

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 60.4%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Ezekiel 22

Monday: Ezekiel 23, 2 Kings 24:20, Jeremiah 52:3, & 2 Chronicles 36:13

Tuesday: Ezekiel 24, 2 Kings 25:1-2, Jeremiah 39:1 & Jeremiah 52:4

Wednesday: Ezekiel 25

Thursday: Jeremiah 21 & Jeremiah 34:1 - 7

Friday: Ezekiel 29:1 – 16

Saturday: Ezekiel 30:20 – 26 & Ezekiel 31

Current # of email addresses in the group: 627

I trust and hope you all had a wonderful Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. We are now in the process of counting to Pentecost. I just returned from a 10 day trip to Turkey with a wonderful group of brothers and sisters in Christ. We were able to see five of the Churches of Revelation, and went to Miletus, the region of Troas and finished the trip in Istanbul (ancient Constantinople). It was an amazing opportunity to experience, and one that I'm confident will help me as I serve God's precious people.

It's now time to get back to our Chronological deep dive study of God's Word. We have now passed the 60% mark in this study. Great job!

I hope you have a wonderful study week.

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

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 93

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

Day 624 – SUNDAY: April 27th

Ezekiel 22

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Chapter 22 presents us with three messages from God. The first is a record of national abominations as the basis for judgment (verses 1-16). The second is metaphor of metal smelting to demonstrate that God's judgment reveals the entire nation to be spiritually worthless (verses 17-22). And the third decries the wickedness of every stratum of society, from the nation's religious and civil leaders to the average person (verses 23-31).

The first section concerns "the bloody city" (verse 2). It is not stated here what city is meant but the context shows it to be Jerusalem as representative of the entire Jewish nation in Ezekiel's day—and probably of all Israel and Judah of future ages, especially the end time. That Jerusalem of Ezekiel's day is intended is clear from the fact that when the Babylonian siege against the city begins, God tells the prophet to proclaim "woe to the bloody city" (see 24:1-3, 6, 9).

This is a horrible designation, given previously to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh ([Nahum 3:1](#)). The Assyrians had received this distinction for brutalizing other nations, but Jerusalem "sheds blood in her own midst" ([Ezekiel 22:3](#)). One way this came about was in connection with the nation's terrible idolatry. The Valley of Hinnom was a renowned place for idol worship, where children were sacrificed to Molech. The nation's leaders used their power to have others murdered (verse 6). Many people made false accusations against others to have them put to death (verse 9). In later centuries, Jesus Christ explained that Jerusalem was guilty of the blood of the righteous, putting many of God's servants to death ([Matthew 23:34-37](#)). Indeed, Jesus Himself was killed there.

Throughout the nations of Israel today, murder rates are high—and the guilty are not justly punished. A million and a half unborn infants are murdered in the United States alone every single year—through the determination and ruling of many of our national leaders and judges. And the entire culture is taught a way of life leading to personal destruction and, ultimately, national suicide.

A whole host of sins, particularly among the nation's leaders, are listed in this section. "Whenever the attitudes detailed here appear in a society, it is near collapse. What are the signs? The undermining of parental authority (v. 7a). Injustices that take advantage of the poor and helpless (v. 7b). Indifference of leaders to the best interests of those they rule, as well as indifference to the things of God (v. 8). A legal reign of terror, including murders (v. 9a). Leaders engaging in sex sins (vv. 9b-11) and seeking illicit personal profit (v. 12). When any society forgets God and strays from its spiritual foundations, its leadership will become corrupt and the nation will ultimately fall. Where is our society today? Apply Ezekiel's criteria and decide for yourself" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verses 7-12).

As in chapter 20, Sabbath breaking is shown to be a big reason for national punishment, being mentioned in both [Ezekiel 22:8](#) and verse 26. Eating on the mountains in verse 9—as in 18:6 and verse 11—refers to participation in pagan worship.

God concludes that He will scatter the people of the nation in line with other prophecies of national deportation. This certainly happened to the Jews of Ezekiel's day. It had already happened to the northern kingdom of Israel more than a century earlier. In early Christian times, it would again happen to the Jewish nation. And at the time of the end, it will happen to the nations of Israel and Judah together. Notice that God says that through this he would remove the nation's filthiness, its spiritual defilement of sin, "completely." While the removal of sinful behavior was accomplished by degrees through previous captivities, the *complete* removal of the nation's sins would seem to point mainly to the captivity of the end time, in which the severe humbling of the people will pave the way for their acceptance of Jesus Christ. For only the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice provides a true atonement for sin, and only His life within a person through the Holy Spirit enables that person to truly obey God as God requires. The Jewish people obviously

have yet to accept Christ. But so do the supposedly "Christian" nations of modern Israel, as they have not really submitted to the true Christ and His ways.

Dross in a Furnace

The next section of [Ezekiel 22](#) concerns the "house of Israel" being placed "into the midst of a furnace." This applied on one level to the invasion and destruction of ancient Judah by the Babylonians. But as with other prophecies in Ezekiel, it also seems to point to the fire of the terrible Great Tribulation that will engulf Israel and Judah shortly before the return of Christ.

The focus of this section is the parable of the metal in a furnace being revealed as all dross. That is, the impurity is so pervasive that there is nothing of value left. Similar imagery was given in [Jeremiah 6:27-30](#), where Jeremiah, as an "assayer," was to label the nation "rejected silver." In [Isaiah 1:21-22](#), God had likewise lamented: "How the faithful city has become a harlot! It was full of justice; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross."

Trials leading up to final destruction served to reveal the widespread corruption. "Judgment displays the people's impurity ([\[Ezekiel 22\]](#) vv. 17-22)... Just as the hot fires of the smelter's furnace cause the dross to come to the surface and reveal the purified silver, so in times of divine judgment human beings are driven to act according to their character. The selfish become more cruel and self-centered; the godly more compassionate and caring. Remember this when troubles come to you, and let the fires of God's judgment on society bring out the best in you!" (note on verses 1-31).

Indeed, besides the focus on the destruction God would ultimately bring, the verses here "also point to the fiery ordeals and trials that force all of us into a more perfect relationship with our Lord (see v. 22;

Psalm 66:10; Jeremiah 9:7; Daniel 11:35; [Daniel 12:10](#); Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:1-3; [James 1:2-4](#))" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Ezekiel 22:17-22](#)).

Verses 23-31 show that corruption pervades the entire society. The civil rulers use their positions for harm and personal gain (verse 27). The prophets and priests—the religious preachers and teachers—are causing the people to be destroyed (verse 25-26). They violate God's law, setting an evil example. Moreover, they fail to distinguish "between the holy and unholy" or "between the unclean and the clean." They do not teach the people of God's Holy Days or of His holy tithes. They do not teach what God declares food fit for human consumption and what he forbids to be eaten. God even says that they have "hidden their eyes" from His Sabbaths—refusing to even look into the possibility that they should be observed. How true all of this is today throughout the churches of the nations of Israel!

Verse 28 repeats a theme from [Ezekiel 13](#)—prophets falsely claiming to be relaying God's teachings or message, whitewashing over the sins of the nation and giving the people a false sense of security. The results are apparent. "The people of the land" ([Ezekiel 22:29](#))—the common people, average citizens—stand guilty of severely mistreating others, oppressing and robbing them.

Standing in the Gap

Verse 30 reflects God's continual hope that His wrath may be diverted. He does not rejoice in punishing even those deserving of punishment. So He looks for those who might "stand in the gap" for the people. This also repeats imagery from [Ezekiel 13](#), where God said of Israel's prophets, "You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on the day of the Lord" (verse 5). This gives us further reason to see an end-time application of [Ezekiel 22](#). Again, as pointed out in chapter 13 and 22:28, rather than repairing the

gaps in Israel's moral condition, which would give the nation real security, the false prophets effectively plaster over the gaps with a thin whitewash, leaving the people defenseless but deluded and complacent.

Standing in the gap is the mark of a man of God. It involves trying to protect others through interceding for them in prayer and seeing to it that they are told what God really wants them to know. Sadly, God says He cannot find anyone to fill this responsibility. Yet when Ezekiel wrote, did not he and Jeremiah both fit that description? And in the end time, will there not be true Christians with the proper mindset? Yes, but "a qualified leader is useless if the people refuse to be led" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 30). What God must be saying is that He is not able to find anyone to repair the society's spiritual gaps because anyone who might actually be able to would be rejected by the people.

So God says He will pour out His fury on the nation (verse 31). Tragically, people today do not even conceive of God as ever being wrathful and righteously indignant. They make fun of that concept as backward and unenlightened. So many today see God as always gentle, always forgiving no matter what—never judging or punishing people for even the greatest crimes. People have forgotten about the God who flooded the earth, rained destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah, slew the firstborn of Egypt and brought famines, diseases and military invasion on ancient Israel and Judah as punishment for sin. The same God stands ready to justly punish our evil society today—not to punish for punishment's sake, but rather for the sake of turning the collective hearts and minds of people away from the sin that destroys them, to lead mankind into a lawful way of living that will bring rich and abundant blessings for all who will submit to Him." [END]

Day 625 – MONDAY: April 28th

Ezekiel 23, 2 Kings 24:20, Jeremiah 52:3, & 2 Chronicles 36:13

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “As God had foretold in [Ezekiel 17](#), King Zedekiah of Judah finally rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar ([2 Chronicles 36:13](#); [Jeremiah 52:3b](#)). As the rebellion is what provoked Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem (see verse 4), which began in January 588 B.C. (compare [Ezekiel 24:1-2](#)), the rebellion must have happened immediately beforehand. This makes sense in light of international affairs, for at this time a new pharaoh came to the throne of Egypt. “The king of Judah foolishly relied on the Egyptians under Pharaoh Apries (or Hophra, [Jer. 44:30](#)) for help (see Ezek. 17:15-18). Apries had recently succeeded Psamtik II (594-588 B.C.) on the throne. He had great plans for Egypt’s renewed glory” (The Nelson Study Bible, note on [2 Kings 24:20](#)). But it was not to be, as we will later see.

A Tragic Tale of Two Sister Cities

Judah’s break from Babylon and its renewed affiliation with Egypt is mentioned in the allegorical story of [Ezekiel 23](#), narrowing the time frame for this chapter. Since chapter 24 is set at the time Jerusalem’s siege begins, chapter 23 apparently is set between Zedekiah’s rebellion and the siege.

Recall from [Ezekiel 16](#) the story of Jerusalem portrayed as a rescued child turned murderous harlot as representative of the history of the nation of Israel. In the latter part of the chapter, Jerusalem, symbolizing the Jewish remnant of Israel, was said to be sister to Samaria and Sodom in the sense that God viewed them all as the offspring or legacy of the Canaanites in a cultural sense due to their idolatry and degeneracy. [Ezekiel 23](#) contains a similar portrayal, with Jerusalem and Samaria, symbolizing the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel respectively, represented as two harlot sisters sharing the same ethnic heritage—“daughters of one mother” (verse 2), the mother being the formerly unified nation.

That the cities are meant to represent the people of the nation is clear from verse 3, which states that “they committed harlotry in Egypt,” reflecting on the Israelites’ worship of the Egyptian gods before the nation was delivered under Moses from its enslavement there. Throughout the Bible, God inspires the metaphorical comparison between adultery and spiritual unfaithfulness to Him. “It was during their stay in Egypt as youths that they had learned the trade of prostitution (v. 3; cf. 16:26; 20:7-8; [Num 25:3-9](#); [Josh 24:14](#); [2 Kings 21:15](#); [Hos 1:2](#)). Though the straightforward language of Israel’s perverted ‘sexual relations’ with other countries [in a figurative sense] may be morally and culturally offensive to many today, God did not hedge in clearly and concisely describing the crudeness and perversion of wickedness and sin” (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, note on [Ezekiel 23:1-4](#)). Where the King James Version says Israel’s bosom was “bruised” (verses 3, 8, 21), the New King James Version has “pressed,” and other translations say “handled” or “caressed,” creating a graphic image of their disloyalty to God.

God refers to Samaria (Israel) and Jerusalem (Judah) as Oholah and Oholibah respectively (verse 4). (The King James spelling is Aholah and Aholibah.) The names are significant. Oholah means “Her Own Tabernacle,” while Oholibah means “My Tabernacle Is in Her.” God’s temple—in essence a fixed tabernacle—was located in Jerusalem. Throughout the divided kingdom era, Judah, despite periods of apostasy, remained the center of true worship. In contrast, the northern kingdom, since the time of Jeroboam, set up centers of false worship.

God refers to both sisters as “Mine” (verse 4)—that is, He took the nation as His own in the Sinai marriage covenant. And they bore Him “sons and daughters,” that is, the people of the nation. Yet despite the covenant relationship, both sisters committed spiritual harlotry with other nations and their gods.

Verses 5-8 describe the harlotry of Samaria—the “older” or, literally, “greater” sister (verse 4). The northern kingdom of Israel sought “relations” with the Assyrians as “her lovers.” This involved not only political alliances but Israel’s worship of Assyria’s gods (verse 7). God’s judgment was to allow the Assyrians to invade Israel and strip her bare, taking the people captive or killing them (verses 9-10). This happened in the first Assyrian invasion and deportation of Israel in 733-732 B.C. and the second invasion and deportation at the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. (more than 130 years before Ezekiel wrote).

Verses 11-21 describe the harlotry of the southern kingdom of Judah with its capital, Jerusalem. She saw what happened to the northern kingdom, but failed to learn from its experiences (verse 11). As Jeremiah had written regarding God having put away the northern kingdom, “Her treacherous sister Judah saw it.... Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also” ([Jeremiah 3:7-8](#)). Indeed, Jerusalem was even “more corrupt” ([Ezekiel 23:11](#)). Judah defiled God’s own temple with idolatry and immoral practices. And, as noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on [Ezekiel 16](#), there was also an important accountability factor. As the center of true worship, the responsibility for spiritual leadership and right conduct rested with Judah even more than with Israel.

Judah also pursued relations with the Assyrians (verse 12). And she, too, was left defiled by them (verse 13)—a reference to the spiritual defilement caused by idolatry and to the actual devastation caused by Sennacherib’s invasion in 701 B.C., in which the Assyrians took a large number of Jewish captives. Unlike what happened to the northern kingdom, though, God left a remnant of Judah in the land at that time. “But she increased her harlotry” (verse 14). She failed to learn the lesson.

Judah “then extended her prostitution to the Babylonians. She had inordinate affections for the Babylonian [Chaldean] rulers (cf. [Jer](#)

[22:21](#)), seeing images of them on walls [[Ezekiel 23:14](#)]. Basreliefs were common decorations in Mesopotamian palaces and temples. Perhaps this statement was an allusion to some Judean envoys who were sent to Babylon and saw the witness of her great power demonstrated on such walls. Judah did send messengers to woo Babylon into 'relations' with her, and Babylon complied by entering into such 'relations' with Jerusalem (vv. 14-16...)” (note on verses 11-21).

Verse 17 explains that Judah became defiled with Babylonian immorality and then states that “she was defiled by them.” This latter phrase apparently referred to the Babylonians’ past few military invasions. Fed up with national humiliation and eager to win independence, Judah “alienated herself from them.” This is evidently a reference to Zedekiah’s rebellion against Babylon. God responds by alienating Himself from Judah (verse 18). For on top of Judah’s downward spiral into depravity, the nation’s betrayal of its allegiance to Babylon is a violation of an oath to God (see [Ezekiel 17:15-20](#)).

“As if Jerusalem had not learned her lesson, she turned away from Babylon only to turn to Egypt for aid through ‘relations’ with that nation ([[Ezekiel 23](#)] vv. 19-21; cf. [Jer 2:18](#); 6:8; 37:5-7; [Lam 4:17](#)). It was like striking up an old relationship. Jerusalem failed to learn from the distasteful relationship with Babylon that security lay, not in men, but in the Lord. Egypt, of course, was extremely anxious to enter into ‘relations’ with Judah; for the Pharaohs were planning intervention in Asia. Such desire on Egypt’s part was portrayed by the figure of lustful donkeys and horses (cf. [Jer 2:24](#); 5:8; 13:27), while Jerusalem equally desired to renew the sexual perversion of her youth with Egypt [with God likening this to the vileness of pursuing relations with animals]” (note on [Ezekiel 23:11-21](#)).

In verses 22-35, God pronounces judgment on Judah. He would bring the nation’s former lovers against her: “The Babylonians, all the Chaldeans, Pekod, Shoa, Koa, all the Assyrians with them” (verse 23).

According to Expositor's: "The names Pekod, Shea, and Koa are taken by most scholars to refer to tribes located on the eastern borders of the Babylonian Empire. peqodh ('Pekod') is believed to be equivalent to the Assyrian pukadu, the name of a tribe in southeastern Babylonia. sho`a ('Shoa') is equated with the Assyrian sutu or suti, a term used of nomads east of the Tigris River. Originally these nomads lived in the Syrian desert according to the Amarna letters, but in the eleventh century B.C. they entered the eastern territory of Babylonia. qo`a ('Koa') finds its parallel in the Assyrian term kutu, a tribal group east of the Tigris River on the border of Elam and Median appearing in Assyrian inscriptions during the eleventh century B.C. and mentioned as part of Babylonia when conquered by Cyrus" (footnote on verse 23).

However, Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary says of these names: "Pekod...[is] not a geographical name, but descriptive of Babylon. [Meaning:] 'Visitation,' peculiarly the land of 'judgment'.... Shoa...Koa—'rich...noble'; descriptive of Babylon in her prosperity, having all the world's wealth and dignity at her disposal" (note on verse 23).

The Assyrians, mentioned in the same context, are reckoned by most commentators to here be vassals of the Babylonians. However, most of the Assyrians had fled the region since their empire fell to the Babylonians. This may hint at some duality in the passage, as the final destruction of Judah and Israel at the end of the age will come at the hands of a power bloc comprising the modern descendants of the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians. The prophecy at the end of the chapter makes this even more likely, as we will see.

God tells Judah of the enemies He will bring against her: "They shall judge you according to their judgments.... They shall remove your nose and your ears" (verses 24-25). This was evidently an ancient Middle Eastern punishment for adulteresses (Expositor's, note on verses 22-27; Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 22-27). Figuratively, Judah would no

longer be beautiful and desirable—she would be disfigured and ugly. Because Judah has gone the way of Samaria, she will go the whole way of Samaria (verse 31)—being forced to drink from the same “cup of horror and desolation” (verse 33). God tells Judah, “Since you have forgotten me and thrust me behind your back, you must bear the consequences of your lewdness and prostitution” (verse 35, NIV).

In the final section of the chapter, verses 36-49, God tells Ezekiel to pronounce judgment on Oholah and Oholibah—Samaria and Judah. From the wording of verses 45-49, it is clear that the decreed punishment was yet to come when Ezekiel prophesied. This is rather intriguing, as Samaria, the northern kingdom, had gone into captivity more than 130 years before Ezekiel received this prophecy. Here, then, is compelling reason for viewing this section as referring to the end time, when the descendants of the northern tribes will suffer the severest judgment ever—along with the modern-day descendants of Judah.

As in [Ezekiel 20](#) and 22, God again indicts Israel and Judah for idolatry and Sabbath-breaking (23:36-39)—sins that are still nearly universal among the modern Israelites. The child sacrifice mentioned here could, as pointed out in regards to similar passages, apply in principle to the modern practice of abortion and to giving children over to the evil values and practices of society. Verses 40- 41 show Israel again playing the harlot, getting made up and dressed up to entice others. The word “Sabeans” in verse 42, while possibly a reference to surrounding nomadic peoples, could also be translated “drunkards”—perhaps symbolizing other nations given over to the world’s false religious system (see [Revelation 17:1-2](#)) with whom Israel commits spiritual adultery.

In verse 45 of [Ezekiel 23](#), God says that “righteous men” will judge Israel and Judah as adulteresses and murderesses. Some commentators equate these righteous judges with the enemy nations bringing the

punishment in verses 46-47, as God said He would delegate punishment to such nations (see verse 24). In this sense, “righteous” is viewed not as characterizing the enemy nations as right before God but as carrying out His righteous judgment. The New Bible Commentary: Revised, however, states, “Righteous men can hardly be Babylonians (cf. 7:21, 24); they are [rather] the few men of Jerusalem who remain faithful to Yahweh and condemn the national policy” (note on 23:45). This does make sense as judgment was committed to Ezekiel in verse 36.

In the last two verses of the chapter, God gives “four purposes in judging His sinning people. To end wickedness in the land; to instruct other nations [‘all women’] of the consequences of unrighteousness; to punish the two wicked cities [for the sake of justice]; to bring Israel and Judah to a saving knowledge of the Lord” (Lawrence Richards, The Bible Reader’s Companion, 1991, note on verses 48-49). God’s great plan and purpose is to have us all come to detest evil, to love good and, with His help, to live accordingly—for our own sake and that of everyone else.” [END]

Day 626 – TUESDAY: April 29th

Ezekiel 24, 2 Kings 25:1-2, Jeremiah 39:1 & Jeremiah 52:4

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “As historian Alfred Edersheim notes, when King Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon ([2 Kings 24:20](#)) “his punishment came quickly. Nebuchadnezzar advanced with his army, and pitched his camp at Riblah—significantly, the same place where Jehohaz had been cast into bonds by Necho (2 Kings [23:] 33). Riblah remained the headquarters of the Babylonian army, as being a convenient point whence to operate against Palestine and Tyre on the one side, and on the other against Ammon and Moab (Ezek. [21:] 19, 20, 22, 28; [26:] 1-7). Presently all Judea was overrun. Indeed, it was

entirely defenceless, with the exception of the fortified towns of Lachish, Azekah, and Jerusalem (Jer. [34:] 7). Against Jerusalem itself Nebuchadrezzar and his host now laid siege. This was the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah (2 Kings [25:] 1; Jer. [39:] 1)" (*Old Testament Bible History*, 1890, Vol. 7, p. 207)—corresponding to January of 588 B.C.

For about four and a half years, Ezekiel had been warning of the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon. Jeremiah had been warning of it for around 38 years. Now it was really happening. Ezekiel was told to record the date that later became a memorial day, being remembered by an annual fast (compare [Zechariah 8:19](#)). Indeed, Ezekiel's revealing of the exact date the siege began would soon confirm him as a true prophet. Bear in mind that there was no instant communication between ancient Judah and Babylon. A message of the siege beginning would take several weeks to deliver. Thus, once word came, the exiles would know that Ezekiel actually *had* received an instant communication—a supernatural one, from God.

Symbolizing what was happening to Jerusalem, God gives the parable of the bronze cooking pot or cauldron ([Ezekiel 24:3-14](#)). This imagery is repeated in certain respects from [Ezekiel 11:1-13](#), where the people considered themselves protected within Jerusalem's walls from outside trouble as meat in a cauldron is protected from the flames of a cooking fire. In the earlier passage God had said the city's populace would not remain protected but would be "dumped out" of the cauldron, representative of coming captivity. Now God explains that the time in the pot will not be so protected as the people imagine. Rather, as the pot reaches the boiling point, the meat inside—the people of Jerusalem—will cook and simmer ([Ezekiel 24:5](#)). As verse 6 explains, the cuts of meat will be tossed out (into captivity) "piece by piece" (as individuals are apprehended)—"on which no lot has fallen" (not by special divine selection but as part of God's general judgment on the

populace). Those who are not taken out into captivity will be cooked to a crisp, totally burned up (verse 10). Indeed, the bronze pot itself will be burned and melted down (verse 11), representing the burning and razing of Jerusalem and the death of many people.

As in [Ezekiel 22:2](#), the city is again referred to as "the bloody city" ([Ezekiel 24:6, 9](#))—guilty of the shed blood of her own people. In this context, mention is made of "scum" or "encrusted deposits (v. 6) on the pot. Verses 7-8 imply that these 'deposits' represented the violent bloodshed of this 'bloody city,' which was like blood poured on a bare rock and not covered with dirt. Jerusalem had done nothing to cover (or to atone for) her bloodshed as required by the Mosaic covenant ([Leviticus 17:13](#)). Uncovered blood evoked God's vengeance (cf. [Genesis 4:10](#); [Isaiah 26:21](#)). The Lord declared that he had put Jerusalem's blood on the bare rock and would not allow it to be covered so that his wrath might be poured out on her" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Ezekiel 24:3-8](#)). An important scripture in this regard is [Numbers 35:33](#): "So you shall not pollute the land where you are; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it." Failure to execute murderers brings guilt on the whole country.

The "filthiness" of the pot (verse 11) also includes lewdness (verse 13), the Hebrew word for which "denominates the worst kinds of impurity: adultery, incest, and the purpose, wish, design, and ardent desire to do those things" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary*, note on verse 13). God laments, "I have cleansed you, and you were not cleansed" ([Ezekiel 24:13](#)). "This probably refers to the deportations of 605 and 597 B.C., whose cleansing effects were incomplete" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 13-14). This time the purge would be complete.

It should also be recalled that the siege of Jerusalem is presented earlier in the book of Ezekiel in a dual sense—as signifying literal events

of Ezekiel's own day but also to represent the fiery destruction that will come on all of Israel in the end time. No doubt that was also meant here. Certainly, it is easy to draw parallels between the immorality of ancient Judah and that of all the Israelite nations today.

Ezekiel Loses His Wife

The next part of [Ezekiel 24](#) (verses 15-24) is quite shocking to read. God's prophets were called on to do many hard things, but Ezekiel was about to be given one of the hardest tasks of all. God was going to take away his beloved wife. He "spoke to the people in the morning" (verse 18)—evidently giving them the parable of the cooking pot to describe the siege of Jerusalem that commenced that day. And at the end of the same day, when "evening" or sundown came (same verse), his wife would die "with one stroke" (verse 16)—the Hebrew term used elsewhere of plague or disease (see [Exodus 9:14](#)). Yet in the face of this devastating personal blow, Ezekiel was not to mourn. We catch a very small glimpse here of Ezekiel's private life when God calls his wife "the desire of your eyes" (verse 16). This was to be no easy task.

"By no means did this signify that God was insensitive to Ezekiel's grief. Just the opposite is true. God's own grief at having to punish His people and reject the sanctuary where they worshipped Him would have been a mirror for Ezekiel's actions, and the Israelites' grief at being driven from the home they loved was parallel to it as well. Here, however, God's grief is not actually mentioned—the focus is limited exclusively to the grief of Ezekiel and the coming grief of the people of Israel" (*Mastering the Old Testament*, Vol. 18: *Ezekiel* by Douglas Stuart, 1988, p. 241).

The Nelson Study Bible notes: "This solemn command of God may be one of the hardest ever given to one of His servants. The picture of Ezekiel's wife dying and Ezekiel not being allowed to grieve illustrated God's pain over the death of His wife—Jerusalem—and His...[necessity

of not mourning to demonstrate that] the nation deserved punishment. Ezekiel was called by God to 'be a sign to the exiles' by demonstrating what they should do [or, perhaps, *would* do since they might be prevented by their circumstances from public ritual mourning and thus would have to mourn privately] (see vv. 21-23) in response to the 'death' (destruction) of their desire and delight—their nation and its capital city. What Ezekiel was commanded to accept and do illustrated the degree of personal sacrifice and separation from ordinary life that the prophetic ministry often required. A long period of mourning was the normal, ritual response to the death of a loved one in the ancient Middle East" (note on verses 16-17).

Ezekiel writes in verse 18, "At evening my wife died; and the next morning I did as I was commanded." Two things should be noticed here. First, the brevity and matter-of-factness of the comment no doubt concealed his deep sorrow—just as God told him he was to "sigh in silence" (verse 17). Second, as difficult as the command was, Ezekiel obeyed God. No doubt Ezekiel understood the truth of the future resurrection of the dead, as other prophets had foretold and as he himself would later proclaim. This would have given him hope. Nevertheless, the pain for the time being was of course overwhelming—as it would be for anyone but especially for Ezekiel, who, set apart as he was, may not have had any other close relationships. Ezekiel surely prayed that God would strengthen him in his great anguish—to give him the necessary spiritual power to obey. And God did. Ezekiel's faithful obedience to such a difficult command provided a great contrast to the faithless disobedience of the Jewish nation in regard to all of God's commandments.

As to the issue of why God would take His servant's wife in death, all the reasons are not revealed. We know He was using the situation as an object lesson. Yet that still does not explain why He would go to such lengths to make a point. Perhaps God knew or determined that she

would die soon or in this general time frame anyway for some other reason—and He decided to cause her death to coincide with the siege date by either slightly prolonging or shortening her life. Frankly, we *never* know all the reasons that God allows our own loved ones to die at a particular time. God is working out a great plan for all humanity. As Creator and Sovereign, it is His right to take anyone's life whenever He decides to. Whatever the case or circumstances, we can be confident that God has the best interests of His servants at heart and will ultimately make all things work out for the good of those who love Him (see [Romans 8:28](#)).

The exiles ask Ezekiel about his bizarre reaction—or, rather, lack of reaction—to his wife's death ([Ezekiel 24:19](#)). "Ezekiel's reply to the people's inquiry," states *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, "was an explanation of this picture lesson (v. 20). The delight of the exiled people's eyes was the pride ([2 Chronicles 36:19](#) [Lamentations 1:10-11](#)) and affection that they had in the temple at Jerusalem ([[Ezekiel 24](#)] v. 21; cf. v. 25). [Indeed, the citizens *boasted* that God's holy temple and holy city provided protection from destruction.] However, the Lord would defile the temple and slay the Judean children in the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (v. 21b). Ezekiel was to be a sign to them (v. 24a). They were to respond to the destruction of the temple and the death of their children in the same manner that Ezekiel responded to the death of his wife (vv. 22-23). Just as the delight of his eyes (his wife) was taken, so the delight of their eyes (the temple and their children) would be taken. Why should they not mourn? Because Jerusalem's fall had been foretold by many of the prophets, especially Ezekiel. This judgment [a just judgment from God] should have been expected!" (note on verses 20-24). However, as noted earlier, Ezekiel's sign may have been more concerned with what the Jews simply *would* do because of their circumstances rather than any command from God as to what they *should* do. As *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary* notes on verse 23: "They could not in their exile manifest

publicly their lamentation, but they would privately 'mourn one to another.'"

God ends chapter 24 with a positive message for Ezekiel (verses 25-27). "In 3:25-27 Ezekiel had been made mute [that is, he was only able to preach publicly when God specifically told him to]... Now the Lord was announcing that Ezekiel's muteness would be removed when the siege of Jerusalem was completed. On the day Jerusalem fell, a fugitive would escape to bring the news of Jerusalem's collapse to Ezekiel in Babylon (vv. 25-26). On the day that the fugitive would arrive in Babylon, approximately three months following the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel's mouth would be opened; and he would have the freedom to move among his people and proclaim continually the message [not of judgment only but] of hope for the future (v. 27a). He would once again intercede before the Lord on their behalf. This fulfillment would be described in 33:21-22 (cf. [2 Kings 25:8](#))...[after] which Ezekiel would deliver his great message of hope for Israel ([Ezekiel] 33:31-39:29). The removal of his muteness would be another affirmation of Ezekiel's prophetic gift to the exiles. When they saw the fulfillment of the Lord's messages through his prophets, then the exiles would know that the Lord...[whom Ezekiel credited as the source of his prophecies, was truly God] (v. 27b)" (note on verses 25-27). And God inspired His prophet to record all this so that we today would know it too." [END]

Day 627 – WEDNESDAY: April 30th

Ezekiel 25

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "It is not known exactly when God gave Ezekiel the prophecies of this chapter, though it is reasonable to assume that they were given prior to the next chronologically dated section of the book. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says: "The four short oracles against Judah's immediate neighbors are a continuation of Ezekiel's dated judgment message that began at 24:1 and concludes at

25:17. This, therefore, was originally a singular series of messages, all delivered at the same time according to Ezekiel's normal chronological notices. The messages in this series announce judgment on Judah [as discussed in previous commentary] and then turn to denounce the surrounding nations that had rejoiced over Judah's downfall and had hoped for personal spoil and gain. God announced judgment on these nations lest their gleeful taunts continue and the exiles question his faithfulness to his promises" (note on verses 1-7).

The siege of Jerusalem had begun but the city would not fall for more than two years. However, much of Judah had no doubt been devastated rather quickly with the invasion of the Babylonian forces. Recall also that the Chaldeans had invaded a few times before—stripping the temple of treasure and deporting many people. The Ammonites and Moabites had actually taken part in one of these invasions during the reign of Jehoiakim ([2 Kings 24:1-2](#)). Though this was part of God's judgment on Judah, these ancient enemies rejoiced in Judah's calamity not for any righteous reason but out of envy and their undying hatred against God's people. This provides some background for the prophecies of [Ezekiel 25](#).

God says to the Ammonites that they will suffer His judgment "because you said, 'Aha!' against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity" (verse 3). This might seem to apply to their attitude after the fall of Jerusalem, and certainly God could have foreseen this even before it happened. Indeed, prophecies often portray things that are yet future in the past tense, demonstrating the certainty of their fulfillment. Nevertheless, the statement could just as well describe what had already happened by the early stages of the siege—the period in which we are chronologically placing this section. God's temple was profaned when, as already mentioned, it was twice stripped of treasure by the Babylonians. In fact, "profaned" seems to go

much better with that than with the ultimate razing of the temple—which was much more than defilement. The desolation of the land of Israel could apply to what happened much earlier to the northern kingdom. It could also apply to the last item mentioned in verse 3: the massive deportations Judah had already suffered, including any carrying away of people that happened early in the current invasion.

Moab and Seir (the latter denoting the territory of Edom) are to be judged for saying, "Look! The house of Judah is like all the nations" (verse 8). Essentially, they are mocking the concept of Judah being some special nation. It's like saying, "So they think they're the 'chosen' people of the 'true' God, do they? Well look at what's happening to them now. They're going the way of all other nations by being conquered and carried away. Guess they're not so special after all!" Such sentiments, in fact, mocked God, as He had revealed through His inspired servants that Judah and Israel were indeed His special, chosen people.

As punishment, Ammon and Moab would be given into the hands of "the men of the East" (verses 4, 10). "The 'people of the East' are not identified specifically anywhere in Scripture. The phrase was used to refer to any peoples living east of another people. However, the immediate context, parallel passages...and ancient history all argue for the designation of Babylonia as Ezekiel's contemporary people of the East. Moreover, Josephus (*Antiquities* of the Jews, [Book 10, chapters 180-81, sec. 9]) recorded that Nebuchadnezzar brought Ammon and Moab into subjection in the fifth year after the Fall of Jerusalem (c. 582/581 B.C.)" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 1-7).

Of the Edomites, God said they "greatly offended" by taking vengeance on His people. While Edom did this at the time of Judah's fall, it had a long history of such action: "The transgressions most characteristic of Edom were its perpetual animosity and repeated, vindictive acts of violence against Israel. The Hebrew words rendered *greatly*

offended ('be guilty') may indicate continuous or repeated rather than intensive behavior" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 12).

In verse 14 God surprisingly declares, "I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel." This certainly did not happen in Ezekiel's day. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* states: "Other passages in the O[ld] T[estament] indicate that...[Edom's] punishment would be executed by Nebuchadnezzar ([Jer 9:26](#); 25:21; 27:1-11).

Certainly [Ezekiel 32:29](#) and [Malachi 1:2-5](#) assume that Edom's desolation was past. However, God also declared that he would execute his vengeance on Edom in return for its vengeance on Judah and would do so *through the instrumentality of Israel*. The historical context of Ezekiel's day precluded this event from happening at that time. However, Ezekiel and other prophets declared that Israel would possess Edom *in the end time* as well (cf. 35:1-36:15; [Isaiah 11:14](#); [Daniel 11:41](#); [Amos 9:12](#); [Obadiah 18](#))" (note on [Ezekiel 25:12-14](#), emphasis added).

Observe that God punishes the Ammonites, Moabites and Philistines so that they will come to know He is the true God (verses 5, 7, 11, 17)—and consider that they will not come to truly understand this until the time of Christ's return. Of course, it should be remembered that the rulers of these peoples in Ezekiel's day would have understood it in a limited sense—as God had warned them through Jeremiah that they would either submit to Nebuchadnezzar or suffer sword, famine, pestilence and the yoke of slavery (see [Jeremiah 27](#)). Nevertheless, none of these peoples really came to understand who the true God was at that time.

In [Ezekiel 25](#), God does not mention the Edomites coming to know Him as the true God. Rather, He simply says, "They shall know My vengeance" (verse 14). In an end-time context, this may be because Edom will apparently be completely destroyed, with no survivors left, when Christ returns (see [Obadiah 18](#)). (The Edomites will apparently

have to wait for the second resurrection mentioned in [Revelation 20:5](#) to be given their opportunity to turn to God in sincere repentance.)

As mentioned previously in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary, the modern descendants of Edom are likely to be found among the Turkish peoples, the Palestinians and other Middle Eastern groups. Indeed, today's Palestinians, who are concentrated in Jordan and Israel, appear to be a blending of all the peoples mentioned in [Ezekiel 25](#)—Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and Philistines—along with others. For centuries virtually all of these peoples have been Muslims, convinced that Allah is the one true God and that the worship of Jews and Christians is corrupt. Only after Jesus Christ returns and establishes true Christianity as the religion of the world will these people—and all other Muslims worldwide—come to know and worship the true God of the Bible.

The chapter ends with God declaring vengeance to befall the Philistines (or Cherethites, as the Philistines or a major part of them are also called). "God's great vengeance against the Philistines was a judgment 'in kind' for their revengeful attitude and actions against Judah. His destruction of Philistia would be complete, even consuming the remnant of them that were on the coast... Though the time of this punishment on Philistia was not stated, the context assumes time in harmony with the three verdicts executed on Ammon, Moab, and Edom by Babylon (cf. [Jeremiah 25:20](#); [Jeremiah 47:1-7](#)). The ultimate fruition of this judgment would be realized when Israel possesses Philistia in the end time (cf. [Isaiah 11:14](#); [Joel 3:1-4](#); [Obadiah 19](#); [Zephaniah 2:4-7](#))" (note on [Ezekiel 25:15-17](#)). Interestingly, today's Palestinians are actually named after the Philistines—and many Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip on the southern Israeli Mediterranean coastline, the region of ancient Philistia. This land will eventually be returned to the Israelites." [END]

Day 628 – THURSDAY: May 1st

Jeremiah 21 & Jeremiah 34:1 - 7

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The prophet Jeremiah had warned incessantly of Babylonian invasion, calling on the nation of Judah and its leaders to repent. God, in fact, decreed through him that the nation should submit to Babylon. Zedekiah had not heeded. Instead, he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, prompting swift retaliation, as we've seen.

In chapter 21, with the siege of Jerusalem underway, we see Zedekiah sending a delegation to Jeremiah to ask that he inquire of God regarding the outcome of the siege (verses 1-2). This delegation consists of Zephaniah the priest (earlier shown to have been sympathetic to Jeremiah in 29:24-28) and a certain Pashhur son of Melchiah (or Malchiah). He is not the same as Pashhur son of Immer, mentioned in [Jeremiah 20](#), who long before had placed Jeremiah in the stocks. As we continue the story in the next few readings, we will find the king making further inquiries—yet, as we will see, he just cannot bring himself to do what he should.

Instead of giving Zedekiah the answer he wants here, the message to the king is that God will fight against Jerusalem Himself (verses 4-6). God had shown immense mercy over many generations, always correcting His people and then blessing them again as they repented. But many in Judah, including the king, showed that they were hardened against God's way. There was no room left for minor corrective measures. God would now have to deal a final, decisive blow to their rebellion.

"The metaphor of the outstretched hand and mighty arm had been used many times ([Deuteronomy 4:34](#) et al.) of God's miraculous intervention on Israel's behalf in Egypt. But now it is used to express

God's opposition to his people. Their doom was inevitable and the defeat total. Jerusalem would be crowded with refugees who, with their cattle, will have fled from the surrounding areas" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on verse 5). God is incredibly patient with human weakness, but the Bible makes very plain that He will not tolerate prolonged rebellion against Him. The fact that there is indeed a "last straw" of human sin that exceeds the limits of God's patience and willingness to extend mercy has ominous implications for today's sin-riddled societies. (Of course, even in His punishment God is showing mercy since the real cruelty would be to let humanity continue to grow more and more corrupt.)

God gives His people an ultimatum—choose life or death—defect or remain in the city (verses 8-10). To remain was too painful to imagine—famine and disease and then, weakened, to wage war to the death.

The royal house is then addressed with an appeal, even at this late stage, that the justice system be reformed—that the oppressed among the populace be delivered (verses 11-12). Otherwise God's judgment would fall (same verse). The clear implication is that a turn to righteous judgment, even now, would avert calamity. But a real turn doesn't come.

God says He is against the "inhabitant of the valley" and "rock of the plain" (verse 13)—references to Jerusalem. "In reply to the claim that 'rock of the plain' (KJV, RSV) is not suitable for Jerusalem [which sits on a hill], it can be shown that the Hebrew may be rendered 'level rock' or 'rock of the level place,' since *misor* denotes 'plateau'...(cf. Psalm 27:11 {'straight path'}; [Psalm 143:10](#) {'level ground'})). It would refer, then, to the level 'rocky plateau' (so NIV) on which Jerusalem stood. The valley could be the Tyropeon, between Mount Zion and Mount Moriah, an appropriate designation in that the royal residence was located on Mount Zion...[One] early archaeologist...understood the 'rocky plateau' to be Mount Zion, where there is a level tract of

considerable extent. Finally, because the city was surrounded by high hills, it could appropriately be called a valley ([Isaiah 22:1](#)). Thus the words of the text are explicable" (*Expositor's*, footnote on verse 13). It should also be considered that, figuratively speaking, the land of Judah was, in terms of its political power at this time, a valley between the two mountains, or great kingdoms, of Babylon and Egypt.

Sadly, even in the face of actual siege, the people of Jerusalem remain foolishly confident that God will not allow His holy city to be breached (verse 13). They are, of course, gravely mistaken (verse 14).

In chapter 34, God sends Jeremiah to deliver the message of Jerusalem's fall to Zedekiah in person (verse 2). The king himself was not to die in the battle, but would be taken captive to later die in Babylon.

The Macmillan Bible Atlas says of this period: "The cities of Judah were destroyed one after the other. In various excavations, such as at Ramat Rahel, Beth-zur, Beth-shemesh, Lachish, Arad, and En-gedi, absolute destruction is apparent. The last of the fortified cities of Judah to fall were Lachish and Azekah (Jeremiah 34:7) The sentence: 'We are watching for the signals of Lachish, according to all the indications which my lord hath given, for we cannot see Azekah,' in one of the Lachish Letters (no. 4), was obviously written after the fall of Azekah [which was soon to come]" (Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, 1977, p. 105).

The "Lachish Letters" were military communications inscribed on potsherds—a common means of recording messages at the time—uncovered in 20th-century excavations of the Jewish stronghold of Lachish. They provide dramatic archeological corroboration of the biblical account of this tumultuous time. Regarding what they document about this period, *Expositor's* adds: "Evidence for the Fall of Azekah (Letter IV), written soon after [Jer 34:7](#), is particularly revealing.

As well the report of Judah's sending of a high army official to Egypt (Letter III) and of the unrest in Jerusalem (Letter VI) are illuminating, as is the mention of 'the prophet' (= Jeremiah? Letter VI)" (footnote on [2 Kings 25:2](#)).

Egypt will respond to Judah's call for help, as revealed in the next reading." [END]

Day 629 – FRIDAY: May 2nd

Ezekiel 29:1 – 16

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "In the 10th year of Ezekiel's captivity, January of 587 B.C., God gives him a prophecy of the downfall of Egypt. The timing here is significant, as this is the period during which Pharaoh Hophra's forces came up to oppose the Babylonians, causing the siege of Jerusalem to be temporarily lifted. In our next reading, we will go through another prophecy of Ezekiel--given a few months later--that alludes to the outcome of this particular conflict and describes the coming fall of Egypt to Babylon. The current reading concerns the latter aspect.

God refers to the Egyptian pharaoh as a great "monster" (NKJV) or "dragon" (KJV) in the midst of his "rivers," saying, "My River is my own" (verse 3). The major "River" of Egypt is of course the Nile--which represented the entire country of Egypt, as the population was concentrated along its length. The "rivers" (plural) likely denote the many branches of the Nile in the northern delta region. The word "monster" is translated from the Hebrew *tannim*. "The word's meanings and its cognates range from 'jackal' to 'serpent,' 'dragon,' 'sea-monster,' 'monster,' 'crocodile.' In all O[ld] T[estament] contexts where the term is used, a fearful creature is imagined" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, footnote on verse 3). The fearful dragonlike beast of the Nile and its branches--a river-dwelling creature with powerful jaws

and thick scales (see verse 4)--is surely the crocodile. "The crocodile god, Sebek [or Sobek], was very important to the Egyptians in the Nile delta area. He was considered Egypt's protector and at times was identified with the solar deity, Re [or Ra] (cf. Diodorus 1.35)" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 1-7). Recall from [Isaiah 30:7](#) and [Isaiah 51:9](#) that God referred to Egypt as a monster called "Rahab," meaning "Fierce" or "Violent"-parallel to the Egyptian name Sobek, meaning "Rager" (conjuring images of a fierce crocodile attack).

The pharaoh was identified with Egypt's divine protector. God says the pharaoh considers himself the creator of the Nile (verse 3), meaning, essentially, of all Egypt. Besides being a blasphemous concept of the pharaohs in general, as they promoted themselves as divine incarnations, "this was [a particularly apt description of] Hophra's (Apries') arrogant self-image. [The Greek historian] Herodotus implied that Pharaoh Apries was so strong in his position that he felt no god could dislodge him. In his reign he sent an expedition against Cyprus, besieged and took Gaza (cf. [Jeremiah 47:1](#)) and the city of Sidon, was victorious against Tyre by sea, and considered himself master over Palestine and Phoenicia. Such pride was consistent with the denunciation in this message ([\[Ezekiel 29\]](#) v. 3), for the Pharaoh felt that the Nile (Egypt) belonged to him and that he had created it for himself. This arrogance had also shown itself in an attempt to interrupt Babylonia's siege of Jerusalem--an attempt thwarted by God" (note on verses 1-7).

God says He will draw the pharaonic crocodile out with hooks along with all the "fish" clinging to his scales, meaning the Egyptians in general who clung to or followed the pharaoh (verse 4). The pharaoh and his people would be pulled from their position of national strength and left "in the desert" as carrion for the birds and beasts (verse 5, NIV). The Egyptian ruler, at least in a figurative sense, "would not even be afforded the royal burial so important to the Pharaohs. The tombs in

the Valley of the Kings at Thebes demonstrate how important proper royal burial was to the Pharaohs' successful journey through the Egyptian afterlife. Lack of such burial would have been [seen as] a horrible fate" (note on verses 1-7).

The imagery then changes from that of a mighty, thrashing river beast to that of a weak river plant. God calls Egypt a "staff of reed to the house of Israel" (verse 6)-just as the Assyrians had described it more than a century earlier (see [Isaiah 36:6](#)). This is an allusion to Egypt's weakness and unreliability as an ally for the Israelites--as well as the worthlessness and even danger of looking to this nation for protection. When the Israelites lean on Egypt for support, it shatters, leaving them seriously wounded ([Ezekiel 29:7](#)).

God says He will bring the sword of warfare on Egypt to lay it waste, showing that He, not the pharaoh, is the one who determines whether the nation exists or not (compare verses 8-9). The devastation would extend across the length of the land, from Migdol in the north (in the eastern delta region) to Syene in the south (modern Aswan) and even down to the border of Nubia in what is today Sudan (verse 10). The prophet Jeremiah later foretells the fall of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar's forces ([Jeremiah 43:8-13](#)). And Ezekiel later gives more details of this Babylonian invasion in [Ezekiel 29:17-30:19](#). The prophet placed this other prophecy right after the one we are currently reading because it follows thematically--even though it was given more than 16 years later (compare 29:1, 17).

According to our current reading, the land would remain desolate for 40 years, during which time the Egyptians would be scattered--after which they would be returned to their homeland of Pathros, southern Egypt (verses 11-14). There is no secular confirmation of this period of scattering. Indeed, we would not expect an admission of such a massive defeat in the Egyptian records. However, "a Babylonian chronicle suggests that Egypt was conquered [by the Babylonians under

Nebuchadnezzar] around 568 B.C. Forty years after this date, the Persians [having overthrown the Babylonians] instituted a policy of resettlement for many of the peoples who had been dispersed by Babylon" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 11). Pharaoh Hophra was executed at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion, not long after a coup by Hophra's own general Amasis or Ahmose, who replaced him as pharaoh. Ahmose (II) remained on the throne as a Babylonian vassal and continued into the Persian period, dying a year before the Persian invasion of Egypt in 525 B.C.

Following its conquest by the Babylonians, Egypt would never again be a superpower empire. This was especially true of the original ethnic Egyptians. More than 200 years later, after Alexander the Great, the land of Egypt did emerge again as an independent power under the Ptolemaic dynasty for three centuries--but, besides the fact that it was nowhere near the great power that Egypt had once been, this was actually a Greek kingdom, not a truly Egyptian one. Afterward, Egypt became a Roman possession and then, centuries later, a province of the Islamic empire. When Egypt became an independent nation in modern times, it was as an Arab, not a true Egyptian, state. The original Egyptians today may be found among the Copts of Egypt and possibly the Gypsies (according to some of their historical traditions)--both of whom are indeed very lowly peoples in geopolitical terms.

In verses 6 and 16, God says that His purpose in punishment is to show the Egyptians that *He* is God. While some may have come to this conclusion at the time of the Babylonian conquest, or at least to the rejection of their own false gods, including the concept of the pharaoh as divine, the Egyptians as a whole did not forsake their false religion or come to know the true God. It may be, then, that this prophecy of Egypt is dual, with elements of it applying to the end time--just as in the prophecies of judgment on Judah's immediate neighbors in [Ezekiel 25](#), where the purpose of punishment is also repeatedly given as teaching

the recipients of God's judgment that He is really God, a fact they will not truly learn until the last days. Like the great majority of other peoples and nations of the region, the inhabitants of Egypt have for centuries been overwhelmingly Muslim, worshipers of Allah. In time they will learn who the true God is. Concerning Egypt of the end time, it is interesting to note that the future king of the North (a revival of Babylon) will invade and subjugate the nation ([Daniel 11:40-42](#)). Afterward, Egypt will be delivered under the reign of Jesus Christ ([Isaiah 19:20-25](#))-when the nation will finally come to truly know God and learn of His ways (verse 21)." [END]

Day 630 – SATURDAY: May 3rd

Ezekiel 30:20 – 26 & Ezekiel 31

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "The prophecy against the Egyptian pharaoh in [Ezekiel 30:20-26](#) comes in the early spring of 587 B.C., just a few months after the prophecy of Egypt in our previous reading (30: 20; compare 29:1). God says He has "broken the arm of Pharaoh" ([Ezekiel 30:21](#)) and that He "will break his arms, both the strong one and the one that was broken" to "make the sword fall out of his hand" (verse 22). The "arm" is the symbol of strength. It holds a "sword," meaning that it wields military power. The breaking of the first arm, which had already taken place at this point, refers to Pharaoh Hophra's attempt to relieve the siege of Jerusalem, which we read about in [Jeremiah 37:5](#). The attempt had obviously failed, with Egypt left sorely defeated.

The image of a broken arm was quite suitable. "The flexed arm was a common Egyptian symbol for the Pharaoh's strength. Often statues or images of the Pharaoh have this arm flexed, wielding a sword in battle. A king with great biceps was especially a popular concept under the Saïtes Dynasty of Ezekiel's day. In addition Hophra took a second formal title that meant 'possessed of a muscular arm' or 'strong-armed'" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Ezekiel 30:20-26](#)).

The initial defeat of the Egyptian forces by the Babylonians was a mere prelude to the complete destruction Egypt would soon suffer. The nation would be devastated, with its people scattered (verses 23-26), as previously proclaimed in [Jeremiah 29:12-13](#). Also repeated is the intended goal of God's discipline—that the Egyptians would know that He is the true God (30:26). As in other prophecies, this seems to signify that ultimate fulfillment will not come until the end time.

Egypt to Be Felled Like the Great Tree Assyria

Two months later, God gives Ezekiel another prophecy of Egypt's fall ([Ezekiel 31:1](#); compare [Ezekiel 30:20](#)). A comparison is made between Egypt and Assyria. Egypt was a powerful and arrogant empire like Assyria. But the Assyrian Empire was even more powerful than Egypt. In fact, Egypt itself had been conquered by Assyria and incorporated into the Assyrian Empire.

In the imagery of chapter 31, Assyria is pictured as a Lebanon cedar—as the cedars of Lebanon were the tallest trees in the Middle East. Great rivers nourished the empire—the Tigris and Euphrates providing Mesopotamia with its fertility of soil and with important commercial traffic routes. Smaller nations, represented as birds and beasts, dwelt in and beneath its boughs. No other "trees," imperial nations, were like it. Still, this great tree was felled—brought down to "hell" or, in Hebrew, *sheol*, meaning "the grave" (verses 15-17; compare "death" and "the Pit" in verse 14).

Despite the greatness and power of Assyria, God brought it down by means of the forces of Babylon. So why did Egypt think that *it* could now prevail against Babylon? If the Assyrian Empire had fallen to the Babylonians, so would the much weaker Egypt—especially since the Almighty God was behind it.” [END]