

Ezekiel

walk-thru

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**A Voice in the Wilderness
P.O.Box 9531
Spokane, WA 99209 USA**

www.a-voice.org

The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Ezekiel

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The Word of Jehovah (Ezekiel 1-2)

"..the Word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest...and the hand of Jehovah was upon him there..." (1:3)

While, to most people, the notable thing about this first chapter of Ezekiel is the vision, we are not going to address it, other than to realize that Ezekiel saw it. How can we propose to understand something which Ezekiel, himself, being the one who saw it, didn't fully comprehend. His description is full of comments like, "the likeness of", "this was their appearance", "their appearance was like", "the appearance...as it were..", etc. When Ezekiel's reaction to "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah" (1:28) was to "fall on [his] face", we cannot presume to understand it from Ezekiel's mere words.

But it seems that quite often, when God called some of His more notable prophets to ministry, He shows a vision of Himself. Moses began by being introduced to God from out of the burning bush. (Ex3) And as Israel was getting firmly entrenched into their rebellion, just after God has delivered them from Egypt, Moses asks God, "Please, show me Your glory" (Exe33:18), whereupon God covers over Moses in a "cleft of the rock" as He passes by and lets Moses see His "back". (vs22-23) As Isaiah is about to be commissioned for service to a people with dull hearts and "their ears heavy, and shut their eyes", before God calls, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" where Isaiah responds, "Here am I! Send me" (Is6:8-10); God shows Isaiah a vision of Heaven; whereupon he sees his own vileness, "Woe is me, for I am undone.." (vs5)

So, Ezekiel reacts to God's glory by falling on his face. In his sinful state, all he can do is fall prostrate. If we were to do a study of any people to whom God revealed himself, we would see the same reaction; one of falling prostrate. Even the disciple "whom Jesus loved", who leaned against Jesus at the Last Supper (Jn13:25), in Revelation when John sees Jesus' glory, he also "fell at His feet as dead". (Rev1:17)

But another thing we would see, if we did such a study, is that when God speaks with His own, He does not leave them prostrate. Jesus lays His hand on John and says "Do not be terrified; I am the First and the Last". God speaks to Ezekiel and says "stand on your feet." (2:1) But notice; apparently Ezekiel could not do so on his own strength. It says that when God spoke to him, "the Spirit entered" him and "set [him] on [his] feet". (vs2)

Regarding the Holy Spirit, we come to understand that there is a difference between the O.T., and the N.T. for the Church. Ezekiel, in his natural state, while being a Jewish priest, nevertheless when he sees God's glory, falls prostrate, until the Holy Spirit enters him.

Now, for the Church, one of its characteristics is that it is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If a person is not indwelt, they are not a Christian. (Rom8:9) Thus, we "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb4:16) We "[have] boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus" (Heb10:19). Thus, when the Church meets Jesus, do we come prostrate, with our faces to the ground? Or when we see Him will we be standing "on our feet"? 'Just a little something I wonder about, when daydreaming, imagining what it will be like when we see Him.

But notice a subtle little -word- choice in 1:3. Depending on which translation you read from it might say that the Word of Jehovah came "to" Ezekiel, or that it came "unto" him. I came to notice this matter recently while going through Ezekiel in the VW-Edition project. Of all the books in the Bible, Ezekiel has the greatest concentration of the expression, "..the Word of Jehovah came unto me, saying..."

So what, if one says, "to"; and another says, "unto"? Indeed, if you look up "unto" in the dictionary, it's first definition is "to". It is a matter of understanding how God's Word comes upon His servants. There are many who claim to receive visions and 'words'. In ch13 God will condemn them for receiving "..vanity and lying divination" as they "hope that their word may be confirmed". (13:6) The typical expression of false prophets is something of the order, "It suddenly came to me". Something pops into their minds, and it comes "to" them. Does it come from a demon? Or merely out of their own imaginations?

But when God gives a Word to His servants, it is as Isaiah describes it, "The BURDEN against..." (Is31:1, 51:1, 17:1, etc) Where Ezekiel speaks of the "Word of Jehovah UNTO" him, Isaiah speaks of the "BURDEN". Jeremiah speaks of God's Word as a "fire", which when he desired not to speak because his flesh was worn out from the abuse from the hearers, God's Word could not be contained. He was "weary of holding back, and could not" (Jer20:9) Those who penned the original manuscripts of the Scriptures were "propelled along by the Holy Spirit" (2Pt1:21)

If we understand the etymology of the word "unto", we see two words, "on" and "to". God's Holy Spirit comes "upon" the servant. God lays His word "on" them, as for Isaiah it was the "burden" that had been laid "on" him. God's Word does not merely come "to" a person, so as to have the potential to be confused as being the person's 'own' word. But God lays it upon that person. Thus, when God brings a Word, it is -UN-to the person.

So... The Word of Jehovah comes "unto" Ezekiel; and God shows Ezekiel some appearances and likenesses of Himself and His glory. Ezekiel has no doubt at all that this is Jehovah revealing Himself to him. God's Word comes UNTO Ezekiel repeatedly throughout the book. And as we

progress, we will see Ezekiel being a rather unique prophet, of all the prophets of Israel, when we see what God requires of him. When Israel and the world see the fulfillment of the various prophecies, "they will know that I am Jehovah". And as they observe how Ezekiel presents God's Word, they will also "know that a prophet has been among them". (2:5b)

To a Rebellious House (Ezekiel 2)

"And He said to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day. For they are impudent and hardhearted children. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah. As for them, whether they hear or whether they forbear; for they are a rebellious house; yet they will know that a prophet has been among them." (vs3-5)

Well, here we see two essential elements. 1) The audience, and 2) the message. And an incidental addendum, 3) the messenger.

Ezekiel is being sent to "God's people". Israel. The nation that came from Abraham's loins through promise. The nation called the "pupil of His eye". (Zech2:8) The nation about which God said to Pharaoh through Moses, "Let My people go!" (Ex5:1) The nation God delivered with His "outstretched arm" and "great judgments". (Ex6:6) The nation of which God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer31:3)

How does God describe them 'now'? They have "transgressed" against God. In other words, they have been disobedient to God's Law. They are "impudent". That means, they have "offensive boldness" before God. They are insolent and impertinent. Shameless. They are "hardhearted". In other words, when God tries to guide them, they refuse to hear. They are "rebellious". They know the right way, but are stubborn, and instead are going their own ways.

Hmm! This sounds like an entity we see today, doesn't it. An entity which calls itself the "church". Pretty much what is described in the book of Judas ("Jude" in other translations). So, while Ezekiel was sent to the "rebellious" house of Israel, we will see a lot of parallels to today's "church". The same "Spirit" which entered Ezekiel to go to Israel is the same "Spirit" who "says to the churches" today. (Rev2:7,11,etc)

And so, now that we know the audience... what is the message? When any man of God proclaims to those claiming to be God's people, what is the message? Gleanings from seminary notes, writings of famous authors, the prescribed outlines ordered from the Sunday school publishing company, summaries and quotes from commentaries, and ???

God says to Ezekiel, "I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, **THUS SAYS THE LORD JEHOVAH.**" Remember in the previous lesson we observed that the "Word of Jehovah came unto Ezekiel". If Jehovah gives the Word as a burden, 'that' is the very Word the man-of-God proclaims. The man of God is like a telegraph operator. The operator does not give his own message; but the customer comes to the window,

gives the message; and the operator merely relays the message 'as given' to him.

Later in the book we will see God's judgment upon those acting as prophets, proclaiming their 'own' thoughts. God condemns them for this. And again, in this, we will see parallels to today. Most of those out there today are not proclaiming, "Thus says the Lord". And this is why I periodically exhort the readers of these writings to be sure to look up the Scripture references. Don't just be lulled to sleep by the fact that some references are included. Look them up. Understand God's Word. Read the contexts. And yes, if I am not proclaiming God's Word, tell me. But like I say at other times, if you want to challenge something, be sure you are "rightly dividing the Word of Truth". (2Tm2:15) There are some who write in, complaining about this or that, but in most cases never bother to look into the Scriptures. In some more rare cases a person may present Scripture, but they do so merely proof-texting their preconceptions, not understanding that which they preconceive. Do not rely on traditions, or the teachings of the great/famous men. Rely upon the Scriptures.

And then, finally, the messenger. God says to Ezekiel, "..do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house. You shall speak My Words to them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious." (vs6-7)

"..yet they will know that a prophet has been among them." (vs5b)

The Messenger (Ezekiel 2-3)

"..yet they will know that a prophet has been among them." (2:5b)

Yes, they are MOST rebellious. But proclaim, anyway. Don't be timid. They may reject the Word. Proclaim it anyway. Some will hear, but others won't. It may seem like wasted effort and time. Proclaim it anyway. Don't "be rebellious like that rebellious house.." (2:8) If God gives a Word to the rebellious house, and the prophet withholds the Word, he is being disobedient. It is a thankless job. But the burden he carries is from the Lord. Remember, the Word of Jehovah comes ON-to him.

If you have ever "thought about" the ministry, but "wondered" whether or not you should..? DON'T! Don't bother! If you are merely "wondering" about it, it is not from the Lord. When the Lord gives the burden, it burns like a fire and you cannot get rid of it. A true prophet of God lives, eats and sleeps the Word. Ezekiel was given a "scroll of a book" to eat. (2:9-10) You see, God's Word becomes a very part of God's messenger. There are no other "options" for such a person as to what he does. It is God-ordained.

Oh, but you are so 'harsh and judgmental!' "..there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe." (2:10) Oh, but, give us 'happy things' to think about. Give us things that are 'uplifting'.

"Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads." (3:8) To Ezekiel God says, "..receive into your heart all My Words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears. And Go! ...speak to them and tell them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." (3:10-11)

Ezekiel is sent to his own people. (3:6) Many of today's prophets are sent to the "church". We do not speak of strange things, of mysteries. It is not that there is a lack of understanding. It is like we often say, they are "NOT WILLING TO LISTEN to you" God says "because they are not willing to listen to Me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted." (3:7) Notice that word "all" in there. People often complain when we essentially categorize "all" the "church" as being apostate. This is what Ezekiel was sent to. This is what today's prophets are sent to.

Any of you who read this, who are also fellow-messengers of God, take courage in this. Be strong in God's Word. Ezekiel was made "like adamant stone, harder than flint" (3:9) in his presentation to Israel. Yes, we are condemned by the hearers for being "harsh". But to whom do

we answer? Who called us to this ministry? What is the stark reality of our responsibility? Notice...

"When I say to the wicked, You shall die the death, and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." (3:18) If you read the passage, you see the responsibility. Warning the wicked to repent. Warning the righteous not to fall into sin. The "job" of the prophet is not to make people "feel good", but to "WARN THEM". If the prophet is faithful to his mission, then the blood of each hearer is upon themselves. If they repent, they are delivered from judgment. If they refuse, because "they are a rebellious house" (3:27), they reap their own consequences. But you have delivered yourself from retribution. What is God's judgment against an unfaithful prophet? What does God mete out when it says, "his blood I will require at your hand"? Dear prophet, do you really want to have to find out? Yes, if you are unfaithful, the wicked will still die in their own sin, because the "soul who sins shall die". (18:4) But I would not want to have to stand before God with that blood on my hands!

Object Lesson: Siege and Affliction (Ezekiel 4-5)

"You also, son of man, take a clay tablet and lay it before you, and engrave on it a city, Jerusalem. And lay siege against it, build a siege wall against it, and heap up a mound against it; set camps against it also, and place battering rams against it all around...lie also on your left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it...three hundred and ninety days...and when you have completed them, lie again on your right side...forty days [for the sins of Judah]...and surely I will put bands on you so that you cannot turn from one side to another till you have completed the days of your siege." (4:1-8)

And lest we end up quoting the entire passage, let me urge you to get your Bible out and look up these two chapters and read them to get the entire picture. Ezekiel is to lie on his two sides, bound there by God, having his food and water sitting by him. God originally says that his cooking fuel should be "human excrement" (vs12), and when he complains, God relents and says to use cow manure. (vs15)

If Jeremiah is called the 'weeping prophet' because he continually says, "Streams of water run down my eyes for the destruction of the daughter of my people" (Lam3:48), Ezekiel is the 'object lesson' prophet. He, Ezekiel himself, -is- continually the object lesson.

My, my! I wonder how many of us could be the kind of servant to God that Ezekiel was. And actually, unless God had been forcing Ezekiel, he might not have been doing what he did, either. Something we did not address previously, when Ezekiel is sent to the Israeli captives, God physically lifts him up and carries him away. And it says that Ezekiel went, essentially in today's vernacular, kicking and screaming, "So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of Jehovah was strong upon me." (3:14)

And furthermore, Ezekiel is sent as a prophet to God's people, but God makes him a mute. God says he will be confined, but his mouth will be closed so he cannot rebuke those who take him. (3:25-26) But then, when it is time for him to proclaim "Thus says the Lord Jehovah" (3:27), that God will loose his tongue so he can speak. And throughout the book we will see his mouth being close and/or opened by God. In other words, Ezekiel, while being God's prophet, does not have a will of his own. When God wants him to speak, God opens his mouth. When he is done, his tongue is tied. Somewhat as though God might have been reaching down and turning him "on" and "off" like a water faucet. In other words, whenever Ezekiel was to speak, all he was permitted to speak was "Thus says Jehovah".

And so here, Ezekiel is tied down to the ground for over a year. He

ate his food "by weight" and drank his water "by measure" (4:10-11) Stuck in one spot, not able to move. One wonders if he got "bed sores"? Perhaps his joints all stiffened up from lack of movement? Beating sun, shivering cold and rain... there was Ezekiel in front of his G.I. Joe battle field, day and night. Cooking his food with cow manure. Can you just imagine his own personal hygiene! (Use your imaginations) And since he is being an object lesson, we can also assume he is "wasting away" from malnutrition, in view of the people. (4:17), because his eating "by weight" isn't really quite enough to fill him.

All for what purpose? The "iniquity of the house of Israel" (4:5) and the "iniquity of the house of Judah" (4:6) All of this as "a -SIGN- to the house of Israel" (4:3b)

Furthermore, when he gets done with this, he -really- "loses it"! He is told to shave all his hair off, and start whacking at it all over with a sword, and burning some in the fire. (5:2,4)

Again, why? When God called Israel out of Egypt, He set her "in the midst of the nations and the lands all around her" (5:5) On other occasions we have observed about Israel, that were all the continents to be pulled back together into one giant land-mass as they were at one time, that the location where Israel sits would be the geographical center of the world. God set Israel there to be a witness to the world of Himself. As a "light to the nations" (Is42:6, 49:6, 60:3, Ac13:46-47, 1Pt2:9)

But what did Israel do?

"And she has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness.." (5:6) And notice... not only did Israel sin against God, what was the nature of that sin? "..wickedness MORE THAN THE NATIONS,..because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you" (5:6-7) Israel was like the typical preacher's kids. It is said that preacher's kids are either -real- "good", or -real- "bad". And when they are bad, they often behave worse than the unsaved/unchurched.

And so, what is God's verdict? "Behold I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations" (5:8) Israel was set in the midst of the nations to shine God's Light to them; but instead, they rebelled. Therefore, God is going to make an "example" out of them before those very nations to whom they were supposed to give God's Light. Do you ever wonder why "the Jew" always seems to be hounded and persecuted more than any other ethnicity? It is God's judgment against her. "..because of all [her] abominations" (5:9)

Just as Ezekiel was to have originally cooked using his own excrement (that which issued from himself) as fuel, "therefore fathers shall eat

their sons in your midst" (due to the famine). Just as Ezekiel went wild chopping up his own hair with a sword, God says, "I will scatter [them] to all the winds". God was bringing upon Israel every imaginable famine, pestilence, sword, exile. Not only were they beaten, raped, killed, and tortured in other ways, and killed by wild animals...when those left alive were taken exile, it is said that some nations would chain the prisoners together; but not with mere shackles. They would put hooks through the flesh/muscle above the shoulder, and chain them together in that fashion. (2Ch33:11, Am4:2) And you can be sure there were no pain-killers.

And God says to them, "My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them..." (5:11,13)

"..and they shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them." (5:13)

And Ezekiel is the object lesson of what is 'going to' happen to them. They will taunt him..."Oh, that crazy ol' coot over there, have you seen the latest with that crazy prophet? Haw, haw, haw!"

Now... what is the whole point of considering these things about Israel, when we are predominantly Gentiles, and many of you who read this have a label as being part of Christ's "Church"?

Israel called themselves as being of Jehovah. But they rebelled. Ezekiel was sent in the manner that he was, because they were "a rebellious house". (2:5) Today the Gentile entity calling itself "Church" boasts in its own self-righteousness. And Paul warns, "Do not be highminded, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either." (Rom11:20-21)

Remember these things! Are you listening? To whom is it that Jesus promises the verdict of, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work out lawlessness!" (Mt7:23) ?? Those continually saying, "Lord, Lord" (vs21-22), and doing what appear to be great miracles of God. Yes, an entity that calls itself, "Church". Forget about grace, grace, graaeesss! If you are a pretender, a changeling, a wolf in sheep's attire; intoning "Lord, Lord"... hear this warning...

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
(Heb10:31)

What we read about Israel is an "example" to us. (1Cor10:6) Israel, called by God's name, turned away from God and was judged as the "rebellious house". All their rebellion and judgment is recorded for us for what purpose? "Now these things became examples for us, so that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. Neither

become idolaters as [were] some of them. As it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them prostituted, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us test Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come..."

And now take heed to this next verse...

"Therefore let him who thinks he is [firmly] established take heed that he not fall." (1Cor10:6-12)

Yes, yes, I know. When some of us proclaim this strongly, continually, there are some of you for whom we just 'tick-you-off'. But I don't know of any modern-day prophet (proclaimer/for-TH-teller) who has been called upon to be subjected to what Ezekiel demonstrated to Israel. If you remain hard-of-heart, no greater object lessons in excremental graphic detail will melt you. As Abraham said to the "rich man", that his relatives would not believe even if someone were to rise from the dead back to warn them of the horrors of Hell (Lk16); it was proven out, as Lazarus -was- raised; and rather than repenting and believing, the rulers instead sought to kill Lazarus, too. (Jn12:10-11)

But the true man of God continues faithfully anyway, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, for they are most rebellious" (2:7)

But you know what? If you are of the rebellious sort and scoff at what God is trying to reach through to you with, there will come a day when you will "know that a prophet has been among" you. (2:5) Understand that all the judgments God promises are sure; they are certain. "Anyone who rejected Moses' Law dies without mercy before two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled on the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of Grace?" (Heb10:28-29)

"I, Jehovah, have spoken." (5:17) Amen!

Slain Before Your Idols (Ezekiel 6-7)

"O mountains of Israel, hear the Word of the Lord Jehovah! Behold I, even I, will bring a sword against you, and I will destroy your high places... I will cast down your slain before your idols. And I will lay the corpses of the children of Israel before their idols, and I will scatter your bones all around your altars." (~6:3-5)

What were some of Israel's idols? The one that gets mentioned most is Baal. The famous account of Elijah praying down fire upon the water-drenched sacrifice was a "contest" between the Most High and Baal. Remember who "won"? And Elijah had all of Baal's prophets killed. (1Kg18)

Is Baal worshiped today? The evil Queen Jezebel was the one whose little finger wicked King Ahab was wrapped around. They were Israel's patrons of Baal. Thyatira is condemned for allowing "Jezebel to teach". (Rev2:20) She calls herself a "prophetess". Isn't today's "church" busy enthroning their Jezebel prophetesses? In considering the "Seven Churches" we have seen her "host" offered on the altar, eaten as the so-called "body of Christ". She is condemned for leading astray "My servants to prostitute themselves to sexual immorality". Just the other day one of my customers was one of these 'Jezebels', a leader of some sort of "ministry", with "paint on the eyes" (2Kg9:30, Jer4:30), all busting-out, with the demeanor and appearance of one who was "after men", more than one serving the Most High.

There was Molech, part of their Baal worship. Throughout Leviticus Israel was warned against letting their "seed pass through the fire to Molech". (Lev18:21) And what was one of Solomon's faults? He "built a high place..for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon" (1Kg11:7)

What did this mean, to "pass their seed through the fire"? The image of Molech was hollow. A fire was built inside to where the image would become red-hot. While the drums were beating loudly, the parents would carry their as-yet-live babies and place them into the red-hot 'hands' of Molech, where the babies would scream and thrash about until dead.

Is anything like this done today in "christian" America? We are not so "barbaric" as to "burn" our babies. Oh, no! Instead, we hire professionals to rip them, limb from limb, suck their brains out while they are still kicking and screaming! We wail and mourn the barbaric radicals who brought down our WTC towers, killing thousands. But the same number who died on 9-11 are murdered -DAILY- in the womb! Offered to the gods of convenience, life-style and immorality. In ancient times they beat drums loudly to muffle the screams. Today, the screams are muffled within the womb! Jezebel's followers have made their own bodies into altars of sacrifice! And those who would seek to rescue these

babies are not hailed as "heroes", like NYC's firefighters. No! They are hunted down to be imprisoned and prosecuted!

Solomon also worshiped the Queen of heaven. Even after most of Israel had been taken captive, the remnants still rebelled, on their way to Egypt, insisting that they -would- worship her. (Jer44:17)

Do we see her adulation today? How many so-called "christians" pray to the one they call "Mary"?

You know, when Israel insisted on worshiping her, they said, "But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything, and have been consumed by the sword and by famine.." (Jer44:18) In other words, things were good when we were in idolatry.

As I sat down to begin this study, to consider where the Lord might take this series next, I first read a few e-mails that had come in. Amongst them was a forward, and in it was expressed the current Bush/Powell doctrines regarding Israel and a "Palestinian State". Speaking of Israel as being "occupiers" of Palestinian territory. Of Israelis who have built and settled in territories Israel won when Arab countries attacked her in the past, as being "settlers". That the current US administration is developing a policy of 'thought' that, had the US been more involved in forcing Israel to give up some of its God-given land to the Palestinians, that the attack on the WTC would not have happened. Thus, one way to forestall further terrorist attacks is to force a plan to legitimize the PLO terrorist organization into a "viable" national entity.

Well, Mr. Bush, it is PRECISELY -BECAUSE- the US has been continually against Israel (not to mention our other abominations!) that the WTC attack happened. Notice how God responded to Israel's reasonings as to why they worshipped the queen of heaven:

"The incense that you burned [all over the place]; did not Jehovah remember them, and did it not come into His mind? Yes, so that Jehovah could no longer hold back because of the evil of your doings, because of the abominations which you have committed! Because you have burned incense, and because you have sinned against Jehovah, nor walked in His Law, nor in His statutes, nor did you walk in His testimonies, therefore this evil has happened to you, as it is this day."
(~Jer44:21-23)

Well, notice God's judgment against Israel. (America, with similar sins, are you paying attention??) Where their altars were, there they would be slain. And notice God's attitude in the judgment:

"My eye will not spare you, nor will I have pity; but I will repay your

ways, and your abominations will be in your midst..." (7:4)

Oh-but! God is a God of luuuuuuv! God accepts you "just as you are". That is God's graeeeessss! Ahh, but! Those who have been proclaiming these things are false prophets. God did not send them. "The prophets prophesy lies in My name; I did not send them, nor have I commanded them, nor did I speak to them. They prophesy to you a false vision and a worthless divination, and a thing of no value, and the deceit of their heart." (Jer14:14) Yes, God is love (1Jn4:8), but He is also a God of "fury". "Now upon you I will soon pour out My fury, and spend My anger upon you; I will judge you ACCORDING TO YOUR WAYS, and I will REPAY YOU for all your abominations." (7:8) "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Rom12:19, Heb10:30)

Then...

"..then you shall know that I am Jehovah!" (7:4)

Oh, No, No, No! You have this all wrong! That's not how you get people to make "commitments". Don't you know? "God luuuuvs you, and has a wonderful plan for your life." (The "1st law" of the "Four") After all, doesn't God say, "For I know the thoughts which I am planning for you, says Jehovah; thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer29:11) This verse was part of the promotional literature of the above-mentioned 'Jezebel' who came in to my store. A ministry of "positive" things. Thing is, they have taken that verse out of its proper context; after Israel has been punished for her sins, and when God is then 'restoring' them, bringing them back from Babylon. But how is Israel going to "know" their God? He must punish them with no sparing and no pity. Only after they have been thusly punished, it says, "And you shall know that I am Jehovah who strikes". (7:9)

Now, we have looked at some parallels between Israel and the apostasy that is called, "church". We have also seen parallels for a nation that many call "christian". If all this came upon Israel, how much worse will be the coming judgment upon America and the false-church!

But let's focus back on Israel. Many of the so-called "church" boast that Israel is done for. They don't care that our "christian" president will go about to give Israel's God-given territory away to terrorists, because in their minds, "Israel doesn't matter" because God's eye is now on "the church"....and, oh yes...America! "God bless America"! [I'm becoming increasingly nauseated by that mantra! I wonder how many times I've been muttering "Oh, shut up!" of late?]

Notice that, even though "the slain shall fall in your midst" (6:7), that God gives a promise. An enduring hope. "Yet I will leave a remnant, so that you may have some who escape the sword among the nations, when you are scattered throughout the earth." (6:8)

What will characterize this remnant? "..those of you who escape will remember Me.." (6:9a) And how will they view themselves? "..they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations" (6:9b) OH...QUICK! CALL THE COUNSELLORS! These people need counseling to reinstate their 'self-esteem'. No! What kind of heart gains God's favorable attention?

"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Is66:2)

Israel's Abominations (Ezekiel 8-11)

"So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and behold, toward the north at the gate of the altar, was this image of jealousy at the entrance... Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations" (8:5-6)

When Manasseh became king at age 12, he brought some most horrendous things into God's temple. He set up images in the court, sacrifices his own offspring to Molech, and also set up an image inside the temple, along with all his witchcraft and astrology which he practiced. All the good his father, Hezekiah, had done in eradicating idolatry, Manasseh reestablished, and added even more abominations. He was likely the worst king before God. (2Kg21)

So, when God speaks of "image of jealousy" here, remember that when the Ten Commandments were given, that when He commands not to bow to other gods, nor make images to them, the explanation which accompanies the command is, "I, Jehovah your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me" (Ex20:5)

This is the state of affairs as Ezekiel has this vision. And notice a comment which God speaks to Jeremiah a lot, "..this house which is called by My name.." (Jer7:10, etc) Perhaps the reader will understand our continual comments about the state of things today when we speak of SO-CALLED "christians", or the "PRETEND church". It is -called- the "church". They -label- themselves as "christians". But they are not. Just as God's house had become defiled with pagan idols, such that God speaks of what used to be (notice He is not saying "My house" as He did when Solomon built it -1Chr28:6; or "My house..of prayer" -Is56:7) His house as that "which is called..." It has the label. But it no longer represents the real Presence of Jehovah, because Israel has rejected God, in favor of their heathen idols.

Does today's "church" have images of jealousy? We have spoken of them in the past in the "10 Commandments" studies and not long ago in addressing Mythology. All the images of the cross, pictures of "Jesus", symbols to paganism. At Xmass they bring in the pagan tree. We won't re-address all this now.

Ezekiel is then shown their carvings of "creeping things, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, carved all around on the wall", along with the 70 elders worshiping with their incense. (8:10-11) Israel's idolatry was not something that "the people" were doing, and the leaders merely "couldn't stop them". But rather, this idolatry started from the leadership-on-down.

The women were "weeping for Tammuz". (8:14) Tammuz was a sun god, the "husband" of Ishtar (queen of heaven, middle-eastern mutation of Egypt's Isis). And the worship had the women weeping, bewailing his funeral. He was honored at the summer solstice.

"Have you seen this, O son of man?" and so he is brought to "the inner court of the house of Jehovah" where he sees "25 men with their backs toward the temple of Jehovah and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east" (8:15-16)

Well, we know this is being done in today's "church". Recently we spoke of the Easter sunrise service. You see, we have the whole -god-"family". Worshiping Ishtar (easter) the "wife", and Tammuz (sun) the "husband". Early on "easter" the [c]hurch worships Ishtar-Tammuz. Same thing Israel was doing.

So God asks, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? ...therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them." (8:17-18)

Notice a couple of things here. If you notice in this passage (Please be sure to get your Bibles out and read it to see the entire context. These studies are not be-all, end-all unto themselves. They are intended to point out a few highlights from these passages, but God's Word comes from the Scriptures.), God is continually asking Ezekiel, "have you seen this?" Why? Remember God's commission of Ezekiel as a prophet? He was called to the "rebellious house", to go and proclaim, "Thus says Jehovah". He was given a book to eat. (ch1-3) God's Word was made a very part of his essence. He has God's Word within him, and he is proclaiming God's judgments. But he needs one more element. He also needs to see Israel's wickedness the same way God sees it. How can he be an effective messenger and proclaim the message with all the necessary 'force', unless in his very being he also sees the corruption to the point of detesting it the same way God does. Thus, God shows Ezekiel all Israel's sin. Thus, as he proclaims God's judgment, he 'understands' in his own mind that what he proclaims is "just". That God is "recompensing their deeds upon their own head". (9:10) What they are getting, they fully deserve.

So, how is God's judgment going to be meted out? Is He going to utterly wipe out the whole lot? In the vision, those in charge come along with their "destroying weapon" (9:1) But before God sets them loose, He "marks" the righteous ones. (9:4) What is the basis of their being marked? Are they the ones who are continually gathering and "praising the Lord"? They are faithfully "worshiping"? They are "happy" and with smiling faces are "dancing around"? They are having experiences of

being "spirit-filled"?

"..put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done.." (vs4) Remember the close to the preceding lesson. If you have forgotten, it is found in Isaiah 66:2

As for the rest, "Go..through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have pity. Utterly slay [everyone who doesn't have the mark] and BEGIN AT MY SANCTUARY.." (9:6)

You see, there is a parallel today. God's ways are NOT to pour out His wrath upon His Believers. "He did not appoint us to wrath" (1Th5:9) Today's pretend [c]hurch does not believe that Jesus is coming to catch away His Believers. They think they are going through what they call, "the tribulation". The thing they don't understand is that the time that is coming is not merely "affliction" (Jn16:33), but it is God's wrath. A time when He is judging the world. And since they are of those who worship idols, turning their back upon God, facing east and worshiping all sorts of pagan deities, they will, indeed, remain on earth, and will receive God's judgment "without pity".

And notice another picture God gives Ezekiel. After Ezekiel has been shown all the abominations in the house "called by God's name", then "the glory of Jehovah departed from the threshold of the house.." (10:18) Ezekiel was shown that, although the physical temple might have existed, due to Israel's idolatry and rebellion, God was no longer there. Thing is, just like Samson, most of Israel didn't know "that Jehovah had departed from him" (Jud16:20) They religiously sing their "worship songs", but they haven't a clue to the fact that God is not in their midst. They have turned the back to God's Word and doctrine, preferring instead to be "spirit-filled" and -feel- "blessed".

This is why we continually exhort Believers to "come out of her My people" (Rev18:4, Jer51:45) God is not in those so-called "churches"! He left a long time ago when they turned their backs on Him and His Word and started worshiping the gods of experiences, self-esteem, and every other abomination that exists today.

And also, these who worship the abominations, "devise wickedness and give evil advice.." (11:2) are also the ones who proclaim, "the time is not near; let us build houses. This city is the kettle, and we are the meat." (11:3) Convert that to today: There won't be a Rapture. God is sending revival. Be healthy and wealthy and thus partake of God's "blessing". Instead of "purifying" themselves (1Jn3:3), they are busy building earthly kingdoms, and engaging in such abominations as prayer warfare.

When Israel's leaders said such things, if you continue in the chapter, you will see God's judgment against them. If God's judged His own elect

in this manner, what do you suppose is in store for the "wild olive branches" that were grafted in! "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled on the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of Grace?" (Heb10:29)

But, back to Israel...

Again, God's promised restoration. Even though God judged Israel, He does not utterly cast them away. "Although I have cast them far off among the nations, and although I have scattered them throughout the earth, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the lands where they have gone." (11:16) And then, "I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the lands where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they will come there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there." (vs17-18)

And how will this happen? God promises Israel, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (vs19-20)

But notice that for those whose hearts insist on their abominations: "I will recompense their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord Jehovah" (11:21)

Object Lesson: Exile (Ezekiel 12)

"Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see and see not. They have ears to hear and hear not, for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, son of man, prepare for yourself vessels for exile, and go into exile by day before their eyes. And you shall be exiled from your place to another place before their eyes. It may be they will consider, though they are a rebellious house." (vs2-3)

A couple of things we can see here. First of all, how "negative" is this message! How full of "personal attacks"! I mean... doesn't God know better? Doesn't He know how to "win friends and influence people"? Over and over and over God calls them "rebellious". It's as though He seems to think there is nothing 'good' in Israel. Aren't we supposed to "look for the good in everybody", and "if you can't say something good about a person, don't say anything at all"? We are supposed to 'luuuv' people into the kingdom. If God were posting this message to any message board, the monitors would remove it for being so venomous and being such "hate speech".

The other thing is the repetition of the phrase "before their eyes". Early on in his ministry Ezekiel was required to be "locked" into place, lying first on one side, and then the other, as he "laid siege" to a portrayal of Jerusalem. (ch4) 430 days he was lying on the ground with God's "bands" laid on him so he could not move. (vs8) Now, he is pretending again. Going through the motions, "acting out" being taken into exile. What Ezekiel was illustrating was a portrayal of what God was telling Israel was about to befall them for their rebellion.

It was one thing for God to send prophets to Israel, imploring them to repent, "rising early and sending". (2Ch36;15) But they would not listen. They would say, "we WILL DO" what we want. We WILL NOT obey God, but we WILL DO our own devices. (Jer44:16-17)

So, God tries something else. God already knew that 'visual' aids are more effective than -mere- 'words', even before modern teaching theories 'discovered' it. It's one thing to hear the words of warning, but to 'see' what captivity might look like... that should grab 'em where they tremble. Ezekiel, do these things "before their eyes".

Why? "...IT MAY BE they will consider.." (vs3) Ezekiel, we have been talking to them till we're "blue in the face", but they are so rebellious. Let's try another method...see if we can get their attention. See if even ANYTHING AT ALL will sink in, even though they are so rebellious, let's give this a try. Maybe...Sigh...just MAY-BE..

Well, history has shown the outcome. Israel continued to be rebellious, and were taken captive.

But notice God's faithful servant. Poor Ezekiel had to go through so much abuse throughout his 'career' in the ministry. We are not told what his attitude was about doing this particular object lesson, but we know that he drug his feet to even -be- a prophet originally. God had to forcibly "lift [him] up" (3:14) to take him where He wanted him. And Ezekiel went "in bitterness, in the heat of [his] spirit".

But God labels Ezekiel, "I have set you as a sign to the house of Israel". (12:6) What is the purpose of a sign? To either point the way, or give instruction.

Dear fellow-Believer... do you sometimes wonder "why" certain things happen in your life? When there was no sin in your life, the Lord gave you illness. When you were being faithful, the Lord gave you financial hard times. Perhaps you have been placed in the middle of a bunch of scorpions (2:6) who snap at you, and you find yourself continually in confrontation, standing on God's Word, and the scorpions attack you with their deceitful venom. Anyone who is a Believer, and lives on this earth, is a "witness" of Christ to the world. (Lk24:48) We are "lights". (Mt5:14) Perhaps you don't much like the attention? You'd just as rather live a peaceful life, "minding your own business"?? Well, lights are not designed to be hidden. (Mt5:15) The various situations the Lord puts us in are for the purpose of showing forth His glory. If we are in illness, His strength is shown through (in spite of) our weakness. (2Cor12:9) If we are attacked, God's wisdom is shown through our ignorance. (Mk13:11) So that they might see that we are "with Jesus". (Acts4:13) That they see "not I, but the grace of God with me." (1Cor15:10)

What is the outcome of the faithfulness of God's servant? "He who hears, let him hear; and he who stops his ears, let him stop; for they are a rebellious house." (Eze3:27) You see, that person you are witnessing/ministering to and praying for may likely never come to the Lord in repentance.

But "they shall know that I am Jehovah". (12:15) Amen!

Whitewash (Ezekiel 13)

Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy out of their own heart, Hear the Word of Jehovah! Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the foolish prophets, who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! (13:2-3)

Jeremiah says similar things, "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture! says Jehovah" (Jer23:1) While we might combine these two chapters into one study, I think Ezekiel gives us -quite- plenty to chew on for this lesson. But you might wish to read Jeremiah ch23 to get a fuller picture.

Remember a couple studies ago (ch8-11) we observed that it was Israel's -leaders- who were guilty of abominations. When God's destruction went out to kill, He commands, "and begin at My sanctuary" (9:6) Now, God addresses those who proclaim to the leaders. Yes, the priests and Levites served before the people unto God in the temple in all the worship rituals. But the prophets were a "notch above". The priests performed the prescribed rituals as written down in the Law. But the prophets would receive special messages from Jehovah to proclaim to the priests, kings and people. Certainly, the people were condemned for their rebellion and idolatry. But some of their error might be 'understandable', because it might be considered that they are merely -following- what the priests said. And while the priests and scribes should have known better because they had the actual scrolls of God's written Law to read, which the common people did not... the prophets were the ones God anointed with His Spirit with God's Word directly to the people. It was -prophets- who actually 'wrote' (or dictated to scribes -Jer36:4) the words of those scrolls.

Notice the condemnation: they "follow their -own- spirit" when, in fact, they had seen nothing. They see "vanity and lying divination" (vs6) "Divination" is an occult practice of fortunetelling or conjuring. It works in the spirit realm. They claim to receive their messages from "the divine", thus, "divination". But if God is saying that "Jehovah has not sent them", what is the source of their visions? If it is not God, there is only one other source. Satan and/or his demons.

Notice regarding their conjuring, "..they -HOPE- that their word may be confirmed". (vs6b) Whereas, God's Word is the "-SURE- Word of Prophecy" (2Pt1:19) When Daniel stood before Nebuchadnezzar, he proclaims confidently, "..the dream is certain, and the interpretation of it is sure" (Dan2:45)

The best today's "christian" conjurers can boast is 70%. So, when they make their boastful proclamations, there is always that 30% doubt that

what they proclaim will come to pass. They can only "hope" their word at that particular moment will fit into that 70%. Thus, God calls what they do, "lying divination". (vs7) It is -NOT- of Jehovah!

God's judgment to those of Israel was "they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel" (vs9) Translate the same judgment to the "[c]hurch"... They will not be part of the Rapture to "meet the Lord in the air" (1Th4:17), They will not be found in the "Book of Life" (Phil4:3, Rev13:8, 17:8,etc), and they will not be allowed entrance into Heaven, but Jesus will say, "I never knew you". (Mt7:23, Lk13:25)

What are prophets supposed to be doing? They are to "close up the wall and stand in the gap" (22:30), they are to "build walls" (13:5). What was the purpose of the city walls? To keep the enemy out. To keep plunderers and robbers out. To keep the residents safe from harm. When a prophet is doing God's counsel, he causes God's "people to hear My Words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings." (Jer23:22)

But the false prophets certainly do "build walls". They have an appearance of being "holy" and a pretense of being "great men of God". But when they build these walls, how do they build? When they proclaim "Peace! when there is no peace" it is like building with stones, but instead of using mortar to hold the stones/bricks together with strength; they merely pile the rocks up, and then slap some "whitewash" over the top. (vs11) It looks pretty, and people "feel" safe because they have the appearance of righteousness, but as Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day that they were like "whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." (Mt23:27)

Spiritual walls are ones which keep out evil and error. In Ezekiel's day the prophets were building walls with whitewash. Today, the prophets are even worse than those of Ezekiel's day, or when Jesus chided the scribes and pharisees. Today, they do not -build- walls, but they TEAR THEM DOWN! They sing, "Walls come down, walls come down". The wall of Godly doctrine which protects a Believer against the errors of the evil one, they DELIBERATELY knock them down, and invite the enemy into the city, and send the citizens out amongst the wolves...and these days, satan's hosts are having a feeding frenzy, because the sheep are not being protected.

Dear Reader, if you sometimes think this ministry is rather "harsh" in its words, it is because of all those things you see out there that LOOK LIKE "walls", but we know from God's Word that they are merely a whitewash. And in many quarters we see the walls crumbling down and the wolves are coming in droves in packs and devouring. How does one

protect sheep and chase the wolves away? By drastic means, and LOUD SHOUTS. LOOK OUT! WATCH OUT! DON'T BE DECEIVED! To the wolves, SHOO, SCRAM! GET OUTTA HERE! No, we DON'T invite them in to our fellowships! All they are there for is to, "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn10:10) They have NO INTENTION of being saved! Do not be "seduced" (vs10) by them!

And if you read the section vs17-23, you will see similar warnings about the women with their occult and "amulet" (vs20) trinkets. Remember God's warning against making "any likeness". (Ex20:4) Even people like Mariah Carey and various paganist, New Age movie stars wear crosses on their necklaces. But that certainly does NOT make them "Christian".

So... notice God's judgment upon Israel's false prophets. What we see, understand that similar things await today's false prophets.

God is sending a "flooding rain", "great hailstones" and a "stormy wind" to knock the whitewash down. And when the wall is found to be fraudulent, the question, "Where is the mortar with which you plastered it?" (vs12) Where is the substance to all your boasts? Where is the Truth? When it is thrown down, "so that its foundation will be uncovered" (vs14), the Truth will be bared. The false prophets will be "consumed". God will do this in Fury, Anger, and Wrath. The wall and its whitewashers will be "no more". (vs15) And lest there be any confusion as to -who- God is talking about...

"..that is, the prophets of Israel who prophesy..who see visions of peace...when there is no peace, declares the Lord Jehovah" (vs16)

But notice also. When these false prophets have been consumed in God's wrath, they will suddenly know the Truth. Nobody in Hell will be an unbeliever. Remember that satan and his demons also "believe and shudder". (Jacob2:19) So much for "Sola Fide"... "Only Believe"!!

You see, He says to them as they are going into destruction...

"And you shall know that I am Jehovah." (vs14b)

The Lord's answers through idols (Ezekiel 14:3-4)

"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face. Should I at all be inquired of by them? Therefore speak to them, and say to them, So says the Lord Jehovah: Every man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him in it by the host of his idols;" (Ez14:3-4)

What another fascinating passage! If we look at Israel's history, if we were to summarize in one word, the reason for their dispersion throughout the world over the centuries, that word would be "idolatry" When God gave the Law, the very first of the "Ten Commandments" is "You shall have no other gods before Me." (Ex20:3) And yet, their - primary- sin was idolatry. Breaking of that very first commandment! They began their rebellion even while Moses was in God's presence, receiving all the laws, with their golden calf. (Ex32)

But here, God is saying through Ezekiel, 'I will answer him via idols.'

You see, God has given man a conscience. (Rom2:14-15) No matter what man may do, God is continually 'striving' to reach man through the Holy Spirit. (Gen6:3, Jn16:8) With Israel He was "rising early" and sending His "messengers" (2Ch36:15) because He has pity on His own. But man is continually running away from God, "like sheep" (Is53:6) going his own way. And God is always pleading "Turn, turn from your evil ways, for why will you die?" (Ez33:11)

So, if man is stubbornly engrossed in idolatry, how is God going to reach him? Well... as this passage says... through his idols. But the idols' prophets proclaim falsehood! How can a person come to God through falsehood?

Ever hear the expression as a child? Maybe you said it to yours, when they were getting older and should 'know better'? "If you're gonna act like a child, I'm gonna treat you like one." Well, that's a little bit what God does. According to the manner in which the person behaves towards God, that's the way God responds. Notice: "With the merciful, You will show Yourself merciful; with an upright man You will show yourself upright; with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the crooked You will show Yourself perverse." (2Sm22:26-27, Ps18:25-26)

Is God limited when false prophets speak? If they use anything at all of His Word, remember that His Word does not go out "void" without accomplishing what God intends. (Is55:11) Even if that "Word" is a Westcott/Hort perVersion. Can a person find salvation while sitting in a Catholic church? Well, from the Pope on down, they distort the

Scriptures. But they -do- speak of Jesus dying "for the sins of the world." God is not limited by the rest of what they teach, when it comes to the individual's heart, at the level of the conscience. The person can hear that Jesus "died for the sins of the world" and then his conscience -knows- his own sin. Salvation is not related to transubstantiation, perogatory, crucifixes. It -is- related to Jesus having died on the cross for sin. (Rom5:8,1Cor15:3) Jesus said that the one coming to Him does so at the drawing of the Father. (Jn6:44) And this happens as the Holy Spirit 'strives' with that person's spirit and soul... at the -individual- level. This is but one such example.

If a person does not hear correct doctrine, because nobody tells him, and he dies in his sin; he dies in his sin. (Ez33:9) But he does not do so in -total- ignorance. God is "not willing that any should perish." (2Pt3:9) The "Sower" (Mt13:3) scatters the seed on -all- kinds of ground. God sees to it that everybody is "without excuse".(Rom1:20) If the person has heard of God, directly, the message will come in that way. If all he knows is idolatry, God will speak even through the idols.

"For the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it." (1Cor10:26)

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the expanse proclaims His handiwork... And the heavens shall declare His righteousness; for God Himself is judge... The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the people see His glory." (Ps19:1,50:6,97:6)

I Jehovah Will Answer by Myself (Ezekiel 14:5-)

"I, Jehovah, will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, that I may catch the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from Me through their idols... I, Jehovah, will answer Him by Myself. I will set My face against that man and make him desolate as a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. And you shall know that I am Jehovah... And they shall bear their iniquity..." (Ezek14:4-10)

In the preceding lesson we observed how God is not limited in terms of people being able to learn of Him, even when they are in idolatry. A person -can- learn of salvation even while sitting in a Catholic or Mormon church, insofar as Scripture is presented and read. That, of course, is for a heart that is in such a place in 'innocence', not knowing any better, being there "in ignorance" but where their heart is tender and ready to obey God who promises to "overlook" the "times of ignorance" and "commands all men everywhere to repent". (Acts17:30)

But to have a true picture of this passage, we must continue; in order to see how God responds to Israel. Israel had a knowledge of the Most High, and yet, they had "set up [their] idols IN [THEIR] HEART" (vs4)

Their history, as a nation, was one of God's mighty "outstretched arm" of deliverance from Egypt, and of "signs and wonders". (Deut26:8) As God argues with Israel, as though an attorney arguing a case in court, "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this and cause us to hear former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is true." (Is43:9)

He presents the evidence: "I, even I, am Jehovah; and there is no one to save besides Me. I have declared and have saved, and I have shown, when there was no strange god among you; therefore you are My witnesses, says Jehovah, that I am God. Yea, before the day was, I am He; and no one can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?" (vs11-13)

"..when there was no strange god among you.." You see, when God did all His works with Israel, they did not have other gods. It wasn't any of those strange gods (that they 'now' worshipped) that brought them forth to become a nation. God did it all... ALONE, by Himself!

But after many centuries have passed, as they are going into captivity for their idolatry, they whine to Jeremiah, that when they were offering their offerings to the Queen of Heaven... "..then we had plenty of food, and were well-off, and saw no evil." But when they stopped, things got bad for them. (Jer44:17-18) So Jeremiah goes on to

say that God's patience withheld as long as He could, until He had had -enough-. (vs20-23)

Notice the path that leads to destruction. The rebellious ones come to the prophets they want to hear from. So, God says, "I Jehovah will answer him by Myself" (vs7) Notice that the things the false prophets speak also have God's authority, "...if that prophet is induced to speak anything, I Jehovah have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from the midst of My people.."

Do we have any specific examples of such a scenario? At the request of Jehoshaphat, Ahab calls for Micaiah. All the other (false) prophets are telling them to go up to battle and "be victorious". But when Micaiah is called, being a true prophet of Jehovah, and the discussion rises as to why his prophecy is so much different from the others, because he is prophesying Ahab's death, he explains how God was 'discussing' in Heaven, how to persuade Ahab to go into battle and be killed. After many ideas were presented, a spirit steps forward and says, "I will persuade him". And God asks, "How?" "I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets" And God replies, "You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so." (1Kg22:20-22)

You see, the false prophets are, indeed, FALSE. They are induced by "deceiving spirits". (1Tm4:1) But do you see -who- sends them on their way? God, the Most High, sitting on His throne. And -why- does He do so? Because they have set up their idols "in [their] heart". (vs4) When the time of the "man of sin" is revealed, -why- does He "...send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie.."? "...for this reason..". "because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." (2Th2:10-11) You see, with God, who knows the heart (Heb4:12), He draws a 'line' with everyone. He says, "...for the time is at hand. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to what his work shall be.." (Rev22:10-12)

So, Israel -purposely- rebelled against God, and set up their idols. God spoke to them -through- their idols, to mete out judgment upon them, and to reveal Himself to them.

We cannot look at Israel without seeing the very real parallel to today's "church". No, the "church" is not Israel. When Israel rebelled, God set up a new entity of "servants by another name". (Is65:15) Since Israel continued to rebel obstinately, God could not allow His own name to be "defiled". (Is48:11) But Israel's case is recorded in history as an "example" to us. (1Cor10:6,11)

Today's Church-of-Babylon (christendom) is based on IDOLATRY and FALSE PROPHETS. Its prophets see dreams and visions. These false visions are not from God, He "did not send them". (Jer14:14) But He commissioned the "lying spirits" who indwell them...IN ORDER THAT today's Babylon, full of what we continually call "pretend-christians", may receive the full reward of their lust-filled hearts.

You who truly know the Lord, don't wring your hands too terribly at the apostasy. Yes, the people all seem 'gullible' don't they, as they swallow all the false doctrine, hook-line-and-sinker. But you see, that is what they 'want', and God knows it. Thus, He is allowing them to have it. But also understand that, when God's judgment comes, they will then, at long last, know God for who He really is... although, by then, it will be too late, as when they boast of their spirit-fillings, He will say, "Depart from Me, you who work lawlessness!" (Mt7:23) As they are ushered into "everlasting fire", the "place prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt25:41) They "shall bear their iniquity.." (vs10)

And God says to His True Believers, "..come out of her, My people.." (Rev18:4)

Oh, but... I'm still going to X, Y or Z "church" because I want to be a witness to them. Perhaps I can "make a difference" and be a "positive influence" there? Being "salt" in amongst them...?

Your presence will make NO DIFFERENCE to the rebels!! And furthermore, in being there, you are being disobedient regarding the "unequal yoke" with unbelievers, and God's command to "come out from among them and be separate.." (2Cor6:17)

Whatever you think your presence might benefit the rebels, notice: "..although these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Lord Jehovah" (vs14) Do you think you are of the calibre of these three who have received noteworthy space in the written Scriptures? Do you find your name in the Scriptures for your greatness before God? Of Daniel it was said, "For you are greatly beloved" (Dan9:23) Well, these three would deliver "neither sons nor daughters" (vs16) They would not stave off famine and pestilence. (vs19) They would "deliver only themselves by their righteousness" (vs20)

Today's apostasy will NOT go away, before God's judgment comes. Those who forecast "revival", are lying. That is not what Scripture prophesies. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, being devoted to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared.." (1Tm4:1-2) Notice that this is what God's [Holy] Spirit says... not what the "spirit-filled" false prophets proclaim. Both today's prophets and their followers, together, will "bear their

iniquity" (vs10)

Dear Believer: do you feel like a "remnant" in the big ocean of apostasy? Well, notice: "Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out..." (vs22) Again, let us not be confused. Most specifically, this speaks of Israel; coupled with the rest of prophecy, we know God's restoration of Israel, His elect seed. But as Israel is an "example" to us, we see the parallel. While "christendom" is going down the "broad way to destruction" (Mt7:13), there is a "remnant" who "have not bowed the knee to Baal" (1Kg19:18)

And for Israel, after judgment has been fulfilled, after Israel has been 'punished' (vs10), and God has given them a "new heart" (36:26), God will work a work "...that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be defiled anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God, says the Lord Jehovah" (vs11) Amen.

Naked and Bare (Ezekiel 16)

"Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations..." (vs2)

My! How un-SELF-fulfilling that is! Why should Israel continually be reminded of her inadequacies? Why must God continually 'put-her-down'? Could He not have had more positive and uplifting things to say, to help build up her self-esteem?

What God wants to show is Israel's utter nothingness, where she originated. And if they think they are anything now...? It is God who made them what they are. As Paul would say a few centuries later, "For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than every one of them, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1Cor15:9-10)

JUST a NOTE of WARNING before we proceed: for you with younger children in your family, depending on how you read these studies; you who are adults may wish to read the entirety of this study first, to see if it is appropriate for your children. God uses some rather explicitly colorful imagery in this passage, and we are going to, also.

God reminds Israel of their cultural lineage. And then paints a colorful image of Israel's birth and betrothal to Himself. I've not seen a human birth other than on film/video, but have of cattle. If a cow gave birth, and then did not take care of the calf, the sight is not a pretty one. The calf lies there, all covered in slime and puddled around, with afterbirth also hanging out the back of the cow. Recently on Public TV they showed a special on tigers. Some tiger cubs that had been born in captivity, which the mother did not take care of and nurse. The people went into the den to retrieve them, and they were barely alive. One, actually, didn't make it.

This is the picture God paints of Israel's origin. "...your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water...you were not..wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you...but you were thrown out...for you yourself were loathed on the day you were born." (~vs4-5) Translate that into today: you were born and tossed into a dumpster, because you were an 'unwanted' pregnancy.

When God calls a person unto Himself, is it because the person is so wonderful? This is the "gospel" being proclaimed by many today, that is termed "graaaaeeesss". God saw all that "value" and "worth" in you; that's why He saved you. Mmmm??

"..when I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to

you in your blood, LIVE! Yes, I said to you in your blood, LIVE!" (vs6)

God is called elsewhere, the "Potter". And we are the clay. (Jer18:6, Rom9:21) Before the potter starts forming the clay, of what value is the clay? It is just a variation of "dirt". Something that, when it gets wet, gets all mucky all over everything, despised, to be washed off. If somebody didn't come along to rescue the calf and nurture it, it would get eaten by wolves. If somebody didn't happen-by the dumpster, that baby would die of exposure.

Well, God came along, and saw us in our less-than-nothingness, and shouts out, "LIVE!" with the same authority that Jesus yelled out for Lazarus to be raised, "Lazarus! Out Here! Now!" (Jn11:43)

Now, this baby is washed up, and grows and matures. God comes by again and sees that a young woman is coming to the age of betrothal and marriage. God speaks of His betrothal of Israel to Himself. (Jer2:2, Hos2:19-20) Of Himself as being Israel's "husband". (Is54:5)

She is developing physically to be desirable to a man, and is naked. Nobody is taking her in, and caring for her. When God brought Eve to Adam, "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen2:25) Now, Hollywood promotes what they promote with scenes of a freshly showered/bathed woman dropping her towel in order to be taken by the man. Well, here, Israel has freshly been "washed" and "anointed with oil" (vs9) God "spread the edge of [His] garment over [her]" to cover her nakedness, swore an oath to her and she "became Mine" declares the Lord Jehovah. (vs8) When Naomi sent Ruth to Boaz to present her case of being available for marriage, it says that she "uncovered his feet and lay down" (Ru3:7), and makes her case by saying, "Take your maidservant under your wing" (vs9). This covering of the edge of the garment. A place of shelter and protection. If the woman is naked, to be covered; and the husband is opening his garment to receive and cover her; they are both together within his garment. The "two shall become one flesh". (Mt19:5)

Now, notice how God is with Israel. Clothes her with designer clothes, matching shoes, jewelry and other coordinated fine accessories. (vs10-13) I don't know why it is, but it is so. Women are always made up to be beautiful. Men get themselves up with your basic suit or tux. But women are bedecked with all sorts of finery and are called "beautiful". And since God uses this kind of imagery, obviously, it is not sinful, is it. There are some pharisaical types who preach a doctrine that their women should get themselves up as 'plain-janes'. Well, this passage, being merely one of several like it various places in Scripture, should put such notions to rest.

So, with all this blessing, pampering and world-renown for all her beauty (vs14) what does Israel do? She "trusted in your own beauty,

committed adultery because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it." (vs15)

Why do some men not like their women to be all dolled up? Because other men will look at them and lust for them. And, let's face it... many women who are beautiful also flaunt their beauty and flirt.

God took Israel into His own cloak, nurtured her, made her beautiful to show her off to the world and she 'turned heads'. But instead of remaining within His "cloak" in her heart, being "only His", she started sleeping around. You can read on into the chapter and see the description of Israel's idolatry.

But rather than remembering her origins of being "naked and bare" (vs22) and how God had taken her into His own bosom, she became an "adulterous wife" (vs32), thinking that her beauty was her own. Forgetting that, unless God had come along and taken her, she would have been abandoned in her own afterbirth. Forgetting God's grace and mercy. Today's "church" teaches that one's faithfulness to God after salvation doesn't matter, that God's graaeess "accepts you JUST AS YOU ARE." What they mean is, "just as you -WERE-". Observe carefully the example of Israel!

So, what is God's verdict upon her? "Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotry..." God was going to collect all her lovers with whom she had pleasure and "...will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness...they shall also strip you of your clothes, take your beautiful jewelry, and leave you naked and bare." (vs37,39) And you can continue reading the full extent of all this in the passage.

In those days, when a nation was taken captive by another, invariably, the captives were stripped naked and chained together. Indeed, when Isaiah prophesies against Egypt, as we have already noted how Ezekiel often had to be an object lesson of God's prophesies, Isaiah was required to go around naked for a couple years, to illustrate from his prophesies to Egypt how they would be taken captive, "naked and barefoot, even with buttocks stripped bare, to the [indecent] exposure of Egypt. (Is20:2-4) If the Lord hasn't returned by then, we may have a study series in Isaiah at some time in the future. If we do, we will see how the "virgin of Babylon", the "Queen of Kingdoms", when God's judgment brings her down, the one who is often presented voluptuously and sensuously, is told, "Uncover your veil, strip off the skirt, bare the thigh, pass through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, your shame shall be seen; I will take vengeance and I will not meet you as a man." (Is47:2-3)

As we read this about Israel, if a person has ever seen documentary films of the Nazi holocaust against the Jews, the images never leave

the memory! Shriveled up, emaciated naked bodies lying around, piled up on carts, being hauled to the huge pits; the now-defeated German officers physically taking up the bodies and tossing them over into the pits, and watching them hurling head-long on top of the other bodies.

God took Israel, at the "time of love" (vs8) and with a most beautiful picture, draws her into His cloak. He bedecks her and makes her beautiful, to be admired by the world. But when she rebelled, she literally ended up "naked", being tossed into pits. While the Communist Russian, Chinese, Cambodian situations resulted in multiplied times 'more' deaths than the Jews who were killed during WW2, the world remembers the images of dead -Jewish- 'naked' bodies being tossed into pits. Why? Because that is what God prophesied would happen. Why? Because of her adulteries, in her idolatries.

You see, all humanity is "naked and bare" before God. He knows us down to the very core of our "soul and spirit". (Heb4:12-13) He knows the thoughts and intents of our hearts. And when we "must give answer" before Him, this is how He sees us. There is nothing covering over and hiding us.

You see, there's several different kinds of nakedness. Let us consider two types. When there is love between a husband and wife, and they belong to each other without reservations, having "forsaken all others", the nakedness that is between them is a most beautiful thing.

However, if judgment is due, remember back to childhood? If you got spankings, remember that there were two kinds. The one kind you just bent over for. But the ones to be dreaded were the ones where the "pants came down", too!

If our hearts are pure before God, we can sing, "Nothing between my soul and the Savior.." We can be comfortable being wrapped next to Him in His cloak of love. But if we rebel, the 'pants' must 'come down'!

Now, this series is also to remind those who think that Israel is "done for", that God's promises remain. Yes, God has given Israel a good whoopin' on their bare bottoms. But...

"Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you." (vs60) God's covenant has nothing to do with Israel's goodness. They have obviously proven themselves to be less-than worthy. Notice -who- is establishing the covenant. "And I will establish My covenant with you." (vs62) Even the original covenants, beginning with Abraham, it says, "For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He had no one greater to swear by, He swore by Himself" (Heb6:13)

Israel today is trying to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

They are yet in unbelief. Israel's future blessing will be because, and -ONLY- because -GOD- keeps His promises. If you recall from the series "Covenants & Dispensations", we have observed that man was never able to keep any covenants with God. God always initiated the covenants, and God is the One who always kept them. Man continually breaks the covenant. As Israel has done. All that Israel has to their credit is the memories of their "shame". (vs61,63) They will have "paid for [their] licentiousness and abominations" from all God's judgments against them (vs58)

When God remembers and fulfills His covenants with Israel, restoring them out of their shame...

Then "..you shall know that I am Jehovah" (vs62)

Turning Away from... (Ezekiel 18)

"Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die." (vs4) "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin." (Deut24:16)

While we know that there is such a thing as a "generational curse", as illustrated by God's Word, "...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Ex20:5, 34:7), and we have seen the results of this in Israel's various captivities and dispersions; when an -individual- stands before the Holy God, God does not look in the Book of Life for the names of the individual's father, wife, children, etc. It says that they are judged "-each- one, according to their works". (Rev20:13) When Jesus calls -individuals- to follow Him, they do not do so under the "family plan" because of "family values". He calls the person to forsake, "houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name.." (Mt19:29)

We know that salvation is by "grace through faith...not of works" (Eph2:8-9) in "repentance toward God" (Acts20:21). But we also know that once a person is saved, the natural outgrowth of the new nature is "works befitting repentance". (Acts26:20) Otherwise, how does anyone know they are truly saved? (Jac2:14-26) Dogs bark, chickens cluck, ducks swim, sinners sin, and Believers do righteous works. (Eph2:10)

With that as introduction: "...if a man is righteous.." (vs5a); he is a Believer; he is saved; the one who is "just" who "lives by faith" (Hab2:4, Rom1:17); remember that Hebrews ch11 is the great "faith" chapter, but it reminisces all the giants of 'faith' by their -deeds-. The deeds did not save them. The deeds -manifested- the fact that they had faith, and the nature of that faith.

This righteous man "does what is just and right". (vs5b) It goes on to list various things: keeping away from idolatry, does not defile his neighbor's wife, has been just and fair in dealing with people in business, has been charitable to the poor, has not been dishonest, and has followed all of God's ordinances faithfully... "he is righteous. He shall live life, says the Lord Jehovah" (vs9)

This righteous man has a son, who does not believe. He manifests his unbelief by living a life of debauchery and dishonesty... "He shall not live! ..he shall die the death; his blood shall be upon him." (vs13)

Now, this unrighteous man, in turn, has a son, who observes all his father's wickedness, and determines to be pleasing to God. His faith is

manifested in a righteous life; "he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall live life!" (vs17) "The soul who sins shall die.. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself." (vs20)

OK, now...

This wicked man, who has been sleeping around, defrauding people, lying, cheating, stealing, worshiping idols... "turns from all his sins...keeps all God's statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall live life; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live." (vs21-22)

You see, this is God's mercy. This is God's grace. When Christians speak of God's wrath being poured out upon the ungodly, the ungodly world scoffs and retaliates against what they view as being merely a "concept" of such a kind of God. They like to think in terms of a "God of luvuuuvv" who would never "torture" anybody endlessly.

If you are similarly-inclined in your mind, consider: "Do I delight with pleasure in the death of the wicked? says the Lord Jehovah..?" (vs23a) God addresses this question head-on. No, it is not His desire or purpose that "anyone should perish..." (2Pt3:9a) God doesn't desire the death of anyone. But "sin" comes between sinful man and the Holy God. (Is59:2)

The solution is very simple, really. If a person doesn't want God's wrath hanging over their head, all they need to do is to "...turn back from his ways and live" (vs23b) "...come to repentance." (2Pet3:9b)

Yes, if a person desires to -live-, he must TURN AWAY FROM his sin. If he does so, and turns to God, "...he shall live." It doesn't matter how horrendous a sinner one was previously, Jesus says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (Jn6:37) And if a person has truly TURNED AWAY FROM his sin, God takes that sin and removes it from us, "as far as east is from the west.." (Ps103:12) Oh yes, in the words of the poet, "...east is east, and west is west, and never the twain shall meet.." God promises, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Heb10:17)

However...

"..when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live?" (vs24a)

This is one of the primary doctrines of today's "church". After the

person has supposedly become a "christian" by "some other way" (Jn10:1), they are told, "It doesn't matter to God. God accepts you JUST AS YOU ARE.." filth and all! You see... a changed heart results in a changed life. A -true- "conversion" creates a "new creation..in Christ". (2Cor5:17) It is a new nature, "from above" (Jn3:3) If a person continues living as they used to, in the world's corruption, their so-called "conversion" is a lie! No, the works do not -save- a person. But if, after the so-called "salvation", there are no good works or a changed life, it is proof positive that a "birth from above" (Jn3:3) did NOT HAPPEN!

Since everybody is used to science fiction, let's create an example to illustrate this point. Suppose a person claimed to have a device that would take a duck and convert it into a motorcycle. Preposterous? Well, like I say...we're talking science fiction here. After all, Star Trek DS9 had their 'changelings' who could take on the form and behavior of anything, animate or inanimate. Ok; so the person takes the duck, and runs it through his boasted 'process' to change it. Out the other side, the creature comes out, waddling, quacking, and diving into the water to swim around; you -know-, proof positive, that his "change" device is a fraud. It went in a duck, it came out a duck. Motorcycles do not quack, waddle or swim. If the change had truly taken place, one would expect a device which a person could straddle, start up, and "ride". Well, today's "church" is filled with quacking "ducks"; not "motorcycles"!

So then, back to the passage... we have a person who is truly a "righteous man". (vs24a) This righteous man now "TURNS AWAY FROM his righteousness and commits iniquity.." We are not talking about the person who retains his righteous -nature-, but merely, while in this sinful world, 'stumbles', requiring a confession and Christ's advocacy (1Jn1:9-2:2), even though he is otherwise clean, requiring only that his feet be washed. (Jn13:10) This is not the "prodigal son" who, did not forsake his family, but took his inheritance with him, and when he came to his senses still had his family name in his mind and heart and was able to be restored to fellowship. (Lk15:12~)

No... he TURNS AWAY FROM his righteousness. He didn't "oops, I stumbled", but rather says, "I have no pleasure in..." the ways of his "Creator" (Ec12:1) I want nothing more to do with the Most High. "...shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the treachery of his unfaithfulness, and the sin which he has sinned, in them he shall die." (vs24b)

Today's "theology" which proclaims, 'you don't have to change, because God accepts you JUST AS YOU ARE' also proclaims "Sola Fide". Faith only. No need for "repentance". The same generation that devised these doctrines originally, also is responsible for the doctrine called,

"Once Saved, Always Saved", which many of them erroneously support with God's Scriptures on "Eternal Security". (Rom8:33-39)

In other words, if you follow their doctrine carefully, a person can get saved by not really being saved through a new nature; And their new-found non-salvation, they cannot lose, no matter what they do. In their minds and hearts they "bind" God to a phony contract (Salvation) which is not real, and put all the responsibility for safekeeping this non-existent covenant upon God. Such a doctrine frees them up to live any-ol-way-they-like, because "I'm saved, and can't lose it, and I'm on my way to Heaven...tra la la!" Well, due to their lack of "loving the Truth" God allows them to "believe [their] lie", in order that their lustful hearts will ultimately receive His condemnation. (2Th2:10-12)

But God's truth is found in this passage. A change of one's state before God requires a TURNING AWAY FROM some thing or other. Since one is born and "conceived" in sin (Ps51:5), if one desires God's presence, he must TURN AWAY FROM -SIN-. Thus, a "righteous man" is established. (We are not covering the matters of Christ's blood and all such things. Please understand this lesson in the context it is presented. For Israel, in Ezekiel's day, Christ had not yet died on the cross. This study, ultimately, is addressing the individual's 'heart' before God.)

Now if this righteous man (the term "righteous" means he is truly Saved. His standing before God is "righteous") then TURNS AWAY FROM God and His righteousness, deliberately, God calls such a turning "treachery". (vs24) The verdict upon treason is "death".

And notice Jesus' words about such a person: "and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be unto this wicked generation." (Mt12:45)

If you ever decide to make such a decision to TURN AWAY FROM God when you have once been saved, understand very clearly that that is your last change. There is no further Salvation after you turn away from God. (Heb6:4-6) Do not be fooled by the vehemence of those who proclaim their false doctrines that purport to "guarantee" your salvation, "Do not be led astray, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (Gal6:7) God knows your heart. (Heb4:12-13)

But what does God plead with Israel? Same thing He pleads with each of you who does not know Him.

"Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity shall not be a stumbling block to you. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and prepare for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (vs30-31) You see, this is the same thing Paul says about Israel. A

true Jew is one who is so from the "heart". (Rom2:28-29)

Just because a person has the label "Jew" or "Israel" does not guarantee entrance into God's Holy Heaven. As Paul states, "...for not all those of Israel are Israel." (Rom9:6) In the same way today, just because a person has the label "christian", or belongs to a "church", does not guarantee that they are a "Christian" (Acts11:26), nor that they are part of Christ's "Church". (Eph1:22, 5:23, Col1:18,24)

If you came along by the above-mentioned doctrines of non-Salvation, do not worry about having committed an unpardonable sin. You have never yet been saved. You've never yet ever TURNED FROM your sin. You are not doomed by the inability to be RE-Saved. (Heb6:4-6) You were never saved to begin with. You are in that state to which you were born, "in sin".

But if you ever want to make it into God's Heaven, and escape an eternity in Hell, you need to TURN AWAY FROM the sin nature into which you were born. Right now, you stand condemned under God's wrath. But this is not God's desire for you...

"For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, declares the Lord Jehovah. Therefore turn and live!" (vs32)

I will not be inquired after (Ezekiel 20)

"...men came from the elders of Israel to inquire of Jehovah, and sat before me [Ezekiel]. And the word of Jehovah was to me, saying, Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, So says the Lord Jehovah: Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live, declares the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you." (Ezek20:1-3)

Dear reader... do you feel like God doesn't hear you? When you read how Jesus promised "where two or three are gathered together in My name there I am in their midst" (Mt18:20), do you feel like He is "out there" someplace..? Out of reach? When you pray, your prayers don't seem to be answered, even though Jesus also promised, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." (Jn14:14)

This 'Portion' and the next three will be some rather hard medicine to take for some. But God has recorded "examples" (1Cor10:6) for us from Israel's experience for our learning and exhortation.

First of all, let us understand very clearly that there are times when God REFUSES TO HEAR. God is never in a place where He is incapable of rescuing, or unable to hear. (Is59:1) But there are times that our persistent rebellion ("iniquities") comes "between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, from hearing." (vs2) In this case the NKJV/KJV are more descriptive... "..He WILL NOT hear.." In other words... He turns a deaf ear and 'refuses' to hear.

God spells out the "abominations of their fathers". (vs4) He pleads with them, "Let each man cast away the filthy idols of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am Jehovah your God." (vs7) But they rebelled and would not listen to God. (vs8)

We see this today with the "church". As a recent example, we studied from God's Commandments that we are not to have any "image..or any likeness". (Ex20:4) While there were some e-mails of agreement; next to the topic of charismania that we address frequently, I think the "application" of the matter of "any likeness" stirred up as many negative sentiments as anything we ever address. When it comes down to the nitty gritty, where the rubber meets the road, and we are faced with exactly -WHAT- constitutes a "likeness", people love their idols. Joshua had ended his life with Israel by exhorting them to "...put away the strange gods among you, and incline your heart to Jehovah God of Israel." (Josh24:23) And this was after years of successful conquest of the promised land; they were -supposedly- "following" God. And yet, they still had their idols.

Today that which pretends to be part of the "Church" also rebels, just as Israel did. If someone has "tears" over some artist's rendition of

Jesus being nailed to the cross, such emotions are supposedly a "good thing"...and they rail against God's messenger who says otherwise, when God -specifically- said, "..or any likeness". Notice that God calls idols "filthy". And embracing them is a "defilement". (vs7)

Israel did not heed God. They "..would not listen". (vs8) So God's "fury" was poured on them. Even though God had shown His power in delivering them from Egypt, Israel clung to the gods of Egypt. Therefore, for witness to Egypt, whose gods had been defeated, God could not allow Israel to go unpunished. To do so would "profane" God's "name...in the eyes of the nations" who saw God's work in Egypt. (vs9)

In the wilderness Israel rebelled continually. God's fury consumed them in the wilderness. (vs13)

Now, as Ezekiel is speaking to Israel several generations later, they are still doing as their fathers did. They are offering their children as live-burnt offerings. Apparently they must have thought that Jehovah would answer them when they offered offerings according to the heathen. But He responds, "As I live, declares the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you." (vs31)

So, what makes today's "church" think that God will respond to them, when they engage in idolatry and pagan practices of the world? We're not talking about Catholics or Mormons here. We are talking about those who consider themselves to be "evangelical, fundamental, Bible-preaching" churches. When they hang their "likenesses" all over the place, and "go up by steps" to their 'altars' (Ex20:26), and have pagan inscriptions on their objects of worship, what makes them think their prayer meetings have any power? What makes them think that there is a "sweet, sweet spirit in this place"?

Just as God would not hear Israel back then, He also DOES NOT HEAR today's "christians". Today's "church".

What is more important? That we build a nice building? That we have large attendances? Or, that God's Name is not profaned?

Dear Reader: "Are you being defiled in the way of your fathers? And do you go whoring after their filthy idols?" (vs30) If you engage in heathen practices and have their idols hanging from your walls, necks and ears, and on your shelves... "I will not be inquired of by you, O [church] As I live, declares the Lord Jehovah, I will not be inquired of by you." (vs31)

Purity in Service (Ezekiel 22)

"A plot by her prophets is in her midst...they have devoured souls and they have taken the riches and gems...her priests have violated My Law and have profaned My holy things. They have not divided between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and clean they have not taught." (Ezek22:25-26)

In this passage, is God -praising- Israel because they were practicing "tolerance" and "inclusion"? No! They were 'dialoguing' with the heathen around them. The unclean were allowed into the temple. They offered abominations as sacrifices. The holy and unclean were mingled together.

This is what the "church" is doing today. Just like the matter of idolatry we addressed last week, this matter comes in a 'close second' in terms of people objecting to the preaching about such "separation" from the world. Not only does the church have the world's idols in its worship, it also invites the unsaved to join in its times of worship. They bring their offerings, and the preachers get rich off of them. Now, to be sure, the excuse given is that they want the world to come in and "get saved". But again... do we do things "our way" or God's way? What is more important, to have 'numbers', or to obey God? Is it more important that the choir be fully staffed with professional-sounding musicians, so the music will "attract more" people to come as they are entertained; or to perhaps only have solos and duets (or NO special music), but be in obedience to the Lord by not profaning the platform with the unsaved? What about the unsaved hired janitor or nursery babysitters? Not to mention SS and VBS teachers, and ushers!!

Hear God's Word: "Enough to you, of all your abominations, O [church], when you brought in the sons of aliens, uncircumcised of heart and uncircumcised of flesh, to be in My sanctuary, to profane it, even My house, when you [bring your offerings and worship]...and you have not kept the charge of My holy things, but you have set them as keepers of My charge in My sanctuary, for themselves. So says the Lord Jehovah: No son of an alien, uncircumcised of heart and uncircumcised of flesh [in other words, an "unBeliever"], shall enter into My sanctuary, or any son of an alien who is among the sons of Israel." (Ezek44:6-9)

In practical terms, let's think of one example scenario, and see how we read this passage and obey it. Some unsaved friends or relatives have come from a distance and are staying with you for a few days. The week-end comes, and you normally go "to church" on Sunday; or perhaps you are meeting in a small house assembly. Do you take your friends along? Remember, they are "unsaved". What does this passage say? To do so is a... what? "Abomination". [Editor: like we said last week, some

"hard medicine"!]

Perhaps you think this is a bit "harsh"? Notice through Isaiah, "Turn! Turn! Go out from there! Touch not the unclean! Go out of her midst, purify yourselves, bearers of the vessels of Jehovah." (Is52:11) Let us not forget Jesus' zeal when He made a whip of cords and overturned the tables, and chased the unclean out of the temple, as He said that the temple was a "house of prayer". (Mt21:13, Is56:7) No, that [prayer] does not mean, a place where people come to put little pieces of paper in the cracks of the wall, recite ritual words, bow their heads, fold their hands, and end their recitations with "in Jesus' name, Amen"! Prayer is communion with God. God is Holy. If we are in communion, there is no sin. It is a place where the unbeliever does not belong, because God's holiness and His awesome name cannot tolerate sin. The thing that characterizes the unbeliever is "sin". Thus, we might see the above words in today's vernacular, perhaps, as "Go on! Get outta here! Shoo! Scram! Don't show your faces around here again!"

Oh, but that was "OLD Testament"! The Law! Jesus did away with the Law. Right?

"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership does righteousness have with lawlessness? And what fellowship does light have with darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? What agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are a temple of the living God [you represent God's presence], even as God said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Because of this..." ...work cooperatively with all your area churches, have neighborhood campaigns to invite people to join you for special services, have 'contests' in your church to see who can bring the most visitors next Sunday... ??? !!-NO-!! Let's resume the quote from God's Word, "...come out from among them and be separated, says the Lord, and do not touch the unclean thing, and I will receive you." (2Cor6:14-17)

Remember last week we observed God saying, "I will not be inquired after by you" because of idolatry, sin and mixing with paganism. Now, when it says, "come out from among them", it is obviously written to people who have been mixed up with the world. Today, we can observe this as the 'status quo' by which the "church" functions. Many of these things we [-me-, too] did in ignorance. (Ac3:17, 17:30)

But when we see our fault through God's Word, we can choose two options. We can do as Israel did, and suffer God's judgment. Or we can obey, and "come out" from it.

Perhaps we lead a local assembly, and have been disobedient. Perhaps we have unbelievers in the assembly. Perhaps some of them are serving and "ministering". How do we "fix" it? Well, nobody said it would be easy. Yes, some people are going to get upset, and call you all sorts of names. Some may even make threats, or do worse. Some may take you to court. Some may threaten your physical safety.

But there is an example in the O.T. where some of Israel actually went about to make things right. Many of the exiles of Babylon who returned to the land of promise had married pagan wives, and there were also children from these wives. In Ezra ch10 is the account of how they put away these wives, along with their children. Drastic? Indeed! Notice how it is said:

"And now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the women, and such as have been born of them, according to the counsel of the Lord, and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God...Be of good courage and act." (Ezra10:3-4)

Now, as they were covenanting with God in this matter, they were congregated, standing out in the rain on a dreary day (vs13), realizing that it was not something that would be done with a quick word, making a pledge and now go home..."la dee dah". There was a lot of work to do to resettle all these people they were putting away...as they said, "we who have sinned in this thing are many.." (vs13) But they covenanted with God, "As you have said, so we MUST do." (vs12) You can imagine there were a lot of tears, and anger. But they did it. And the chapter ends with a 'list of names' of all those who made things right before God.

As we asked last week, do you sense a distance between you and God? Well, are you engaged in idolatry and are you fellowshiping with the unsaved? You need to make a break from these things. You need to put away your "heathen wives and children" and "burn the books" (Acts19:19) of your past. "Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts, double-minded ones." (Jas4:8)

Yes, it will be hard. But if you "draw near to God" in this manner, and "mourn and weep" and come to Him in "humility", "He will lift you up". (Jas4:9-10)

Carefree multitude (Ezekial 23)

"The sound of a carefree multitude was with her..." (23:42 nkjv)

Before I got this far with the VW-Edition, this word "carefree" popped out at me from the nkjv. Let's see this verse again...

"..the sound of a multitude at ease was with her, and drunkards were brought from the wilderness with men of the common sort, who put bracelets on their wrists and beautiful crowns on their heads.."

Before we discuss this phrase, let us see the context of this chapter. It is recommended that you read it all. Scripture uses some terminology here that is not quite 'proper' in 'polite' company; in some ways, more fitting for the likes of a Jay Leno monologue, what with explicit terminology of body parts and what people do with them in whoredom. But this is how far Israel and Judah have sunk. The psalmist says, "..with the crooked You will show Yourself twisted." (Ps18:26) God addresses them as the prostitutes that they are, spelling out their apostasy from Him as adulterous women who sleep around with any man who will have them. Spelling out in graphic detail what they've been up to: how they lusted after other gods (as handsome men to be seduced and spend some time with in bed); and God's judgments upon them, how, since they have exposed themselves, God will allow their judges to expose them naked, and: "You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, the cup of horror and desolation... you shall drink and drain it, you shall break its shards, and tear off your own breasts; for I have spoken, declares the Lord Jehovah."(vs33-34)

Now God tells Ezekiel to "..declare to them their abominations.." (vs36)

They have "blood" on their hands; they have committed adultery against God with their idols; they have sacrificed their babies "passing them through the fire". (vs37) We've described this before... live babies placed on the altar screaming and kicking, until burnt to death! (In many ways, not at all that dissimilar to abortion! ...from the baby's perspective!)

They have "defiled My sanctuary on the same day and profaned My Sabbaths". They would go offer their babies to Molech, and the very same day come into God's temple to 'worship' (vs38-39) How many in today's "churches" also belong to secret orders/societies; including some rather famous "christian" leaders, ones who conduct crusades and have access to world leaders! Saturday night worship before the altars of the Knights Templar, and the next morning stand in God's pulpit!

Rather than trusting in God, Judah was trusting in Egypt, and making alliances with other strong neighbors. (Exactly what Israel is doing

today!) Israel, being a theocracy, their politics was essentially one and the same with their worship. The figurative language God uses of a woman freshening up, making sure her hair is 'just so', primping up in front of the mirror with the make-up, putting on that slinky barely-there dress with parts missing in just the right places, putting on jewelry, and then draping herself on her couch-of-seduction to entice others (not-her-Husband, God) into her bed. (vs40-41) 'You think such writing is too "suggestive"? Again, please read this chapter. It is the language God is using.

Now, her lovers have arrived. She doesn't have just 'one' lover, oh no! She has many! She has a veritable orgy! The wine is flowing (today's 'church' loves to be "drunk in the spirit"), they are bringing their gifts, and they are having quite a time of 'love-making!' (vs43-44) Like a play-girl mansion!

It is in -this- context that our 'theme' phrase appears. The "sound of a multitude at ease/carefree.."

Folks (I just 'must' insert this here!): the Gospel of Jesus Christ is NOT 'seductive'! It is an 'offense'. It is the "offense of the cross"! (Gal5:11) It involves blood, death, repentance, self-abhorrence. Rather than the slinky dress, it involves a filthy "menstruation cloth". (Is64:6) Salvation only comes to a person who sees their own sin and pleads for God's mercy upon them. The so-called "good news" today's [c]hurch proclaims is sending people down the "broad" way to "destruction". (Mt7:13)

OK, back to our lesson: In the previous lesson we observed the call to keep the abominations out of worship. Israel was not only offering their babies to idols, but once Manasseh became king, they even brought this practice into God's temple! (2Ki21)

Oh... our church is so small. We need to "grow" our church. How can we do this? How can we get more of 'Egypt' in to help contribute more into the offering plates, because we 'need' to build some buildings. How can we get the adults in? Let's entice their children. How do we get their children in? Let's entertain them. Give them something they can feel "carefree" about. Something that doesn't suggest holiness or standards of righteousness. They worship the rock stars. So, let's bring in rock (satan's) music... that will draw them in. Let's not impose any standards of conduct while they are in the sanctuary, so let's let them romp around and rough-house and throw paper airplanes and spit wads at each other, trampling over the pews and around the pulpit in God's sanctuary... after all, we don't want to speak 'cross' words to them, and get them angry, such that they won't come back. As they grow up and become adults, how do we 'keep' them coming? With rock music... what else! And of course, our church must be advertised as a "FRIENDLY" church. "Friendly" means, coming into the sanctuary with 'high-fives',

slaps on the back 'how-ya-doin'?', and a general state of hubbub. "CAREFREE" Don't dress up, just come casual as-you-are, and we've got the espresso concession so you can be "AT EASE" (you don't need to fast, if even figuratively) in worship.

In one church I was involved in years ago, one man told of one of the ushers. This man was doing as I would do before a service, while the prelude music was playing... he would sit in the pew in prayer, preparing his heart for worship and exhortation from God's Word. Well, this church had one particular usher who was the slap-the-back high-five type 'roudy' person, who would romp up and down the aisles to lead people to their seats. He apparently came by this person, sitting next to the aisle, in an attitude of prayer, and bumps him in the shoulder with, "Are you sleeping?? Wake up! Har-dee-har-har!!"

Well, when 'churches' feel the need to bring the world/unsaved into the assembly, they must needs do things the world's way. Advertising campaigns, slogans, cheer-leading, bubbiness, and... COMPROMISE! Using the devil's music, and pagan rituals and symbols as they adorn themselves with "bracelets on their wrists and beautiful crowns on their heads" (23:42)

You see, not only does bringing the unsaved into the assembly disobey God's commands about keeping the unclean out (Ezek44:6-9)(We've said enough about this at other times), it jeopardizes the 'spirit' by which Believers can worship. When the world is "at ease/carefree" in God's sanctuary, the Believer cannot worship "in the spirit of holiness" (Rom1:4) Yes, the Psalms are full of Joyful Shouts, Singing, Thanksgiving, and making 'loud' sounds on instruments; but worship is also a time of "silence". "...Jehovah is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him." (Hab2:20) "Silence is praise to You, O God, in Zion; and unto You is a vow performed." (Ps65:1)

Everybody loves to sing loudly, "Lord I lift Your name on high, Lord I love to sing your praises"... but then, the one son also said, "I go, sir...but he did not go". (Mt21:30) It's one thing to blab all over town how much one is worshipping God, but what God wants to see is the one who had been rebellious, but then repents, "...afterward he regretted it and went." (Mt21:29)

"Which of the two did the will of his father? They said to Him, The first. Jesus said to them, Truly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him." (Mt21:31-32)

Today's "church" is infested with the -carefree- "mixed multitude" of Egypt. (Ex12:38) It was the "mixed multitude" that "yielded to intense

craving" and lusts (Num11:4) and led Israel away from God.

Folks, remember this: If you invite the world into your assembly, you will NOT 'win' them for Christ, but they -WILL- drag you down away from God's holiness. This is a 99.999% certainty! Israel is our "example" of this. (1Cor10:5-6)

Today's "church" needs to be like those of Nehemiah's day: "So it was, when they had heard the Law, that they separated all the mixed multitude from Israel." (Neh13:3) To be sure, they were left with a 'small' group!

"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice (worship), and to heed than the fat of rams." (1Sam15:22)

Don't Cry (Ezekiel 24:16)

"Son of man, behold I take away from you the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Yet neither shall you mourn nor weep, nor shall your tears run down." (Eze24:16)

Oh, what a life Ezekiel had! First of all, God tells him his mission. Go to a "rebellious" people with "My" message. (Eze2) In ch3 God tells him that Israel is more rebellious than other peoples would be. That if he was being sent to foreigners, THEY would listen. But God's own people (dare we say for our day...the "church"?) would not listen. Ezekiel isn't too sure about his mission...and so God forcibly "lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong on me." (3:14) Ezekiel is "spittin' mad" at his assignment, so God drags him off, "kicking and screaming" (so-to-speak).

Not only does God forcibly move him to his mission field. When he gets there he is struck "dumb" so that he cannot speak. (3:15) And God further clarifies the mission. He will be dumb until God wants him to speak, and then his tongue will be loosed. (vs26-27) ...and reiterates, "He who hears, let him hear, and he who stops his ears, let him stop; for they are a rebellious house." (vs27)

Along the way, there's another requirement. He must "lay seige" to this depiction of Jerusalem on a piece of tile. (4:1) He is to lie on one side for 390 days, and on the other for 40. And God "lay bands" (vs8) on him so he could not stir from these positions. This is in testimony, a visual object lesson to the people of Israel. Can you imagine being in such a position? Eating, sleeping and doing all the other bodily functions, for over a year, outside, in all the annual climates and weather conditions. Let alone the likely taunts and abuse of passers-by.

But nothing like, having his beloved wife taken away in sudden death; and he is not even allowed to mourn for her. God says "Groan but be silent; make no mourning for the dead" (24:17) Feel the pain inside, but don't let anybody else know your pain. He is forewarned, so when it happened, "I did in the morning as I was commanded." (vs18) This, too, was an "object lesson" for the message of Jehovah to Israel. (vs19-24) And when Israel found themselves doing what Ezekiel had done, they would "know that I am the Lord Jehovah." (vs24)

I expect none of us has been called to the extremes Ezekiel was. And yet, we are called to some hardships. Maybe your wife was discovered to have a lump. Your child has some rare form of disease with no cure. You have been politicked out of job or ministry position. And as "humans" we hurt, don't we! When these things happen, what do we do?

Well, first of all, we can rejoice, in that... we are in good company. There has never been the likes of the apostle Paul who "despaired even of life" (2Cor1:8) because of the hardships he endured.(11:23-33) And yet, what was his conclusion of the matter? Oh, poor me, poor us! Would you please pray for us that these hardships will go away!..?? No! "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, SO THAT we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." (1:9) As he was a "living testimony" to the Corinthians (vs12) His desire was, "..lest anyone should think of me as being beyond what he sees me, or hears of me." (2Cor12:6)

How can a Christian exhort another "how to" deal with adversity, if he has not been through some, himself? So, if God brings some your way, or allows satan to buffet you... REJOICE! He cares enough about you, and sees "potential" in your development, that he is bringing training. Sometimes "chastening." (Heb12:5,7,11) Sometimes, just "endurance." (2Cor1:6) Ultimately we learn that...

"..we should not trust in ourselves, but in God..." (2Cor1:9)

King of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:11-19)

"Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre..." (vs12)

Throughout many of these intervening chapters the reader would see God's judgments pronounced against various nations; for their rebellion against God, their mistreatment of Israel, or their rejoicing over Israel's calamities when some other nation was mistreating them, and for not coming to Israel's aid. Remember the sheep/goat judgment is not necessarily about -doing- evil to Israel, but a nation's attitude towards Israel in coming to their aid, or not; and if they saw Israel in need, and did nothing, they receive judgment. (Mt25:31-46)

But when we come to the "king of Tyre", we have a different situation. Notice that vs2 addresses the "prince" of Tyre; but vs12, the "king". Vs2 could say, equally, "prince" or "ruler"; someone who has authority and governs. But a typical ruler is often 'under' another, who is of even higher rank. In vs12 "king" indicates an 'ultimate' authority. An authority that is 'higher' than the prince/ruler. Typically, in any domain, nobody is higher in rank, than the king. When Joseph ruled in Egypt, he was a prince/ruler, but pharaoh was king. When Mordecai ruled in Babylon, he was a ruler, but Ahasuerus was king.

Thing is, these earthly kings, while being "kings", are only merely princes/rulers. Many kings in eastern cultures made themselves out to be little 'gods'. That was the case with the pharaohs. This persisted through to at least WW2, when Japan's 'god', their emperor, was defeated. But notice that Tyre's self-assumed 'god' is condemned, "and yet you are a man, and not a God, though you set your heart as the heart of God". (vs2) This ruler of Tyre has set himself up as a self-assume 'ultimate' ruler... but who was over him, making him be as he was? The "king" of Tyre.

And who was this king? Someone who "seals the measure" (vs12); someone of 'ultimate' wisdom and beauty. When somebody dismisses to you satan's ability to have wisdom, don't you believe it! It says here, that he is "full of wisdom". After all, it takes more than a nincompoop to rule "all the kingdoms of the world". (Lk4:5-6) He is full of schemes and purposes by which he tries to "take advantage of us". (2Cor2:11) It takes a lot more intellect to lie, and keep track of them all, than to tell the truth; and who is the "father" of lies? (Jn8:44)

When he comes to us, he does so with "beautiful" things. He, himself, was the most dazzling creature of all God's creation. He not only looked dazzling, he also was a musician. He is called the "angel of light" (2Cor11:14), the "shining one". (Is14:12)

We know this is not speaking of Tyre's -human- 'prince', because this

one was in "Eden, the garden of God". The "serpent" (Gen3:1), the "..dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan.." (Rev20:2)

Notice where his place of origin was: "..the anointed cherub that covers...in the holy mountain of God.." (vs14) Just as the "king" of all animal creatures, Leviathan, was associated with fire in the very core of his being (Job41:18-21), this "king", also, had a place "in the midst of fiery stones.." (vs14b) But being the covering cherub, that indicates a special place in the very presence in fellowship and worship of the Most High; as the Jewish "mercy seat", representing God's presence, was overshadowed with the wings of the cherubim. (Ex25:20)

Let us summarize this king's modern most successful form of "taking advantage". It is based upon his own characteristics. Did you ever see 'ugly' people leading worship? No, they are always "beautiful". In many cases they grow up through the ranks because they are "attractive". Many of those who 'entertain' in worship, do so with the razzle dazzle of lights and sequins; things that sparkle and give a sense of radiance. The "ministers of righteousness" being like the "angel of light". (2Cor11:15) It is done with music. And it is called "worship". Yes, folks: due to his origins in God's presence, he is qualified as the -ultimate- "worship leader". And since this 'king' is so full of "wisdom", his cleverness has used his own specialties, trained his followers in them, and has cleverly gotten all these people worshipping him...even though they think they are worshipping Jesus. No! Don't ever underestimate him, leaving yourself unguarded, because you think he is "stupid" ..!! That, too, is satan's deception.

What we see in his followers is what it is, because that is what he is. Most musicians and worship leaders are a very 'proud' folk. [Ed: for anybody who wants to object to that statement, please remember, I used to be there, and worked amongst them. While my heart might have been different from theirs, I learned their arguments well. I know whereof I speak! If you decide to send me arguments, please don't waste your time. I've heard them all before. I even used to use some of them, myself!] And to be sure, this pride often manifests itself in a false-humility. They are always "humbled" to be up there; so-they-say. No they are not! They are proud as all get-out, just bursting inside!

And this pride became satan's downfall. He saw his own beauty, and forgot that it had been given to him by the Most High. He got this idea that he could "be like the Most High". (Is14:14) Being his own god. Pride is a dangerous thing. In order that Paul not be "exalted above measure" due to the greatness of the ministry God had entrusted to him, he was given a "thorn in the flesh". (2Cor12:7) Many who are in ministry have little "thorns" of various sorts, as each person's need requires.

Notice God says, "You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities..." (vs18) Yes, his followers also defile the sanctuaries with their "worship".

And as a result notice this king's conclusion: "..therefore I bring fire from your midst; it has devoured you, and I consign you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who see you." (vs18)

Isaiah speaks of this one as the "-king- of Babylon". (Is14) Yes, he has dominion over the world, given to him temporarily by God. The king of the "rulers, authorities, the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies." (Eph6:12) Whatever godless world ruler exists, their 'king' is the same as this "king of Tyre/Babylon". And just as he has been "seeking whom he may devour" (1Pt5:8), notice that others are waiting -eagerly- for him...

"How the oppressor has ceased! The golden city has ceased! Jehovah has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers who struck peoples in wrath, strokes without letup, ruling the nations in anger, a persecution without restraint. The whole earth is at rest and is quiet; they break forth into singing. Yea, the noble trees rejoice over you, the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since you have been laid down, no woodcutter comes up against us. [Ed: to make idols?] Sheol from below is excited over you, to meet you at your coming. It stirs up the dead for you, all the chief of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations." (Is14:4-9)

And as he has been deposed, what is creation's reaction? "All who know you among the peoples have been astonished at you; you shall become a terror, and shall be no more forever." (vs19)

And as he is in the Pit, along with his fallen followers, what is their reaction upon learning his true identity? "All of them shall speak and say to you, Are you also as weak as we? Have you become like us?" (Is14:10) You're a nobody? You're no greater than us?

Dear Reader: whom do you worship? The "King of Glory"? (Ps24:7-10) or the king of Tyre/Babylon? Have you even yet "come out of [Babylon]"? (Rev18:4), or are you being spirit-filled and following your "doctrines of demons"? (1Tm4:1) If you are following the latter, and insist upon remaining in it, notice your king's epitaph:

"Your arrogance is brought down to Sheol, and the noise of your lutes (rock guitars of your worship music). The maggot is spread under you, and the worms cover you. How you are fallen from the heavens, O shining one, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!" (Is14:10-11)

God is not fair? (Ezekiel 33:10-20)

"..the children of your people say, The way of Jehovah is not fair. But as for them, it is their way which is not fair! ...O house of Israel, I shall judge each one of you according to his ways." (vs17,20)

This passage reiterates what God proclaims to Israel in ch18, about a sinner "turning away from" sin to become righteous; or a righteous person "turning away from" his righteousness, rejecting God forever; refuting the doctrine often called "once saved-always saved" which we have addressed in the past and won't now, and many links can be found at the website:

<http://www.a-voice.org/search/o.htm#oncesave>

But let us consider right now a person's individual accountability.

We live in quite an interesting world. People typically do not accept responsibility for their own actions. If a person's car has a blow-out, but because the driver was busy yacking with passengers, looking in the mirror fixing their makeup, working on the burger-n-fries, etc; instead of paying full attention to their driving; and they rolled over because they hadn't been gripping the steering wheel properly and the blow-out ripped/spun the wheel out of their hands; what is the typical reaction? Sue the tire and vehicle manufacturer. A parent leaves a gun lying around within easy access of a young child to whom the parents haven't bothered to teach gun safety; and while they are out, the child starts playing with the gun and shoots either themselves, or sibling/friends. Reaction? Sue the gun manufacturer for making a gun that does exactly what guns are designed to do... shoot bullets. Or the one that I wish I could have seen on Judge Judy; only saw the promos... A fellow who had driven his girlfriend's car while 'high' on drugs/booze, suing the girlfriend for allowing him to drive her car, because while he was driving it (under his state of intoxication) he had an accident, got arrested? (I didn't get all those details because I didn't see it) But, due to his driving while intoxicated, he got into some trouble; so, therefore, he was suing the girlfriend for letting him driver her car! In the promo they showed him arguing that the girlfriend should have said "No" to letting him drive the car...!! Because, once he was drunk, he was not in control of himself...!! [Ed: Huh??]

When a person does not pay attention to their driving, eventually they -will- have an accident; and it is nobody's fault but the driver's. If a gun is left lying around, when there are untrained and/or young irresponsible children around to find it, it is not the gun's fault that it did what it was designed to do; shoot. It is the parent's fault for leaving the gun where the child could find it, and get hurt. If somebody drives while drunk, is it anybody else's fault when they get

in trouble? Did anybody else 'force' them to get drunk? Did anybody else force them to get behind the wheel? They did it all on their own.

If a person jumps off a cliff to their death, is it God's fault for creating gravity which pulled the person to their death? Well, without gravity we'd all be free-floating off into space. If a person smashes their thumb with a hammer, is it the manufacturer's fault for making the hammer? If a person jumps in front of a fast-moving train and gets splattered around the countryside, was it the train's fault for travelling down the tracks? If a person jumps overboard a ship at night when nobody can see to rescue them, is it the pilot's fault when they drown at sea? If a person deliberately walks out to where lions or tigers are, and gets mauled and eaten, is it God's fault for creating lions and tigers? If a person goes walking out on a flat plain where there is no shelter, in the middle of a lightning storm, and gets struck by lightning and killed, is that death God's fault, for creating lightning?

Are the answers all not painfully obvious? You do something stupid, you pay the consequences. You jump out of an airplane without a parachute, and the chances are great that you will "splat" when you hit the ground. Just because you decided to jump does not obligate God to suddenly at the spur of that moment, change the laws of gravity. It is not God's 'fault' when you are dead.

Oh, but... "it's not fair", that I can't beat my head with a baseball bat without it hurting. It's "not fair" that when carelessness got my finger too close to that sickle bar, it got whacked off.

There is a law that has been established since the beginning of creation, "...the soul who sins shall die". (Ezek18:4,20) It was first established at Eden; in the day you -disobey- God, "you shall die the death" (Gen2:17)

You don't want to die by "splat"? Don't jump off the cliff. You don't want to get zapped by lightning? Don't go out in the lightning storm. You don't want your head to get smashed? Don't hit it with a baseball bat. Simple. Yes?

You don't want to die under God's judgment? Repent and turn from sin; be obedient to God. Simple. You say you want to turn away from God and repudiate the righteousness you had? Well, Ok then...die in your sins.

But... God is not fair! Why would a God of "luuuuv" condemn a person to everlasting torture? But... gravity is not fair! If I jump off the cliff, or out of the plane, why must I go "splat"? That is the "law". In the first case, the Law of Eternal Life vs Judgment. In the second, the 'law' of 'gravity'. A person knows the laws and either abides by them; or disobeys them and suffers the consequences. It's not a matter

of "fair" or "unfair". It just -is-.

If a person wishes to be "angry" at the law of gravity and defy it; well, go ahead. Jump. Splat! If you wish to be angry at God for His laws of Life and Death, and defy Him; well, go ahead. Rebel. And be prepared to spend forever in the Lake of Fire. (Rev20:14-15)

Just as each person pays their -own- consequences for jumping, shooting, beating, etc.; as for God's Law, "So then each of us shall give account concerning himself to God." (Rom14:12) The drunk will not be able to accuse the owner of the car, when the drunk person was driving it. Each person will answer for their own sin. No passing the buck. No "extenuating circumstances". When we stand before God "every mouth" is "stopped" as the sinner is "guilty before God". (Rom3:19)

The judgment is according to what the person did or did not do regarding God and His Son, Jesus Christ. God "..will render to each one according to his works.." (Rom2:6) Remember, Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe into Him whom He sent." (Jn6:29)

If you rebel against God, expect judgment. It will come to you in this manner: "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her." (Rev18:6) "..for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink, for they are -deserving-." (Rev16:6)

Many think it's not right that people should suffer the consequences for their crimes. Let's just "forgive-n-forget". And they want God to just forgive, too, even though they are not sorry for their sin, nor do they have any intention of repenting. I should be able to rebel against God all I want, and if God then punishes me... well, He's just "unfair". God says, "But as for them, it is their way which is not fair!" (vs17)

If you rebel, God -will- "..judge each one of you according to his ways" (vs20) And "be sure your sin will find you out.." (Num32:23) Whatever judgment each receives from God... They will be "deserving" of it!

Kill the messenger (Ezekiel 33)

"And you, son of man, I have set you a watchman to the house of Israel. Therefore you shall hear the word from My mouth, and warn them from Me." (Eze33:7)

Years ago, before telephones, e-mail, faxes; any mail or messages were relayed by horseman. Of course, the most important messages were from the king to his serfs, to issue some new edict or collect taxes. If the people were in a mood to rebel, they would meet the messenger, gang up around him, pull him off his horse and "Kill the messenger!!"

What wrong had the messenger done? Nothing. He had merely relayed to the recipients what the sender intended. The serfs were, in actuality, angry with the king. But since he is safely tucked away in his fortified castle, anger is vented on the messenger.

What do we see today? A corrupt president is exposed for what he truly is. A messenger, having been hired for the task, proclaims the corruption. "Bad" messenger, "tarnishing such a wonderful president with his accusations." Well, no! He simply exposed what was there.

Most of the world adores a sweet, unassuming, humble lady who appeared to be doing so much good for the oppressed and dying. People come along and expose her associations, hoarded wealth and false gospel; and the messengers are accused of "poking at specks" and making "personal attacks" on somebody who is now dead and can't defend herself.

Outrage is not on the corrupt politician or religious icon. It's "bad Ken Starr" or "Dave Hunt" or "whoever."

When a True Believing Christian proclaims "Thus says Jehovah" the message goes counter to popular trends. It proclaims Life and Light which is counter to the Darkness and Death of the world. People "love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." (Jn3:19) Thus, Jesus promised, "because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (Jn15:19) Which follows the example above of the villagers killing the messenger. "The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they have kept My saying, they will also keep yours." (vs20)

When someone like Mother Teresa is exposed, what is the purpose? To rat on her and tear her down? No. What about the fact of her "sincerity"? Well, surely she was sincere...but sincerely WRONG. So, as the several documents which a few of you sent after the recent expose corroborated, the purpose is to right the wrong. People are sincerely on their way to

hell because of false doctrines such as M.Teresa proclaimed. Exposes are a form of "rescue mission" so that others do not go down that same path to destruction. As Jude says, "snatching them out of the fire." (vs23) ..out of "pity"(vs22) ...not condemnation.

Trouble is, people are hell-bent! God would send His messengers, "rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not do this abominable thing which I hate" [idolatry](Jer44:4) Israel was of such rebellion that He sent "all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them" the "church" responds the same; "but you have not listened nor bowed down your ear to hear." (Jer25:4) People would rather have everybody "happily" (feeling good) being deceived, following a person they consider to be a "saint" on their way to hell.

The purpose of the "watchman" is to "warn" people of imminent danger. God's message to this generation is, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Eze33:11)

True Christian, who is reading this... When you are assailed by the unbelievers, take heart. You represent our Lord Jesus Christ. He was despised and rejected. (Is53:3) So, when you experience the same, take courage. Remember His word, and be faithful in it, "As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you." (Jn20:21)

Love Songs (Ezekiel 33)

"And you, son of man, the sons of your people are speaking about you beside the walls, and in the doors of the houses. And one speaks to another, each man with his brother, saying, Come now and hear what the Word coming from Jehovah is. And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as My people. And they hear your words, but they do not do them. For they produce much love with their mouth, but their heart goes after their unjust gain. And, behold, you are to them as a singer of love songs with a beautiful voice, and playing well on an instrument. For they hear your words, but they are not doing them." (Eze33:30-32)

Other than little periodic personal examples from life intended to illustrate the lesson being taught, I don't speak of "PFB" here. While PB's 'call' to this ministry was the call to a "prophet" (2:5) from Ezekiel ch2, this ministry is for the purpose of proclaiming "So says the Lord Jehovah". (2:4) After all, if you look at Ezekiel's life, he the -man- was a continual "object lesson" to Israel, as God called on him to do all sorts of 'strange' things that would have people shaking their heads and asking questions. While PB hasn't been asked to dig through walls as though 'in exile' (ch12), nor to lie on his side for days at a time, while 'laying siege' to a model city (ch4), he has been called to "a house of rebellion" nonetheless. (2:3,6,7,8)

Yes, subscribers often write to complain at the "harsh tones" they sense from the VW mailings. They might wish that things were written more "lovingly", and with, perhaps, a bit more (what they would consider) "compassion". But notice that God is to people the way they are to Him. "And Jehovah has returned to me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands before His eyes. With the merciful You reveal Yourself as merciful; with an upright man You reveal Yourself as upright; with the pure You reveal Yourself as pure; and with the perverting ones You appear perverse" (Ps18:24-26) And so, if people are rebelliously in their hearts shaking their fists at God, His message/s to them will be 'in kind'.

[Editor: Now, as an 'aside' here... often when the rebellious ones are complaining, there are also notes from those who love the Lord, with words of 'agreement' with what has been proclaimed. So, you see, the "tone" of a writing isn't so much coming from "PB" as it is being 'received' in the heart/s of the reader/s...due to either agreement with the Word, or a smitten rebellious conscience.]

With this as introduction, let's look briefly at the passage with which we opened this study. The VW ministry began in 1994. That's when the Ezekiel ch2 'call' came upon PB. But years prior to that he was being prepared. He thought the Lord would use him 'mightily' in music

ministry. You see, as a child he was used to performing special music in both singing and playing trumpet. Even when he was studying music and eventually performed professionally, the Lord's message was nevertheless strong on his heart. When his collegiate peers were into the perVersions, he developed the reputation and label as being "judgmental" for trying to bring people back to "Thus says the Lord" When he did special music in churches, it was never to "entertain", but to proclaim God's message. The songs ALWAYS had a Spiritual message. His heart yearned for "Christians" to be more "on fire" for God. Thing is, at the time, he didn't realize yet that most of them were NOT -really- "Christians".

Like this passage says, people always talked 'about' him. They loved his music, but their "hearts [went] after their unjust gain". (vs31) They were always 'politicking' behind the scenes.

But vs32 is the clincher. After special music, or a concert, they would come up, all smiles and feeling wonderful, "Oh, you have such a beautiful voice" ... "Oh, we just -love- your music" ... "Oh, you are sooo gifted with so much talent". (Ad Nauseum!!) As the requisit "thank you's" and handshakes are engaged, the heart is STABBED... "Did they not HEAR THE MESSAGE of the songs???" And then, in some situations, where politics put a rift in relationships, some of those who had been praising, were now twisting the knife with which they had stabbed the back. You see, they enjoyed the "beautiful music" ...and as such, they would have had to have "heard the words" but "they [were] not doing them". (vs32)

Back then it was beautiful "loving" music. They didn't hear. Now, the Word is given in a plain wrapper, sometimes bluntly. They still don't hear. Is it really a question of "being lovingly" or "harsh" in the presentation? Or is the real problem the heart/s of the hearers and readers?

In Israel's case God was promising desolations and destitution because of their abominations. Remember that God was "not pleased with most of them" (1Cor10:5), they were not "Israel of Israel". (Rom9:6) Pretend christians. He sent his prophet, whom the people listened to and became mesmerized with. But they did not take heed. They gossiped about him (the prophet), and I expect did a lot of speculating about him. Just like they did about John the Baptist. They spent their time speculating and complaining about the messenger, instead of hearing (and receiving) the MESSAGE.

But notice God's Word to them. Since they were "not doing" God's Word as given through His prophet, He promises about the desolations, "behold, it is coming!" (vs33) And just like Jesus promised the Faithful Church that the pretend "christians" would be made to come and bow at the feet of the True Believers (Rev3:9) so that they would know

that those whom they had ridiculed were -truly- Christ's Beloved, He also says to Ezekiel about Israel when their chastisement comes...

"..then they will know that a prophet has been in their midst.." (vs33)

Shepherds (Ezekiel 33-34)

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord Jehovah to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?" (vs2) And the passage goes on to describe how the shepherds have gotten fat off the sheep, and have not taken care of the sheep, and as a result, the sheep were "scattered". (vs5) Yes, Israel's dispersion "over the whole face of the earth" (vs6) was Israel's 'individuals' collectively. But who was leading them? The same ones Jesus would pronounce later, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Mt23) They not only refused to follow God, themselves, but also kept others, who were willing, from entering God's Kingdom. (Lk11:52)

Not only does a spiritual leader feed the sheep, he also warns against danger. When a "watchman" is given a charge (33:2), his duties are for the specific purpose of watching for the enemy. When he sees the enemy coming, he blows the shofar (33:3) to "warn" the people.

The shepherd -feeds- the flock from God's Word with exhortations, "This is the way, walk in it." (Is30:21) And the watchman warns, "Turn! Turn from your evil ways! For why will you die, O house of Israel?" (33:11)

There are some whose primary commission is to "pastor" their local congregations. To "feed" the flock. There are some ministries whose sole goal seems to be to "warn" people of errors. Many of these are often called "discernment ministries"; to discern the evil for the 'evil' that it, truly, is. Sometimes the watchmen get a bad reputation for being "so unloving" and "negative". Well, it's like a teacher giving music lessons. On one hand the instruction is "how to" play; but as the student also develops bad habits, the teacher must also warn how "not to do" certain things, and sometimes due to the atrocious sounds emerging, the teacher in anxiety might 'yell' at the student, "No!" A traffic director motions traffic in terms of "movement". Guards are posted to keep people out. By the very nature of the post, the guard's duties are somber and serious; but some traffic cops in some places are known for being "colorful" as they direct traffic. Does it mean that the guard is "unloving"? Keeping unqualified people out of certain places keep them from harm's way, out of danger of exposure to toxins or explosives. If the guard did not perform his duty diligently, people could get hurt, or national security interests could shift the tides of war, and many people would perish.

If the sheep are not fed, they do not grow strong. If they are not warned, the wolves come and devour them. As is the case today, so it was in Israel's day. The shepherds were living wealthy lives at the sheeps' expense, and the guards were not warning, because it was so

"negative" and "hateful". They gave the people "smooth things" and "deception" according to their desires. (Is30:10-11) They did not remain faithful, even though God had commissioned them to proclaim, "Thus says the Lord". So, Israel was scattered.

As was the case for Israel, so it is for the C/church.

Now, since the shepherds messed up, is that the end? Was Israel "done for" -permanently-? No.

God has -a- Shepherd lined up for the 'job' of leading Israel.

Notice, first of all, that the promise is that God "will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the lands, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the dwelling places of the land." (34:13) We'll address this more in the next lesson.

But notice that God says "I will feed My flock" (vs15) He says, "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick" as He promises judgment upon those who had abused Israel. (vs16)

He also promises to judge "between sheep and sheep, between rams and he goats" (vs17,22) Israel will not go "unpunished" (Jer30:11) for her sins and rebellion. But God, Himself, will come and draw them to Himself, and judge and heal. And they will say, "Come, and let us return to Jehovah. For He has torn, and He will heal us. He has stricken, and He will bind us up." (Hos6:1)

And where the appointed shepherds failed, God will "raise up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them; My servant David. He shall feed them and be their Shepherd. And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and My Servant David a prince among them; I, Jehovah have spoken." (vs23-24) This reference to "David", of course, the prophetic fulfillment of David's 'seed', Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, the Savior of the world, when He comes to reign from Jerusalem. It is not that David, himself, returns to the throne; but all of David's descendants sat on the "throne of David". When Solomon became king and was blessed, Solomon's blessing helped to "establish" the "throne of David". (1Kg2:45) As Israel looks for their Messiah, they look for the "Son of David" (Mk12:35), which is who Jesus is. (Mk10:47)

When Jesus rules from Jerusalem it will be a time of peace. Even the animals will be at peace. (vs25, Is11:7,65:25) And the land will be prosperous. Presently Israel has had a period of droughts. But when Jesus is ruling, they will have their rains and showers. Yes, "showers of blessing". That song isn't really quite appropriate for the Church. Just as some have taken the so-called "prayer of Jabez" out of its

proper context and made a historical record into a present-day assumption, churches have been singing for God's "showers of blessing" to fall upon them; they are not content with the "mercy drops". They want more and more of something that isn't for them. They want to be "spirit-filled" with things that make them 'feel' all warm and fuzzy. Taking a 'physical' promise to Israel, and twisting it into a so-called 'spiritual' application for the Church.

More on this next lesson...

Israel's 'physical' restoration (Ezekiel 36)

"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the Word of Jehovah! Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Because the enemy has said of you, Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession.." (vs1-2)

Oh, indeed, is this not precisely what those surrounding Israel say. There is no "Israel", but "Palestine". Well, if there is Israel, we want our "Palestinian state" so that we are better-situated to oust Israel off the map.

And then, if not the PLO; there is the so-called "church". "Oh, Israel is -done-for. Anything in Scripture about Israel is -really- now about the church." So, we want our spirit-filled "showers of blessing" (34:26), and for our "sons and daughters [to] prophesy" and to see visions and dreams and have a "baptism of the spirit". (Joel2:28-29)

Notice carefully who (what) this prophesy is towards: the "mountains" of Israel. [Ed: I wonder if anybody has tried to 'spiritualize' this, too?] Notice it is -not- a "spiritual" discussion. It goes on to speak of "mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, and the cities.." (vs4) Notice that plants will "shoot forth branches" (vs8), the land will be "tilled and sown" (vs9), and there will be people and animals (vs11), it will be a place where people "walk" (vs12).

Yes, God has scattered Israel for her bloodshed of idolatry (vs18) and defilements (vs17); but for God's own "holy name" He has "compassion" upon them. His promise is to "take" them "from among the nations" and bring them "into [their] own -land-" (vs24). All the sprouting the land is doing is for all of Israel God is bringing back as they are "drawing near to come" (vs8)

A reminder: as Israel returns, it is not because of their own righteousness or goodness, "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for the sake of My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations, there where you went." (vs22) Some of the more morally corrupt Hollywood entertainers, like Jerry Seinfeld or Julia Louis Dreifus (sp?) are Jews. From the very little I've seen of Dreifus' latest show "Ellie"(?), she has gone even further off the deep end of moral depravity. Just because somebody has the heritage of "Jew" does not make them honorable or pleasing in God's sight! In fact, one of the very reasons Israel was dispersed as it was, was because in many ways, in spite of having God's name attached to themselves, they were "worse" than the heathen around them! (2Ki21:9, Ezek5:6-7)

But as God brings them out of dispersion into their "own land", He

promises, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your defilement and from all your idols. I will also give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you [Joel2:28] and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them." (vs25-27) This is the -spiritual- transformation God will do for Israel. As we see them partly in the land now, they are not yet to this place of spiritual rebirth. This will happen as Messiah comes to them.

Just as the 'spiritual' is promised, so is the physical: "And you shall dwell in the -land-.." (vs28) What land is this? This point is very important as we watch events in the middle-east unfold daily. "...the land that I gave to your fathers." Who were Israel's fathers? To Jacob God says, "The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your seed after you I give this land." (Gen35:12) And God told Israel, "The land shall not ever be sold, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me." (Lev25:23) Letting so-called "Palestinians" live -in- Israel, as "Israel", is permitted. God says later in the book, "And it shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel." (Ezek47:22) People of Arab descent may live in Israel among the Israelis, but the nation is "Israel". The land belongs to God. God has given back to Israel bits and bits as her enemies attack her, and she conquers, as a result of having been attacked. It does not belong to Israel to negotiate away. [Mr Bush, Powell, Zinni, Arafat...are you paying attention?]

But you who call yourself the "C/church" but think you are also "Israel", are you also paying attention? The "Kingdom of Heaven" is not something consisting of mountains, rivers, fields, cities; where a person can say, "See here! or see there!" Our "Kingdom of God is within you" (Lk17:20-21)

God's promises for Israel, while including the "Spirit" and "heart"; also includes mountains, fields, streams... -LAND-. If you thought the Church "replaced" Israel, look at the evening news for the past years, months and days. Over in that -LAND- which God promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is a nation called, "Israel". They are situated on mountains, rivers, fields, cities. -THEY- are the ones to whom the prophecies about "Israel" apply. An actual -physical- "Israel".

What is the purpose to it all? "Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, Jehovah, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and I will do it... And they shall know that I am Jehovah." (vs36,38b)

"And they shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezekiel 36:38)

The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it." (35:2) God promises total ruin and devastation against Israel's neighbors in order that "you shall know that I am the LORD." (vs4)

Her neighbors have a "never-ending hatred, and have shed the blood of the sons of Israel." (vs5) Even as we see today, it was prophesied that they would say, "these two lands shall be mine, and we shall possess it." (vs10) They blaspheme and "[speak] against the mountains of Israel saying, Desolation! They are given to us for food!" (vs12)

I am told that maps which Arab countries possess do not label Israel. Their minds and hearts have an avowed purpose to push Israel into the Mediterranean..."peace processes" notwithstanding. To eliminate her! They infiltrate. They desire to establish a "Palestinian State" in the middle of Israel...a better position from which to annihilate!

The Vatican is also now saying words to the effect that Israel owns Jerusalem "illegally."

God says to Israel "because the enemy has said against you, Aha! Even the old high places have become a possession to us." (36:2) Could this be talking about the Golan Heights? A strategic spot that Israel's enemies would like to have to take away Israel's defense.

As Israel has been in exile, they have always been in scorn to other people. (vs3) However, just as they have been shamed, God is going to bring shame upon the "nations around" her. (vs7) God will cause Israel to multiply again. (vs10~)

God had scattered Israel "among the nations" because of "their way and according to their doings" (vs19) because they had rebelled against God.

But even though God had punished, in the land/s of their exile God had "pity." WHAT did God pity? He says "for MY HOLY NAME." God is supreme. God is holy. Israel is God's chosen nation. So, He promises restoration, not because Israel is so wonderful! But "for My holy name's sake, which [Israel] have profaned among the nations." (vs22) Remember, as God was about to wipe Israel off the face of the map at the golden calf incident, Moses pled with Him that the Egyptians would speak evil OF GOD on account of Israel's rebellion. (Ex32:12)

And so, God's promises to restore Israel is NOT for "Israel's sake!" But it is so that He can "be sanctified in [her] before [the nations]"

eyes." (vs23) So He declares, "I am Jehovah!"

So, notice all God's "I will"s. I WILL... 1) take you from among the nations 2) make you clean 3) give you a new heart 4) put My Spirit within you 5) save you from your defilements 6) multiply your produce 7) make you live in your cities. (vs24-33) All Israel's prosperity will not be her doing. It will be God's doings. God says, "I Jehovah have spoken it, and I will do it." (vs36)

"I do not do this for your sake, says the Lord Jehovah, be it known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel." (vs32) As Israel is built up it is not time for rejoicing! She has been so rebellious for so long. Before all is said and done, she will have been sifted and purified, just like gold and silver is melted in the heat to skim off the dross of impurities. (Mal3:3) "Who can endure it?" It is a time of "Jacob's trouble." (Jer30:7) But she will be saved out of it. But not until she has shed tears "in that day shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem." (Zec12:11) They will weep in "bitterness" when they see their Messiah Whom they rejected and "pierced." They "shall remember [their] own evil ways, and [their] doings that were not good, and shall despise [themselves] in [their] own sight for [their] iniquities and for [their] abominations." (36:31) But God will bring them out of it and restore them.

"And they shall know that I am Jehovah." (vs38)

Israel & Judah Rejoined (Ezekiel 37)

"So says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and will gather them on every side, and will bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land on the mountains of Israel, and one King shall be king to them all. And they shall not still be two nations, nor shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." (Eze37:21-22)

Whenever discussions of "pre-trib" Rapture take place, and/or debate regarding the distinction in prophecy between "Israel" and the "Church" invariably the parties rejecting the Rapture and/or espousing the "Kingdom Now" viewpoints will bring in arguments about Israel vs. Judah.

When Rom11:26 "So all Israel shall be saved" is quoted, it is argued that that is referring to the "Church" because [supposedly] the 10 tribes of "Israel" are "lost." And, thus, the reasoning goes, "we only know where Judah is." So, since Paul speaks of "Israel" and we don't know where Israel is, Paul "must have" been talking about the "Church."

Some people claim that the northern 10 tribes were so dispersed, as to not be found ever again. That they are "lost." Some think they migrated north into Europe and eventually to America. And that the prophecies about "Israel" are actually, now, about the United States. And so the US is "Israel" and Israel is "Judah." That "that's" why there is "friendship" between the US and Israel today. Last winter we saw some possibilities that some of Israel may have migrated to Japan, and become part of the basis of their "Shinto" religion. Recently I received an e-mail indicating the existence of quite a large Messianic Jewish settlement near India/Burma possibly of the tribe of Manasseh.

Were the 10 tribes "lost"? Peter, part of Judah, writes "to the elect sojourners OF THE DISPERSION..." (1Pt1:1) It was known where they were. ("Manasseh" was one of the "ten".)

We briefly consider this subject, because I know that, just as I receive these arguments, many of you do, too. Let us not forget. God's promises were to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob/Israel had 12 sons, which became the 12 tribes of ..."Israel." Kings David and Solomon ruled over 12 tribes. The country, collectively, was called "Israel" ...after the patriarch. At the end, God seals the foreheads of "12 tribes" (Rev7) The gates of the New Jerusalem have the names of the 12 tribes inscribed. (Rev21:12)

This passage we opened with is the classic on the matter of Israel and Judah's reunification into, "Israel" again. Fun songs have been sung about the BONES "rattling" and coming together, which certainly illustrates Israel's being gathered; "they shall gather His elect from

the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."(Mt24:31) But often is forgotten the other focus of the chapter. Even though Israel was scattered so vastly, "They shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, the land in which your fathers have lived. I will cut a covenant of peace with them. My tabernacle shall be with them. Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And David My servant shall be King over them. And there shall be one Shepherd to all of them." (vs25-27,24) Ezekiel writes the names representing Israel on a stick. He writes the names representing Judah on another. And in the sight of the observers, the two pieces became "one stick" in his hand.(vs17) He explains that God is going to join "all" Israel back together again. And notice the terminology as the two sticks are being labelled; this one "for his companions, the sons of Israel.." and that one "all the house of Israel, his companions.." (vs16) They are BOTH of "Israel."

So you see; Israel is Israel... NOT the "Church."

"Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the nations shall know that I Jehovah sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in their midst forever." (vs27-28)

Gog & Magog (Ezekiel 38-39)

"Thus says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal...After many days you will be visited. In the last final years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many peoples on the mountains of Israel..." (38:3,8)

"For, behold, in those days and in that time, when I bring back again the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of My people and My possession, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and divided up My land...put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down, for the press is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision." (Joel3:1-2,13-14)

"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. And all the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats." (Mt25:31-32)

"And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon...So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came forth out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles...He who sat on [the white horse]...judges and makes war...He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God...[and the] angel standing in the sun...cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds...Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings...the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.." (Rev16:16, 14:19-20, 19:11,13,15,17-18)

As we get started here, let me first make a suggestion, that you read all these passages in their entirety. Read the entire book of Joel. Read Revelation chs 4-19. And of course, these two chapters of Ezekiel, 38-39. While this series is from Ezekiel, I have concluded that chs 38-39 cannot be understood properly apart from these other passages. While many students of prophecy have speculated that Gog/Magog is a different event from Armageddon, or again, than the Joel prophecies, there are just simply too many similarities to ignore the fact that it is all one humongous horrendous event.

Notice how I quoted excerpts from Revelation out-of-order as the chapters go. Please remember the recent observations over the past

couple of months that the book of Revelation cannot be viewed as a "time-line". Visualize that "table" with the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle all dumped out, turned upwards. But the pieces are scattered -all- about the table. Remember, also, the recent observations about prophecy, when the matter is urgent from the mouth of God; to Pharaoh He 'doubled' the message about the coming famine with two dreams. (Gen41:32) One dream was about cows; the other, about growing grain; but they were both about "one" event. (Gen41:26) Above, here, we have four (4) passages we have just observed. But the O.T. is -full- of many other references also to "that day". And I am coming to believe that Ezek 38-39 is the "one" -same- event as Armageddon, and all those other passages.

We can know 38-39 speaks of the 'same' day the other references speak of because God says so right in this passage. First of all, He tells "when" it will be: "In the LAST FINAL years..." (38:8) And explains, "This is the day of which I have spoken." (39:8b) "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer30:7) For Pharaoh, regarding seven years of 'mere' famine, God doubled the message. This final conflict is -SO- huge, that Scripture is 'full' of references to it; in order that it cannot be missed. While we will be aware of the other references and observe them, since this series is from Ezekiel, obviously we will concentrate on chs 38-39.

First of all, we need to understand who the players are, and where they come from, and why are they aligned the way they are into their various alliances and enmities. For that, we need to go back to Genesis chs9-11.

When the ark landed on Ararat, that is located at the eastern end of present-day Turkey, at the region where Turkey, Iran and Armenia converge. While they were still speaking one language, they migrated southeastward and settled in the plains of the Tigris/Euphrates rivers, over in the region by the Persian Gulf, where if you were looking at a Bible map you would see "Babel" labeled. (Gen11:2)

Genesis ch10 tells how Noah's three sons became the basis for the nations; "and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood." (10:32) Notice, starting in vs2, that Japheth is the basis for all those names we see in Ezekiel 38. [Editor: if the details interest you, please read and compare for yourselves. If we repeat all the names here, this lesson will get even longer than it already is.] Essentially, what we speak of as "Gog/Magog" is the descendants of Japheth.

Now, if you look at Genesis 11:10~, you will see that Israel comes from Shem.

And then, following 10:6~, we see Ham's descendants. Notice that Nimrod

comes from Ham. Notice it says, "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.." (vs10) He travels north up the Fertile Crescent and establishes Nineveh and Rehoboth. The descendants of Ham continue their migrations and from them the Philistines came. (vs14) And further, notice that Nimrod's father is Cush. (vs8) As the migrations settle out, "Cush" is another ancient name for Ethiopia.

So, with Noah emerging out of the ark in the center of the world's land mass, considering this simplistically: Japheth migrates north and west, and becomes the basis for Europe and western Asia; Shem to the east, forming the bulk of Oriental Asia; and Ham to the middle-east and Africa.

These migrations, while being interesting, do not stand alone. We must also go back a chapter to Noah's blessing/curse of his descendants. Notice that he curses Canaan. (vs25) Even before God's blessing on Abraham, Noah blesses "the God of Shem". (vs26) And notice that "God shall enlarge Japheth.." (vs27) But in each case, Canaan, son of Ham, is cursed.

A couple of generalized observations here:

First of all, the "enlarging" of Japheth. From Japheth comes Europe, eastern Europe and Russia. But it does not end there, because from Europe over the centuries comes the British Empire, which includes Canada, S.Africa, Australia, and yes... the USA. During the middle of the past millennium, the French, Spanish and Portuguese explored and "conquered", and as a result, also emigrated extensions of themselves into the Americas, becoming greater in numbers than the indigenous natives who most likely originated from Shem's Asian regions. Except for Shem's Asia, and Ham's Africa, pretty much the rest of the world is overwhelmingly from Japheth. One could certainly observe that Japheth was "enlarged". Asia may have a large population; but Japheth's descendants cover more of the earth's surface.

The other is about Nimrod. Notice it says, "..the BEGINNING of his kingdom was Babel." (10:10) And also from Revelation we remember the well-know passages, "Babylon is fallen...that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her sexual perversion." (Rev14:8) "Babylon the great..is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every unclean spirit.." (18:2) God repeats this matter also: "Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed." (Jer51:8) "Babylon has fallen...and all the graven images of her gods He has smashed to the ground." (Is21:9)

If Nimrod's kingdom -began- at Babel, where did it progress? Remember that Cush settled into what we know as Ethiopia. Where does witchcraft, voodoo and spiritism come from? Typically from the negroid peoples of Africa, as they were captured and slave-traded into various parts of

the world, and took their pagan spiritism along with them. Where did that witchcraft and voodoo come from? Nimrod.

What about the so-called more "civilized" cultures? Where is it considered that the world's organized religions originated? If it is all traced back, usually they begin in Egypt. If any of you have kept up with the Star Gate SG1 TV series, they have been giving quite a series of history lessons tucked into their exotic sci-fi adventures. They, of course, show that there were powerful entities -behind- the Egyptian religions (which we know is satan, which they depict with their symbiotic 'larvae'. Can you say, "demon possession"?) Who are some of the primary Egyptian gods? Ra, Isis and Horus. Where did this come from? Nimrod.

What do pretty much all religions have in common as icons? Their sacred pillars. (Lev26:1) Egypt has their obelisks, Islam their minarets, Native American totem poles, and... so-called "christian" church -steeple-! God commanded that Israel -not- have such, and as they went in to the land of promise, they were to tear down those they found. (Ex23:24, Deu7:5) Where did these come from? Nimrod and Babel's "tower" that would "reach into the heavens". (Gen11:4)

As the centuries progress, the middle east had various names for these gods: the baals, Queen of Heaven, Tammuz, Moloch, etc. But where did Egypt's worship end up? Ra, the sun god, celebrated with a round white wafer, with 'flames' imprinted around the edges. Isis, the "Madonna", sitting with her "child" Horus.

And -where-, pray-tell, is this located? In the heart of Japheth's "enlarged" dispersion. Yes, back then it was called "Egypt". Today the same "kingdom" of Nimrod is seated in Rome. It's leader, the "pontifex maximus", representing the one who desires, "I will be like the Most High" (Is14:14)

Yes, there was the Roman empire, the "people of a coming ruler" (Dan9:26); the Roman descendant of Nimrod's kingdom, the Roman "church"; there was the Club of Rome, and more recently the "Treaty of Rome" which has resulted in the recent inauguration of the one-world court, which is supposed to supercede any judiciary of any individual sovereign nation. (As of this writing, the US, Britain, Israel and a few others have not ratified it; resisting giving up their own sovereignties. But it is 'now' set up, and "open for business". Clinton signed it, and would have sold us down that river; but Bush is refusing to ratify it...thus far!)

Yes...all this: part of Gog/Magog.

One other little observation, before we get back into Ezekiel 38-39. A little more prophecy to give us perspective regarding today's

middle-eastern conflicts. In a recent Q/A the question came up as to where the Palestinians came from. Here's an interesting passage to lend support to my thoughts that they possibly descended from Ishmael. Notice the Angel of Jehovah says to Hagar, "I will multiply your seed exceedingly...and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael...he shall be a wild ass of a man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (Gen16:10-12) Does this not graphically describe the so-called Palestinians? And notice that his mother took a wife for him out of Egypt. (21:21) Even today, while the Arab nations and Egypt won't take Arafat in, they still behave as though they are "married" to each other. Indeed, they are: way back starting with Ishmael.

SO NOW:

We have Gog/Magog coming down against Israel. There's a couple of reasons why this cannot be the very 'next' major conflict that will happen for Israel. First of all, anything 'next' would not agree with the words "last final years". (38:8) There is likely yet, another conflict that will precede this one. Again, I'm not going to take up the space to list all the names, but what is presently lining up for a near-future conflict agrees more with Psalm 83. Notice the players there are different from this Gog/Magog event. Notice also that when Gog/Magog comes against Israel, Israel will be "a land of unwallled villages...a people at peace". (vs11) That is certainly not the case right now: Certain political factions of Israel are building the wall, and the nearly-daily terrorist murders are anything -but- "peaceful".

However, for something as massive as what this passage talks about, the world climate and politics need to be moving in that direction years ahead of the actual event. Indeed, as Bush recently spoke of the need for present PLO leadership to be gone, the very next day the Gog/Magog players, in the form of the EU, UN and Russia, voiced their support for Arafat.

While the EU and Russia are becoming cozy 'friends' with each other, there are noticeable frictions also. "Sheba, Dedan, the merchants of Tarshish, and all their young lions..." (vs13) will voice objections to the machinations of Gog/Magog. These are thought, by many, to be the US and British empire. The British crest is comprised of lions. Britain, with its "young lions" of the empire/commonwealth. Britain has been a hold-out from joining the EU's Euro, as well as the aforementioned World Court. Even though the USA is "independant" of Britain, there is, nevertheless, a unique special bond between the US and all the members of the British empire. And, while we might be tempted to wring our hands at how our respective leaders do their continual two-faced little dance-arounds regarding Israel to keep the oil-supplying Arabs happy, for the most part, there is a support of Israel. And while the US has been the primary military provider for NATO, the relationship between

the EU and US is becoming more 'distant' lately.

During the current conflicts, the EU and Russia have been the most vocal in wanting to see outside troops inserted into Israel for "peace-keeping". But notice that what they will be coming for is "to plunder the spoils and to steal a prize.." (vs12) What is there that could interest such a large horde? Likely some things as yet undiscovered. But we may already have hints. Some have speculated about the rich minerals of the dead sea. But so far, that has not been part of the rhetoric. However, recently, a large natural gas deposit was discovered that is supposed to supply Israel for many years to come. Maybe we can get a hint from another verse, "And they make a covenant with Assyria, and oil is carried into Egypt." (Hos12:1b) Something to watch for.

Perhaps, since it says "last final years", 38-39 speaks of the conflict 'after' the Millennium? What's that? you say? "Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be set loose out of his prison and will go out to ensnare the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle...and they went up...and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." (Rev20:7-9) Well, that certainly includes Japheth's "enlarged" descendants. But the outcome is different. God just 'zaps' them.

So, let's take a look briefly at the nature of this conflict:

Since it speaks of them using the weapons for building fires for "seven years", many suppose that this conflict will begin what they call, "the tribulation". However, if that were so, it would not be the "last final" events; there would still be seven more years before "the end". (Mk13:7, Lk21:9) And, if a person thinks about it, why could they not be using weapons for fuel during the first seven years of the millennium? After all, a primary characteristic of the millennium is that they "shall beat their swords into plowshares..." (Is2:4)

But God says, "This is the day of which I have spoken." (39:8)

Notice that there will be "a great earthquake". (38:19) "...and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men came to be on the earth." (Rev16:18)

"..all men who are on the face of the earth shall quake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground" (38:20) "And the kings of the earth, the great men...hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Rev6:15-16) "Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure His

burning anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken down because of Him." (Nah1:6)

"..I will rain down...flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.." (38:22) "And the first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth." (Rev8:7)

"You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel...I will give you to the birds of prey...to be devoured." (39:4) To all the birds: "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God.." (Rev19:17) "Speak to every sort of bird...Assemble yourselves and come; gather together from all sides to My sacrifice which I sacrifice for you, a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of rulers of the earth...you shall eat fat till you are full, and drink blood till you are drunk.." (39:17-20)

See the similarities between Ezekiel and Revelation? I really do believe this is the same, also, as the "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision" (Joel3:14) where God's winepress is trampled to bring the blood "up to the horses' bridles". (Rev14:20)

And then, what about...

"And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Lord Jehovah." (39:29) "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also I will pour out My Spirit on the menservants and on the maidservants in those days. And I will show signs in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of Jehovah." (Joel2:28-31)

First of all, I have quoted the entire set of verses from this place in Joel, so that we can observe the -context- of everything. Notice it says these things will happen "afterward". (vs28) "After" -what-? For this, please read the -context-, which in vs20 He says, "I will remove the northern army far from you..." "Northern army"...that's not Ps83. That's Gog/Magog from the "recesses of the north". (38:15)

Notice also that this favorite proof text for those who like to utter unintelligible mindless (1Cor14:15) jibberish (Is8:19) from their backgrounds in pagan idolatry (1Cor12:2), is not for them. This "pouring out" that God is going to do is "on the HOUSE OF ISRAEL". (39:29) Oh, but... that's right... these same people think that Israel

is "done for" don't they...!

Yes, the first installment happened in Acts ch2, where the Holy Spirit was poured out in Israel, enabling the disciples to 'preach' the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and as a -coincidence-, since there were many people there from other ethnic dialects, He also enabled everybody to hear (and understand with their "minds") the message in their own dialect. But Peter did not fully yet understand the "timing" and fullness of Joel; because none of those "signs in the heavens and in the earth" happened on that occasion. That is yet future, in the context of "after" Gog/Magog has been defeated by God.

This pouring out of God's Spirit will not be for the purpose of giving everybody a big massive "high", but it will be part of the process whereby God is making His "new covenant with the house of Israel" where He writes His "Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer31:31-34) It will not have been a time of rejoicing and "praising the Lord", but of "mourning" and weeping because of their Messiah whom they "pierced". (Zec12:10) That's how salvation comes about, "Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to shame. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (Jacob4:9-10)

And you see, this is what Ezekiel says, too: "So the house of Israel shall know that I am Jehovah their God from that day forward." (39:22) As Paul affirms: "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (Rom11:26-27)

Requirements for God to dwell amongst (Ezekiel 43-44)

"And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory...and the glory of Jehovah came into the house by way of the gate which faces toward the east." (43:2-4)

"For as the lightning comes out of the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be...Immediately after the affliction of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and then all the tribes of the earth will wail, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and much glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Mt24:27-31)

"And I will bring them, and they shall live in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." (Zec8:8)

Chapters 40-42 give a detailed description and measurements for the Millennial temple complex. Now, when we understand that the huge earthquake that happens, of which it says that there has not been any like it since man has lived on earth (Rev16:18), in context even greater than whatever upheavals happened during Noah's flood to create the present mountain ranges and whatnot, will be knocking "every wall" down (38:20); but here we read that when Jesus comes again He will come via the gate facing east, to come "into the house" (vs4); it seems pretty obvious that some miraculous events will be happening.

In the past we have observed that a temple is not necessary for the sacrifices of the 70th week to commence, which the antichrist puts a stop to in the middle of those seven years. (Dan9:27) All they need is a stone upon which no human tool has been wielded. (Ex20:25) And considering what Scripture says about that big coming earthquake, any temple they might attempt to build now, if they were to ever get that far, would be shaken down into rubble anyway, since it says "-EVERY-wall" will come down. We have observed in the past that it says, "the BRANCH...will build the temple of Jehovah" (Zec6:12)

So, if Christ is coming, like flashing lightning from out of the east, via the eastern gate, into the temple, but just prior to His coming the powers of the heavens have been shaken, and among everything else there is the huge earthquake that levels everything; as it says, "Every valley shall be

exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.." (Is40:4); where does such a complex temple structure come from, into which He comes? Perhaps God will miraculously transport the temple complex to its location in an instant? Let us not forget that when God gave the Law to Israel, the writings on the tablets of stone were written by the "finger of God". (Ex31:18, Deu9:10) Perhaps He will do something similar regarding the Millennial temple?

Whatever the case, that is not this lesson's subject, but merely a backdrop for our consideration. But once Christ returns, from Jesus' words in Matthew, we know that a major regathering will then happen, to gather all the rest of Israel from the farthest reaches of the ends of the earth, unto Himself. "Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me, and the ships of Tarshish will come first, to bring your children from afar..." (Is60:9) It is often thought that Tarshish is a prophetic reference to America; and certainly, if that is the case, there are more Jews in the US today than even reside in Israel.

But as Christ comes to rule the world from out of Jerusalem, and Israel is gathered back to Him, what are the conditions of His rule? If God scattered Israel and dispersed them throughout the world for their rebellion and idolatry, what changes must characterize their hearts, that Christ will be willing to dwell among them and call Himself their God, and them, His people? (Jer31:33) They will be given new hearts. And their behavior will change.

Just as chs 40-42 describe the new temple, chs 43-44 describe their new behavior. And notice that much of it is addressed to the Levites. The tribe of Levi was the tribe that led Israel in worship and was the priestly tribe, offering sacrifices for sin and atonement. And thus, it was the tribe of Levi that also was corrupt and allowed and led Israel astray. It would have been those of Levi that Ezekiel would have been shown "with their backs toward the temple of Jehovah and their faces toward the east.." worshipping Egypt's sun god Ra. (Ezek8:16) Notice during the time of Jacob's trouble that it says the "sons of Levi" will be "purified". Why? In order that they "may draw near to Jehovah with an offering in righteousness." (Mal3:3)

During the Millennium they will be given duties of service in the temple, but notice that the "shame" of their "abominations" will stick from the reputations of their past. (44:13) And so, from the backdrop of their past apostasy God describes what they should have been, that they weren't; that they will be in the new temple service.

What is God's introduction to the subject? "..this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet.." (43:7) Remember when we studied the giving of the Law, God accentuated each law by saying, "I am Jehovah" (Lev18:4,30, 19:10, etc) Now again, as the new temple is established, along with its service of sacrifices, the

introduction is, This is where I dwell...this is My presence.

Therefore...

"No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name..." (43:7) How had Israel defiled God's name? With their "harlotry" and the "carcasses of their kings on their high places". What is harlotry? Going after someone other than one's own spouse. Israel was 'married' to God (Jer3:14), and God had said, "You shall have no other gods...nor shall you bow down to them" (Ex20:3,5) and yet Israel lusted after and whored after the pagan deities around them. We won't go into all the details, the O.T. is full of it; but they also brought the pagan altars into God's temple complex. God says, 'No more of that!' As Hosea says to Gomer, "You shall not be a harlot, nor be with another man" as God said of Israel, "I will even betroth you to Me in faithfulness. And you shall know Jehovah." (Hos3:3,2:20) here He says, "Now let them put their harlotry...far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever." (43:9)

Same thing can be said to today's so-called "church". You feel like God is "far away" and you just can't seem to "reach" Him? Put away the harlotry of chasing after the world's ways. Remember, if you name the name of Christ, the command is to "depart from iniquity". (2Tim2:19) God does not countenance sin. If you are chasing after the world, God will not fellowship with you. It is not that God is "not -able- to hear" your prayers, but if you are chasing after sin, He "-will- not hear". (Is59:1-2)

Furthermore, as God addresses those in ministry, He continues on, "Enough of all your abominations!" (44:6) What were these 'abominations'? "When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it; My house...And you have not kept charge of My holy things, but you have set others to keep charge of My sanctuary for you." (44:7-8)

This is written to Israel, and God will deal with them; but let's talk about the so-called "church" again. When pastors abdicated their responsibility for teaching the Word "in season and out of season" (2Tim4:2), and did not pay heed to giving attention to "reading, exhortation and doctrine" (1Tim4:13), turning their pulpits over to the unregenerate from the outside who turned God's sanctuary into a dance hall with their music of flesh, what does God call it? ABOMINATION!

When the unsaved were invited to join the choir, what does God call it? ABOMINATION!

When the unsaved were recruited to teach Sunday school classes or help out with VBS, what does God call it? ABOMINATION!

When the unsaved were invited to "be -in- My sanctuary..." what does God say they did? They "..defiled it.." (vs7) Did you see that? Let's look at it again... When the unsaved were invited to "be in My sanctuary TO -DEFILE- IT.." what did God call it? ABOMINATION!

Notice He is not speaking totally of the Jewish custom of the 8th day -physical- circumcision of male babies. Like Stephen said to the Jews just before he was martyred, "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always oppose the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." (Ac7:51) He says, "when you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised IN HEART..." (44:7) Folks... by definition, that's the "unsaved". If you don't believe it, hear Paul's words, "..but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." (Rom2:29)

I know there are yet many of you who simply will not accept God's Word at face value, to keep the unsaved -OUT- of the meetings/gatherings of Believers, met for worship and exhortation around God's Word. You insist that bringing them in is the only way to "get them saved". Well, if you have a clear (pure/holy) liquid in a clean/clear glass container, and you drop even the slightest hint of dye or food coloring into it, what happens? Does the dye become clear (saved)? NO! The liquid becomes tainted. It happened with Israel, and in His wrath, God dispersed them for it. "Of how much worse punishment..." (Heb10:29) do you suppose the so-called "church" is due?

If you want God's fellowship and blessing in your group... KEEP THE UNSAVED -OUT-! God is holy. "Holy" is not a -feeling-, but means "set apart, distinct". If you claim to be worshiping Him, He does not tolerate the presence of sinners in His holy place. If you have a place dedicated as a "sanctuary", a holy place, keep the UNSAVED OUT! Keep the world's ways, music and methods -OUT-. When Nadab and Abihu offered "strange fire" before the Lord, God struck them down dead. (Lev10:1-2) When you invite the unsaved in, it is an ABOMINATION to God!

Now notice God says that it was "..the Levites who went far from Me, when Israel went astray, who strayed away from Me after their idols.." (44:10) Indeed, a good deal of the blame for where the so-called "church" is rests upon the pastors. Yes, Israel lusted after some other god to lead them in the wilderness, but it was Aaron who caved in to their demands and came up with the idea of the golden calf. While Moses was in the mountain, Aaron was supposed to be the leader, but he abdicated his leadership. Pastors were always that 'wall' against new fads entering the congregations. Particularly in the area of music. And musicians came along, scoffing at the pastors, because pastors were not -trained- "musicians" like THEY were! That might have been true...but the pastors had the Holy Spirit, and were God's representatives charged

with the responsibility to "lead" the people. Leaders are supposed to "shepherd the flock of God.." (1Pet5:2) When lambs go wandering off, or sheep get out of the safety of the fence or corral, the shepherd needs to go gather them back into the barn. It is the nature of sheep to go wandering "astray". (Is53:6) Thus, that is part of the charge of the shepherds, to protect and guard the sheep; and keep the wolves -OUT-. But instead, they opened the gates for the wolves to come in, and "destroyed and scattered the sheep of [God's] pasture!" (Jer23:1) God pronounces "Woe!" against them!

Yes, the rebellious so-called "christians" are due God's punishment. But their blood is on the hands of the pastors who did not stand up against the wolves, and protect God's flocks.

What is the responsibility of the pastors? What will the Levites be doing in the new temple? As this is being written, a few minutes ago some boys were riding around on their bikes in front of the store. Most of them were around 10-12 years old. But tagging along was a little boy, must have been about 4-5 years old, pedalling along as fast as he could, trying to keep up with the older boys. My store is right next to one of Spokane's busier arterials where at times, the traffic moves along at a good clip. The little tyke meandered out onto the street once, not looking for traffic...obviously totally oblivious to the potential danger. Fortunately, at the moment, no cars were coming. He rode into the parking area next door, and some cars came by. Next thing I saw, he darted right back out across a couple of lanes...whereupon I darted outside, yelling for him to "Get off the street!!" And as he came back off the street, I was by 'now' over to where the boys were...and had a little 'talk' with the tyke, about the dangers of the busy street, and then patted him on the head. Next, I turned my attention to the older boys, "He looks up to you, follows you. Watch out for him. You're -responsible- for him!" ...to -guide- him as to what is 'safe' or 'dangerous'.

"..they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean." (44:23) You didn't like it when that stodgy pastor wouldn't allow the bass and drums into the church! So you manipulated...and eventually, you got the church corrupted with the world. It "isn't fair" that the pastor should foist his own -personal- "likes and dislikes" upon us! After all, we "know" what quality music is! Many of you don't like it when PB continually harps on the theme of "keep the unsaved -OUT-". Since you are too full of lust to live a holy life before the world, and thus, also are not able to witness 'where' the unsaved are... you can't see any other means of "winning souls" than to bring the unsaved in, to "let the pastor save them"...after all, that's what we hired him for. Well, as strange as this may sound, that's -NOT- his job! His job is to 'feed' -you-. While it may be true that the shepherds are, themselves, 'sheep'; they are charged with "shepherd" duties. Last I

knew, shepherds don't typically give birth to lambs... sheep do. The shepherd helps the process along, and helps nurse the lambs. And it is also PB's job to continually proclaim these Scriptural truths that you don't like to hear. It is the pastor's job to "preach the Word".

(2Tm4:2) It is his job to "teach" you the difference between the holy and unholy. The difference between the Godly and worldly. He might not know music (or other things) like you do, but by virtue of his calling by God to the ministry God has entrusted to him, he -DOES- KNOW what is sacred and sacrilegious. He might not know what Tonic and Dominant or a 5/7 chord is, but with God's Holy Spirit over him, he knows what is of God, and what is of satan. God put him there for that reason, and gave him a special anointing of the Holy Spirit for the task.

In the case of Israel the prophecy is that when God gives them a new heart, God promises to "dwell in the midst" of them, and they will "no more..defile [God's] holy name" (43:7)

Church of Jesus Christ, which He redeemed and washed us from our sins with His own blood (Rev1:5)... what about you? Are you going to continue to lust after the world, and disobey God by intermingling with them? Or are you going to "come out from among them and be separate" (2Cor6:17) and...

"..as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also become holy (distinct, separated) in all conduct, because it is written, Be holy, because I am holy." (1Pt1:14-16) ??

Waters from the Sanctuary (Ezekiel 47:1-12)

"Then he brought me back to the entrance of the house; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the front of the house faces east; and the water was flowing from under the right side of the house, south of the altar." (47:1)

These next 12 verses are a famous passage that Jewish clerics read, and look for any "signs" that this great river is about to spring forth. A few years ago there was a lie being propagated by various famous people that water had sprung up and was running from some areas under the foundation of the present Temple Mount in Jerusalem. According to a Jewish source, a person living in Israel, that story was a hoax. It never existed. But various ones would make pilgrimages to Israel, and return to their homes, claiming that "water is running", and would write books about it, claiming that the running water was a "sign" of the imminent return of Christ. Of course, for that hoax, there were no proofs or authentic photos, other than the 'word' of the charlatans; and if their audiences hadn't been there, how would they know any-the-different?

More recently, there has been an 'appearance' on the stone face of the Wailing Wall. For this one, apparently Jewish clerics were getting all excited about the prophetic implications of "water running" from the temple area. Considering its location, some wondered if perhaps some Arab plumbing behind the area had sprung leaks. And yet, the clerics were donning their special robes, and proclaiming Messiah's imminent return. Eventually, it was discovered, with investigation, that the visible "spot" was actually some sort of 'growth' on the rock face.

Is water going to spring out of the present temple mount area as it is now situated? While with God nothing is impossible, I really doubt it. What is the entire prophetic picture when this river is flowing?

Ezekiel is still in the same vision that began in ch40, where he is being shown the new temple, its service of sacrifices...and 'now', he is being shown the river that springs from that same 'future' temple complex. It is the same context of Jesus' second coming. What else do we know about that event?

Remember that great earthquake, so great that there has not yet been one the likes of it in human history? (Rev16:18) The one where the mountains come down flat, and the valleys are exalted? (Is40:4)

At the same time when Jesus alights upon the Mount of Olives, the mountain is going to split in two. It is going to separate and divide from itself from east to west. And between its halves will be a "very great valley" (Zech14:4) And one half will move north, and the other

half, south.

You see...When Jesus comes again, the topography of Jerusalem is going to receive some 'adjustments'. Things aren't going to be as they are now. The present Temple Mount will no longer be situated 'where' it is today. Geology of the area will have been greatly altered. Thus, any present springs of water will likely have no bearing or relationship to the new landscape.

This will be a very special river. Jesus is ruling from the new temple. As I read this passage I am reminded of Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria, where He spoke of the "...water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life." (Jn4:14b)

Notice that wherever the water of this river flows, things are "healed". (47:8-9) Healed from what? Well, for one thing we know of the star "Wormwood" that poisons a third of the waters, which causes death. (Rev8:11) Certainly, many bodies of water today are polluted; but I expect, as God did to Egypt, He will do to the whole earth again when He judges. Since man worships "mother earth", and pretends to protest against its pollution, I expect God is going to show the Hindu-tree-huggers what -real- "pollution" is. By the time all the nuclear bombs have been dropped, and poisonous sulpherated volcanic debris has sifted over everything, and perhaps some of those "weapons of mass destruction" have been used and polluted the earth with toxins, microbes, chemicals...much of the earth will be uninhabitable, except for God's intervention to "heal". Thus, these healing waters.

As Christ's rule will be "in righteousness" (Is16:5), the psalmist speaks of the one who delights "in the Law of Jehovah" who is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season, and its leaf shall not wither..." (Ps1:3) The same picture as Christ's rule. This river will be lined with trees. "All kinds of trees used for food" (47:12) The leaves never wither, continually producing fruit...and notice, again, the "healing" of their leaves.

Currently there are plagues of all sorts: HIV, west Nile virus, mad cow; not to mention all the various diseases mankind deals with on a regular basis: cancer, MS, heart disease, etc. and the list goes on. And what would one suppose, by the time all the judgment is past, that there will be cases of radiation sickness and all sorts of other things requiring healing.

Christ's rule, while being one of peace and righteousness, will also be one of restored nature. Somebody recently sent a URL to a website containing pictures claiming to be of fossils discovered of a dinosaur eating a human. It was later admitted to be a hoax. But as I looked at the pictures, the thing that came to my mind was that prior to the

flood, animals were not carnivorous, because God had ordained that all animals would eat "green plants for food" (Gen1:30) Thus, along with other things that did not 'fit' about those pictures, as likely having been contrived to 'create' a hoax, Scripture provided a basis to question that archaeological "find"...which questioning was later confirmed. It -was- a 'hoax'. Pre-diluvian dinosaurs did not eat other animals or humans. And, the same will be true of animals during the Millennium. It is said of the most notable carnivore, the lion, that it will "eat straw like the ox", and animals will not hurt man during Christ's rule. (Is11:7, 65:25)

Now, the fact that the leaves of these trees will "not wither" also suggests a change in climate. Presently, Israel experiences climates, where there are "seasons" for planting, harvesting, leaves to fall off trees, and bud again in the spring. Just as it is thought that the earth was one climate year-round at creation, with a sort-of "greenhouse" effect, perhaps God will be restoring that condition to the earth again, too? After all, we have observed before that major astronomical things will be happening, including the likelihood that the earth will be changing orbits as it is moved "out of its place" (Is13:13) farther away from the sun (Zec14:4-10) We do know that the earth will "change" as the mountains "slip into the oceans". (Ps46:1-3) After the flood, God covenants that the seasons will remain as long as the earth exists. (Gen8:22) So, perhaps Israel's climate will become modified to where the seasons are not as 'extreme' as they are now? We'll know soon enough, won't we!

So, no... this river Ezekiel 'wades' through and swims in will not be originating from some "trickles" coming out of the present Temple Mount. The changes God has in store for the earth and Jerusalem are so much greater than that! In the wilderness the waters came out of the rock, and the people drank, "and that rock was Christ". (1Cor10:4) Jesus will be calling the new temple "...the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet.." (43:7) The new temple will literally be where Christ is. These waters will truly fulfill Jesus' words to the woman of Samaria, the waters that He gives "springing up to eternal life" (Jn4:14) providing healing, since, "...by His stripes we are healed.." (Is53:5) I dare say this river will be originating from Jesus Christ, Himself!

O Glorious day that will be!

Israel's Kingdom Territory (Ezekiel 47:13-23)

"These are the borders by which you shall divide the land as an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel...for I raised My hand with an oath to give it to your fathers, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance." (~47:13-14)

Seeing how much maps have little variances, depending upon who compiled them, I'm not going to try to pretend to be an expert about exactly 'what' constitutes Israel's rightful territory. But if one reads this passage, and tries to trace out on a map where this border goes, it appears to essentially be the same as the territory that ended up under David's kingdom by the time he had finished subduing Israel's enemies. It certainly includes everything Israel presently owns, as well as the so-called "occupied territories" which the so-called Palestinians are having such a fit about. The eastern border I'm not as sure about, but I think also includes the areas originally mandated for Israel by the League of Nations, which is presently occupied by Jordan (speaking of "occupied territories"!), but I could be wrong on that.

We are not going to worry ourselves about that. God will arrange its final outcome in due course. This lesson will be short. One little observation...in the context of today's middle-east struggles...as we conclude this Ezekiel series.

A couple lessons ago we observed things about worship in the new temple. The ordinances about keeping the holy and profane separate. When Israel first went in to take over the land 3500 years ago God commanded them to be a distinct nation. They were to completely "drive out" its inhabitants (Ex23:31). They were not to "make any covenants" (treaties) with the inhabitants. Nor were they to allow them to dwell in the land with Israel. They were certainly not to sell the land away to foreigners. (Lev25:23)

Now, notice about Kingdom Israel: as they divvy up the land to the 12 tribes (No, those "ten tribes" are not "lost"!), there will be "strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you." (47:22) Notice that the land will be allotted to non-Israelis, too, who are not of the 12 tribes. When the time comes, Christ has come, and the dust of the final events has settled; wherever people find themselves living, "...there you shall give him his inheritance.." (vs23)

Clearly, things will be different with Israel during the Millennium. Israel will have been given a new heart, and they will be following Jesus Christ. Israel will be the 'hub' of the world, and people of the world will latch themselves onto Jews to learn of God; for they will have heard that "...God is with you.." (Zec8:23) The world will be going to Jerusalem: "And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up

to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion the Law shall go forth, and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." (Is2:3)

This was God's desire from the very beginning. But as Christ is ruling from Jerusalem, it will become a reality.

The primary feast that is prophesied that will be observed by the world is the last of the seven that Israel always celebrated annually (The other six will all have been fulfilled by then), the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zec14:16,18,19) Tabernacles symbolizes God's -dwelling- among man. "My tabernacle (dwelling) also shall be with them; yes, I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Eze37:27)

Thus, Jerusalem will be changing names: "..the name of the city from that day shall be, "JEHOVAH IS THERE" (48:35)

YAHWEH SHAMMAH

Amen!