

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 59.5%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Ezekiel 6

Monday: Ezekiel 7

Tuesday: Ezekiel 8

Wednesday: Ezekiel 9

Thursday: Ezekiel 10

Friday: Ezekiel 11

Saturday: Ezekiel 12

Current # of email addresses in the group: 627

I hope you each enjoyed the start of Ezekiel. This week we simply continue down through the book in order. Tuesday is about twice as long as the other days.

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH

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3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 91

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 610 – SUNDAY: February 23rd

Ezekiel 6

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “At this point we have the first instance of God temporarily removing Ezekiel's muteness during the mock siege representing punishment on Israel and Judah. That it was still ongoing here is clear from the fact that [Ezekiel 8:1](#) is dated to 13 months past the siege beginning (so the 430 days are still not over even then). The prophecy of chapter 6 is given during the 390 days symbolizing the

punishment on the northern tribes of Israel. That's fitting, for the prophet is now to set his face "towards the mountains of Israel" (verses 2-3) and speak against them.

In ancient times, the literal mountains of Israel would have been the hills of Samaria, to the north of Jerusalem. Yet the Israelites were no longer settled there. They had been carried captive by the Assyrians around 130 years before Ezekiel's prophetic ministry began. And they weren't at this time anywhere close to Ezekiel. Rather, the Israelites were hundreds of miles to the northwest and northeast of him. It is therefore evident that they wouldn't have gotten his message—not then anyway. And there was no need for them to. There was no imminent threat to the existence of the kingdom of Israel at that time, as it had *already* been destroyed long before. And the scattered peoples of the northern tribes were not in mortal danger either. Ancient Judah's destruction was certainly imminent, but why would that have been a danger to the northern tribes?

Some try to solve this problem by arguing that "mountains of Israel" and "house of Israel" in this chapter refer exclusively to Judah. But the whole context of the mock siege is that it is to represent a punishment on the house of Israel *and* the house of Judah—clearly delineating between the two ([Ezekiel 4:4-6](#)). Putting all of this together, it should be clear that [Ezekiel 6](#) is a prophecy of the future destruction of the northern tribes of Israel in the end time. (In fact, all of chapters 3-7 can be similarly understood, realizing there is probably a measure of multiple fulfillments, involving the ancient destruction of Jerusalem and some historical periods of oppression endured by the Jews and Israelites.)

Figuratively, mountains are many times used in prophecy to symbolize nations. And it is indeed likely that the prophecy is directed to the numerous nations that now make up modern Israel—chief among them being those descended from Joseph—principally Britain, Canada,

Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Of course, other features of the land are also addressed by the prophecy. Verse 3 mentions mountains, hills, ravines and valleys. Some maintain that these are simply cited as locations for pagan worship, as idolatrous shrines were everywhere throughout ancient Israel. That could well be, as these are all told that their places of worship will be destroyed. Recall that God had instructed the Israelites to destroy all the places where the pagans worshiped their idols: "upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree" ([Deuteronomy 12:2](#); compare [Ezekiel 6:13](#)). The lower valleys were where the streams ran and the green trees were located.

However, these natural features are also told that their cities will be destroyed, which makes little sense for a ravine. Considering that mountains symbolize nations, the other features could be symbolic as well. Hills might mean smaller nations (compare [Isaiah 2:2](#)). Ravines and valleys in this usage could perhaps signify Israelite populations in countries where they are not the majority and not in power (such as the English colonial descendants in Zimbabwe and South Africa). They too will suffer God's coming judgment.

Idolatry is the chief sin listed. The Hebrew word the book of Ezekiel uses most often for "idol," as in 6:4, is *gillul*, a term derived from *gel*, meaning "dung pellets," showing how detestable and disgusting they are to God (the same word was used in [Jeremiah 50:2](#), as noted in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary). In an end-time context, there is no question that idolatry remains Israel's biggest sin—whether actual false worship, which is rampant throughout the nations of modern Israel, or the *spirit* of idolatry, exalting other pursuits or concerns above the true God. Even green trees are still significant as part of modern Christmas customs.

[Ezekiel 6:6](#) tells us, "In all your dwelling places the cities shall be laid waste." Consider the destruction that befell Judah under

Nebuchadnezzar: "Conditions in Judah must have been severe, for many Judean cities suffered during the Babylonian invasions. Arad, Lachish, Ramat Rahel, En-gedi, Timnah, Ekron, and Jerusalem are among the excavated sites showing evidence of destruction at this time. Only the region north of Jerusalem appears to have escaped relatively unscathed" (*Holman Bible Atlas*, 1998, p. 159). This utterly pales in comparison to what [Ezekiel 6:6](#), an end-time prophecy, is actually saying.

What we are apparently being told here is that New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto, London, Glasgow, Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland will be "laid waste"—obliterated. Paris, Geneva, Amsterdam, Oslo and Copenhagen may be wiped out as well. Perhaps we can now see how there could be such a huge death toll as that described in chapter 5. This appears to require the work of nuclear weapons or some other new superweapons—perhaps in conjunction with a bombardment of large meteors, earthquakes and other cataclysmic natural disasters from God (compare [Leviticus 26:31-32](#); [Deuteronomy 28:24](#)). The prophesied destruction is utterly horrific and unimaginable. But, barring unexpected national repentance, it is going to happen—because of Israel's sins. The rest of [Ezekiel 6:6](#) tells us that this will serve to rid the land of its places of idolatrous worship (again, compare [Leviticus 26:31](#)).

We then see that people will come to realize that they have not been following the true God, as they will finally come to recognize Him for who He is (verses 7, 10, 13, 14). This will be the starting point for those who are left. Led away and scattered, many will finally come to loathe themselves because of their sins (verse 9)—the first steps on the road to repentance. He tells them to pound their fists and stamp their feet in a demonstration of grief and mourning while they lamented their national abominations (verse 11). If they had felt this way ahead of time, they would have been protected, as we later see in [Ezekiel 9:4-6](#).

Through the proliferation of copies of the Bible, the modern nations of Israel now have ready access to this warning message Ezekiel proclaimed. Yet the vast majority of them still have no idea that they are the intended recipients of the message. We should all pray that the Israelite identity of the nations of Northwest European heritage becomes much more widely known as we approach the cataclysmic events that will shake the world at the end of this age.” [END]

Day 611 – MONDAY: February 24th

Ezekiel 7

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Chapter 7 is a continuation of the prophetic message we've been reading, emphasizing the point that because the people have refused to come to know God through seeking and following His will, they will come to know Him in a different way—through His severe judgment ([Ezekiel 7:4, 9, 27](#)). God's warning here to the "land of Israel" (verse 2) was likely given during the 390 days of mock siege that represented the punishment on the northern 10 tribes (compare Ezekiel 1:1-2; [Ezekiel 4:5](#); [Ezekiel 8:1](#)). Since the ancient fall of Israel happened long before Ezekiel wrote, his warning in this chapter is of Israel's destruction in the end time—indeed, the time leading into "the day of the wrath of the Lord" ([Ezekiel 7:19](#)). Of course, as with the other prophecies of this section, there was some application to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in Ezekiel's own day. But, again, the message is mainly for Israel at the end of this age.

The term "four corners of the land" (verse 2) conveys the total destruction God will bring. This is not a partial or regional calamity. Ezekiel, as God's watchman, is required to thunder this warning loud and clear, even though his immediate audience was in captivity in Babylon. Accounts of what he said may well have been passed on to those Jews living in Jerusalem. And through the transmission of the sacred text across the centuries, we have his warnings today.

God explains that the Israelites are guilty of "abominations" (verses 3-4, 8-9)—terrible, loathsome sins—even in their religion, which is idolatrous (verse 20). The abominable practices are so bad that God declares He will not spare or have pity in the time of punishment—the severity of punishment conveying the severity of wrongdoing. Verse 9 introduces a terrifying new name for God in this context of punishment: *YHWH makkeh*, "The Eternal who strikes the blow."

The ominous sense of impending doom is palpable. "Numerous short sentences and the repetition of words and phrases express the intensity of the message. The recurrence of the word 'end' [five] times in the first six verses stresses the finality of the judgment (cf. [Amos 8:2](#)). Judgment had come! Imminency was heightened by the reiteration of the verb 'coming' (seven times in [Ezekiel 7](#) vv. 5-12); the repetition of 'now' (vv. 3, 8 {NIV, 'about to'}); and the use of terms like 'time,' 'day,' and 'is near' (v. 7)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 1-4).

Notice the rendering of this passage in the New Living Translation: "Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to Israel: The end is here! Wherever you look—east, west, north, or south—your land is finished. No hope remains, for I will unleash my anger against you. I will call you to account for all your disgusting behavior. I will turn my eyes away and show no pity, repaying you in full for all your evil... With one blow after another I will bring total disaster! The end has come! It has finally arrived! Your final doom is waiting! O people of Israel, the day of your destruction is dawning... Soon I will pour out my fury to complete your punishment for all your disgusting behavior. I will neither spare nor pity you. I will repay you for all your detestable practices... None of these proud and wicked people will survive. All their wealth will be swept away. Yes, the time has come; the day is here!" (verses 2-12).

Verse 10 appears to be saying, "The rod [of punishment] has blossomed [because] pride has budded [among God's people]." That is, the people are ripe for judgment since their arrogance has reached its zenith.

Verse 11 may be saying that violence among God's people has produced the consequence of a "rod of wickedness"—that is, a rod *necessitated by* wickedness, a rod *for dealing with* wickedness. Alternatively, the verse may mean that "the violent *one*" (NIV)—that is, the enemy of God's people—has risen up as a punishing rod (meaning either Babylon or, in an ultimate sense, Satan).

Verses 12-13 seem to imply that people in difficult financial circumstances will be forced to sell property at low prices, but that in the end this will be irrelevant. The New Living Translation adds clarity: "There is no reason for buyers to rejoice over the bargains they find or for sellers to grieve over their losses, for all of them will fall under my terrible anger. And if any merchants should survive, they will never return to their business. For what God has said applies to everyone—it will not be changed! Not one person whose life is twisted by sin will recover."

The message continues with a reminder of the three-fold punishment coming from God: sword, famine and pestilence (verse 15). When the warning sounds, people will be too weak or too afraid to fight (verses 14, 17). The initial survivors will be like birds driven from their roosts, separated from their kind, making mournful noises like the dove. These people are described as clothed in sackcloth and shaved bald, symbols of humiliation and shame in Middle Eastern cultures to this day (verses 16-18). In the bleak despair of the Great Tribulation, as the Day of the Lord approaches, they will finally come to view their money, which they had practically worshiped before, as worthless, unable to truly provide them with what they need, and they will toss it away (verse 19).

God says: "They were proud of their gold jewelry and used it to make vile and detestable idols [as they do even still]. That is why I will make all their wealth disgusting to them. I will give it as plunder to foreigners from the most wicked of nations, and they will defile it. I will hide my eyes as these robbers invade my treasured land and corrupt it" (verses

20-22, NLT). Again, this happened to a degree when ancient Jerusalem was invaded and plundered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It happened again when the Romans, imperial successors to the Babylonians, invaded Jerusalem in apostolic times. It will happen on the greatest scale, as primarily foretold in these verses, when Israel and Judah are both invaded and destroyed by the end-time revival of Rome and Babylon.

Finally, God orders that a *chain* be prepared (verse 23). Chains were used for binding criminals or enemy prisoners. Indeed, the surviving Israelites will be bound in chains and led away into slavery—just as the Jews experienced when Nebuchadnezzar's forces invaded Judah and centuries later when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Recall also that the northern tribes were taken captive by the ancient Assyrians more than a century before Ezekiel's prophetic ministry. And lest this seem only the stuff of ancient history, we should remember Nazi Germany, in which multitudes of Jews were forced to toil in slave labor camps and vast numbers were led away to be exterminated. As horrifying as it is to contemplate, such days will come again, and are prophesied to be even worse.

People will turn to religious and civil leaders for help, but these will have no answers, not understanding the truth of God's Word (verse 26). They will have ignored the warnings prior to this. And now it will be too late. They will be judged according to what they deserve (verse 27). That would be a dire predicament for any of us. We all should deeply consider this and ask God to lead us to repent of our own sins now and receive God's merciful grace, before such judgment falls—and pray that others will recognize their own sins and repent as well. God's truth is available to us right now as we study His Word. Let's make good use of it.” [END]

Day 612 – TUESDAY: February 25th

Ezekiel 8

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Ezekiel 8 through 11 records the details of another powerful vision the prophet received from God. The date is a year and two months after the first vision (compare [Ezekiel 1:1-2](#); [Ezekiel 3:15-16](#); [Ezekiel 8:1](#)). This would seem to place it within the 40-day period during which Ezekiel lay on his right side to represent the punishment for Judah's sins—following the 390 days on his left side for Israel (compare [Ezekiel 4:4-8](#)). (However, it should be noted that, as sometimes happens with the Hebrew calendar, it is possible that a 13th month had been added to the year, which would mean that the vision of chapters 8-11 occurred just after the 40-day period.)

As chapter 8 opens, we find Ezekiel sitting in his house with the "elders of Judah" (leaders among the Jewish exiles in Babylon) in audience to hear what he has to say. No doubt his lengthy mock siege had attracted a great deal of attention.

Once again, Ezekiel experiences "virtual reality" by seeing and experiencing in his mind what the others in the room do not. He sees the same glorious figure he beheld in the first vision—that of the Lord (verse 2; compare [Ezekiel 1:26-28](#)), the preincarnate Jesus Christ (compare [Revelation 1:12-15](#)). The Lord carries the prophet, who is also a priest, in vision to Jerusalem, to the northern gate of the temple. The north gate was also called the "altar gate," apparently because sacrifices were killed in its vicinity, on the north side of the altar (compare [Leviticus 1:11](#); compare [Ezekiel 40:35-43](#)).

Ezekiel sees the glory of God ([Ezekiel 8:4](#))—the cascading illuminations surrounding God's presence—as he had witnessed in chapter 1. That glory was here at the temple, as were the four transporting cherubim, as we will see in the next few chapters. Yet, as we will also see, God's glory will soon depart from the sanctuary. Abominations committed here are causing Him to withdraw His presence.

Ezekiel is taken on a tour of the temple area to witness the terrible abominations. He first is told to look around where he has landed in this vision, in the vicinity of the north gate near the place of sacrifice—where a vile image is now located (perhaps implying that sacrifices are made to it).

The image is referred to as the "image of jealousy...which provokes to jealousy" (verse 3). This probably hearkens back to God's commands against idolatry: "You shall not make yourself a carved image...[to] bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God... You shall destroy their [the Canaanites'] altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)" ([Exodus 20:4-5](#); [Ezekiel 34:13-14](#)). Israel is God's wife by covenant, and He is rightly jealous over her loyalty and affections—demanding that she not enter into adulterous relations with other gods, adopting their worship customs. Of course, being provoked to jealousy essentially means being provoked to justified anger, which may be why the Jewish Tanakh translation renders verse 3 as saying, "that was the site of the infuriating image that provokes fury." The Revised English Bible has "where stands the idolatrous image which arouses God's indignation."

There are different ideas as to what this image was. Some propose an image of Tammuz, the counterfeit savior of the Chaldean religion, since his worship is specifically mentioned in the chapter as occurring in the same place ([Ezekiel 8:14](#)). Surprisingly, the image could have been that of a large cross. As *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* explains, the modern cross "had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt. By the middle of the 3rd cent. A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate

ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the 'cross' of Christ" ("Cross, Crucify," New Testament Section, 1985).

Most scholars, however, feel the image was an *asherah*, the Hebrew term for a sacred wooden image or tree. The reason for this conclusion is because Manasseh "even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made" in the temple of God, and "he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has made Judah sin with his idols" ([2 Kings 21:7, 11, NKJV](#)). Even though Josiah purged Judah of idolatry during his reign, the hearts of the people reverted back to Manasseh's evil after Josiah's death—which means the priests may have been inclined to reproduce Manasseh's image. Either way, since the corrupted Jewish worship was often syncretistic—blending true and false worship—it could well be that the idolatrous object, whatever its form may have been, was being used to worship the true God, which He had strictly forbidden.

Next, "Ezekiel was brought into the north entry gate. There he saw a hole in the wall and was told to dig through the wall, enter, and observe what the elders of Israel were doing secretly in the inner court [or, perhaps more accurately, in chambers or a particular chamber adjacent to the north gate] (vv. 7-9). These seventy elders were not the Sanhedrin of N[ew] T[estament] times. That institution had not yet begun. They were most likely the leaders of the nation who based their traditional position on Moses' appointment of the seventy elders to assist him in governing God's people ([Exodus 24:1](#), [Exodus 24:9](#); [Numbers 11:16-25](#))" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Ezekiel 8:7-9](#)).

Note that these are referred to as the "elders of the house of Israel" (verse 12). The expression "house of Israel" sometimes includes

Judah—especially as Judah was supposed to be the faithful remnant of Israel. That Judah of Ezekiel's day is intended is clear from the mention of Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, as Shaphan had been Josiah's secretary of state and his other sons, such as Jeremiah's friend Ahikam, came to occupy important positions (see [2 Kings 22:8-14](#); [2 Chronicles 34:15-21](#); [Jeremiah 26:24](#); [Jeremiah 29:3](#); [Jeremiah 36:10](#); [Jeremiah 40:5](#), [Jeremiah 40:9](#), [Jeremiah 40:11](#); [Jeremiah 41:2](#); [Jeremiah 43:6](#)). Moreover, the phrase "house of Judah" is explicitly used in [Ezekiel 8:17](#). Yet it may be that in this vision the 70 elders are also meant to typify, in a broader spiritual sense, the religious leadership of all Israel in a future context (particularly as we will later see other indications that the vision of chapters 8-11 applies to both Israel and Judah in the end time—see [Ezekiel 9:9](#); [Ezekiel 11:15](#), [Ezekiel 11:17-21](#)).

In verses 10-11 of chapter 8, Ezekiel describes the portrayal of idolatrous images on the walls where he has entered, with the elders—shockingly—standing before them as priests with censers. In verse 12, it appears that the honoring of idols is even done privately in the elders' chambers—showing this to be their personal conviction. This seems fairly straightforward and yet the meaning may be broader. While pagan images may have literally been used to adorn the temple complex or its chambers in Ezekiel's time, as they certainly did at earlier times, it is possible that the vision should be understood, at least on some level, in a figurative sense. Perhaps the indication is that the nation's leaders, while practicing what appears to be a form of true worship, are really devoted to false gods and customs of false worship.

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary states that the elders "are here the representatives of the people, rather than to be regarded literally. Mostly, the *leaders* of heathen superstitions laughed at them secretly, while publicly professing them in order to keep the people in subjection. Here what is meant is that the *people* generally addicted themselves to secret idolatry, led on by their elders; there is no doubt,

also, allusion to the mysteries, as in the worship of Isis in Egypt, the Eleusinian [mysteries] in Greece, etc., to which the initiated were alone admitted" (note on verse 12).

Such a figurative meaning would apply in the nations of Israel and Judah even today—its leaders and people having rejected true worship for a false Christianity descended in many respects from the Babylonian mystery religion—called in [Revelation 17](#) "Mystery, Babylon the Great." Indeed, as God's "temple" in New Testament times is His Church (see [Ephesians 2:19-22](#); [2 Corinthians 6:16](#); compare [Ezekiel 11:16](#))—the true "Israel" of God ([Galatians 6:16](#))—Ezekiel's vision here may even picture, in type, the great apostasy from the truth foretold by the apostle Paul (compare [2 Thessalonians 2:3](#)).

The elders are pictured as saying, "The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land" ([Ezekiel 8:12](#)). When Ezekiel received this vision, Judah had experienced drought and a series of invasions—King Jeconiah and many people having been dragged away to Babylon. So, the leaders reasoned, God had deserted the land and the people—what did they have to lose! In the next chapter, these words are attributed to both Israel *and* Judah (9:9), so the same false reasoning will be employed in the future as national calamities begin to worsen. How ironic that such reasoning itself eventually leads to even greater calamity (verse 10). Also ironic is that the name of Jaazaniah, the person singled out, means "The Eternal Hears" or "The Eternal Harkens"—implying that God does indeed hear *and see* whatever is going on, and reacts.

Ezekiel is next directed to see the terrible abomination of women at the temple "weeping for Tammuz" ([Ezekiel 8:14](#)). The *Encyclopedia Mythica* says Tammuz was "the Akkadian vegetation-god, counterpart of the Sumerian Dumuzi and the symbol of death and rebirth in nature. He is the...husband of Ishtar. Each year he dies in the hot summer (in the month Tammuz, June/July) and his soul is taken by the Gallu

demons to the underworld. Woe and desolation fall upon the earth [in the form of withering vegetation in autumn and winter], and Ishtar leads the world in lamentation [i.e., the weeping for Tammuz]. She then descends to the nether world...and after many trials succeeds in bringing him back, as a result of which fertility and joy return to the earth [in the spring]. In Syria he was identified with Adonis" (<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/t/tammuz.html>). As was explained in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Isaiah 47](#), the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz may be traced back to the early Babylonian queen Semiramis, wife of Nimrod, the builder of Babel (see [Genesis 10:8-10](#)). After Nimrod's death, Semiramis (Ishtar) produced a child through fornication (Tammuz) yet claimed that he was the very incarnation and resurrection of her dead husband, now reborn to life.

Recalling that the symbol for Tammuz was the cross, the idea of the women of Ezekiel's vision weeping before his symbol (which may have been the image of jealousy mentioned earlier), mourning his death and awaiting his resurrection is disturbingly similar to some of what we see today that goes by the name of Christianity. Indeed, the ancient idea of a dying and resurrected saving god has led some to conclude that even the notions of Christ dying for our sins and being raised from the dead derived from paganism. Yet we should understand that though it was concocted by Semiramis, the worship of Tammuz—the fountainhead of the world's idolatry—sprang from Satan, who deceives the whole world ([Revelation 12:9](#)). In his inimical deceit, Satan, through this ancient Babylonian religion, counterfeited certain aspects of the imagery of Christ's later execution to subvert and pervert Christianity for some and utterly discredit it for others. On the subversion and perversion side, he has succeeded in convincing most of the world that many of the concepts and practices of his counterfeit religion belong in true Christian worship (for more details, request or download our free booklet [Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?](#)).

It has been suggested by some scholars that the practice of "weeping for Tammuz" was the actual origin of Lent, the Roman Catholic 40-day period of abstinence prior to Easter (starting after Mardi Gras, "Fat Tuesday," on Ash Wednesday). Consider that the name *Easter* itself is derived from *Ishtar*, the ancient Babylonian fertility goddess and Tammuz's mother. Alexander Hislop, in his book *The Two Babylons*, explains that "the forty days abstinence of Lent was directly borrowed from the worshippers of the Babylonian goddess. Such a Lent of forty days, 'in the spring of the year,' is still observed by the Yezidis or Pagan Devil-worshippers of Koordistan, who have inherited it from their early masters, the Babylonians. Such a Lent of forty days was held in spring by the Pagan Mexicans... 'Three days after the vernal equinox...began a solemn fast of forty days in honour of the sun.' Such a Lent of forty days was observed in Egypt...Among the Pagans this Lent seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual festival in commemoration of the death and resurrection of Tammuz, which was celebrated by alternate weeping and rejoicing, and which, in many countries, was considerably later than the Christian festival, being observed in Palestine and Assyria in June, therefore called the 'month of Tammuz'; in Egypt, about the middle of May, and in Britain, some time in April. To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and, by a complicated but skillful adjustment of the calendar, it was found no difficult matter, in general, to get Paganism and Christianity—now far sunk in idolatry—in this as in so many other things, to shake hands" (1959, pp. 104-105).

The month of Tammuz was the fourth month on the Hebrew calendar. Lent today overlaps the last month of the Hebrew year and ends in the first month. It is interesting to consider that the Celtic Britons, who centuries ago observed the mourning period more in line with the time Lent is observed today, were Israelites. Perhaps they had begun this practice while still in the Promised Land—as the apostate Jews may

have also done. Either way, whether fourth month or first, we should notice that Ezekiel's vision takes place in the *sixth* month ([Ezekiel 8:1](#)). Though that might appear problematic, this may just signify the time Ezekiel received the vision, not the time the events depicted in it actually occurred. Indeed, Ezekiel's vision appears in many respects to be symbolic. Even if literal, we should not necessarily conclude that he was seeing things at the temple the very moment they were transpiring. His vision may have been more sweeping in scope, just as many other prophets had visions in a short time of events that would span days, months or even years in their actual fulfillment.

Ezekiel is then taken from the vicinity of the north gate to the court area outside of the Holy Place. He is here presented with another stunning sight—men with their backs to God's temple "worshiping the sun toward the east" (verse 16). "The location for the sun worship was in the inner court...between the porch and the altar. These 25 men must have been Levites if temple regulations were being followed; otherwise, the area was forbidden (see Numbers 3:7-8; [Numbers 18:1-7](#); [2 Chr. 4:9](#); [Joel 2:17](#))" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Ezekiel 8:15-16](#)).

Indeed, this group appears distinct from the 70 image-worshipping elders mentioned previously. "It would seem strange that only a portion of the seventy would have been engaged in the sun worship. The specific numbers of seventy (v. 11) and twenty-five (v. 16) were probably given to aid in distinguishing the two groups. Therefore it is more likely that these twenty-five men were priests though one cannot be dogmatic about it. If they were priests perhaps the number is twenty-five because there was a representative of each of the twenty-four courses of the priests plus the high priest (cf. [1 Chron 23](#))" (*Expositor's*, note on [Ezekiel 8:16](#)). Perhaps the symbolism is to demonstrate that both the civil and religious leadership were engaged in pagan practices—and maybe to show that the same would be true in the end time. (It should also be noted that chapter 11 mentions 25

"princes" giving wicked counsel, with another person named Jaazaniah among them—albeit a different Jaazaniah.)

In [Ezekiel 8:16](#), since the sun was in the east, this logically denotes sunrise, a popular "in-between" moment for sun worship in the pagan world. Consider, as quoted above, "the solemn fast of forty days in honour of the sun." Tammuz was often equated with Baal, and Baal often with the sun. Coming right on the heels of the previous verses, it could well be that what Ezekiel was witnessing was the conclusion of the pagan Lenten season, when Ishtar (or Easter) was deemed to have brought Tammuz (here as the incarnate sun) back from the underworld in a resurrection in the spring, specifically on the feast of Ishtar, known today as Easter. This, then, would have essentially been *Easter sunrise services*—so extremely popular today in the world religion that masquerades as Christianity and yet an utterly vile abomination according to God. Indeed, the symbolism is profound. The worshipers, religious leaders even, turned their backs on God in order to participate—and yet they probably claimed to be honoring the true God (as they still do). What audacity!

Rejection of true worship has resulted in *violence* throughout the land ([Ezekiel 8:17](#))—*bloodshed*, the next chapter explains (9:9). As for "putting the branch to their nose" (verse 17), the meaning is uncertain. *Matthew Henry's Commentary* states: "...a proverbial expression denoting perhaps their scoffing at God and having him in derision; they snuffed at his service, as men do when they *put a branch to their nose*. Or it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served. We read of garlands used in their idolatrous worships ([Acts 14:13](#)), out of which every zealot took a branch which they smelled to as a nosegay. Dr. Lightfoot (*Hor. Heb. in John 15.6*) gives another sense of this place: *They put the branch to their wrath*, or *to his wrath*, as the Masorites read it; that is, they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath,

which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or putting the branch to the nose may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men" (note on verses 13-18).

God states that in the time of punishment He will not spare these leaders, even though they cry aloud for help. We must all reject false worship. Yet that is not the only point here. The lesson of this chapter becomes clearer when we examine the next chapters in this section. They show the glory of God departing from the temple because of such abominable practices and attitudes. God's Spirit leaves when people turn away from Him. He remains only where He is welcome and is obeyed. This is true of nations, church organizations and individuals. And when He leaves, judgment follows." [END]

Day 613 – WEDNESDAY: February 26th

Ezekiel 9

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The vision of the previous chapter continues. This chapter reveals some insight about God's sparing of a remnant during a time of destruction. Notice that punishment is to come on "Israel and Judah" (verse 9). As the northern kingdom of Israel had fallen more than a century before Ezekiel wrote, this prophecy must be meant for the future destruction of Israel and Judah in the end time. As in chapters 4-7, Jerusalem is here used to represent all Israel, the city being the ancient capital of all 12 tribes. Of course, the prophecy no doubt had a limited application to the people of Judah in Ezekiel's own day.

As the chapter opens, men who "have charge over the city" are summoned (verses 1-2). These are apparently angelic beings who were to render God's judgment on the people of Jerusalem, again representative of all Israel. Six arrive, each armed with a battle-ax. They

stand beside the bronze altar, the altar of sacrifice, perhaps symbolizing that they will make a sacrifice of the disobedient nation (compare [Isaiah 34:6](#); [Zephaniah 1:7](#))—that blood would run as a result of the sins of the people.

With them is a man clothed in white linen who has a writer's kit containing a horn of ink at his side. In the Bible, one "clothed in linen" typically represents a holy servant of God (compare [Daniel 10:5](#); [Revelation 15:6](#)).

In [Ezekiel 9:3](#) the prophet again mentions the presence of the "glory of the God of Israel." It had "gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold [or entryway] of the temple"—on its way out altogether, as we will see in chapters 10-11. Putting this verse together with [Ezekiel 10:3-4](#), it appears that the "cherub" in [Ezekiel 9:3](#) and [Ezekiel 10:4](#) indicates the inanimate copies of the cherubim whose wings covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. The transporting cherubim were waiting outside on the south side of the temple ([Ezekiel 10:3](#)). The idea seems to be that God rises from His earthly throne in the Holy of Holies, ascends His transportable throne above the four living cherubim and then flies away. By withdrawing His presence God demonstrates His readiness to bring judgment on the people.

The writer with the horn is instructed to mark the foreheads of those who "sigh and cry" over the abominations and idolatry around them. The sighing here is not just a brief exhalation of disappointment. It is an utter groaning of spirit—deeply grieving and feeling anguish over what is happening. Jesus likewise said, "Blessed are those who mourn" ([Matthew 5:4](#)). This does not mean an absence of any joy and happiness in life. Rather, it means regular and heartfelt sober reflection on the state of the world.

Of course, those who are truly grieved at the sins are those who follow righteousness. That does not mean they are perfect, but they strive to do God's will. They mourn over their own sins as well as over those of the world around them. They groan over the pain and suffering human beings inflict on one another through their sins. They are indignant and outraged at injustice and blasphemy against God and His truth. They constantly cry out to God to intervene. These are the righteous—God's true servants—and God says He will spare them. He certainly protected such individuals in Ezekiel's day, but the primary focus here is on the future. This passage might well be read along with traditional references to a "place of safety" or God's protection at the end time ([Zephaniah 2:3](#); [Luke 21:36](#); [Revelation 3:10](#); [Revelation 12:14](#))—the object of such protection being those who are a part of God's true Church.

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John also saw visions of people being marked in their foreheads for protection. Notice: "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads" ([Revelation 7:3](#)). And: "They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" ([Revelation 9:3-4](#)). Also: "Behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads" ([Revelation 14:1](#)).

The first occasion in Scripture of a host of people being spared through some outward sign was the time of the Passover in Egypt, when lamb's blood was used to mark the dwellings of the Israelites who were spared from the slaughter of the death angel. The seal on those in the end-time is an inward one, the forehead representing the mind—wherein resides God's Holy Spirit, which signifies whether one is truly a Christian or not (see [Romans 8:9](#)).

The "death angels" in Ezekiel's vision are instructed to begin killing the people of Jerusalem—no doubt through the various punishments mentioned in [Ezekiel 4-7](#). Of course, God doesn't command this slaughter until the people have been given sufficient warning to repent. But eventually it is time for the punishment to fall.

God says to begin with His sanctuary—the elders before the temple then being the actual starting point ([Ezekiel 9:5-6](#)). This clearly hearkens back to the abominations portrayed in the previous chapter.

The place to begin correction is always with those who should know better. In the early days of the tabernacle, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu disobeyed God and were destroyed by fire ([Leviticus 10:1-2](#)). The precedent continues throughout time. The apostle Peter explained that "judgment must begin at the house of God" ([1 Peter 4:17](#)). This he said of God's New Testament Church. And in fact, the Church may well be the "sanctuary" of [Ezekiel 9:6](#), at least in type.

The Church is the true "temple" of God today ([Ephesians 2:19-22](#)), as God dwells in His people through the Holy Spirit, making each individual Christian a temple or, in fact, part of the same temple ([1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#); [1 Corinthians 6:19](#); [2 Corinthians 6:16](#)). That being so, consider the interesting statement God makes in [Ezekiel 11](#), part of the same prophecy. Regarding "all the house of Israel in its entirety" ([Ezekiel 11:15](#)), God says, "Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone" (verse 16). This ties in well with Christ's statement to the Samaritan woman at the well: "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain [the Samaritan holy place], nor in Jerusalem [where the temple was], worship the Father... The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"

([John 4:21-24](#))—that is, through the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming the spiritual temple of God, which is not confined to one place.

If the sanctuary in [Ezekiel 9:6](#) is meant to portray the Church of God on some level (which, besides the parallels we've just seen, seems likely also because those to be protected in verse 4 are probably true Christians of the end time), then the indication is that punishment would apparently fall first and foremost on apostates from God's truth. This would have to mean that the temple abominations of the previous chapter apply in part to such apostates—again, as mentioned in the commentary on [Ezekiel 8](#), possibly indicating the great falling away from God's truth foretold by the apostle Paul ([2 Thessalonians 2](#)). Moreover, there are degrees of responsibility even within the Church. The apostle James stated, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" ([James 3:1](#)). So the "elders before the temple," the first to be judged in [Ezekiel 9:6](#), may well be apostate elders of God's Church. Paul sternly warned Church elders that savage wolves would rise up from among them ([Acts 20:17](#), [Acts 20:29-31](#)).

Yet the sanctuary is just the beginning of the slaughter. It continues throughout all of Israel and Judah ([Ezekiel 9:9-10](#)). Ezekiel sees great numbers killed until He alone is left, and He cries out to God, asking Him if He is going to wipe out everyone who is left (verse 8). Of course, he already had the answer from verse 4 that some would be spared. But they were no longer here to be seen. God explains to Ezekiel that the punishment fits the crime, bemoaning the exceedingly great iniquity of Israel and Judah. The people have degenerated into depravity and disrespect for human life because of their false religion. They have denied the power and reach of God—but they won't be able to deny it any longer. At that very moment the angel clothed in linen returns, reporting that he has done his job. This means he has marked

all of those who wanted to obey God and they have been spared. God thus gives Ezekiel encouragement by the report of the angel.

Let us take heart as well and strive to be among those who sigh and cry over the abominations committed throughout the nations of Israel and the rest of the world, praying to God, "Your kingdom come." [END]

Day 614 – THURSDAY: February 27th

Ezekiel 10

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The vision of chapters 8 and 9 continues in chapter 10. Here we have a lesson from God of considerable importance to us. For us to continue as God's chosen people, He must actually dwell or live among us. The people of Israel came to understand this following their Exodus from Egypt. In [Exodus 25:8](#) God instructed Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." It was God's intent at that time that He would dwell in the midst of the 12 tribes of Israel in the tabernacle made of goatskins. And His presence was evident in the pillar of cloud illuminated by the divine glory filling the tabernacle (see [Exodus 40:34-35](#)). As explained in previous comments, rabbis later designated this glory by the term *shekinah*, meaning "indwelling."

God's glory later came to dwell in the temple built by Solomon after his fervent and humble prayer ([2 Chronicles 6-7](#)). God chose to allow His presence—again evident through the radiance and splendor of His glory—to remain in the temple for centuries. Yet after the Jews had proven their determination to continue in false, idolatrous worship, the presence of God did eventually leave the Jerusalem temple prior to its looting and destruction by the Babylonians. Even when the second temple was rebuilt in its place after the return from Jewish exile, God's glory did not occupy it. Moreover, there is no record of the shimmering, luminous glory ever again occupying an earthly building. However,

centuries later the shepherds saw the glory appear in the sky as angels announced the birth of the Savior ([Luke 2:9](#)). Indeed, the coming of Christ in the flesh was, in essence, God coming to *dwell* with human beings ([John 1:1](#), [John 1:14](#); [Matthew 1:23](#)). And after His death and resurrection, He would again do so through the Holy Spirit.

Later, Stephen proclaimed the truth that God no longer dwells in temples made with hands ([Acts 7:48](#)). As the apostle Paul explained, God's temple is now His Church, the people whom He dwells in through the Holy Spirit ([Ephesians 2:19-22](#); [1 Corinthians 6:19](#); [2 Corinthians 6:16](#)). And the initial giving of the Spirit to the Church was accompanied by the miraculous signs of wind and fire, reminiscent of the glory of Ezekiel's vision (see [Acts 2](#)).

On the night before His death, Jesus relayed some very important guidelines for God dwelling in His people through the Holy Spirit: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to Him and make Our home with him" ([John 14:23](#)). Notice: in order for the Father and Jesus Christ to dwell with a person, that person must be obeying Christ's words. The apostle Paul repeats essentially the same principle in [2 Corinthians 6:16](#): "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you [Christians] are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'"

But Paul goes on to follow this with a *warning* from God: "Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you" (verse 17). God dwelling among a people or in the heart and mind of a person is conditional upon that people or person being submissive and obedient to God. The presence of any idol or unclean worship will cause God to withdraw His presence. This is one of the most important lessons God is using Ezekiel to teach us in this chapter.

[Ezekiel 10](#) begins with the image of the living cherubim carrying God's throne. God gives the order to the man in linen to gather coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city of Jerusalem (verses 1-3). This symbolizes that God has now judged the city and it is to be punished and burned, as when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone (see [Genesis 19:24-25](#)). Yet as we've seen, the punishment on Jerusalem is representative of punishment to befall all of Israel ([Ezekiel 9:9-10](#)).

The glory or presence of God then begins to move. The step-by-step exit from Jerusalem is recorded for us. As the glory of God moved from the Holy of Holies to the threshold or entryway of the temple ([Ezekiel 9:3](#); [Ezekiel 10:4](#)), we see that the living cherubim carrying the mobile throne were waiting outside the temple on the south side (verse 3). The entire house and courtyard were filled with the surrounding cloud and brightness (verse 4). Then, apparently after God assigned the man in linen and the executioners their jobs, He left the temple threshold and ascended His mobile throne above the living cherubim, not returning to the physical Holy of Holies within the temple (verse 18). The cherubim may have moved to meet Him as we see them hovering, with Him above them, at the east gate of the temple (verse 19).

The east gate is probably the one referred to as "the gates of righteousness" and "the gate of the LORD" in [Psalm 118:19-20](#) and the "everlasting doors" in [Psalm 24:7, 9](#). It is called the "Sun gate" in a Talmudic passage (Erubin 5:22c) because the sun would shine through it in the morning. Also through this gate traditionally entered the king and the ark in the sacred processions.

In the next chapter, we will see that when the glory of God leaves the temple through the east gate, it proceeds to the mountain on the east side of Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives ([Ezekiel 11:23](#))—after which it presumably ascends to heaven. This path is opposite to the one Jesus Christ will take when He returns to the earth in power and glory in the

future. For at that time He will first descend to the Mount of Olives and then, sometime later following the construction of the millennial temple, enter Jerusalem through the east gate, accompanied by the glory of God ([Ezekiel 43:1-5](#); [Zechariah 14:4](#); [Acts 1:9-12](#); [Matthew 24:27](#)). Indeed, a principal theme in this vision and the whole of the book of Ezekiel is the departure and eventual return of God's glory to Jerusalem.

The description of the cherubim takes up a lot of [Ezekiel 10](#), paralleling material from chapter 1. Ezekiel describes the transportation system of God's throne almost exactly as he saw it earlier. His word picture of the cherubim, wheels rotating within each other with eyes apparently on the rims, the shimmering light in various colors, and the four faces of a cherub, man, lion, and eagle are almost identical to the previous account. This reveals that he was seeing the same God and the same throne. Since all of the faces are the same as those in chapter 1 with the exception of the "face of a cherub," it is obvious that this face is the same as the face of the ox ([Ezekiel 1:10](#)).

Another detail to note is that where the wheels are called "Wheel" in the New King James Version of verse 13, others translate the word here as "whirling" or "spinning." The sound of the cherubim wings became very loud as the throne of God moved out of the temple. It could be heard even in the "outer court" (verse 5). This may symbolize God leaving Jerusalem in a public way, having the fact perceived or loudly proclaimed.

God had in fact prophesied the departure of His glory well in advance. Back in [Deuteronomy 31:17-18](#), He had warned: "Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and *I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them*, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us *because our God is not among*

us?" In [Hosea 9:12](#), God proclaimed, "Woe to them when I depart from them!"

In all these warnings, Ezekiel included, we should recognize that God was not only talking about the ancient destruction He brought on His people. He is also talking about the future—of nations today and of us individually. All of us have a choice before us of whether to be faithful to God or to reject Him. The apostle Paul taught that the greatest mystery of all time is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" ([Colossians 1:27](#)). Jesus Christ living in us through His Spirit is the most wonderful thing a human being can experience in this life. Yet one of the main lessons from Ezekiel is that God stays only where He is wanted and obeyed. This is true of nations, this is true of church fellowships, and this is true of every individual.

God withdrawing is never what He wants—it is people who force it on Him. Whenever His place of dwelling—whether a person, a church or religious organization or an entire nation—is filled with objects of false worship or idols, *there is no more room for Him*. After all, His name is Jealous ([Exodus 34:14](#)) and He will not share His glory with another ([Isaiah 42:8](#)). Satan has organized society so that God is squeezed out—we now have no time for Him. Christ illustrated this in the parable of the sower with the new plants being choked by the thorns (see [Matthew 13:7](#), [Matthew 13:22](#)). As individuals we often fill our lives with economic pressure, constant entertainment and various pursuits—and then we wonder why God is not truly manifested and working in our lives. The book of Hebrews warns us not to neglect so great a salvation as that which has been offered to us ([Hebrews 2:1-3](#))—yet we at times come to the realization that we are doing just that. As Paul said to all of us, "It is high time to awake out of sleep" ([Romans 13:11](#)). May studying God's message through Ezekiel aid us in doing just that." [END]

Day 615 – FRIDAY: February 28th

Ezekiel 11

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Ezekiel 11 concludes the vision that started in chapter 8. Ezekiel is now shown a group of 25 men that may or may not be the same as the group of 25 sun worshipers in [Ezekiel 8:16](#). Those here are designated as "princes of the people" ([Ezekiel 11:1](#))—possibly civil leaders as this term "denotes public and political officials often serving in judicial, military, or royal posts (see [2 Samuel 8:15-18](#); [2 Samuel 20:23-26](#))" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Ezekiel 11:1-2](#)). However, leading priests were "princes of the sanctuary" ([Isaiah 43:28](#)). Perhaps these are religious leaders who are also acting as civil leaders—or maybe just as ringleaders among the people in evil pursuits.

The Jaazaniah of [Ezekiel 11:1](#) is the son of Azzur, not Shaphan as in [Ezekiel 8:11](#). Again, perhaps the meaning of the name, "God Hears" or "God Harkens," is significant: "Azur means 'help.' He [Jaazaniah] and Pelatiah ('God delivers'), son of Benaiah ('God builds'), are singled out...because their names ought to have reminded them that 'God' would have 'heard' had they sought His 'help' to 'deliver' and 'build' them up. But neglecting this, they incurred the heavier judgment by the very relation in which they stood to God" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 1).

God told Ezekiel that these men were plotting evil and giving wicked advice in Jerusalem. Remember that Jerusalem in this vision, while pointing literally to the city of Ezekiel's time on one level, is also intended to represent all of Israel and Judah in the end time, just prior to Christ's return (compare [Ezekiel 9:9-10](#); 11; 15-21).

Verse 3, which relates the wicked advice given, is clearer in the earlier King James Version than in the New King James: "It [presumably calamity] is not near; let us build houses" (KJV). Perhaps better still, the

NIV has, "Will it not soon be time to build houses?" What about the rest of the verse? The New Living Translation renders it, "Our city is like an iron pot. Inside it we will be like meat—safe from all harm."

In Ezekiel's day, this directly contradicted the warnings he and Jeremiah had been giving. As leaders, those making these claims should have heeded the threat posed by Babylon and leveled with the people. Yet, instead, they are shown wickedly promoting a false sense of security. Evidently, they themselves were living in denial—confident that even if they came under attack, the walls of Jerusalem and the presence of God's temple would protect them from harm just like a cooking pot protects the meat inside from the flames of fire outside. Of course, this was foolishness—especially as God had sent such dire warnings through His true servants. The leaders had a responsibility to heed and spread the warning themselves. But they failed miserably in this respect, even going in the exact opposite, quite evil direction by saying all would be well. The same thing often happens among our national leaders today—and will in fact get far worse as the end of the age approaches.

God places the blame for the great number of deaths in the city on the shoulders of the leaders ([Ezekiel 11:6](#))—as He earlier placed it on the shoulders of the religious leaders ([Ezekiel 8:17](#); see also [Ezekiel 9:9](#)). This could mean that the high murder rate is due to a failure to honor and teach God's laws. Or it could refer to the deaths that have already come as punishment for the people's sins—the leaders being culpable for failing to properly acknowledge God and educate the nations in His ways and for giving a false sense of security, for not warning the people. When Ezekiel received this vision, the leaders already bore responsibility for the two previous attacks on Judah that left many dead in 605 and 597 B.C.—just as they would be responsible for the terrible slaughter that would follow. The same will be true of leaders in the end time.

In this light, God then uses the cooking pot analogy against them. He agrees that the city is a cooking pot of meat—only it is a pot of *dead* meat! The corpses of the slain are the meat, being cooked, so to speak (verse 7). Yet this would not include the particular leaders being addressed. They would indeed be killed, but not before they see the full calamity being brought. God says that the city would *not* be *their* cauldron. Rather, they would be run out of it and given into foreign hands, to be executed *outside* of Israel (verses 8-11).

Notice that Israel is again identified with Jerusalem here, which may point to an end-time fulfillment. However, Israel also designates the Promised Land (compare verse 17) and these verses could conceivably apply to what happened to certain leaders in Ezekiel's own day. Notice what later occurred after Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians: "And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the second priest...an officer who had charge of the men of war, five men of the king's close associates who were found in the city, the chief recruiting officer of the army...and 60 men of the people of the land who were found in the city... [and] brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah [in Syria]. Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death" ([2 Kings 25:18-21](#)).

Whoever the 25 leaders are intended to portray, through judgment they would finally come to see the reality of God—that is, of the true God, whom they had denied by not heeding His law and by corrupting His worship with pagan customs and concepts ([Ezekiel 11:12](#)).

In verse 13, Ezekiel sees Pelatiah (mentioned in verse 1) die and cries out, asking if God will even leave a remnant. Perhaps Pelatiah is the first of the 25 leaders to fall in the vision. Or, just the opposite, maybe Ezekiel saw the other 24 killed and Pelatiah is the last. And it could be that his name, again meaning "God Delivers" or "Delivered of God," is significant—that is, if he is not delivered, will anyone be?

Starting in verse 14, God responds to Ezekiel by giving him a wonderful message of comfort and hope. Verse 15 may be slightly mistranslated in the New King James Version. The picture seems to be that the Jews of Jerusalem are saying that all of Israel in exile—the scattered northern tribes and the Jews in Babylon—have been carried far away from God (through virtue of being far from Jerusalem). Consequently, the Jews of Jerusalem see the Promised Land as belonging solely to them.

However, the reality is that those with such a mindset in Jerusalem are going to be destroyed while those in exile will ultimately be given the land (verse 17). Yet this would not happen until later generations.

Indeed, even the Jewish return from exile at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah would not fulfill this passage, as it is "all the house of Israel in its entirety" (verse 15) that is to be given the land of Israel and, at that time, they are shown to be repentant and spiritually converted (verses 18-20), signifying the period of Jesus Christ's future reign on earth—as described in [Isaiah 11](#) and many other passages. During the centuries of scattering, God says that He Himself would serve as a "little sanctuary" among the people ([Ezekiel 11:16](#)), perhaps indicating, as explained in the comments on chapter 9, the Church of God—referred to in Scripture as the "little flock" and the "body of Christ."

A Heart of Flesh

When the captives of Israel and Judah are at long last brought back to the Promised Land in the future, they will purge it of all abominations (verse 18). God then gives hope for a beautiful future of reconciliation with Him for all Israel. The final message of [Ezekiel 11](#) tells us much about God's great mercy and compassion. In the depth of their sins, while they still practiced idolatry, God promises these people that one day in the future they will be given an opportunity to repent, return to their land and make a new covenant with Him. This covenant will be different from their past experience because God will cause the "stony" (stubborn and hard) heart of evil and rebellion to be removed from

them and will replace it with a heart of "flesh"—one that is soft, malleable, emotionally tender and responsive. In other words, He will give them His Spirit, the indwelling presence of His glory, and cause them to desire to obey His laws (verses 19-20). Again, we see a marvelous consistency between the messages of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament about God's plan for mankind—contrary to what today's counterfeit Christianity would have us believe. (See the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on [Jeremiah 31](#) for a fuller explanation of the New Covenant that God will make with Israel and Judah.)

Even then, verse 21 of [Ezekiel 11](#) cautions that there will yet be those who refuse to obey God and their heart will desire detestable things. Justice will be meted out to them as they deserve.

Finally, Ezekiel sees the glory of God depart from Jerusalem (verses 22-23). In His vision He is transported back to the exiles in Babylonia. And thus his vision comes to an end, whereupon he reports all he has seen to the exiles—starting, no doubt, with those elders who were then seated with him in his house, where he had actually been all along (see 8:1).” [END]

Day 616 – SATURDAY: March 1st

Ezekiel 12

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “Chapter 12 begins a new section in the book of Ezekiel. This new series of messages, extending to the end of [Ezekiel 19](#), apparently follows soon after the vision of chapters 8-11: "Ezekiel always gave specific dates for new visions or oracles. Since no new chronological notice was given, and since the speeches of chapters 12-19 were closely related thematically to the foregoing vision, it can be assumed that these messages were uttered shortly after Ezekiel's

explanation of the vision in chapters 8-11" (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verses 1-2).

Thus, the exiles had watched Ezekiel's symbolic acts and heard the rarely spoken prophecies of this normally mute man of God for more than a year. They had seen his acts with their eyes and heard his words with their ears, but it had no impact on them; in fact, they rejected God's message ([Ezekiel 12:2](#)). Other prophets experienced the same reaction (see [Isaiah 6:9-10](#); [Jeremiah 5:21](#)).

The exiles did not grasp the seriousness of Ezekiel's messages. They still believed they would be allowed to return to their land in the near future because Jerusalem still stood and most of the Jewish people continued in the land. Surely, it was only a matter of a little more time before they would be permitted to go back home. Throughout chapters 12-19, several reasons are presented as to why they believe this way. In chapter 12, it is apparent that the people either don't believe prophecy or reason that even if judgment really is going to come on their homeland, it won't happen in their lifetime. It just doesn't seem possible to them—but, of course, it should have.

"Ezekiel's next visual demonstration [of the process of deportation] warned the captives already in Babylon that they should not expect a quick return to Jerusalem. He had already shown that the city would soon fall ([chapters] 4; 5); those not killed would be led into exile. These exiles should have understood Ezekiel's meaning, for they had done what he was displaying only six years before, when they had been brought into exile" (*The Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Ezekiel 12:3-7](#)).

After pantomiming Jerusalem's siege, lying on one side and then the other over the course of 430 days, and shaving all his hair, Ezekiel was no doubt drawing larger numbers of onlookers. For this next demonstration he probably packed a bedroll, water container, staff and a few clothes. He was to pack them outside his dwelling during the day

with people watching him. "In the evening he would dig a hole through the mud-brick wall of his house. Leaving through the hole, Ezekiel carried his bag like an exile (vv. 4b-6a). Next he would cover his face [essentially blindfolded so he couldn't see where he was going] (v. 6b) and go to another place while all the people watched. Ezekiel's act was a sign that God would bring additional exiles to Babylon (v. 6c)" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 3-7).

The onlookers asked what this meant, and God told Ezekiel to respond that besides the rest of the nation, it particularly concerned the "prince," the ruler, in Jerusalem (verses 8-14). Indeed, leaving through a hole in the wall by night indicated a secret escape. This is exactly what the nobles and political leaders of Jerusalem tried to do six years later during the siege of 586 B.C. They attempted to escape and run but were caught by the Babylonians. King Zedekiah was blinded and carried off to Babylon where he would die (see [2 Kings 25:1-7](#); [Jeremiah 52:1-11](#)). The rest of the nation was also carried away captive, just as God foretold through Ezekiel.

God is clear as to the reason for allowing many of them to go on living. Despite the judgment He is bringing, this is another example of His great mercy. While enslaved, they will come to acknowledge their sinful ways and come to better understand Him ([Ezekiel 12:15-16](#)). "They will know that I am the LORD," He states repeatedly. This will also serve as a powerful witness to all mankind. God wants to emphasize that no one should think He wasn't strong enough to prevent the calamity that came upon His nation. Rather, their downfall was due to His power, a fulfillment of the curse He promised. God understands human nature and the depth of evil to which people can sink. People need to know who God is—including what He stands for, His likes and dislikes, His expectations—before they can learn to properly worship Him. And for those who refuse to heed Him initially, they will ultimately come to know Him in a more ominous way—through judgment.

Using the family analogy He inspires in the New Testament, God has expectations for His household, like any wise father does. Even a physical family fairs poorly without mature household rules. On the other hand, proper parental guidance helps children succeed in life. Said succinctly, fatherly love includes laws—not harsh, not without mercy, but rather rules that protect his children from harming themselves and others. How does a wise father ensure that his children respect his rules for their good? He disciplines them. So it is with our heavenly Father's approach to His children (see [Hebrews 12:5-11](#)).

In verses 17-18 of [Ezekiel 12](#), God gives the prophet another pantomime to perform. Ezekiel is instructed to tremble and shake as he ate his food and shudder in fear as he drank water. This would test his acting ability, but the message from God is clear: This is what the nation is going to experience. He then explains that this is to serve as punishment for the incessant *violence* between people (verse 19)—which probably includes not just physical but emotional violence as well (compare [Malachi 2:16](#)).

In verse 20, the chilling warning of [Ezekiel 6:6](#) is reiterated: The inhabited cities are to be laid waste. Many elements in chapters 12-19 hearken back to points made in the earlier chapters of Ezekiel. Recall that in those earlier chapters, Jerusalem was often used to represent the whole house of Israel in the end time. The same can be said of this section. While the message is obviously directed to Ezekiel's immediate audience, there are, as we will see, indications throughout the section that the message is for all of Israel—and more specifically, since the northern tribes did not receive Ezekiel's message in ancient times, for Israel's descendants in the last days.

In verse 6 of chapter 12, Ezekiel was to be a sign to the "house of Israel." Yet in verses 8-9, this could conceivably be limited to the Jews in captivity, as God asks, "Has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, 'What are you doing?'" However, we could perhaps

imagine people of the modern nations descended from Israel reading Ezekiel's prophecy and also wondering the same thing—and Ezekiel answering them through this preserved written record rather than his ancient utterances. In verse 10, God says, "This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel who are among them." This verse might seem limited to the Jews of ancient Judah. But, while it clearly does apply to them, it may also have a broader meaning. Again, we have clear precedent in the preceding chapters of Ezekiel for understanding the ancient destruction and captivity of Jerusalem and Judah as typical of punishment that is to befall all of Israel in the end time. The end-time Jewish monarch resides among the Israelites (as we will see more about in [Ezekiel 17](#)).

It only makes sense to see Ezekiel's warning of deportation as applying to not only the Jews still in Judah when he spoke, but also to all Israel and Judah at the end of this present evil age. As other prophecies also show, the cities of the modern Israelite nations are going to be destroyed and the survivors will be marched off into foreign slavery. And again, violence among the people is part of the reason for this punishment. God must be grieved continually at the terrible murders and violent crime that are so common in the lands of modern-day Israel. How we are repeating the experience of our ancestors! At times it seems that the only lesson we learn from history is that men do not learn lessons from history.

In verse 22, God quotes a proverb of the people: "The days are prolonged, and every vision fails." A "proverb" is a popular saying summing up some common wisdom. But this wasn't wise at all. Such statements are still common today: "People have been saying that for centuries and it hasn't happened yet." And the Bible warned of the pervasiveness of such sentiments in the end time: "Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts [physical wants], and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell

asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'" ([2 Peter 3:3-4](#)).

"The belief the proverb [in Ezekiel] expresses is, simply, that the message of judgment delivered by Ezekiel and other prophets like Isaiah simply was not true. The argument underlying it is basically, 'It hasn't happened yet—so it can't happen!' That notion is foolish, whether it's held by a Californian living in an earthquake zone, or a non-Christian hearing about Christ's Second Coming! God's patience in delaying judgment is evidence of grace, not evidence no judgment lies ahead!" (Lawrence Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, 1991, note on 12:22).

Others accepted that Ezekiel's warning was true and inspired, but believed it concerned the distant future and not the here and now (verse 27). This is also true of many believers in the end time. Jesus warned of Christians who would adopt the attitude of "My master is delaying his coming" ([Matthew 24:48](#)). Even many who believe Christ's coming is relatively soon lose any sense of urgency regarding it—seeing it as still far enough off not to concern them. "Maybe someday. But not now. Maybe someone. But not us. God's response through Ezekiel was, 'Not someone...you!' And, 'Not someday...soon!' The attitude of the people of Ezekiel's day is still pervasive in the church. Only if we truly believed judgment was coming to *us* and *soon* would we break the bondage of our materialism, and live completely for the Lord" (note on [Ezekiel 12:26-28](#)).

Once God accomplishes His proclaimed punishment, no one will be able to contradict it! There were false prophets in Jerusalem with whom Jeremiah was contending at this time ([Jeremiah 28:1-5](#)). There will also be false teachers and prophets in the end time. Even though they persuade many people with their words, God's Word stands sure and will pass the test of time. The chapter ends with this message:

"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "None of My words

will be postponed any more, but the word which I speak will be done." In less than six years from this prophecy Jerusalem would fall to Nebuchadnezzar and be destroyed.

Similarly, the judgments of the end time are coming swiftly. We don't know how long. But we know they are coming soon. At some point in the not-too-distant future, what the apostle John foresaw will come to pass: "The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever...that there should be delay no longer" ([Revelation 10:5-6](#)). Until then, the end for each of us could be minutes or even seconds away, as we are all mortal and subject to death. So we should live each day with that reality in mind—and direct our lives accordingly." [END]