations accountable for their treatment of the Jewish people. God judged the Assyrians and the Babylonians for mistreating his people. Read Jeremiah 50:17–19 for more details: \_\_\_\_\_

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God also announced he would judge nations based on their treatment of his chosen people. Cross reference to Jeremiah 30:16 and Obadiah 15–17 \_\_\_\_\_

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The Abrahamic covenant is still operative, and God still holds nations accountable to seek ways to bless the Jewish people. And one way to do that today is to support Israel's right to their God-given land.

The fact that Israel has failed the covenant requirements with the Lord because they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ might lead Christians to the conclusion that they should not support Israel's claim to the Land. Many have come to that conclusion, and evangelical support for Israel, especially among Christian leaders, has waned during the past two or three decades.

Clearly, Israel must be in the Land before the return of the Lord to establish His kingdom. This is a very important point, and one that is ignored by those who are against Christians supporting Israel. It means that the Jews would be fulfilling Biblical prophecy even though coming back to the Land in unbelief, and that God's hand is in this preliminary restoration.

# CONCLUSION

## Ten Prophecies that Parallel Ezekiel

### **1. Jacob's descendants would regain control of Israel**

Bible passage: Amos 9:14-15

Written: about 750 BC

Fulfilled: Since 1948

In Amos 9:14-15, the prophet said that there would come a time when the exiles of Israel would again have Israel as their own land and that they would never be uprooted again. Amos lived about 2700 years ago, during a time when the people of Israel were being forced out of their homeland by a succession of foreign invasions. Despite many centuries of exile, many Jews returned to Israel and reclaimed sovereignty over a portion of their ancient homeland. This declaration of independence, in 1948, triggered a war with the surrounding countries, which objected to the presence of a Jewish state. On May 15, 1948, the day that armies from the surrounding countries invaded, Azzam Pasha, the Secretary General of the Arab League, said "This will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." Similar quotes were uttered by others during the war of 1948-49 and during the two major wars that followed. Despite its tiny size, Israel prevailed in these wars, preventing its people from being uprooted again, as they had been in ancient times.

Amos 9:14-15

I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the Lord your God.

### **2. Israel would be brought back to life**

Bible passage: Ezekiel 37:10-14

Written: between 593-571 BC

Fulfilled: 1948

We have already studied this passage.

### **3. Isaiah spoke of a Israel being reborn in one day**

Bible passage: Isaiah 66:7-8

Written: perhaps between 701-681 BC

Fulfilled: 1948

In Isaiah 66:7-8, the prophet foreshadowed the re-birth of Israel in 1948. Isaiah describes a woman giving birth before going into labor, and he speaks of a country being born in one day. This accurately describes what happened on May 14, 1948 when the Jews declared independence for Israel as a united and sovereign nation for the first time in 2900 years.

During that same day, the United States issued a statement recognizing Israel's sovereignty. And, only hours beforehand, a United Nations mandate expired, ending British control of the land. During a 24-hour span of time, foreign control of the land of Israel had formally ceased, and Israel had declared its independence, and its independence was acknowledged by other nations. Modern Israel was literally was born in a single day.

Isaiah said the birth would take place before there would be labor pains. And that too is precisely what happened. A movement called Zionism began in the 1800s to encourage Jews worldwide to move to Israel, which at that time was called Palestine. Within hours of the declaration of independence in 1948, Israel was attacked by the surrounding countries of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

When reading Isaiah 66:7-8, keep in mind that Israel's status as a sovereign nation was established and reaffirmed during the course of a single day, and that it was born of a movement called Zionism, and that its declaration of independence was not the result of a war but rather the cause of one.

Isaiah 66:7-8

"Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than she gives birth to her children."

#### **4. Israel would be re-established as a united nation**

Bible passage: Ezekiel 37:21-22

Written: between 593-571 BC

Fulfilled: 1948

We have already studied this passage

#### **5. The second Israel will be more impressive than the first**

Bible passage: Jeremiah 16:14-15

Written: sometime from 626 to about 586 BC

Fulfilled: 1948

In Jeremiah 16:14-15, the prophet said the second Israel would be more impressive than the first. In many regards, it is. The first time that Israel was established as a country was after Moses led the descendants of Jacob (typically referred to today as Jews) out of Egypt, where they had been enslaved for 400 years. They then conquered Canaan and established Israel about 3400 years ago. But the second time that Israel was established was after the Jews had been scattered far and wide for a few thousand years. This time the Jews had to return from as far away as the United States, China, Russia and South Africa.

Jeremiah 16:14-15

"However, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when men will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' but they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers.

## **6. Ezekiel predicted when Israel would be re-established**

Bible passage: Ezekiel 4:3-6

Written: between 593-571 BC

Fulfilled: 1948

In Ezekiel 4:3-6, the prophet said the Jews, who had lost control of their homeland, would be punished for 430 years. This prophecy, according to Bible scholar Grant Jeffrey, pinpointed the 1948 rebirth of Israel. Here's a summary of Jeffrey's theory:

1. Ezekiel said the Jews were to be punished for 430 years because they had turned away from God. As part of the punishment, the Jews lost control of their homeland to Babylon. Many Jews were taken as captives to Babylon.
2. Babylon was later conquered by Cyrus in 539 BC. Cyrus allowed the Jews to leave Babylon and to return to their homeland. But, only a small number returned. The return had taken place sometime around 536 BC, about 70 years after Judah lost independence to Babylon.
3. Because most of the exiles chose to stay in pagan Babylon rather than return to the Holy Land, the remaining 360 years of their punishment was multiplied by 7. The reason is explained in Bible's book of Leviticus. (Leviticus 26:18, Leviticus 26:21, Leviticus 26:24 and Leviticus 26:28). In Leviticus, it says that if the people



did not repent while being punished, the punishment would be multiplied by 7. And, by staying in pagan Babylon, most exiles were refusing to repent.

4. So, if you take the remaining 360 years of punishment and multiply by 7, you get 2,520 years. But, those years are based on an ancient 360-day lunar calendar. If those years are adjusted to the modern solar calendar, the result is 2,484 years.

5. And, there were exactly 2,484 years from 536 BC to 1948, which is the year that Israel regained independence.

(In this Bible passage, Ezekiel is asked by God to symbolically act out the 430 years of punishment)

Ezekiel 4:3-6

... Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel. "Then lie on your left side and put the sin of the house of Israel upon yourself. You are to bear their sin for the number of days you lie on your side. I have assigned you the same number of days as the years of their sin. So for 390 days you will bear the sin of the house of Israel. "After you have finished this, lie down again, this time on your right side, and bear the sin of the house of Judah. I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year.

## **7. The people of Israel would return to "their own land"**

Bible passage: Ezekiel 34:13

Written: between 593-571 BC

Fulfilled: after May 14, 1948

In Ezekiel 34:13, the prophet said that God would gather the people of Israel scattered throughout the world and bring them back to "their own land." After many centuries of dispersion, hundreds of thousands of Jews returned to their ancient homeland beginning in the late 1800s. But, millions more returned after Israel declared independence in 1948. In other words, millions of exiles returned to their ancient homeland which was now truly "their own land" in the sense that it was now a sovereign Jewish state.

Ezekiel 34:13

I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land.

## **8. God would watch over the people of Israel**

Bible passage: Jeremiah 31:10

Written: sometime from 626 to about 586 BC

Fulfilled: 1948, etc.

In Jeremiah 31:10, the prophet said that God would one day gather the Jews back to Israel and that He would watch over them like a shepherd. Believe what you wish, but there is evidence that God indeed has watched over the re-established nation of Israel. Hours after Israel declared independence in 1948, the surrounding countries attacked, hoping to replace the Jewish state with an Arab state. These countries are much larger than Israel. But tiny Israel prevailed in that war and was able to capture additional land, increasing the land size of Israel by 50 percent. Israel also prevailed in the two other major wars that followed.

Jeremiah 31:10

"Hear the word of the Lord, O nations; proclaim it in distant coastlands: 'He who scattered Israel will gather them and will watch over his flock like a shepherd.'

## **9. Israel's army would be disproportionately powerful**

Bible passage: Leviticus 26:3, 7-8

Written: perhaps around 1400 BC

Fulfilled: 1948-49, 1967, etc.

In Leviticus 26:3, 7-8, the Bible says that the army of Israel would have a supernatural power to prevail during times of conflict, if the people are obedient to the Lord. This Bible passage says that 5 people would be able to chase away 100 people, and that 100 would be able to chase away 10,000. Is there any proof to this incredible claim? Judge for yourself:

Example 1: Within hours of Israel's declaration of independence in 1948, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded Israel. The combined population of those countries was at least 20 million at that time. Israel had fewer than 1 million Jews. Even so, the Jews won the war and expanded the size of Israel by 50 percent.

Example 2: During the War of 1967, Israel attacked the air force bases of the surrounding countries and took control of Jerusalem for the first time in about 2000 years. They also seized additional territory. That war lasted a mere 6 days.

Example 3: On Oct. 6, 1973, Israel was attacked by Egypt and Syria. Other countries later joined the attack. But the Jews were able to push back the attacking armies and occupy land outside of Israel's borders.

Leviticus 26:3, 7-8

"If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, ... You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you."

## **10. The fortunes of the people of Israel would be restored**

Bible passage: Deuteronomy 30:3-5

Written: perhaps 1400 BC

Fulfilled: 1948, etc.

In Deuteronomy 30:3-5, the Bible said the Jews would be scattered worldwide and that they later would return to their homeland and have their fortunes restored. This prophecy began to be fulfilled in modern times during the late 1800s when many Jews returned to Israel, from as far away as China and the United States, Russia and South Africa. Israel declared independence in 1948. Today, Israel is among the world's most prosperous countries. In 1999, for example, Israel's per capita Gross Domestic Product was twice as prosperous than the neighboring countries.

Deuteronomy 30:3-5: then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.