

A Study of Ezekiel

Part Four:

Judgments on Judah's Neighbors

Chapters 21, 25-32, 35, 38-39

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Dedication

To those who sigh and cry for their lost neighbors.

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CONTENTS

Preface- 4

Introduction-6

The Ammonites- 8

The Moabites- 14

The Edomites- 17

The Philistines- 23

Tyre- 27

The Prince of Tyre- 48

Sidon- 58

Egypt- 60

Pharaoh's Demise-76

Magog- 90

Part 5 introduced-113

Other Books by Bob Faulkner- 114

PREFACE

Ezekiel, in Part One, is introduced as a priest and prophet of Israel, carried away into exile along with his king, to Babylon. It is 597 B.C. The prophet settles in with the captives at the canal Chebar, and is called by God to an extraordinary ministry of messages. He is made intimately aware of the glories of heaven and of the coming wrath.

For Part Two, I collected the visual aids, and the word pictures Ezekiel was given to communicate to God's people.

In Part Three, I have put together a series of Ezekiel messages to Judah, both in Jerusalem and at Chebar. God's anger is about to boil over, and the prophet is asked to agree with Him and deliver His message.

In Part Four before us now, I have assembled another set of judgments. These are the ones directed to the nations surrounding Israel and Judah. Most of them can be found in consecutive chapters in the book of Ezekiel (25-32), with additional judgments in chapters 21 and 35. I have often used *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* as a tool for background material on the nations covered.

I have included also in this part, the mystery of Gog. Judgment is coming to him, but he is not necessarily Israel's neighbor. His story is in chapters 38-39.

The book of Ezekiel, whether in this part or the first three parts, can be difficult reading. When God is angry, no one can feel at ease. But soon the time of judgments will be over, and we will turn to Part Five, where an amazing reversal of Israel's fortunes are displayed in technicolor language.

Here now is the final round of judgments:

A STUDY OF EZEKIEL

PART FOUR

Judgments on Judah's Neighbors

Chapters (or portions thereof):

21, 25-32, 35, 38-39

INTRODUCTION

1. Which nations are singled out for judgment in Ezekiel's prophecies?

21:28-32, and 25:1-7, Ammon.

25:8-14, and 35, Moab-Seir (Edom)

25:15-17, Philistia

26-28, Tyre and its Prince

29-32, Egypt and its Pharaoh

38-39, The land of Magog and its Prince, Gog

2. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, all have portions of their prophecy given over to Gentile judgment. Are the same nations included in each book?

Take a look. *I=Isaiah. J=Jeremiah. E=Ezekiel:*

Babylon. I, J

Assyria. I, E

Philistia. I, J, E

Moab. J, E

Damascus (Syria). I, J

Ethiopia. I

Egypt. I, J, E

Edom. I, J, E

Arabia. I, J

Tyre. I, E

Sidon. E

Ammon. J, E

Elam. J

As you can see, Philistia, Egypt, and Edom are the only nations singled out by all three prophets. Isaiah's diversity is the greatest. Also of note are the strong prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah against Babylon, and Ezekiel's significant three-chapter focus on the Satanic Kingdom of Tyre, and a four-chapter look at Egypt.

Let's examine God's message to each of these peoples.

The Ammonites

3. Who were the Ammonites?

Their founding father was one Ben-ammi, “son of my people.” Conceived in a cave, Ben-ammi’s father was the one male that survived the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19), Abraham’s nephew Lot. The mother was Lot’s younger daughter, unnamed in Scripture.

The child had his beginnings in a sinful relationship and in an atmosphere of fear. What Dad and Mom taught him about their famous uncle we do not know, but it was probably hard for him to believe in a God that brought his parents to such a state as this.

His descendants were no doubt also raised in unbelief and the paganism that permeated the world of the second millennium before Christ.

As the family of Ammon grew slowly into a tribe and then a small nation, it occupied territory adjacent to brother Moab’s area, on the east side of Jordan, opposite Israel. Their boundaries seem to have been two streams, the Arnon and the Jabbok.

Because of Abraham’s connection to Lot, Israel was normally forbidden any violence against the Ammonites, though they certainly merited it at times. And Ammon would not consider it unusual to ally itself with surrounding countries against Israel. That trend continues to this day in nations near Israel.

Unger states that it was not until the days of the Roman Empire that the Ammonites were finally extinguished, actually merging with the Arabs in the third century A.D.

1 Kings 11:7 mentions Molech as the “abomination of the Ammonites.” We take that to mean that Molech, or Milcom, was their national deity.

Politically, kings ruled the Ammonites, from the city of Rabbah. That city, though it is the capital of a non-Ammonite entity today, still exists. We know it as Amman, of the kingdom of Jordan.

Israel had mingled with the Ammonites maritally and otherwise. Solomon was perhaps the first to be so inclined. He fathered the next king of Israel via an Ammonitess named Naamah (1 Kings 14:31). Nehemiah records (13:23) that other Jews took wives from that people group.

The prophecies of Ezekiel we are about to examine, along with that of Zephaniah (2:9) have been fulfilled literally. Unger quotes from *Land and Book* by Thomson:

“Nothing but ruins are found here by the amazed explorer. Not an inhabited village remains, and not an Ammonite exists on the face of the earth.”

4. What did God say was to become of the Ammonites?

21:28-32. *“And you, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites and concerning their reproach; say, A sword, a sword is drawn for the slaughter. It is polished to consume and to flash like lightning— while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies for you—to place you on the necks of the profane wicked, whose day has come, the time of their final punishment. Return it to its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your origin, I will judge*

you. And I will pour out my indignation upon you; I will blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and I will deliver you into the hands of brutish men, skillful to destroy. You shall be fuel for the fire. Your blood shall be in the midst of the land. You shall be no more remembered, for I the LORD have spoken.”

In Part Three we saw Nebuchadnezzar headed south on his way to the Jordan River valley trying to decide which nation to decimate first. Through the guidance and sovereign will of God – though the King thought it was from his own fanciful way of conjuring up truth – he decided on the siege of Jerusalem.

But Ammon, across the river, was not left out. The same shining, polished, ever-so-sharp sword that brought Israel to its knees would now work its way into the populace of the Ammonites. Macarthur states that this prophecy was fulfilled about five years after Jerusalem’s 586 demise.

Verse 29 lets us know that Ammon too had its false prophets. Imagine living in a country that is dominated by false religion then further infested with false prophets of that false religion. These seers were evidently proclaiming that Ammon would survive, that there was nothing to fear but fear itself. But there was much more to fear.

As to the “final” punishment, it is true that the Ammonites survived this onslaught, and lived to suffer further attacks, but each wound brought the condemned people further down until they “disappeared from the family of nations altogether” (Macarthur). Nebuchadnezzar’s blow was fatal, but the victim lived on in pain for some time.

Here is Ezekiel’s further word about the Ammonites:

5. Is not Rabbah (aka Amman, Jordan) still with us?

25:1-7. The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them. Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Because you said, 'Aha!' over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when they went into exile, therefore behold, I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession, and they shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings in your midst. They shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you will know that I am the LORD. For thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel, therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy you. Then you will know that I am the LORD."

Matthew Henry points out:

"It is wicked to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people; it is a sin for which he will surely reckon. God will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. It is better to know Him, and to be poor, than to be rich and ignorant of him."

Interestingly enough, it was some surviving Ammonites, banded together with Arabs and “Ashdodites” (Philistines) who, upon the return of Israel to its land after the seventy-year exile, became

“...very angry. And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it” (Nehemiah 4:7-9).

The animosity lived on until Ammon’s dying breath years later. But the same spirit dwells today in the wildly jealous lands surrounding Israel who recognize the blessing of God on that land, and the poverty of everything resident in their own.

As for Rabbah, I quote from the *Bible Gateway* commentary:

“Ezekiel made two prophecies against the Ammonites. He predicted that the king of Babylon would capture Rabbah in the same campaign that would see the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek 21:20) [see above].

“The capital of the Ammonites, however, was not to meet its annihilation on this occasion; it would come later at the hands of the Arabs of the desert (Ezek 25:1-7). It was Rabbah’s control over these desert tribes of the Wadi Sirhan, who traded also with the Arabs, that had made Rabbah wealthy throughout many years. Ezekiel predicted that the Ammonite kingdom would return to desert pasture land through military conquest by the same desert tribes.”

This describes the comments about the “people of the East” in our text. The modern city is built on the *ruins* of Rabbah, but is not Rabbah, either by its population or its edifices. God’s Word has prevailed. But the spirit of animosity against neighbor Israel prevails also, for a while.

The rest of the prophecy merges with the chapter 21 prophecy and its fulfillment is obvious. Ammon is no more, and the fatal stab-wound was from Nebuchadnezzar.

The Moabites

6. Who were the Moabites?

The same chapter in Genesis (19) that tells of the origin of Ammon tells of Moab's beginnings. Moab was the son of Lot's older daughter, given to her via an incestuous relationship with her father. This evil start was predicative of Moab's life and the future of the tribe and nation he fostered, which settled south of Ammon in the area east of the Dead Sea, north and east of Edom.

Like the Ammonites, Moab was in regular conflict with Israel. Unlike Ammon and Edom, Moab's attacks were not military, but strategic in other ways. It was a Moabite king that hired the false prophet Balaam to curse Israel as they approached the Promised Land.

While the Lord ordered that some nations in the area be fought and conquered, Ammon and Moab were excluded due to their relationship, however distant now, to Abraham.

As the Jewish nation continued its trek toward Canaan, Moab women, at the instigation of Balaam, cozied up to Israelite men, and caused a fusion of the two nations that was abhorrent to God and dealt with in a serious manner. To be united to Moab was to be one with Chemosh, the national deity. As Molech, Chemosh supposedly demanded child sacrifices. How could Solomon later raise an altar to this God in his kingdom (1 Kings 11:7)?

Moab was a persecutor of Israel after Canaan was settled. It took a deliverer of the Israelites – Ehud – to subdue Moabite King Eglon during the days of the judges.

But it should be noted that there was a peace between Moab and Israel that allowed Elimelech and Naomi to stay in that land during

Israel's famine. Moabite Ruth was a product of that situation, and was later included in the line that leads to Christ. That same friendliness of Moab allowed David to place his parents there during the wild reign of Saul.

Moab was reduced to a tributary status for quite some time in the strong reigns of the early kings of Judah and Israel. But eventually there was a revolt, an attack, then counterattacks from Israel, and open hostility continued until the time we have reached in Ezekiel's day when Moab will have to be dealt with.

Somehow through the years Moab rose to a certain prominence, to the point where its pride was noticed by God and addressed through prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zephaniah as well as Ezekiel.

Let us see now what Ezekiel – God – has to say about this ancient nation.

7. What is to become of the Moabites?

25:8-11. "Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Moab and Seir said, 'Behold, the house of Judah is like all the other nations,' therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the cities, from its cities on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim. I will give it along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, that the Ammonites may be remembered no more among the nations, and I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

“Seir” is the land roughly equal to Edom, whose future is told in the next paragraph, where we will deal with it. As to Moab:

- The most important cities are going to be humbled. The “flank” is merely the side. Moab is going to be open to enemy invasion, as a candidate for surgery has a portion of his body opened up to the invading knife. And Ellicott comments on the cities mentioned:

“The cities named were all on the north of the Arnon, and before the time of Moses had been wrested from the Moabites by the Amorites, from whom in turn they were taken by the Israelites, and long formed a part of their territory. In the decay of the power of Israel they were reconquered by Moab, and are here spoken of, perhaps in view of their being rightfully a possession of Israel, as appropriately the point from which desolation should go out over the whole of Moab.”

He mentions that in his day this area was still considered by Arabs to be a choice territory.

- The people of the east – the Arabians – will assimilate Moab as they will Ammon. Neither people group exists today.

The Edomites (Seir)

8. Who were the Edomites?

Seventeen chapters further into Genesis from the account of the origins of Moab and Ammon, you will find the story of Edom's beginnings. Verse 8 of that chapter reads: *"So Esau settled in the hill country of Seir. (Esau is Edom.)"*

Here are all three of the names associated with this land, in one verse. Seir, inhabited by Horites and mentioned long before Esau's birth (Genesis 14:6), is the name of a land, a territory. It was prophesied to Esau by his father Isaac, that he would inherit a land *away from* the fatness of the earth. Such was Seir. Mountainous, rugged country.

The 36th chapter of Genesis tells how Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, had finally to take his family and possessions "into a land away from his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together."

Barren or not, it was his own. Deuteronomy 2 tells us how he expelled the original inhabitants, renamed the area, and over the centuries peopled it with his descendants. By Genesis 32, the "land of Seir" had become the "country of Edom."

As for the names of this brother: His parents had named him Esau, or *"rough,"* perhaps due to his hairy skin. Later he was given, or he gave himself, the name Edom, "red", that could refer to the color of the stew that Jacob sold him for his birthright (Genesis 25) but more likely to the fact that when he was born, *"he came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak* (Genesis 25:25)."

Edom the territory was south of Moab, and southeast of Canaan/Israel. Its placement made it the first nation in the way of the freed Israelites coming out of the wilderness into the area of the Promised land of Canaan. Though some nations in their pathway were annihilated, God made it clear to His people that He had given Seir to Esau and it was to be circumvented and treated with the utmost of respect. Even when Edom refused passage to Israel and showed up one day with a military force to stop the Jews from passing through, Israel simply turned away from them and took a longer route.

Though the brothers Jacob and Esau eventually came to a peaceful relationship during their lifetime, in spite of Jacob's deceiving of his brother on at least two occasions, the posterity of the two nations were seldom at peace, as witnessed by this early hostility.

Saul defeated the Edomites four hundred years later. Then David. Hadad the Edomite became Solomon's greatest enemy for a time. Edomites tried to defeat Israel in the days of Jehoshaphat by an alliance with Moab and Ammon, but were soundly defeated. More attacks and counter attacks followed during later kings, but as Judah (the tribe next to Edom and therefore the subject of the raids) turned farther and farther from God and His supernatural protection, Edom became more and more a thorn in their side.

In the time of which we now speak, Edom actually joined with Nebuchadnezzar in the plundering of Judah during the siege. Prophecies against Edom then multiply. You will read such denunciations in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Amos, and Obadiah. We will of course center on what God said through Ezekiel, though it is the lesser of the messages.

I will place alongside these chapter 26 denunciation, the words found in chapter 35, the whole of which is given to the judgment of Mt. Seir, which as we have pointed out, is another name for the territory of Esau/Edom.

9. What is to become of the Edomites/Mt. Seir?

25:12-14. "Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them, therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast. And I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord GOD."

35:1-9. The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you, and I will make you a desolation and a waste. I will lay your cities waste, and you shall become a desolation, and you shall know that I am the LORD. Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment, therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you. I will make Mount Seir a waste and

a desolation, and I will cut off from it all who come and go. And I will fill its mountains with the slain. On your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain with the sword shall fall. I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”

Here, with Nebuchadnezzar’s kind assistance, was their chance to get even with Judah, their long-time nemesis. What rejoicing in Edomite streets to hear that, finally, Judah would be gone forever, and they could help her demise.

Thus does the Psalmist (137:7) lament to God to remember the Edomites, how they said, “Lay it bare, lay it bare, down to its foundations!” Oh how delightful was the notion to them.

We assume that when our enemy is destroyed, God must love us. We forget that all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory. Without Christ we shall all likewise perish.

Judgment will come to Edom for the part they played and the joy with which they played it. Unger reports:

1. They were driven out of their land by the Nabateans, though they as a people prospered still for hundreds of years north of their old territory in Palestine. Man and beast driven from their land. Many killed.
2. When the Maccabees took over Judah, Edomites, living in such close proximity now, were totally subdued, its people forced to eventually be incorporated into the Jewish nation. Here is fulfilled the part of the prophecy that demands that Israel will be a part of the vengeance on Edom.

3. By Roman times, the term “Idumaea” was given to the general area. Rome allowed multiplied thousands of Edomites into the Holy City in the days preceding the siege of Titus in A.D. 70, to loot and kill at will.
4. After the destruction of Jerusalem in Titus’s day, the Edomites disappear as a people. God’s Word fulfilled.

Regarding the placement of chapter 35, after God had already given a stern word against Edom in chapter 25: Some say that the prophet places this chapter next to the ending of chapter 34 in stark contrast to the blessing that is coming to Israel. There is a future for God’s chosen, none at all for God-haters.

One more note from chapter 35 to round out the severity of this declaration from God, and give us another insight as to why God is so angry with these people:

10. What was Edom’s intention following the demise of Israel and Judah?

35:10-15. “Because you said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them’—although the LORD was there— therefore, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you. And you shall know that I am the LORD.”

“I have heard all the revilings that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, ‘They are laid desolate; they are given us to devour.’ And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words

against me; I heard it. Thus says the Lord GOD: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.

As I stated above, we make unwarranted assumptions when we see the wicked around us punished. One such idea is that we ourselves are not wicked. But time will tell all.

Edom saw both Israel and then Judah fall, and assumed that Edom's gods were paving the way for them to take over the land for themselves. We will see Tyre (Chapter 26) jump to similar conclusions.

God has a surprise for them. The ruins of their major cities are still with us today as silent witnesses to the firm determination of God to punish *all* evil.

Shall nations in our own day that are filled, as were these ancient kingdoms, with sexual perversions, idolatry in all forms, and the murder of innocent children, escape judgment? I think not. Americans, for example, should be trembling in repentant fear.

The Philistines

11. Who were the Philistines?

Unlike the first three nations receiving God's curse in this chapter, the Philistines were not related to Israel in any way. But like them, their origin is reported in the book of Genesis, and their demise is due to their hatred of Israel.

A consistent translation of the name *Mitz-rah yim*, (Mizraim) would have been helpful. When it is first mentioned, in Genesis 10:6 and 13, and the same chronology is repeated in 1 Chronicles 1, the translators simply transliterated. But in the hundreds of other times the word is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, the translation is *Egypt*.

Thankfully, the ESV and others have ended the confusion. *Egypt* was a son of Ham, a brother of Canaan. In that same Genesis chapter we see that *Egypt* fathered the *Casluhim* from whom came the Philistines. These Philistines were a peaceable agricultural people who settled in Canaanite territory in 2900 B.C.

The Calsuhim, as other derivatives of the Hamitic people, went their separate ways, some into Africa, some into the Middle East, but Amos says that these other "Philistines" came back to Canaan by way of *Caphtor* (Amos 9:7), which some identify as Crete. The *Caphtorim* are listed separately from the *Casluhim* but both were fathered by Egypt (the man) and both were sea people.

The name change to Philistia/Philistines, according to Unger, came about as they invaded a land with that name in what was part of Canaan, around 1200 B.C., in the days of the judges. It seems that God was bringing potential enemies into the land as Israel continued to fall away when not being miraculously defended or blessed. These Philistines would be a constant thorn in Israel's side

from that day on. Unlike the Philistines already living there and giving the land its name, these invaders were a warlike people who desired later the annihilation of Israel. Israel was the new invader, in their eyes. One thing that invaders despise is invasion.

The religion of the Philistines included Dagon, the fish god, and Ashtaroth, the Assyrian goddess of propagation aka "Ishtar". From which we derive the modern celebration name of the resurrection, "Easter." Then there was Baal-Zebub, the ruler of the demons known as Beelzebub in the Gospel account.

The Philistines were among the nations that God allowed to test the early peopling of Israel (Judges 3:3). They were confronted by an early Israelite judge, Shamgar, and a later one, Samson. Throughout the history of Samuel and David, the Philistines tried to dominate Israel, but eventually were subdued, becoming a tributary nation under Solomon's rule.

But the hostility returned during later kings of Judah. Philistia, like Moab and Edom and Ammon, was situated close to that tribe-later-nation and was used by God to chastise Judah as needed. But as always, even though God used the Philistines in this way, their joy in destroying their enemy was also noted in Heaven. The punishers would be punished.

No less than seven prophets lifted up threats and warnings and promises to Philistia, including the one we study now.

12. What was to become of the Philistines?

25:15-17. *"Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the Philistines acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity, therefore thus says the*

Lord GOD, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the rest of the seacoast. I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance upon them.

“Never ending enmity.” From the time of their invasion of Canaan, these warriors were intent on taking the land for themselves, and they would share it with no one. Their political ancestors are still with us, but that is another story. What was to happen to Philistines, the Caphtorim, the descendants of Ham?

Unfortunately, this prophecy is short on details, except for the mention of the Cherethites. Who were they?

The Septuagint translation renders this word as “Cretans” from which island these later Philistines originated. It is a designation given to several Philistine tribes, and/or used synonymously with “Philistine,” according to Unger.

God will stretch out His hand. Cut off a portion of the Philistines. Destroy any other tribes living on the Mediterranean Coast, where Philistia was located. Great vengeance. Wrathful rebukes.

Though no agents are mentioned here of God’s destruction, we know that Assyrians, Egyptians, and Israel all partook in the eventual downfall of this wicked people.

Wikipedia summarizes:

“The Philistine cities lost their independence to Assyria, and revolts in the following years were all crushed. They were subsequently absorbed into the Neo-Babylonian Empire and the Achaemenid Empire, and disappeared as a distinct ethnic group by the late 5th century BC.”

Rome, in defiance of history and the Jews, renamed the entire Judean area "Aeola Palestina" after the Jewish revolt of the first century failed. Palestina is a modern/Roman spelling of Philistia.

For one, I never use the term "Palestine" when referring to Israel. It is a serious insult to any serious Jew.

As I suggested earlier, the Philistine threat lives on by way of *political* descendants of the Cherethites today, but God's word to the originals has been fulfilled.

Several verses given to several nations so far. What in the world has brought about three entire *chapters* to deal with the next enemy of Israel?

Tyre

13. How is the city of Tyre important to the Biblical narrative and the prophecy of Ezekiel?

Tyre is an ancient Phoenician city that had incredible influence for centuries, and still exists today, as a town in Lebanon, 12 miles from Israel's border. Stripped by God of its ancient greatness, the Arabic town *Sur* boasts about 100,000 residents.

The Phoenicians seem to have been a part of the ancient Canaanite civilization, a cursed people whose demise is forecast in Genesis 9. Others claim a Semitic origin of these people, which would account for their ongoing success for so long, and their continued presence in some form to this day. The mixture of the two sons of Noah is clear, though, especially in regard to the religion they adopted, the pervasive Canaanite devotion to Ba'al.

Conquered by Israel in about 1400 B.C., they were pushed to a narrow strip of land nearly two hundred miles from north to south. This scarcity of land east to west pushed the Phoenicians to become seafarers, and successful ones. Of the many significant ports created, Tyre shines as the principal.

As we proceed it is important to note that Phoenicia itself is not addressed as a whole, but rather a very wicked seaport that rose from within it.

References to Tyre – or “Tyrus” in the KJV – are many in the Scriptures. And not all of them are negative:

- Joshua 19:29 speaks of Tyre as the northern boundary of the tribe of Asher, as the Canaanite territory is divided between Israel's sons.

- In 1 Kings 5:1 we are introduced to a king of Tyre named Hiram, who became a close friend and ally of David and Solomon, especially in reference to the building of the Temple. Clear admiration and deep friendship seem to have prevailed between the two nations, centuries after Phoenicia had been subdued by Israel.
- Ezra 3:7 documents a continuing commercial relationship between Israel and Tyre, as the magnificent cedars of [now] Lebanon are being used again to build the House of God.
- Nehemiah 13:16 shows just how far the commercial interests of Tyre had advanced. Tyrians are accused of helping the newly established Jews once more break the Sabbath covenant by attempting to sell their wares on that day.
- Asaph, or one of the “sons of Asaph” that inherited his musical office in David’s day, sees in Psalm 83, “inhabitants of Tyre” as one of many enemies of Israel, along with the Edomites and the “children of Lot”, Moabites and Ammonites.
- Ethbaal, King of the Sidonians (1 Kings 16:31) was also king of Tyre. He had murdered the previous king, and was a priest of the goddess Astarte. Importance? He had a daughter named Jezebel, whom he united to Ahab in Israel in a splendid political marriage. The wicked woman of the wicked king influenced Israel to go deeper than ever into idolatry. This may have been Tyre’s crowning evil.
- The other Old Testament references to Tyre, often coupled with sister port Sidon, are from the prophets, and all predict

judgment on the city. But none so much as Ezekiel. These prophets include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, and Zechariah. Their prophecies deal with Tyre in several verses each. Ezekiel needs three chapters.

- As awful as will be the judgment on Tyre and Sidon, says Jesus in Matthew 11:21, it will be greater on those who reject the Son of God.
- Luke, in Acts, shares a New Testament insight into the dwindling might of the twin cities. We see representatives of Phoenicia suing for peace with King Herod Agrippa I, ruler at the time of Israel, yet under Rome. The reason they wanted this peace, Acts 12:20: *“their country depended on the king’s country for food.”*

We will step off the pages of Scripture later, and document the rest of Tyre’s history in connection with the prophecies made of it.

14. What was the boast of the Tyrians that provoked God to His anger?

26:1-2. In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, ‘Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken; it has swung open to me. I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste,’”

Knowing just the little pieces of Tyrian history as I have already shared makes crystal clear what Tyre is thinking here. Israel had pushed Phoenicia to the water’s edge. Tyre had profited from it, but

the restrictions, the hemming in to the east constantly was a pain to these freedom-loving people.

Now Israel is gone. Nebuchadnezzar has done his work, as Ezekiel and the other prophets had predicted. The siege. The starvation. The slaughter. The destruction.

How delighted were the Tyrians! No more fences and gates keeping us out. We'll take over all this territory that has suddenly been opened to the east and south. Perhaps they credited their gods with this victory.

But not so fast, Tyre. Yahweh and his instrument Nebuchadnezzar are not finished.

15. What is to be the fate of Tyre?

26:3-6. "...therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. And she shall become plunder for the nations, and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

As early as 1400 B.C., the city could be thought of in two ways: a coastal port and an island city. The imagery of this prophecy makes more sense thinking of Tyre in both ways. She was "in the midst of the sea" as an island. When the conquest was finished, this little island was nothing more than a fisherman's village, a bare rock used

for the spreading of nets. All that was magnificent about her would be destroyed. Walls, towers. And her “daughters”, those Tyrians living still on the coast of what is today Lebanon, would suffer the ravages of the sword by the same invasion.

But what of the reference to the “many nations”?

16. Who will be carrying out the vengeance of the Lord?

***26:7-14. “For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring against Tyre from the north Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, and with horsemen and a host of many soldiers. He will kill with the sword your daughters on the mainland. He will set up a siege wall against you and throw up a mound against you, and raise a roof of shields against you. He will direct the shock of his battering rams against your walls, and with his axes he will break down your towers. His horses will be so many that their dust will cover you. Your walls will shake at the noise of the horsemen and wagons and chariots, when he enters your gates as men enter a city that has been breached. With the hoofs of his horses he will trample all your streets. He will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will fall to the ground. They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise. They will break down your walls and destroy your pleasant houses. Your stones and timber and soil they will cast into the midst of the waters. And I will stop the music of your songs, and the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more. I will make you a bare rock. You shall be a place for the spreading of nets.*”**

You shall never be rebuilt, for I am the LORD; I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD.”

In this passage the Lord enlarges on the summary given just before it, and tells exactly who will be involved in the massacre of the Tyrians.

It was Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who was so used. Just a short time before the Tyrians had been thinking of this emperor as the hero of the day, the deliverer from the oppressive Israelites. Now he is to be their final judge, ordained by the same God who had to punish His own people in the same way.

Do the nations of our time not know that when they see judgment fall on the very House of God from time to time, that their own judgment is not thus being canceled? If God judges the godly, where will the ungodly appear when all is finished?

Of note in this description:

Nebuchadnezzar is called “king of kings.” It is none other than the prophet Daniel who styles Nebuchadnezzar as king of kings. God spoke through both of these men the title that lets us know that God in His sovereignty had given all the kings of the world into his temporary power. Artaxerxes of Persia calls himself by the same label in Ezra’s account.

Three other times in the New Testament, Jesus is given this description, for He is the true King over all kings who have ever reigned or ever will reign. His Kingdom is not temporary as theirs but as Isaac Watts puts it:

*“Jesus shall reign where’er the sun doth its successive journeys run.
His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and
wane no more.”*

This designation helps us to understand to whom the “nations” of this passage are referring. The Emperor did not march alone. He called alongside, all the conquered nations he had accumulated in his whirlwind destruction of the Middle East.

Worthy of notice next are the methods the King will use. See how similar they are to the plans he made against Jerusalem: siege wall, mounds, battering rams, etc. The siege of Tyre lasted 13 years (585-572 B.C.)! It began the year after Jerusalem’s destruction was completed.

The rest of the prophecy is quite self-explanatory and quite gruesome. And as stated, Tyre never became a great city after that. Alexander besieged the attempted rebuilding of the city years later, even creating a causeway from the mainland to the island. Another serious defeat.

The Lord Jesus visited Tyre, as did Paul, during a time when it was still populous but not in any way exalted. Tradition says that a church was formed there after Stephen’s martyrdom. A form of Christianity remained in that town until the Muslims took it from the Crusaders in the thirteenth century.

And there is still a town there as noted above. But the Tyre of ancient days is no more. The proud empire-like people who ruled the waves and gloated over Israel’s loss, they are no more. As God said.

17. What will be the reaction of the nations at Tyre’s fall?

26:15-18. *“Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: Will not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter is made in your midst?*”

Then all the princes of the sea will step down from their thrones and remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They will clothe themselves with trembling; they will sit on the ground and tremble every moment and be appalled at you. And they will raise a lamentation over you and say to you,

“How you have perished, you who were inhabited from the seas, O city renowned, who was mighty on the sea; she and her inhabitants imposed their terror on all her inhabitants! Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall, and the coastlands that are on the sea are dismayed at your passing.”

Benson’s commentary has it:

“All the princes and rich merchants (or the merchants who are as princes, as Isaiah speaks) of Zidon, Carthage, and other maritime cities that maintained a trade with Tyre, and got great wealth by that means, shall express a deep grief and concern for the fall of it.”

This is the main trading partner for islands, coastlands far and near to the city. An incredibly intricate system of goods that passed to and from the city, is suddenly disrupted, abolished.

A similar wailing is recorded for the eventual fall of Babylon, Revelation 18:

“The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ‘Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste.’ And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood

far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, 'What city was like the great city?' And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste. Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

Notice that the affection of these mourners has to do with material loss, and nothing else. The love of this world eventually leads to eternal loss.

18. To what does God compare the ruin of Tyre?

26:19-21. "For thus says the Lord GOD: When I make you a city laid waste, like the cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you, then I will make you go down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I will make you to dwell in the world below, among ruins from of old, with those who go down to the pit, so that you will not be inhabited; but I will set beauty in the land of the living. I will bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be no more. Though you be sought for, you will never be found again, declares the Lord GOD."

Your glory, your history, your reputation, will all be buried in a watery grave. You will be forgotten as a dead man. Your companions will be the dead.

The term "pit" or "the pit" seems to describe a place beyond the grave, which all men head toward. Throughout Job and Psalms the

pit is a place from which God delivers His people. And in the prophets, it is a place where evil men go.

It is not clear, but it seems to me that the “bottomless pit” of Revelation may be one and the same with the pit of the Old Testament. If so, this Ezekiel reference, one of many in his book, is a picture of eternal torment, or at least, a holding place until the final judgment.

None of God’s people ever go to the pit in Scripture. For them it is absent from the body and present with the Lord. Abraham’s bosom. Paradise.

That Tyre left its place of glory is historical fact, as we discussed above. But the antithesis of this calamity is spoken in the same breath: “*I will set beauty in the land of the living.*” Tyre will be the land of the dead. But in my own land will be life. Those commentaries I read seem to believe this is referring to none other than Messiah Himself, who will one day be revealed in Judah, and one later day revealed to the entire world as Mankind’s Beautiful Savior. I see no reason to disagree...

As to never being found again, though it is true that Tyre’s history can be traced even to the present day, a day will come when even the scant remains of that civilization will be forgotten forever. It is nearly so now. Did you know there is a town in the Middle East that used to be the great Tyre?

So *men* will lament when she is gone. Now we will hear God’s lament over the city.

19. What caused the Tyrian people to consider their city perfectly beautiful?

27:1-9. The word of the LORD came to me: "Now you, son of man, raise a lamentation over Tyre, and say to Tyre, who dwells at the entrances to the sea, merchant of the peoples to many coastlands, thus says the Lord GOD:

"O Tyre, you have said, 'I am perfect in beauty. 'Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders made perfect your beauty. They made all your planks of fir trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of oaks of Bashan they made your oars; they made your deck of pines from the coasts of Cyprus, inlaid with ivory. Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail, serving as your banner; blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was your awning. The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers; your skilled men, O Tyre, were in you; they were your pilots. The elders of Gebal and her skilled men were in you, caulking your seams; all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you to barter for your wares."

This was a city that had taken the best from all the surrounding nations. It was an international wonder. It had used its restrictions to the sea and built an empire. A port city, it sent its ships all over the Mediterranean and added the finest of all the goods of these other lands to its own repertoire. A fashion model of merchantry.

We are confined to ships? says Tyre. Then our ships will have the finest planks. "Senir" is another name for Hermon. The "fir" may well have been of the same species as God used on the floor of the Temple. Lebanon's cedars will provide the masts. The oars are to be

made from the strong wood found abundantly in Bashan, the territory settled by Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, for Israel also was a trading partner.

Overlaying the sound structure will be a deck formed from Cyprus's pine trees, and somehow inlaid with ivory, says the ESV, though there is some confusion in translation here. Main point: we have the finest looking and the finest working ships on the sea.

From Egypt will come the linen for the sails, which doubled as a banner. The borders of Elishah, somewhere along the northern Mediterranean coastline, provided dyes to color the awning that covered the ship's deck.

As to personnel, other Phoenicians and residents of tributary nations supplied menial tasks such as rowing and caulking etc., but only Tyrians could be pilots.

This passage ends with a sweeping description of every vessel at sea in those lofty days of Tyre. All wanted to benefit from Tyre's wares, so all pitched in to help the Tyrian merchant marine prosper.

Tyre was truly in charge. Tyre ruled the waves of her day, and was proud of it.

God perfectly describes this nation to begin his lament, but the lament will not end in praise, else it were not a lament.

20. How was Tyre protected militarily?

27:10-11. "Persia and Lud and Put were in your army as your men of war. They hung the shield and helmet in you; they gave you splendor. Men of Arvad and Helech were on

your walls all around, and men of Gamad were in your towers. They hung their shields on your walls all around; they made perfect your beauty.”

A literal United Nations. Mercenaries from all around. Soldiers recruited from Tyre’s trading partners gladly joined forces with the giant city to protect and defend her.

Persia was beginning to rise as a power in connection with the Medes, but for now was content with aiding Tyre.

Lud is the Ludim, or Lydians, fathered by Egypt, or Mizraim, in Genesis 10:13. An African nation west of Egypt.

Put (Genesis 10:6) is also African, listed as a son of Ham along with Cush and Egypt/Mizraim.

Arvad we have seen in verse 8, a source of Phoenician rowers.

Helech may not be a proper noun at all, and is translated “army” by many.

Gamad also is not clearly the name of a people and is rendered “brave warriors” elsewhere.

These nations and warriors added to the beauty of the nation by their symbolic if not actual show of support, and the picturesque customs they developed, as mentioned by Barnes:

“The custom of hanging shields upon the walls of a town by way of ornament seems to have been of purely Phoenician origin, and thence introduced by Solomon into Jerusalem 1 Kings 10:16.”

Fine ships. Excellent protectors. And of course, business everywhere:

21. What products were traded by the Tyrians and with whom?

27:12-25. "Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of every kind; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. From Beth-togarmah they exchanged horses, war horses, and mules for your wares. The men of Dedan traded with you. Many coastlands were your own special markets; they brought you in payment ivory tusks and ebony. Syria did business with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares emeralds, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and ruby. Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat of Minnith, meal, honey, oil, and balm. Damascus did business with you for your abundant goods, because of your great wealth of every kind; wine of Helbon and wool of Sahar and casks of wine from Uzal they exchanged for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and calamus were bartered for your merchandise. Dedan traded with you in saddlecloths for riding. Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you. The traders of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; they exchanged for your wares the best of all kinds of spices and all precious stones and gold. Haran, Canneh, Eden, traders of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad

traded with you. In your market these traded with you in choice garments, in clothes of blue and embroidered work, and in carpets of colored material, bound with cords and made secure. The ships of Tarshish traveled for you with your merchandise. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas."

- The lengthy list begins and ends with Tarshish. This ancient city or country is mentioned in nine books of the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis 10:4, where a man of that name is identified as a grandson of Japheth, Noah's third son, whose people occupied what we call Europe.

Tarshish is familiar to us because of Jonah's desire to go there when God was calling him to preach in Nineveh.

Having said that, do we know where Tarshish was of a certainty? Here is Matthew Poole's commentary, with which most of the other scholars are in agreement:

"...some say Carthaginians, others Tarsus in Cilicia; others with more probability say it is Tartessus, an ancient town on the mouth of the river Baetis; or rather, over against it, in an island, a convenient port to export the rich metals that were brought down the Baetis from the country abounding with them, and through which their Baetis ran, and the inhabitants of this Tartessus furnished the Tyrians with them. Spain was full of silver and iron; these were the product of the country."

Fitting that we begin, then, on the other end of the Mediterranean with a people who likewise had a

multitude of ships that cooperated with Tyre in a brisk business in metals.

- Javan, Tubal, Meschech. Note that these as many of the names mentioned in this chapter will occur later in Ezekiel in reference to the Gog/Magog mystery.

Javan is unanimously considered to be Greece, or a portion thereof. Tubal and Meschech are called by these same commentators, as Barnes here:

“The Tibareni and Moschi, whose lands were on the Caucasian highlands between the Euxine and Caspian Seas.”

Some have seen in these names two capitals of the future Russian bear, Tobolsk and Moscow.

Another metal here. And slave trade.

- Beth-togarmah. Or house of Togarmah. Genesis 10:3. The consensus here is Armenia, the land east of Asia Minor, present day Turkey. Horses abounded in that land and were shipped to Tyre to support the military.
- Possibly two locations by the name Dedan are mentioned in the list, verses 15 and 20. Genesis 10:7 tells of a Hamitic tribe that may locate it in the interior of Africa. Connected with islands on the Mediterranean coast of Africa, this Dedan provided ivory and ebony not in trade, but as tribute. Verse 20 tells of a possibly different tribe, perhaps Semitic in origin, that dealt along with other tribes in Arabia. Saddlecloths were traded here.

- Syria needs no introduction. Precious stones and cloths.
- Judah. Wheat that it received from the Ammonites was passed on to the Tyrians, along with other foodstuffs and oils.
- Damascus is mentioned apart from its Syrian connection as having a separate line of goods with which it traded, a vast business that would soon be disrupted. Surely the Damascenes would be among the loudest of the lamenters in the previous chapter.

The wine of Helbon, north of Damascus, was the choicest of drinks. White wool treasured by many. Iron. Spices. And more. Translations differ in this passage but suffice it to say that Damascus had much to offer in the marketplace.

- Arabia. Not our Arabia, but a small portion of it. Kedar is descended from Ishmael and settled in the Arabian peninsula. From here came a multitude of animals used for food and sacrifice.
- Sheba and Raamah once more take us to Genesis 10. These were Hamitic tribes that likewise settled in the peninsula of Arabia and dealt in spices and precious metals.
- Allow Ellicott to describe “Haran, Canneh, Eden, Sheba, Asshur, and Chimad”:

“Haran, and Canneh, and Eden.—The description now turns from Arabia to the Tyrian trade with Mesopotamia. Haran, important in the story of

Abraham (Genesis 11:31-32; Genesis 12:4), the Charræ of the Romans, was in north-western Mesopotamia, at the junction of two great caravan routes, the one along the Tigris, the other along the Euphrates. Canneh, a contraction for the Calneh of Genesis 10:10, was the most important commercial city on the former, and was later known as Ctesiphon. Eden was an unknown town on the Euphrates (2Kings 19:12; Isaiah 37:12), and is to be distinguished from the Syrian Eden.

Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad.—Sheba is still the same Sheba before mentioned; for Pliny (Hist. Nat., xii. 40) says that the Sabœans brought their goods from the spice country to Carrhæ, where they held markets, and went thence to Syria and Phœnicia. They were, therefore, traders between Mesopotamia and Phœnicia. Asshur is here not the country of Assyria, but the commercial city Sura (modern Essurieh), on the banks of the Euphrates, above Thapsacus. Chilmad is supposed to be the Charmande of Xenophon, “a great city beyond the Euphrates, in the neighbourhood of the desert.” Others identify it with Kalwada, near Bagdad. It is mentioned only here.”

Garments and carpets round out the traded wares of the Tyrian empire, which stretched from modern day Spain to modern Iran. “Heavily laden in the heart of the seas” is an apt description to summarize Tyre.

But is this a lament? Oh yes. The picture of beautiful Tyre is about to be broken in pieces by the judgment of God.

22. How will all of Tyre's beauty be erased?

27:26-36. "Your rowers have brought you out into the high seas. The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas. Your riches, your wares, your merchandise, your mariners and your pilots, your caulkers, your dealers in merchandise, and all your men of war who are in you, with all your crew that is in your midst, sink into the heart of the seas on the day of your fall. At the sound of the cry of your pilots the countryside shakes, and down from their ships come all who handle the oar. The mariners and all the pilots of the sea stand on the land and shout aloud over you and cry out bitterly. They cast dust on their heads and wallow in ashes; they make themselves bald for you and put sackcloth on their waist, and they weep over you in bitterness of soul, with bitter mourning. In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you and lament over you: 'Who is like Tyre, like one destroyed in the midst of the sea? When your wares came from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with your abundant wealth and merchandise you enriched the kings of the earth. Now you are wrecked by the seas, in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and all your crew in your midst have sunk with you. All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you, and the hair of their kings bristles with horror; their faces are convulsed. The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.'"

One looks in vain through history for a literal interpretation of these verses. Tyre was not ruined by shipwrecks, east winds, maritime battles that sunk ships. Tyre was ruined by Nebuchadnezzar.

The passage becomes then an apt *metaphor* for the ruin to come. Tyre is the ship. Nebuchadnezzar is the east wind. As the Phoenician Empire was busily sailing the Mediterranean, the Babylonian Empire was about to blow on it and stop its forward progress forever.

Everything would sink, literally and figuratively, into the Sea.

Seeing what is happening, the pilots or leaders of the government of Tyre cry out in dismay and the entire region is shaken in shock. The Lord repeats the Tyrian lament as a part of His own here.

Not only Tyre, but all who are associated with Tyre, will sink.

Certainly Nebuchadnezzar was the beginning of the end for Tyre, as *Wikipedia* reports:

“According to accounts by Saint Jerome in his Commentary on Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar II was unable to attack the city with conventional methods, such as using battering rams or siege engines, since Tyre was an island city, so he ordered his soldiers to gather rocks and build a causeway from the mainland to the walls of the island, similar to Alexander the Great's strategy in his siege 250 years later.”

Regarding Alexander's siege, referred to in that same source:

“The siege of Tyre was orchestrated by Alexander the Great in 332 BC during his campaigns against the Persians. The Macedonian army was unable to capture the city, which was a strategic coastal base on the Mediterranean Sea, through conventional means because it was on an island and had walls right up to the sea. Alexander responded to this problem by first blockading and besieging Tyre for seven months, and then by building a causeway that allowed him to breach the fortifications.

“It is said that Alexander was so enraged at the Tyrians' defense of their city and the loss of his men that he destroyed half the city. According to Arrian, 8,000 Tyrian civilians were massacred after the city fell. Alexander granted pardon to all who had sought sanctuary in the temple, including Azemilcus and his family, as well as many nobles. 30,000 residents and foreigners, mainly women and children, were sold into slavery.”

God's judgment has been sure, if not immediate. There will never be a Tyrian Empire.

No comment can improve on what God spoke through Ezekiel. The message is clear. Tyre is finished. The Judge of all the earth has done right.

Matthew Henry summarizes and applies:

“The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, come down. Those who make creatures their confidence, and rest their hopes upon them, will fall with them: happy are those who have the God of Jacob for their Help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever. Those who engage in trade should learn to conduct their business according to God's word. Those who possess wealth should remember they are the Lord's stewards, and should use his goods in doing good to all. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

Now we enter one of Ezekiel's most well-known mysteries. Well-known as a mystery, not necessarily well-understood. Who was the “prince” of Tyre? And who was the “king” of Tyre? Two persons or one? Why an entire chapter devoted to this one (or is it two?) person(s)?

The “Prince” of Tyre

23. What is the meaning of the Bible word “prince”?

First, we must understand that a prince, Biblically, is not necessarily the son of the king. *Nagid* in verse 2 is “commander.” It is translated chief, captain, governor, leader, and ruler. And here, prince. On the other hand, *Melek* in verse 12 is the standard Hebrew word for “king”.

1 Kings 14:7 uses this same *nagid* to refer to King Jeroboam. The KJV uses “prince” whereas the ESV decided on “leader.” *Nagid* seems to refer to *function* as opposed to *title*. But make no mistake: Biblically a “prince” can easily be as high as a king in authority and power.

In the New Testament, Jesus is called the *Prince of Life* and Satan the *prince of the power of the air*. These are positions of paramount excellence. Though the Greek is used in these passages, the idea I am trying to make is intact: princes and kings can be one and the same.

So in chapter 28 we seem to have two separate prophecies regarding the same man. And more...

24. Who, historically, is being addressed in chapter 28?

28:1-2, 11-12. *The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord GOD...”*

“Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD...”

The leader or “prince” of Tyre in that day was Itto-Baal (Eth-Baal) III. He is in a long line of Tyrian monarchs. His namesake, Eth-Baal I, was father of the notorious Jezebel, a priest of the pagan goddess Astarte who violently overthrew the sitting king of the Phoenician Empire to rule there himself. He had been a wicked man, steeped in the demonic.

That first Ethbaal lived and reigned in the 800’s B.C. A second one came along in the next century and number 3 ruled from 591 to 573, during the time of which Ezekiel now speaks. Unfortunately, we know little about him, but it is reasonable to assume that he had the same religion, based on his name, the same demonic hatred of Israel and Israel’s God, the same lust for power.

Here is Wikipedia’s accounting of the meager history we have of this man:

“Ithobaal III (Latin Ithobalus, Hebrew Ethbaal) was recorded by Josephus as the king on the list of kings of Tyre reigning 591/0–573/2 BCE at the time of the first fall of Jerusalem, and therefore the subject of Ezekiel's cherub in Eden. During his time, Josephus also wrote that Nebuchadnezzar II besieged Tyre for 13 years, which probably covered 585 to 573 BC. The precise year it began is difficult to pinpoint with scholars divided as to whether it started in 598, the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, or 585, which was Ithobaal III's seventh year as king.”

Tyre is about to escape from the hands of Eth-Ba'al III . And the king himself will be the subject of serious judgment. That is what this chapter is about.

But as we read along, and the Spirit of God carries Ezekiel along, we will see that it is about something else too. Someone else.

25. What did Eth-Ba'al think of himself?

28:2. "Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man, and no god, though you make your heart like the heart of a god—"

Tyre was at this point an island with no connection to the land. In this king's mind, as perhaps with all the rulers of the city, nothing could touch him. His kingdom was impregnable, and so was he. The longer Tyre reigned over the merchant empire, the longer these kings believed they were deities and unreachable by anything harmful. God would soon show him the folly of his beliefs.

26. How does the prophet Daniel enter this prophecy?

28:3-5. "you are indeed wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you; by your wisdom and your understanding you have made wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; by your great wisdom in your trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth—"

This sounds like sarcasm. Did this king know of Daniel and compare himself proudly to the man of God who had become over the last twenty years a powerful statesman in the Babylonian Empire? Or is this merely God's humorous way of belittling the proud king?

Daniel's wisdom had come from God. He came as a teen-aged exile into the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. By miracles and revelations God had raised him up to his present prestige.

Eth-Baal's wisdom was of the carnal sort. He had used his worldly wisdom to get rich and powerful... and proud. His pride would now bring on the normal result of that condition: destruction, and a fall.

27. What is to be Eth-Ba'al's fate?

28:6-10. "therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you make your heart like the heart of a god, therefore, behold, I will bring foreigners upon you, the most ruthless of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendor. They shall thrust you down into the pit, and you shall die the death of the slain in the heart of the seas. Will you still say, 'I am a god,' in the presence of those who kill you, though you are but a man, and no god, in the hands of those who slay you? You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of foreigners; for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD."

Truth is about to dawn on the King of Tyre. Swords drawn. Swords thrust. Into the pit, the grave. You will not be spared the fate of all the others who die at the same time. Then where will your boasting go?

The word “death” is plural in the original. The Prince is to die more than one death. He himself will be slain. His friends will die. His Empire will be crushed. His island will be connected to the mainland and be unreachable no more. Many deaths.

As to the “uncircumcised,” God is saying that this king will die like every other pagan national outside the covenant of God. No special glory to be attached to him because he was a king. He is merely a man, an uncircumcised Gentile, and like them, he will perish.

So far in the chapter, no real mystery, although we could wish we knew historically more about Eth-Ba’al III.

But now, something else is to be said about this man from God’s perspective, in a curious 9-verse lamentation. Listen carefully to the prophet of God.

28. Are we still talking about a human king, Eth-Ba’al III, in this lamentation? If not, who is this king?

28:12-15. *“Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: “You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of*

the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created..."

Certainly, the words before us present a challenge. We must proceed very carefully, avoiding the sensational, but not ignoring the obvious.

First, we note again a lamentation. The lamentations of Ezekiel are many:

*Ezekiel 2:10 - And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of **lamentation** and mourning and woe.*

*Ezekiel 19:1 - And you, take up a **lamentation for the princes of Israel,***

*Ezekiel 26:17 - **And they will raise a lamentation over you [Tyre]** and say to you, "How you have perished, you who were inhabited from the seas, O city renowned, who was mighty on the sea; she and her inhabitants imposed their terror on all her inhabitants!"*

*Ezekiel 27:2 - "Now you, son of man, **raise a lamentation over Tyre...**"*

*Ezekiel 28:12 - "Son of man, **raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre,** and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty..."*

*Ezekiel 32:2 - "Son of man, **raise a lamentation over Pharaoh** king of Egypt and say to him: "You consider yourself a lion of the nations, but you are like a dragon in the seas; you burst forth in your rivers, trouble the waters with your feet, and foul their rivers..."*

Verses 13-15 tell of someone who was absolutely perfect and beautiful. The words are addressed to the king, the same king as we just described in the first verses of Ezekiel 28. There we saw a mere man calling himself a god. We see a very smart man but one whose

worldly wisdom in trading caused him to be sinfully proud. Is this the one being addressed here?

It seems not. It seems that the king of Tyre was possessed by the spirit of the evil one. Why else would the Lord have two side-by-side prophecies directed to the same person? The first prophecy is for the man. This second one is for the spirit inside the man. And when it seems that we have transitioned back to the man, we must recall that what we are seeing in the natural is still the working of Satan.

In this way, Eth-Ba'al III becomes a type of the antichrist yet to come. He too will be a man totally filled with Satan, yet in appearance like a mere human.

Back to the prophecy itself. This ruler of Tyre was "created" (13 & 15). Eth-Ba'al III was not created. He was just a man (2).

And this one, says God, was the very model of perfection at the beginning. Not so, Eth-Ba'al III of Tyre.

The one addressed here was perfectly beautiful at his creation. No, not the man we read of in verses 1-10.

This one was in Eden. Most of us now know who the Lord is lamenting. Only three persons were ever in Eden: Adam. Eve. Satan.

Adam has not been resurrected here, nor Eve. God is talking to His arch enemy, who has entered the body of the evil king Eth-Ba'al. The passage makes sense, at least for now.

Now we understand why the "Prince" of verses 1-10 was so proud and wise. Inside of him was the one who had been created with perfect wisdom and beauty.

The “precious stones” referred to are found in Genesis 2:12, describing the Eden inhabited by Satan in the beginning.

The “settings” and “engravings” of the ESV (end of verse 13) are admittedly uncertain translations of the Hebrew. Other Bibles speak of things musical, as in the coronation of a King. I prefer to think of this whole verse as one indication of something of the splendor of Eden.

Verse 14 is unmistakably definitive of the devil’s beginnings. A cherub! Ezekiel must have reeled with confusion as he remembered the cherubim he saw at Chebar more than once. Cherub? This evil king inhabited by one who used to be a special messenger of God?

Now where are the holy mountain of God and the stones of fire? God placed this anointed cherub there. This is before Eden, perhaps even before the creation somehow. Satan was special. This mountain, and this fire, though having earthly counterparts in the Temple and Sinai etc. are being connected to a person whose existence predates all earthly persons and places. We simply do not know how God elevated this cherub in the time after his creation.

It is disappointing to read commentary after commentary that try to attach all of these descriptions to the ruler Eth-Ba’al III, the human. Satan is not mentioned at all. Only Macarthur, of the ones I read, sees the dual nature of this prophecy. I hope you see it too.

In verse 15, the person is called blameless. Surely the human king we met earlier does not fit this description. But there was a creation of God that was made perfect and stayed perfect until...

29. What is to happen to the king/Satan?

28:15-19. "...till unrighteousness was found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries; so I brought fire out from your midst; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever."

There are some mysteries not meant to be uncovered here. We know Satan fell. We don't know how or why. Here in verse 15 the fall is depicted. The perfect cherub was suddenly not perfect.

This imperfect, yea evil, spirit has now entered Eth-Ba'al III. Satan has lifted this king to great pride but now he will be brought to great ruin, as was the spirit within him. What Satan's sin was, we do not know, but what he instigated the king to do is spelled out. First abundance, prosperity, worldly success, and power.

All of that led the king to tighter and tighter control of his surroundings. Violence. Pride. Sin of all sorts. As with Satan, Eth-Ba'al is cast off his place of authority, and destroyed. The kings of the earth will watch as this god-like possessed man falls from his glory to his death. The city and the king will be burned. As in the lamentation for Tyre earlier, we see the Mediterranean world

appalled at what is happening. The king is dead, the kingdom begins its downward spiral. It is over.

And Satan? He is set free from this earthly body to enter others in every age. One day he will enter the man of sin. That man will be defeated as was Eth-Ba'al, thrown into a lake of fire, and be no more. But this time, the spirit-Dragon will be bound, and later thrown into that same fire to be punished forever.

Ezekiel 28 is a preview of what shall come to pass in our own future.

Next, sandwiched in between the three Tyre chapters and the four Egypt chapters is a five-verse word to Sidon, Tyre's next-door neighbor.

Sidon

30. Who were the Sidonians and what is to become of them?

28:20-24. *The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against her and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, and I will manifest my glory in your midst. And they shall know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her and manifest my holiness in her; for I will send pestilence into her, and blood into her streets; and the slain shall fall in her midst, by the sword that is against her on every side. Then they will know that I am the LORD. "And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all their neighbors who have treated them with contempt. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD."*

Though a great city of itself, it is remembered historically as the partner city of Tyre, with which it is associated almost exclusively by New Testament writers.

Sidon, or Zidon in the KJV, is addressed by four other prophets. The judgment due Tyre will be coming equally to Sidon.

Unger informs us that, like Tyre, Sidon was located on an island later connected to the mainland by a bridge. It was twenty miles North of Tyre, and still exists as *Saida* in Lebanon.

It was actually the capital of the Phoenician Empire before Tyre. In fact, the Phoenicians were known as Sidonians for about three hundred years. Eth-Ba'al I, the father of Jezebel and priest of the Ba'al worship so prominent in that territory, was known as the "king of the Sidonians".

Sidon was captured by the Assyrian Shalmaneser shortly before the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in 721 B.C. When the Babylonians conquered Assyria, Sidon continued to be enslaved. Alexander re-conquered it centuries later. During Roman/New Testament times it had regained some of its importance.

Jesus and Paul both visited the territory in the first century. Jesus spoke of the wickedness of the place, knowing that He Himself had been involved in its judgment hundreds of years earlier.

A very old city it is, named originally after its founder, a son of Canaan (Genesis 10:15.) And like other of the sons of Canaan, the Sidonians were early and often oppressors of Israel (Judges 10:12). Hence the reference here to briars, pricks, and thorns aggravating the people of the land of Israel.

Pestilence, say the commentators, is the natural outcome of the siege mounted by Nebuchadnezzar. As to the blood in the streets and the sword on every side, Gill says:

“this was literally fulfilled in Sidon, either by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, which besieged it on every side; or by Artaxerxes Ochus the Persian, who took it, and destroyed it” We might add Alexander to the list of Sidon’s destroyers.

When all these things came to pass, Sidon and all those around her knew that Yahweh was the Lord. How soon we forget, until something like this has to happen to us.

We now proceed to Egypt, where God dictates to the prophet his most detailed message of coming trouble. A prophecy, another lamentation, and a specific message to the Pharaoh!

Egypt

Ezekiel's words to Israel's surrounding enemies began with the relatively small nations of Ammon, Moab, and Edom. Family members of Israel in the past, spared for the longest time because of their connection to the Covenant people of God. And Philistia, a constant thorn in Israel's side.

Then a major word to a major presence of Ezekiel's day, Tyre and Sidon.

We now have come to the larger threat still. Other than Babylon itself, Egypt was the power to deal with during the days of Ezekiel's ministry. And deal with it, God does, very thoroughly.

And what of great Babylon, you say? Why is Babylon not singled out for judgment? Oh it is! But not by this prophet. Jeremiah was the man assigned this task, and a mystery known as "Babylon" is addressed by John the apostle. But for now, Egypt.

31. Who were the Egyptians?

Of all the nations addressed thus far, Egypt is no doubt the most known to us. I will not go into great detail about its history, but a quick review of the main points might be helpful.

As stated earlier, the reference to *Mizraim* in Genesis 10 is where we must start. Mizraim is *Egypt* in modern translations and in most KJV renderings also. Egypt was Noah's grandson through Ham, along with Canaan and Cush. It is obvious that the ancestors of this son make up much of the trouble Israel has faced through the centuries.

Though most moderns use the Greek rendering of the name, there are still those who know Egypt as *Misr*. The ancient Canaanites called the land *Misri* following the Hebrew for Ham's son.

The ancient land of Egypt consisted of a ten-mile-wide strip following the Nile River and the resultant delta at the Mediterranean. The rest of what has been known as Egypt is desert.

The history of the dynasties and the pyramids and all those things we consider Egyptian must be for another writer to cover. Let us come to the time when Egypt's past intersects with the Scriptures. Per Unger, though not word for word:

It was early in the period known as Dynasty 12, the Middle Kingdom (1900-1775 B.C.) when Abraham went into Egypt. In the 1800's B.C. came Jacob and his family, during that same period. In the 18th Dynasty, the 1400's, was the exodus from Egypt.

Solomon makes a marital contract with Egypt during his reign. But in the days of his son, Shishak of Egypt overruns and plunders Israel and Judah (1 Kings 14:25 ff).

Egypt was a sometime friend. And later still in Israel's history Egypt became a prop upon which the Jews rested. In the fading days of Israel's Kingdom, she began to look to the Egypt from which God had so wonderfully delivered her, as a place to hide as the wrath of God gathered in the skies.

A large settlement of Jews would later be found in Ptolemaic Egypt, after Alexander's conquests.

But to the present prophecy. Why is God angry with Egypt in the 500's B.C.?

32. How is the pride of the Pharaoh to be addressed?

29:1-6. *In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt; speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, 'My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.' I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales; and I will draw you up out of the midst of your streams, with all the fish of your streams that stick to your scales. And I will cast you out into the wilderness, you and all the fish of your streams; you shall fall on the open field, and not be brought together or gathered. To the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the heavens I give you as food. Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD."*

Put simply, the accusation of Heaven through Ezekiel: Pharaoh is so arrogant that he dares to call himself the owner of God's creation.

Pharaoh is called here the great dragon. Most agree that this refers to the crocodile of the Nile waters. A proud threatening creature if ever there was one, a fit prophetic symbol to match some of the Pharaohs.

Ellicott comments: *"This is characteristic of the pride of Hophra, [Apries, the fourth king of the twenty-sixth dynasty of Egypt.] who, according to Herodotus, was accustomed to say that "not even a god could dispossess him of power." The whole dynasty to which he belonged, beginning with Psammeticus, improved the river and*

encouraged commerce with foreign nations, thereby acquiring great wealth."

This Hophra reigned from 589 to 570 B.C., at the time of Ezekiel's prophecies. It is obvious that his pride was to become his destruction.

The crocodile is to be taken out of the Nile, along with many of his fellow creatures, driven into a wilderness, and caused to fall in a field, and eventually to die.

How literal is the fulfillment of this somber word is recorded by the Benson commentary:

"...for there seems to be here an allusion to the heavy loss which Apries [Hophra] and the Egyptian army sustained in his expedition against the Cyrenians, toward whom they must have marched over the desert. Apries himself did not fall in battle, but was taken prisoner by Amasis, and strangled by the Egyptians."

Taken out of Egypt to march against an enemy, suffered to be defeated by that enemy, then killed. Just like God had said.

33. What further charge does the Lord make against Egypt?

29:6-9. "Because you have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel, when they grasped you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins to shake. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you man and beast, and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Other prophets had suggested that Egypt should not be leaned upon. Egypt, and all nations for that matter, were not covenanted with God. Their very existence and alliance and affiliation could change at any time. To lean on a staff and find it is but a reed that grows in the water, is precarious business. You will fall when they fall, causing bodily harm to yourself.

The sword and desolation and waste mentioned, came upon Egypt at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and various civil wars that raged throughout Egypt.

34. How severe is Egypt's punishment to be?

29:9-12. "Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I made it,' therefore, behold, I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush. No foot of man shall pass through it, and no foot of beast shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years. And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated countries, and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries."

The localities mentioned for the coming destruction represent the entire land of Egypt from north (Migdol) to south (Syene). It is like saying in Israel, "from Dan to Beersheba." Everything. Utter waste.

Uninhabited for forty years. Most commentators speak of a limitation of traffic through Egypt, but not a complete cessation of it. Here is Poole's assessment of the forty years' desolation:

“...accounting these years from the first wastings of Egypt by their civil dissensions and wars, some nine or ten years before Nebuchadnezzar subdued and wasted it, which he did in the thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and thirty-seventh years of his reign, or thereabout. So that these forty years will fall in about the thirtieth year of Jeconiah’s captivity, and end with the seventieth year of the captivity, which was the first of Cyrus.”

Here is the beginning of the end of the greatness of Egypt. It will have the same future as Tyre. The pride of the rulers of these once great kingdoms will bring down not only the rulers, but all the glory of their creations.

Scattered? Yes, all the kingdoms interrupted by Nebuchadnezzar’s attacks produced refugees. As says Ellicott:

“Megasthenes and Berosus state that Nebuchadnezzar on his conquest of Egypt, sent great numbers of the people captive to Babylon; others doubtless, as in similar cases, took refuge in Ethiopia, Libya, and other neighbouring lands. The kind of desolation foretold for Egypt is the same as that for ‘desolate’ cities and countries that fell under the power of the conqueror: they were to be plundered and reduced to subjection.”

35. Was Egypt ever to be restored?

29:13-16. “For thus says the Lord GOD: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered, and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and

never again exalt itself above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations. And it shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity, when they turn to them for aid. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.”

If we are understanding the chronology correctly, the forty years ended with the accession of the Persian Empire. Israel was restored at that time, as were other surrounding nations. Egypt will be set free also. Refugees return.

But not business as usual, says the prophet. Though Egypt is spared extinction, unlike many who receive a prophetic word in this book, she will never return to her former glory. She will never have an empire. She will never rule over other nations. Certainly Israel will never look to Egypt to lean upon. It will be a broken nation. Low. Humbled forever.

Benson quotes Bishop Newton for the detailed fulfillment of this prophecy. I can do no better:

“... upon the ruin of the Babylonish empire, it [Egypt] was subject to the Persians; upon the failure of the Persian empire, it came into the hands of the Macedonians; after the Macedonians, it fell under the dominion of the Romans; after the division of the Roman empire, it was subdued by the Saracens, in the reign of Omar, their third emperor; about the year of Christ 1250, it was in the possession of the Mamelukes, a word which signifies a slave bought with money, but is appropriated to those Turkish or Circassian slaves, whom the sultans of Egypt bought young, and taught military exercises. These slaves usurped the royal authority, and by that means Egypt became their prey. But, A.D. 1517, Selim, the ninth emperor of the Turks, conquered the Mamelukes, and annexed Egypt to the Ottoman

empire, of which it continues to be a province to this day [18th century]. By this deduction it appears, that the truth of Ezekiel's prediction is fully attested by the whole series of the history of Egypt, from that time to the present. And who could pretend to say, upon human conjecture, that so great a kingdom, so rich and fertile a country, should ever afterward become tributary and subject to strangers? It is now a great deal above two thousand years since this prophecy was first delivered; and what likelihood or appearance was there, that the Egyptians should, for so many ages, bow under a foreign yoke, and never, in all that time, be able to recover their liberties, and have a prince of their own to reign over them? But as is the prophecy, so is the event." —

From the 18th century to our own, can anyone come forward with testimony to the fact that Egypt has indeed risen to the heights, has defied the word of God pronounced against her? I think not.

36. How did God repay Nebuchadnezzar for doing the Lord's work in Tyre?

29:17-20. "In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare, yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he had performed against her. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt as

his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, declares the Lord GOD.”

A fascinating word from the Lord. We are allowed behind the veil to see how God views even pagan nations. His justice extends to the giving of rewards to them if they are doing His work. Part of His work in these days was to destroy Tyre’s influence. He used Nebuchadnezzar to do this.

But, who paid the Emperor’s way? It takes a lot of money to set up a siege, to mount a major battle, especially against a people that feel they are safe on an island in the Mediterranean. How will God repay the King of Babylon?

The answer: Egypt. Go into proud Egypt, take its wealth, plunder. Pay your soldiers well from the riches of this land. It will not be the first time that Egypt had to be ravaged by a foreign entity. Israel actually went around knocking on doors during their captivity, asking for donations for their upcoming journey. The nation was plundered.

God has many ways to stop human pride. It would seem that a similar demonstration of His jealousy is due on the planet. Soon.

37. What promise is given to Israel in the midst of this message to Egypt?

29:21. “On that day I will cause a horn to spring up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

Evan as Nebuchadnezzar is devastating Egypt, Israel needs to know that eventually God will restore Israel to power. When the

prophecies begin to be fulfilled, Ezekiel will be heard and believed. Up until now, there have been long periods of time when the prophet did not speak, but when all of this takes place, his mouth will be opened authoritatively.

Note: This prophecy is actually a part of the last dated word in the book [27th year, v. 17]. It is out of order, for later in the book will be earlier prophecies.

Next, as with Tyre, a lamentation covering some of the events already mentioned in chapter 29.

38. Is this talk of the “day of the Lord” an end-time prophecy?

30:1-8. The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: “Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’ For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. A sword shall come upon Egypt, and anguish shall be in Cush, when the slain fall in Egypt, and her wealth is carried away, and her foundations are torn down. Cush, and Put, and Lud, and all Arabia, and Libya, and the people of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. “Thus says the LORD: Those who support Egypt shall fall, and her proud might shall come down; from Migdol to Syene they shall fall within her by the sword, declares the Lord GOD. And they shall be desolated in the midst of desolated countries, and their cities shall be in the midst of cities that are laid waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have set fire to Egypt, and all her helpers are broken.”

Possibly, in part, this message has some end-time significance. But more likely, the “day of the Lord” promised is merely Egypt’s “day.” The emphasis is on that land throughout the chapter. Other nations are mentioned in connection with her downfall, but those nations were also victims of Nebuchadnezzar, as Egypt is to be. Ezekiel expands on the Egypt theme in the next two chapters after this one, making his point.

As for end-time prophecy, it is coming, later in the book, and we will cover it in Part Five of this series.

The nations addressed here, besides Egypt:

Cush: Ethiopia of Africa.

Put: Libya of Africa.

Lud: Lydia, a kingdom in western Asia Minor, but also a people descended from Mizraim/Egypt, and thus African.

Arabia (ESV) Chub (KJV et al): A name seemingly unknown elsewhere.

Libya (ESV) “all the mingled people” (KJV): Foreigners who came to assist the Egyptians in their trials, or simply foreign-born citizens.

People “in league” : This seems to refer to Jews who had fled to Egypt for support, as in the last chapter. Their support is short-lived.

Bottom line: A fire is to burn in Egypt and the surrounding nations. No one is to be spared.

39. What will happen to those who try to escape the coming horror?

30:9. *On that day messengers shall go out from me in ships to terrify the unsuspecting people of Cush, and anguish shall come upon them on the day of Egypt's doom; for, behold, it comes!*

Terrified people terrify others. As the Egyptians see what is coming God stirs them up to get on a ship and travel south to the shocked people of Ethiopia, who will soon share in Egypt's judgment.

40. How extensive will be the devastation of the Egyptian kingdom?

30:10-11. *"Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will put an end to the wealth of Egypt, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. He and his people with him, the most ruthless of nations, shall be brought in to destroy the land, and they shall draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain.*

The economy ruined, says the ESV. More likely the "multitude" of people as in other translations. This fits better with the rest of the passage, where Nebuchadnezzar is seen applying his sword to the masses. Dead bodies everywhere.

Notice God's description of the King of Babylon. We see Daniel working with this proud emperor in the Bible's next book. Ruthless and all-powerful he was, yet God used such a man to fulfill His work in Israel and the world of that day. Kings are in the Lord's hands and we must not despise what God allows for His purposes.

30:12. "And I will dry up the Nile and will sell the land into the hand of evildoers; I will bring desolation upon the land and everything in it, by the hand of foreigners; I am the LORD; I have spoken."

To prepare the way of Babylon, the Lord will send a drought to the land, dry up the canals that feed the Nile, and thus work with Nebuchadnezzar to affect His judgment.

30:13 a. "Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images in Memphis..."

Memphis, not far from modern Cairo, was a center of idolatry. This would end as God's wrath was poured out. The Persian Cambyses would literally smash idols throughout the land when his turn came to reign.

30:13 b. "...there shall no longer be a prince from the land of Egypt; so I will put fear in the land of Egypt."

We discussed earlier how Egypt became a subordinate state after this beginning of its downgrade. Egypt would have rulers, but not "from the land". Its rulers would be the princes of other nations. Egypt would henceforth be afraid to rise up against the nations around it for fear of another bloodbath.

Even its skirmishes with smaller Israel in our own day, though allied to many other mid-eastern nations, were failures.

Now the judgment on other cities:

30:14-19. "I will make Pathros a desolation and will set fire to Zoan and will execute judgments on Thebes. And I will pour out my wrath on Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and cut off the multitude of Thebes. And I will set fire to

Egypt; Pelusium shall be in great agony; Thebes shall be breached, and Memphis shall face enemies by day. The young men of On and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword, and the women shall go into captivity. At Tehaphnehes the day shall be dark, when I break there the yoke bars of Egypt, and her proud might shall come to an end in her; she shall be covered by a cloud, and her daughters shall go into captivity. Thus I will execute judgments on Egypt. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Pathros: Also mentioned in 29:14, this is Upper Egypt. Upper by elevation, not by looking at the map, where it is the southland, per Jamieson-Fausset-Brown:

"the Thebaid, or Upper Egypt, which had been especially harassed by Nebuchadnezzar. The oldest part of Egypt as to civilization and art. The Thebaid was anciently called "Egypt" [Aristotle]. Therefore it is called the "land of the Egyptians' birth".

Zoan: A major city (Tanis) on the opposite end of Egypt, in the Delta region. Again a "north to south" devastation is in view.

Thebes: Or No . Says Ellicott: *No, mentioned again in the next Verse, more fully written No-Amon (Nahum 3:8), is the celebrated Thebes of Upper Egypt, still famous for its ruins at Luxor and Karnac. The mention of these various cities is to make emphatic the universality of the judgment upon the whole land.*

Pelusium: The Cambridge Bible and most other commentaries identify this as the ancient

"Sin called here the 'bulwark of Egypt,' ... usually identified with Pelusium, which lying on the N. E. frontier of the country might be considered the key to it."

Memphis: See verse 13 above. This is *Noph*.

On:—

Aven is the same as On of Genesis 41:45; Genesis 41:50, and as Bethshemesh (House of the Sun) of Jeremiah 43:13, the Heliopolis of the Greeks, so called because from the remotest times a chief seat of the worship of the sun. [Ellicott commentary].

Pi-beseth: Called

“Bubastos. The city situated on the Suez Canal, begun by Necho and finished under Ptolemy II. It derived its name from the cat-headed goddess Pasht, and was the chief seat of the home which was named after it. [Pulpit Commentary]

Tehaphnehes: Ellicott says of this town,

“Otherwise called Tahpanhes; the city Daphne, also a frontier town near Pelusium, strongly fortified. It may be especially mentioned, because the Jews who fled from Palestine through fear of Nebuchadnezzar had taken refuge there (Jeremiah 43, 44).”

Nebuchadnezzar’s plundering would be the first fulfillment of God’s promises in these places, but not the last. Some would suffer at the hands of the Persians also. But history and prophecy match perfectly here. Idols destroyed, no Egyptian-born ruler, desolations, slaughter, fire, agony, captivity... all that they might know who is Lord in Egypt, and all over the world.

41. How does God characterize and summarize the coming judgment?

30:20-26. In the eleventh year, on the seventh day of the first month, the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt. See, it has not been bound up for healing, or splinted for strength to hold the sword. Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt. I will break his arms, both the strong one and the one already broken, and will make the sword fall from his hand. I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands. I will strengthen the arms of Babylon's king and place My sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, who will groan before him like a mortally wounded man. I will strengthen the arms of Babylon's king, but Pharaoh's arms will fall limp. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I place My sword in the hand of Babylon's king, and he wields it against the land of Egypt. I will disperse the Egyptians among the nations and scatter them throughout the lands. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

Pharaoh is a man with two broken arms, utterly incapable of aggression or even self-defense. A defeated foe. Finished. His enemy from Babylon, on the other hand, will have his arms strengthened by God Himself to do the task at hand.

No new material in this prophecy. It was given many weeks after the word of the last chapters, and seems to be a reminder and summary.

Two months later a third message comes, the subject of chapter 31.

Pharaoh's Demise

42. To whom is Pharaoh compared?

31:1-3. *In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: "Whom are you like in your greatness? Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon..."*

Though the message is clearly addressed to the present Pharaoh of Egypt and all his people, almost every word of the chapter is a description of the defeated Assyrian Empire. God describes just how wonderful Assyria was, then tells of her downfall at His hands. The point: if I could let Assyria be devastated, what will stop me from doing the same to you, a lesser light?

As recorded above, the Pharaoh of this day, reigning from 589-570 B.C., was Apries, also known as Hophra. He was in Egypt, Ezekiel in Chaldea. We are not sure how the message ever got to the Pharaoh, but I tend to think that God found a messenger to deliver Ezekiel's words to the offending king. God's command to the prophet is clear: "Say to Pharaoh..."

43. To what is Assyria compared?

31:3-7. *"Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches and forest shade, and of towering height, its top among the clouds. The waters nourished it; the deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the place of its planting, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field. So it towered high above all the trees of the field; its boughs*

grew large and its branches long from abundant water in its shoots. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young, and under its shadow lived all great nations. It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its roots went down to abundant waters.”

Assyria was in power and beauty like a famous Lebanon cedar. It reached out to many nations, provided shade or protection to all its own. It was the highest of the governments of the day, a power to be looked up to.

The Tigris river flowed near to the capital Nineveh and supplied it with unequalled trade possibilities. Many peoples and products flowed into the source of the Empire, nourishing, growing.

The surrounding nations are pictured as branches, its peoples as birds and animals of all sorts. Unrivaled for diversity and riches and authority, Assyria was unassailable.

44. To what are the “cedars” of Assyria compared?

33:8-9. “The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs; neither were the plane trees like its branches; no tree in the garden of God was its equal in beauty. I made it beautiful in the mass of its branches, and all the trees of Eden envied it, that were in the garden of God.”

This Tigris river of Nineveh was mentioned as part of the irrigation system of the Garden in Eden, Genesis 2:10-14. Though Eden was Paradise, absolute perfection in its habitat for man, there were certain aspects of the natural life in the same vicinity that actually

surpassed that of the idyllic Garden. The same God who made Eden, has now made Assyria a beautiful place to be.

Up until now the trees seem to represent power and authority and people etc. Are we to keep the imagery the same? If so, how do we compare all the height of Assyria's power to the powers of the Garden of Eden? Only two humans and the Serpent were in that Garden, as far as we know, along with angelic forces to keep people out. For this reason it seems best to transfer to the literal here. The trees themselves.

45. What happened visibly to proud Assyria and will happen to proud Egypt?

31:10-14. "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I will give it into the hand of a mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. Foreigners, the most ruthless of nations, have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land, and all the peoples of the earth have gone away from its shadow and left it. On its fallen trunk dwell all the birds of the heavens, and on its branches are all the beasts of the field. All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to towering height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height."

There is confusion in the Hebrew here. The mixing of pronouns makes it difficult to know whether God is speaking about old Assyria's demise, or the fall of Egypt yet to come. It is Babylonia, the mighty one of the nations, the most ruthless of nations up until then, that will be the agent of both falls.

Whether Assyria or Egypt, the prophecy states that the branches, the other nations connected, will be cut off. The tree is to be cut low, and while the people scatter, soon they return to trample over the trunk and make it impossible for it to grow again.

Of course. And where is Assyria today? Where is Egypt's power today?

46. What happened in the world below to offending nations?

31:14-17. "For they are all given over to death, to the world below, among the children of man, with those who go down to the pit. Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it, and restrained its rivers, and many waters were stopped. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit. And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below. They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations."

The kings thought they were gods. But in a moment they are cut off and receive the penalty of all the wicked. The surrounding nations thought that Assyria could be trusted forever. But suddenly it was gone, and worldwide mourning began. This scene shall take place again when Babylon falls ultimately, Revelation 17-18.

Eden here might in our punctuation system be surrounded by quotation marks. The trees of "Eden" would be the highest powers of the land, the men who were the truly "great" men of the earth. They are comforted, so to speak, from their position in the grave, to know that mighty Assyria also has fallen as did they at the hands of that mighty Empire. Their end was equal: the pit.

47. What is the point of this entire message?

31:18. "Whom are you thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? You shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below. You shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword. "This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord GOD."

Why did God go to such lengths to describe Assyria and its final days? Because God is about to use the same power of Babylon in the same way in Egypt. "Who do you think you are, Pharaoh?" You too are just another "tree of Eden" that I will cut down, dismember, and bury forever.

48. How did Pharaoh's self-image differ from God's picture of him?

32:1-2. In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him: 'You consider yourself a lion of the nations, but you are like a dragon in the seas; you burst forth in your rivers, trouble the waters with your feet, and foul their rivers.'"

Nearly two more years pass. Did Pharaoh receive in person all the words God has said through Ezekiel so far? If so, it is obvious he is ignoring the words. Here is yet another message of warning to the proud Hophra of Egypt.

Though the Egyptian leader is well aware of the presence of Nebuchadnezzar and his might, he still considers himself the lion of all nations. The king of the forest. Though his empire seems to be a bit inferior at present, he will make Egypt great again. He will not be overshadowed by this eastern upstart in Chaldea.

But God calls him a dragon. Better, a crocodile, say the commentators. He jumps out of the water, stirs up the mud from its bottom and creates a foul murky mess.

Hophra is not content with having Egypt under his control, but jumps out of his proper domain and seeks to trouble the waters of other nations, creating mayhem around himself.

49. What will God do to arrest this crocodile of the Nile?

32:3-10. "Thus says the Lord GOD: I will throw my net over you with a host of many peoples, and they will haul you up in my dragnet. And I will cast you on the ground; on the open field I will fling you, and will cause all the birds of the heavens to settle on you, and I will gorge the beasts of the whole earth with you. I will strew your flesh upon the mountains and fill the valleys with your carcass. I will drench the land even to the mountains with your flowing blood, and the ravines will be full of you.

"When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD.

"I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries that you have not known. I will make many peoples appalled at you, and the hair of their kings shall bristle with horror because of you, when I brandish my sword before them. They shall tremble every moment, every one for his own life, on the day of your downfall."

The Lord continues with the same metaphor. A crocodile needs his water. But this one will be thrown upon the land with no way of escape. Benson's commentary says:

"This was literally fulfilled when, making war upon the Cyrenians, he was vanquished, and his army cut in pieces, and left a prey to the fowls and beasts in the deserts of Libya and Cyrene."

Pharaoh and Egypt have been a “star” in the region. But when that star burns out, the entire lighting system of the heavens will grow dim. This is just saying in a different way what was said of Assyria. And Tyre. And will be said of Babylon. A huge shaking of powers in the earth when the main power goes down.

What if our own nation was suddenly cut off? Think of the hemorrhaging worldwide.

And when the greatest of powers falls, think of the fear of God that enters the minds of the weaker powers that remain. They will realize that no one is secure without God’s help. Trembling everywhere. At least for a while. How soon we forget.

50. And once more, by whom shall all this judgment come?

32:11-16. “For thus says the Lord GOD: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. I will cause your multitude to fall by the swords of mighty ones, all of them most ruthless of nations. They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt, and all its multitude shall perish. I will destroy all its beasts from beside many waters; and no foot of man shall trouble them anymore, nor shall the hoofs of beasts trouble them. Then I will make their waters clear, and cause their rivers to run like oil, declares the Lord GOD. When I make the land of Egypt desolate, and when the land is desolate of all that fills it, when I strike down all who dwell in it, then they will know that I am the LORD. This is a lamentation that shall be chanted; the daughters of the nations shall chant it; over Egypt, and over all her multitude, shall they chant it, declares the Lord GOD.”

God has made it clear several times that this most ruthless of all the nations shall be the one that will be God's hand in the coming show of wrath. Babylon, that had its beginnings early in man's history, and that shall suffer its own crushing blow at the end of that story, will be the instrument. Gill:

“Pharaoh's numerous subjects; or his army, the vast number of soldiers in it, whose carcasses should fall in battle by the sword of the Chaldeans, the mighty men of Nebuchadnezzar's army: and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt; cut off the king, the princes of the blood, the nobility and gentry, the prime of the nation; plunder the king's palace of all the wealth and riches in it, the treasury of the kingdom; destroy the metropolis of it; demolish its cities and fortified places, and take away all its strength and glory: and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed: all the people of the land, high and low, rich and poor; the destruction shall be general, all ranks and degrees of men shall share in it.”

And the waters that “crocodile” Hophra stirred up will be calm again. God will bring a silence to Egyptian ambitions. An eerie stillness will descend upon the Nile vicinity.

And as most mourners of those days were taken from the female gender, it is appropriate that the word of the Lord closes with a reminder that the lamentation that is coming will originate from the daughters of the nations.

Two weeks pass, and God says a final word through his man to the soon-to-be dethroned leader of Egypt:

51. To what location is Ezekiel ordered to send Egypt for “comfort”?

32:17-20, 31-32. *In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, wail over the multitude of Egypt, and send them down, her and the daughters of majestic nations, to the world below, to those who have gone down to the pit: ‘Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down and be laid to rest with the uncircumcised.’ They shall fall amid those who are slain by the sword. Egypt is delivered to the sword; drag her away, and all her multitudes. The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: ‘They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’*

“When Pharaoh sees them, he will be comforted for all his multitude, Pharaoh and all his army, slain by the sword, declares the Lord GOD. For I spread terror in the land of the living; and he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword, Pharaoh and all his multitude, declares the Lord GOD.”

Go to the underworld, Egypt. Go to the pit. You are no better than the ones you will find there. Submit to your destiny, and let us drag you to yonder grave. You will be greeted by a host of others who are out of covenant with God, eternal proof that God is no respecter of persons. The soul that sins shall die. You have sinned mightily against the Lord of Heaven. Go to the pit.

And his “comfort”? Egypt and its ruler are at least gratified that they are not the only ones who must suffer this torment of loss.

There follows a list of the companions he will have in the pit. It is a somber declaration that God has therefore put into the mouth of his prophet. But it is something that all evil men must face. Their doom is sure, and the hosts of evil people who reject God will share it.

Here are some nations that will be there to “greet” Pharaoh Hophna and his slain multitudes.

52. Who will the Egyptians meet when they arrive in the underworld of death and hell?

32:22-23. “Assyria is there, and all her company, its graves all around it, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, whose graves are set in the uttermost parts of the pit; and her company is all around her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.”

Chapter 31 details the pride and fall of the Assyrian Empire. See there. Note that the graves of this people are in the uttermost parts of the pit. Their greater crime seems to be its extent and its tendency to terrorize. These were an inhuman severe set of soldiers who brought fear to their subjects. Now see them in their stillness, harmless as the rocks on which they lie.

32:24-25. “Elam is there, and all her multitude around her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread their terror in the land of the living; and they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit. They have made her a bed among the slain with all her multitude, her graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the

sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the pit; they are placed among the slain.

If Elam is Persia, as some believe, then Ezekiel is looking into the future and seeing her fall. For Persia did not rise to world power until its destruction of the Babylonian Empire many years hence.

Barnes sees it differently: *“Elam answers to the country known to the Greeks and Romans as Elymais, near Persia and Media. The Elamites were a fierce and warlike people. In the records of [Assyrian Emperor] Assurbanipal his final triumph over Elam seems to have been one of his proudest boasts. Elam no doubt in the decline of Assyrian power again asserted its independence and was again crushed by the Chaldaean conqueror.*

Whatever and wherever Elam was, it is now in the pit. Also accused of terrorism. Also brought to shame.

32:26-28. “Meshech-Tubal is there, and all her multitude, her graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; for they spread their terror in the land of the living. And they do not lie with the mighty, the fallen from among the uncircumcised, who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose iniquities are upon their bones; for the terror of the mighty men was in the land of the living. But as for you, you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword.”

Note that these two are thought of as one. We mentioned them in connection with judgments in Ezekiel’s chapter 27. We shall speak again of them when dealing with Gog and Magog. For now, note the possible distinction made between these nations and the others in

the list: “they do *not* lie with the mighty.” The other soldiers seemed to have died in battle, a more “honorable” death, perhaps. These suffered some shameful termination.

Or, as other comments have it, the Hebrew can be read as a question: “Do they not lie with the mighty?”

But again, moot points. They are in the same defiled collection of pit-dwellers. Lost. Dead.

32:29. “Edom is there, her kings and all her princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the pit.”

Edom’s deserved judgment was covered in connection with Ezekiel 25 and 35, which see.

32:30. “The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the pit.”

The Pulpit Commentary is typical of the descriptions of the “princes of the north”:

“The fact that they are coupled with the Sidonians (it is suggestive that Ezekiel names these rather than the Tyrians) points in the direction of Northern Syria, including cities like Damascus, Hamath, Arpad, and others.”

Others include the Tyrians as well. True north of Israel is Tyre, and her judgment was given extensive attention in chapters 26-28.

All of Israel's enemies over the years are therefore to be sent to the pit. Oh there may be various layers of evil that are dis-honored in that place, but to go there at all after thinking such high thoughts of one's self and one's nation is a tragedy.

Magog

I had originally placed chapters 38 and 39 in the final section, Part 5, that speaks of the restoration of Israel. There seems to be an unbroken series of chapters, 37-48, speaking of Israel in the future.

But Ezekiel 38 and 39, though they touch on Israel's coming restoration and are therefore placed in this part of the prophet's work, are not specifically aimed at Israel. Rather they are two more of the judgments of nations that come against Israel.

The challenge here will be to identify these nations, and to speak with certainty, as much as is possible, as to the *timing* of the fulfillment.

Not an easy task. We proceed carefully, saying for the most part only what we *know* to be true, and not trying to solve the insoluble.

Let us begin with searching the Scriptures for the subject of this word from God, just after Ezekiel's introduction:

53. Who is Gog? And where are Magog, Meshech, and Tubal?

38:1-3. The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him. and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal."

Except for the KJV, Bible translations uniformly see Gog as a person or title, the subject of the prophecy, with Magog as his land. The KJV, without inserting "of" before Magog, leaves that second name in doubt. We will follow the majority in this case, a translation that

makes sense of most of the known facts, but with the footnote that in Revelation the question arises again as both names seem to be places.

Gog, used alone, is found eleven times in Scripture. Nine of them are here in Ezekiel. There is a Gog of the family of Reuben in 1 Chronicles. And Gog is mentioned with Magog as part of the final force that will be assembled against the Lord after the Millennial period of Revelation.

Hamon-Gog is used twice, both here in the chapters before us, and means “the multitude of Gog.”

So Ezekiel was made the expert on this Biblical character. Let us see what we can learn of him.

Strong’s Concordance, usually quite reliable, lists the Hebrew name as simply “some northern nation.” But when describing the Greek word of Revelation, which is of Hebrew origin, he says it is “a symbolic name for some future antichrist”. I thought that to be a strange inconsistency, and actually an interpretation rather than a translation. But we’ll see...

Could “Gog” be just a title, and not a name? Note that no name is mentioned when dealing with the king/prince of Tyre. No name, only a title, is mentioned when dealing for those four chapters directed to Egypt. If a title, what does “Gog” mean? Neither *Strong’s* nor any of the commentators help us here.

Interesting note: Some translations see the word *chief* next to *prince* as a proper noun – Rosh – instead of an adjective. That would mean that this Gog is the ruler over Rosh, which some want to make “Russia,” as well as those northern tribes of Meshech and

Tubal. If indeed Meshech and Tubal are Moscow and Tobolsk, “rosh” as Russia may fit. But we have a ways to go...

With *Magog* there are less entries, but with helpful descriptions, in Scripture. In Genesis 10:2 and I Chronicles 1:5 we find the origin of Magog. The man Magog was a grandson of Noah, through Japheth. As with so many of these Genesis 10 names, they are first men, then tribes, then cities or nations: Cush, Egypt, Canaan, Tarshish, Sidon etc.

Here in Ezekiel we establish the place Magog twice, once in this introductory verse, and once in the next chapter when fire is sent to this land.

And again, it is mentioned in connection with Gog in Revelation 20.

Strong calls it “a barbarous northern region” based on Ezekiel’s prophecy and “an antichristian party” in the New Testament equivalent. He is convinced that Gog is the antichrist and Magog is the people of same.

Meshech and Tubal we have already met a couple of times. Interesting to note here is that both of these men are brothers of Magog in Genesis 10, and all three are associated with northern areas of Japheth’s domain in Europe.

A man from the north, a man with great power over the northern areas of Europe, is being singled out by God for a message via Ezekiel. Agreed so far?

54. Is Gog working alone?

38:4-6. “And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great

host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords. Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you.”

Whatever Gog is doing, God is against it and will ultimately not allow it to happen. And Gog is definitely not working alone. He has Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, his own land of Magog, and many others, whose names we associate with twenty-first century entities, though the reality may push things farther into the future. What do we know of the names of places hundreds of years in our future?

- Persia. We move ahead in history later in this message, and must assume here that an empire is not being described, but rather a nation descended from this great land of the past. We would call it Iran today.
- Cush. Ethiopia.
- Put. Libya.
- Gomer. Many want to say “Germany”. Not sure why. Because it begins with a “G” perhaps? This is far from scholarship. The commentaries mostly say that this first son of Japheth – brother of Magog, Meshech, and Tubal, by the way – gave birth to the Cimmerian people. Who? Wikipedia tells us:

“According to Herodotus, the Cimmerians inhabited the region north of the Caucasus and the Black Sea during the 8th and 7th centuries BC (i.e. what is now Ukraine and Russia), although they have not been identified with any specific archaeological culture in the region.”

A pattern developing. Rosh. Moscow. Tobolsk. Ukraine. But no jumping to conclusions!

- Beth-Togarmah. The house of Togarmah. Gomer's son in Genesis is Togarmah. From Hebrewnations.com I quote:

"Togarmah the brother of Ashkenaz has been identified with the region of Tilgarimu just north and northeast of Cilicia in southeast Turkey of today.

The Hittites called this region Tegarama. Also in the Hara and neighboring region east of the Caspian Sea was Tukharistan and a people called Togar or Tukharian in Classical literature. These names relate to Togarmah and are connected with the Turks who emerged from Central Asia, as did others.

In this same general area were the Chumaru, the Chomari, and the Komari which names all connect with the Cimmerians and with Gomer.

Later Togarmah was equated with the Turkish peoples.

- "many peoples." The list above is not complete. But look at the picture. Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Turkey, northern Africa, a huge assembly of nations being pulled back from something. From what are they being withdrawn? Keep reading.

55. When is this awful deed to be attempted?

38:7-9. "Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years

you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them. You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you.”

Before we analyze this crucial text, let me explain:

I am a pre-Millennialist. That means I believe that Jesus will come before the Millennium, reign in Jerusalem during the Millennium, and deal with a serious issue at the end of the Millennium.

I did not arrive at that title through my heritage. Neither my parents nor my churches through the years, nor any commentary, led me to these conclusions. I have simply read and believed what the Scriptures spell out. I read the fine print.

Antichrist will arise, perhaps soon, and cover the earth with his filth and power. Rome will revive around him. All of this is dealt with by Daniel, Jesus, Paul, and John.

These days will see a *successful war* on Israel and the church.

Then Jesus Christ will return, claim His own, keep them from judgment, and then after judging the wicked nations, He will set His saints over the nations that remain. And herein is the way to understand the territory into which we enter. The nations of the Millennium will be served by a perfect government, but their need for a government to begin with is proof that they, the citizens of those nations, are not perfect.

Sin and death will still be a possibility during those thousand years. And towards the end of that period there will be another

amalgamation of nations formed. The malcontents of the Millennial period will gather together under the head of Satan himself, but with another human leader.

But Jesus and His people will be ready. This time the attack on Israel/Jerusalem will be thwarted, and a final end will be made to this pest of the ages.

These are the facts I have gleaned from Scripture and recorded elsewhere in books such as *Who Is the Antichrist?* Since I have struggled with these prophecies elsewhere, I will not deal at length with all of the background material in this present work. I give you this simple outline as a backdrop for what I believe to be the interpretation of Ezekiel 38-39.

It is for the above reasons that I am disappointed that men like Strong and MacArthur and others are referring to Gog as the antichrist. He is surely against Christ, but Satan's animosity takes a different form in this last attack.

Antichrist is, I believe, a resurrected ruler that descends from one of the generals of Alexander the Great (Daniel 10-12). But Gog is clearly from the northlands.

Antichrist is successful for years. Gog's plan is defeated immediately.

Antichrist will not be known for sure until he appears. Gog will be identifiable by God's people for the entire Millennium. They will be expecting his arrival. Jesus will easily put down the rebellion.

Before antichrist, Israel is still expecting judgment. Before Gog, Israel is dwelling securely and no word is spoken against her.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I approach the “when” question of Ezekiel’s prophecy.

Notice that these chapters are placed in the *restoration section* of the book. But even as God restores the Kingdom to Israel, as He promised, the enemy is making a play to stop the plans of Jesus.

“After many days” and “in the latter years” tell of a passage of time well beyond Ezekiel’s day. Some of the names we have been trying to locate may well not ever have existed on a map until the latter days.

These expressions of time are not the final word. “Latter days” can easily refer, as in Joel’s “last days” or “afterward” to the times beginning when Jesus appeared on earth. We are living in the last days even now. But the first clue is in: from Ezekiel’s standpoint, the fulfillment of this prophecy is well into the future.

And, since nothing like what is about to be described has ever happened in history, we must conclude that it is still well into our future also. Thus far, the whole antichrist theory is still intact. But read on:

This man with his many nations will come against a land that is restored from war...

Here is a land that has been at peace for some time, says the Lord. I ask you, has Israel – for you will soon see that Israel is the target – been at peace lately? Is she not always being attacked or threatened by her neighbors? Yet, the attacks are not on the scale as described in Ezekiel.

Today is not the time for Gog. Israel needs a time of peace.

So what about the next descriptor? The people in this land you will attack, were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste.

A people from many peoples. The return of the Jews to Israel, as in our own time since 1948? They had been dispersed to many nations and are now returning. Palestine was a waste until they returned. This is one interpretation.

Or, is this an apt description of the Millennial Kingdom, made up of Gentiles from all over the world, saved and added to the Kingdom by the grace of God? The saints who return with Jesus will be placed over the Kingdom. Jews and Gentiles formed into one new man.

Admittedly, this clue could go either way. But what about the next:

At the time of the attack, the people on the mountains of Israel will be dwelling securely. No threats. No sirens. No stones being thrown over the wall. How secure is Israel in our day?

The evidence still favors an *end-of-Millennium* attack.

56. Will there be any opposition to Gog before Jesus destroys him?

38:10-13. "Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day, thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil scheme and say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,' to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the

nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth. Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its leaders will say to you, 'Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your hosts to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away livestock and goods, to seize great spoil?'"

So the plan enters their mind. I believe it is Satan who stirs them to this way of thinking. Consider Revelation 20:7-8.

"And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea."

Do you see the connection now? The Millennium is nearly over. Satan is released. But he is not repentant. He continues to plot against the plans of God, and is able even in those holy years to find people, even nations, to go along with him. He finds Gog, his new leader, who lives in Magog. The picture that unfolds in Revelation is the very same as in Ezekiel. Hordes of people coming against the Holy City, the headquarters of earth.

Notice the further description of secure Israel. No walls. No bars. No gates. No fences. No locks on the doors. Totally protected by the Son of God.

Note also that they dwell in "the center of the earth." Have you heard Jerusalem of today called the center of the earth? But one day it will indeed be the center, when King Jesus rules from it.

Meanwhile, there is some tepid defiance. Businessmen. Merchants from sea and land who see their business going up in smoke. Remember, not all Millennialists will be holy. The unregenerated

nations will continue to act like men act today, protecting their assets. Sheba and Dedan are districts in Arabia, Tarshish is representative of the far western enterprises.

However there are those who see the questions asked by these merchants as indication that they are glad about what is going to happen. This rule of Jesus has been so restrictive. They want to know, "Are we about to be freed from it?"

57. Why does God welcome this attack?

38:14-16. "Therefore, son of man, prophesy, and say to Gog, Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day when my people Israel are dwelling securely, will you not know it? You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army. You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes."

This attack is going to be so easily thwarted by the Almighty that He is anticipating showing His great power and authority to the nations. One last time Satan will have a chance to gather the peoples of the world in an all-out aggression against his former Master. But when it is all over, Satan will be no more. Read the history of the end of this raid in Revelation 20:

"And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who

had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

The devil is finally finished. After a one-thousand-year separation, he and his old partners the antichrist and his companion prophet meet up again in the eternal lake.

This scenario is described by Ezekiel in similar terms:

58. We continue to ask, is this Gog the pre-millennial antichrist, or the millennium’s end time warrior?

38:17-23. “Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? But on that day, the day that Gog shall come against the land of Israel, declares the Lord GOD, my wrath will be roused in my anger. For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel. The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord GOD. Every man’s sword will be against his brother. With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur. So I will

show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

The passage begins with God recollecting a time or times when He spoke about this coming disaster through other prophets. There is no such reference to a “Gog” in the prophets we have in our Old Testament. Commentators therefore suggest that God spoke generically about this coming day, in passages like Isaiah 14, where the ultimate ruin of Satan is chronicled:

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north...”

Far reaches of the north? Here is one clue that this one being cursed in Isaiah is connected to Gog of the north, not antichrist of the Middle East and Rome.

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.”

Recall that Satan was bound after his episode with antichrist and thrown into the pit, Revelation 20:1-3. His ultimate fate in a lake of fire is not seen by Isaiah.

The Isaiah passage is not definite either here or in 27:1 where a serpent is punished with a strong sword.

Jeremiah mentions wrath on the head of the wicked in the “latter days.” Yes, this could refer to the coming of Christ, but also that final conflict following the Millennium.

The other possibility of interpretation is that God did indeed speak about these days and this man to prophets who were not instructed to write it down and pass it on. Little is mentioned even by John, the obvious reason being that Gog will not arise in the lifetime of any members of God's church. It is good to know how things will eventually turn out, but not necessary to know details of an event to occur at least one thousand years from now.

So also is the narrative about "eternity." Can you think of anything God has spelled out for the New Jerusalem beyond those last verses of the Apocalypse? No worry. We'll have a millennium to hear about and anticipate what is coming.

So I still have no proof to share with you regarding the timing of Gog being synced with the time of antichrist. All the evidence points to an end-of-the-millennium scene.

A great earthquake is predicted for this time. Mountains will be thrown down. Cliffs will fall. The attackers will begin attacking each other, in a last bid for power in a dying earth. Upheavals in the living creatures of earth and sea. Rain and hail and fire and brimstone will fall.

Yes, some of this will happen when and even before Jesus comes. But pieced together with the end of Revelation 20 and the beginning of 21, I believe we are seeing the crumbling of earth as we know it. In that general period known as the end of the Millennium, in those last few years, a series of events take place that have been recorded for us. Consider John's testimony next to Ezekiel's, as Revelation 21 follows Revelation 20 without a break in the original...:

- Fire from heaven consumes the invading army. [Ezekiel would add here the aftermath of that cremation, at least a seven-year period.]
- The great white Throne appears. Earth and sky flee.
- The sea gives up its dead.
- The lake of fire is populated by Satan and his followers.
- A new heaven and a new earth appear.

Peter adds that everything will be dissolved in that day, burned up, and all the works exposed.

Satan has made his last move. God counters it with the final destruction of all things. Ezekiel has been catapulted into the end, not only of civilization as we know it, but of Terra Firma.

Thus far, chapter 38. A man, empowered by Satan, rises in the far north, gathers people together while Jesus and His flock are secure in Jerusalem, and believes that he can still take over the world. He will win somehow, against all odds.

Now, one more chapter. Does chapter 39 take us away from the ultimate end, and bring us only to the antichrist one thousand years earlier? Let's see.

59. Is there any mention of judgment falling on Israel in the Gog attack?

39:1-6. "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. 2And I will turn

you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares the Lord GOD. I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”

One clear feature in both of these chapters is the absence of any condemnation of Israel, which unfortunately is the subject of most of the rest of the book of Ezekiel. Chapter after chapter of warning of coming judgment, but nothing of this sort here except a review in the final verses of the former case God had had against His people.

Situated as it is in the last chapters of the book, the Gog menace is clearly a portion of the reconstituted phase of Israel. Israel is dwelling securely with her Messiah, no more to suffer at His hands, living righteously and holily. Only Satan’s hordes are to be judged now, and they rise up to receive that very thing.

In contrast to a secure Israel is the Israel of our own day and the coming Holocaust to threaten Israel in the final days of this age in which we live. Israelites are told to flee by Jesus. “Jacob’s Trouble” is prophesied by more than one seer of God. “The Jewish problem” was not only the domain of the persecutors of Israel through the ages. God has been angry and has not yet finished his dealings with that people.

But in Ezekiel 38 and 39, as well as Revelation 20, none of that is visible.

This chapter begins much like chapter 38, with a denunciation of Gog, yet a drawing forth of that final enemy to the mountains of Israel with all his accomplices from the nations. Again we look to Revelation 20:

“ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

Gog is called forth. By God Himself is all of this set up. But something goes horribly wrong with this would-be destroyer of the people of God and their Master. Again, the apostle John’s vision:

And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them...”

Ezekiel says they will fall in the open field. The “broad plain of the earth,” says John. Fire will not only consume the army, but it seems that the homelands of the attackers will also experience a burning.

60. Is this the very end of Satanic meddling?

39:7-8. “And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares the Lord GOD. That is the day of which I have spoken.”

Yes, this is the introduction to the final judgment day. God's saints will have been judged in Jesus. They will stand before His judgment seat at His second coming for rewards. There is no condemnation to them now.

But the rest of the dead are resurrected shortly after Gog's defeat and judged according to their own works.

Israel – and all that that word entails – will get this final look at the holiness of God and the justice of heaven before heaven and earth are all replaced. All of the Holy land and all the nations that served it for one thousand years will now see exactly who this God is, in preparation for a cataclysmic change to all things.

God's name will not be profaned any more. How could this be said at the judgment of antichrist before the Millennium? Knowing that Gog will come one thousand years later, would God make such a statement? This is the last judgment.

61. What is the aftermath of the Gog attempt?

39:9-10. "Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears; and they will make fires of them for seven years, so that they will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons. They will seize the spoil of those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, declares the Lord GOD."

First, seven years of fires, a constant reminder of the fire that fell from Heaven.

As we approach the end of the Millennium, it is safe to say, is it not, that Jesus has done away with nuclear weapons, bombs, and all the rest? Is it not Isaiah's promise that they of the Millennial period will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks"? The reign of Messiah will be enforced by supernatural means, and men will not learn the science of war any longer.

I believe that explains why the Gog assemblage is armed with only bows and arrows and clubs and spears. Slowly over the decades-centuries, evil men will begin amassing such primitive toys as a possibility for such an attack as they attempt now. This is my assumption.

At any rate, the dwellers in Jesus' land still have no use for childish weaponry, and for the next seven years following the attack, the stockpile gathered from dead attackers will be slowly consumed by fires. Anything of value on the dead soldiers will also be gathered up and distributed to those in need. God's fields will not be allowed to be cluttered up as closing time approaches.

39:11-16. "On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers, east of the sea. It will block the travelers, for there Gog and all his multitude will be buried. It will be called the Valley of Hamon-Gog. For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. All the people of the land will bury them, and it will bring them renown on the day that I show my glory, declares the Lord GOD. They will set apart men to travel through the land regularly and bury those travelers remaining on the face

of the land, so as to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make their search. And when these travel through the land and anyone sees a human bone, then he shall set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-Gog. (Hamonah is also the name of the city.) Thus shall they cleanse the land.”

Second, seven months for burying dead bodies.

We assume the seven months are the first part of the seven years above. Bodies and their weapons and whatever other possessions are found, all of this takes place in a few months. The burning of the stockpile is firewood for seven years following.

So Gog is given his own cemetery in the land where he fell. It will be located east of the sea, which the commentators say is the Dead Sea. An appropriate place for these folks, for sure.

It will be named, or nick-named, the “Valley of the Travelers” or “passengers” or “foreigners.” That is, the valley of those who trespassed against Israel in its final days. Also known as the Valley of Hamon-Gog, or “Hamonah”, “Hamon” meaning multitude.

It will be such a huge area of burial, that those who normally would pass through that land to points east, will have to find another way.

As to those masses of people assigned to the burial task, they will be considered honorable people, and their God an honorable God, for dealing with their enemies in this way.

But none of this negates the fact that fire comes from Heaven to destroy these evil ones, and that the birds and beasts are invited to feast on their dead bodies. Even with fire and predator, there will be much work for the “under-taker.”

39:17-20. "As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: 'Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. 18You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of he-goats, of bulls, all of them fat beasts of Bashan. 19And you shall eat fat till you are filled, and drink blood till you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. 20And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all kinds of warriors,' declares the Lord GOD."

Third, the supper of flesh.

You say, wait! I've heard this before. Yes indeed. Revelation 19. The Rider on the white horse, Jesus Himself, comes back to the planet and executes judgment globally. Oh such bloodshed! Such calamity! No one is saying that such a feast will not happen then. Jesus so declares it.

But I must remind you of the next chapter of Revelation, the one we have been analyzing in connection with Ezekiel's words. A number of soldiers "like the sand of the sea" consumed by the fire of God! What is to keep the birds and animals away from this delicacy? In Ezekiel, I believe, we are seeing a second invitation.

Did I say "second"? Jeremiah 12:9 calls for judgment on Israel that demands yet another supper. Oh, and so does Psalm 79:2. Such slaughters have been common throughout history.

62. Why does God execute judgment so powerfully in the earth?

39:21-24 “And I will set my glory among the nations, and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.”

God’s glory is at the center of all He does. He is to be known and praised by all who wish to live eternally.

I understand that these verses could favor a beginning-of-the-millennium interpretation. I do not say that my explanation of these two chapters is inspired. But you have seen the clear connections I have made between Ezekiel and John. If I have seen things correctly, this ending passage would be a final summary of God’s dealing with His people over the centuries.

That is, God has protected His secure people who trusted in Him. But Israel did not always trust. They were a wicked lot who had to go into captivity and much more, until a remnant finally surfaced with whom He could rule the world.

Nevertheless, says God, those days are over – whether just over or long over, reader, you must decide – and my Israel knows Me now and will from this day on.

These words seem to be God's epitaph on Planet Earth. He did what He came to do, call out a people for His name. He ruled the earth, and protected His people even to the very end. Now let the ages of eternity begin.

Part Five...

In Part Five, we will examine the City where God's people will spend one thousand years! Restoration is coming, says Ezekiel, in spite of all the awful things I have had to say from the Spirit of God, good days are coming.

We will finish this 39th chapter in Part Five, as well as go back to chapters 36 and 37 (the dry bones!) take a look at portions of six other restoration passages, and then zero in on that New Temple and its environs described in 40-48. A tall assignment, but a happy one...

A Study of Ezekiel

Part Five (final):

Restoration!

(Portions of) chapters

11, 16, 17, 20, 28, 34, 39

(All of) chapters 36, 37, 40-48

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3. He does what He wills. 5-31
4. Twenty questions & answers. 12-15
 5. Jude. 6-20
6. Thro the Bible in 52 lessons. 5-12
 7. Romans I. 11-19
 8. Romans II. 11-19
9. Of Jesus, Grace, and Salvation. 3-16
 10. Who is Jesus? 12-13
 11. One of them. 12-15
 12. Thro the Bible Q & A. 3-17
 13. Speak My Language! 12-20
 14. A Study of Galatians 12-20
 15. A Study of Ezekiel, Part One 3-21
 16. A Study of Ezekiel, Part Two 3-21
 17. A Study of Ezekiel, Part Three 4-21
 18. A Study of Ezekiel, Part Four 5-21

END-TIME PROPHECY:

1. Caught up but when? 4-12
2. The last message of Daniel. 4-12
3. The scroll of Revelation. 4-12
 4. The last things. 3-16
 5. John and Daniel. 3-16
 6. Yes, we will. 8-18
 7. There are seven kings. 2-16
8. Who comes first, Christ or antichrist? 8-13
 9. Coming our way. 12-15
 10. Who is the antichrist? 4-12
 11. The Kingdom Handbook. 4-12
12. The Seventy Sevens of Gabriel. 9-20
 13. The Greater Reset. 1-21

SCARLET THREADS:

1. Part 1. 5-12
2. Part 2. 5-12
3. Part 3. 6-12
4. Part 4. 6-12
5. Part 5. 6-12
6. Parts 6-7. 6-12
7. Scarlet Threads 3-16

HACKBERRY HOUSE:

1. Volume 1. 6-12
2. Volume 2. 6-12
3. Volume 3. 6-12
4. Volume 4. 6-12
5. Volume 5. 12-14

OTHER RELIGIONS:

1. Jehovah's true witnesses agree: Jesus is God. 5-12
 2. On the witness stand. 11-16
 3. A Christian's Guide to Koran. 6-12
 4. Jesus: First, best, last. 6-12
5. A Christian view of Islam, Muhammad and Koran. 4-16
 6. Submitted to His will. 12-15

THE CHURCH:

1. The Spirit in the church, today. 6-12
2. The church and the Spirit in her. 4-16
 3. A time to speak. 2-18
4. To the church of Albany Park. 11-13

PERSONAL:

1. The road I've taken. 4-16
2. Potpourri. 4-16
3. The change of a lifetime. 6-12
4. Cries from among us. 12-19
5. Thoughts on the "Passion of Christ." 6-12
6. Word Pictures from "my" Romania. 1-21