

Enrich Your Reading in Ezekiel.

A reading companion.

Some people tire easily when reading Ezekiel. It is a longish book. It is very Jewish. Some of it is blood, guts and thunder. But wait a mo! It also very down to earth; real. It tells us clearly about ourselves too. It *is* Jewish, but it is also a book for the non Jewish. It is about Israel in a Gentile world. It predicts clearly the end days, including aspects of the days in which we are now living. It is quoted often in the New Testament and by John in the Revelation. It helps us to better know God, and how to live in a way that better pleases Him.

If you are a Christian and want to know about God's plan and place for His chosen and His redeemed people, then this is a book for you. You ought to read and study it. When you do, look for and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you from its pages. When He does, be careful to obey.

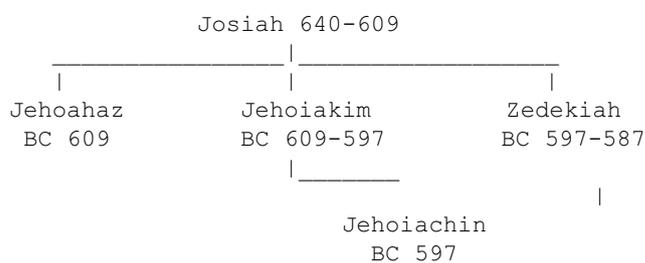
It will help to keep an atlas of ancient Bible lands and the surrounding nations at hand. Locate and keep in mind Judah and her seven gentile neighbours, Egypt, Nineveh and Babylon. Note the fertile crescent and the desert that it circumvents. Most travellers journeyed the crescent, not traversed the inhospitable desert.

These sheets are your free daily reading study companion and are introductory or devotional. They are meant to get you going, not a comprehensive commentary. The recommended and mostly used commentary is *Ezekiel - An introduction and Commentary* by Bishop John B Taylor (Taylor). These notes generally follow the divisions of Ezekiel by Taylor. He was a lecturer in Hebrew and Old Testament. His book is written for Bible readers like us, who are not trained in theology or classics. The book is edited by Donald Wiseman, an archaeologist specialist in Middle Eastern languages and civilizations. It is available at Koorong for \$14.99. I urge you to buy it. It is worth that.

Make the most of your investment. First, set aside a little of your time daily or you will not really benefit very much. Read the Bible selection carefully, then the notes for the day, then Taylor's book if you have it, as it will give much more historical, cultural and linguistic background to what the Bible is saying. These notes do not cover everything, sometimes they only bring our a devotional thought for the day. Look to the Holy Spirit to speak to you personally from your own Bible. He will in His own time.

Basic Historical Background. King Josiah of Judah was a spiritual man in that he honoured the Lord and seriously attempted to reform the nation. All subsequent kings of Judah were his sons plus one grandson.

The Last Kings of Judah



No one knows why the eldest, Johanan, (Not shown above) did not become king. Perhaps he did not survive into manhood. When Josiah died, his third son Jehoahaz, reigned only three months. They were months of violence and idolatry. It ended when Pharaoh-Necho imprisoned him, then exiled him to Egypt where he died.

His brother Jehoiakim, Josiah's second son, was appointed king by Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and Jehoiakim of Judah paid tribute to him. He also showed himself unworthy like Jehoahaz. After some seven years in 607BC Nineveh, capital of Assyria fell. Nebuchadnezzar of the new super power, Babylon, also wrested the sovereignty of the remainder of the Levant, including Jerusalem, from Pharaoh of Egypt. Jehoiakim did not resist him and became a vassal king for three years. Then Jehoiakim in BC603 rebelled. Just then Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, died and he returned to Babylon taking with him many of the nobles of Judah, Daniel among them, to Babylon. This was the first Exile of Judah to Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar sent some vassal armies to chasten Jehoiakim. See 2 Kings 24:1&2. The vassal armies were not very effective and the kingdom of Tyre joined the rebellion. At this point in 598BC Nebuchadnezzar returned and took direct control. During the campaign Jehoiakim somehow was captured and slain.

Jehoiachin was selected to be king by the people, but was on the throne only for three months. he was the son of Jehoiakim. Nebuchadnezzar at that time besieged Jerusalem and Jehoiachin was transported to Babylon where he lived for many years. This was also the second general deportation which included Ezekiel. The prophecies of Ezekiel about the final siege and fall of Jerusalem all are dated after this second transportation.

Zedekiah was the fourth son of Josiah. He became the last king of Judah. The kingdom he inherited was depleted of manpower and counsel in that almost all men of ability had been deported, and almost only the worst kind remained. At first he seemed to follow the counsel of the prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and tried to turn the tide of evil in government. In the fourth year of his reign he even travelled to Babylon to pledge loyalty and ask for peace.

After about ten years however, the new Pharaoh of Egypt wanted to rebel against Babylon and sought the assistance of Judah and some of the other small nations. Against all advice a pact was made along with the other petty kings in the area. In 589BC Nebuchadnezzar again came against Jerusalem. Egypt deserted the pact and a terrible siege ensued for 18 months. Things became desperate, then impossible. Zedekiah with his family and other leaders tried to escape, but were captured.

Zedekiah's sons were slain before him and his eyes were then gouged out. He was taken in chains to Babylon along with many others in the third deportation, where he died.

The temple was burnt, the walls dismantled. The monarchy of Israel that once had been the wonder of the world had ended after only 500 years. From that time to the modern day Jerusalem has not been wholly free of Gentile control. Today it is a divided city. However the promises of God are sure. We are seeing the bones come together, piece by piece.

Ancient conquerors practised deportation as a control mechanism in the countries they conquered. Deprived of leadership and skilled workers, conquered people were in no position to rebel. Additionally conquerors appointed a puppet king-governor whom they considered would remain under their control. We see both these mechanisms in play as we read Ezekiel and other Bible literature of the people. Deported people were not always considered hostages, but were often free to live in assigned areas and work at assigned tasks certainly, but free to live as families and keep their national religion and culture. Many settled down, grew quite prosperous and raised their families. When given the liberty to return to Palestine under Cyrus preferred to remain where they were. These are the dispersion peoples we read about in 1 Peter 1:1.

Ezekiel's Expression. Ezekiel is very artistic in his use of language and employs many techniques to describe what he is seeing or hearing in the messages that he is receiving from the Lord. Because our understanding is so different from him and his day, it is sometimes difficult for us to know exactly what Ezekiel had in mind. There are three popular techniques which you ought to know.

Three language figures found in the Bible overall and also in Ezekiel are the simile, the metaphor and the allegory. It is picture painting using words for paint. Ezekiel pictures some thing we all know to portray something else we may not know.

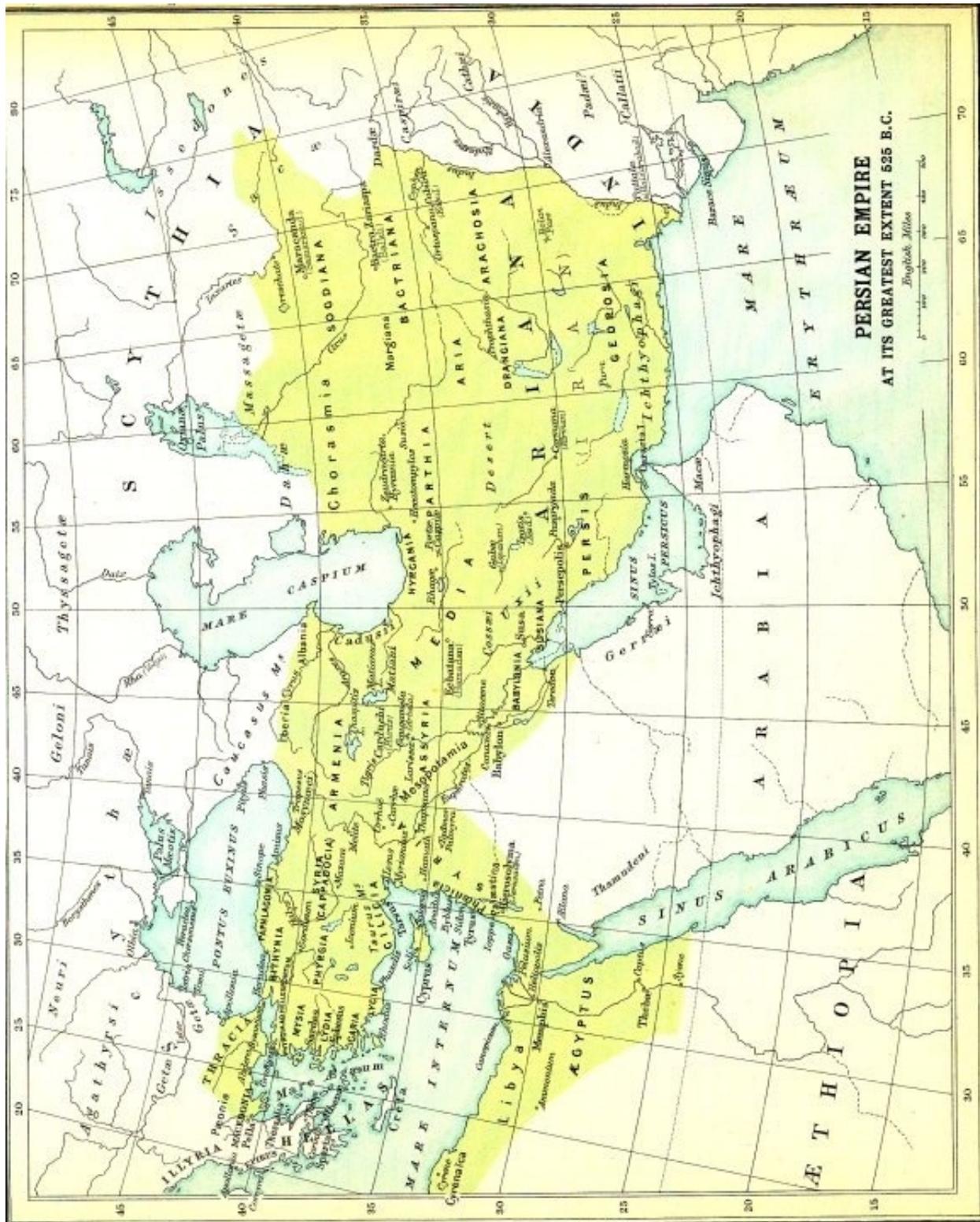
1. A simile uses such word as 'like.' "Clouds floating on the air like ships on the sea." It is difficult to miss the meaning of a simile as the interpretation is plainly stated, even though clouds do not float on the surface of the air, but are suspended in it.

2. A metaphor shows what is unknown by alluding to similarities something that is known, "All the world's a stage." The world is not a stage. Shakespeare is alluding to the antics of men. Usually we are able to interpret the meaning of the metaphor because it is so short and simple.

- 3 An allegory is a short or long story, and like a metaphor contains one or more hidden meanings. 'Pilgrim's Progress' and 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' are extended or longer allegories. An allegory is more open to differences in interpretation because the meaning is often deliberately obscured. The writer wants to make us think through the issues involved, but we might miss them.

Jesus often used parables (A parable is a long metaphor) because he wanted to instruct his disciples in the mysteries of His kingdom while at the same time catering to the crowds on a lower level. See what Jesus said about this in Mark 13:3-17. He then gave the hidden meaning immediately following these words. It is a good example.

Ezekiel. Notes on daily readings. February.



1. Ezekiel 1:1 'In the thirtieth year' The NIV reads "In my thirtieth year . . ." This is their interpretation of the text. It is probably correct. Some commentators may not agree. If it is, it means that Ezekiel was born at a time of religious revival under godly King Josiah. This early training accounts in part for his zeal for his God. The reading of 2 Kings 22 tells us of this time. Then things went bad for Judah. He lived through

the time covered in our introduction. They sinned terribly and were a nuisance also to the Babylonians, who were the super power in the region at that time, who deported the king and certain key people to Babylon.

2. 1:2&3. These verses are generally treated as an added note to link the date in v1 into Ezekiel's systematic and consecutive local dates given in his book. Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon, 2 Kings 24. In the third or fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, the father of Jehoiachin, a group of Jewish captives, the brightest and best, were deported to Babylon, and among them was Daniel. A second occurred under Jehoiachin's reign, when Ezekiel was taken away. The third and final one was at the complete destruction of Jerusalem under Zedekiah's reign.

3. 1:4-28. Ezekiel saw many visions, some of which he only saw. This first vision is of the Lord upon His throne. It is a 'theophany,' which is a manifestation of the Lord Jesus before His advent. This is seen in a vision v1. The first is His throne borne on the four beings as men but with the faces of natures top of the animal tree beings in the major groups. Man, lion, ox and eagle. They form a square with their wings. Inside which were coals of fire flashing lightening.

Above them v22&23 was an expanse NASB, a vault NIV which was a platform of hammered metal (Taylor) as a dias for the Lord v26-28. Compare this description with that in Isaiah 6 and Revelation 1. Notice the recognised form as that of a man. All these refer to Jesus as Son of Man speaking of His incarnation.

The vision is rich in symbolism and it pays to study it carefully. The word 'likeness' appears nine times in this chapter alone. The word 'appearance' fifteen times (KJV count). Ezekiel struggles to find words to describe what he saw. Do not be surprised if you struggle to visualise his imagery. The creatures are later identified as seraphim.

4. Ezekiel 2:1-7, 'Son of man' as it is here is a Hebraism meaning 'partaking of the nature of Adam' (Taylor). In Jesus's case not the nature of fallen Adam, but as the Last Adam, the life giving spirit. 1 Corinthians 15:45.

Ezekiel's call. God sent him to a sometimes thankless and difficult task, 'whether they would hear or forbear.' The phrase is used in Ezekiel 2:5, 7 and 3:11. You as a Christian are likewise called to be faithful with a somewhat unpopular message in an often unresponsive situation. Be encouraged. Obedience is more noble than popularity.

5. Ezekiel 2:8-3:3. The chapter division is unfortunate because this and the previous chapter are one. This is all part of Ezekiel's call and commission. The scroll was written on the inside and out, not normal, indicating a very full message. It was one of mourning, lament and woe. The imagery is taken up in Revelation as an extended and multiple metaphor. The scroll there with the seven seals is written on both sides Revelation 5. The little scroll was sweet to taste but bitter to digest Revelation 10. The end time scroll of prophecy which cannot be altered Revelation 22. The sweetness of the scroll indicate the acceptance of God's word to God's people Psalm 119:104.

6. Ezekiel 3:4-15. Today, to the servant of God, His message is sweet. To the heathen tribes in our day the Gospel has proven to often be greatly desired, but to those accustomed to a Christian presence, our very own people, it is very often unacceptable. One who is full loathes honey from the comb, but to the hungry even what is bitter tastes sweet. Proverbs 27:7NIV. This makes evangelistic ministry very hard. The brothers of Jesus in the days of his ministry were hard hearted. It was noted by Jesus. See Matthew 8:1-10, 11:21-30, 12:41, 15:21-28. This onerous task made Ezekiel bitter. Hardly a right attitude to approach spiritual ministry, but the prophets of old sometimes struggled with it all too.

7. Ezekiel 3: 15-21. These early prophecies are delivered to the Babylonian exiles, even though the fall of Jerusalem is the point in focus. The Babylonian contingent resented Ezekiel's sullen presence in their midst. The Lord had another objectionable message for Ezekiel. The Lord made it clear that there was judgement which would fall on those who sinned, and His servant was to warn of it. He was instructed about the wicked in their rebellion and the righteous who transgressed Mosaic law and the covenant. This passage applies first to the carnage at the fall of Jerusalem. Continued rejection of the Lord and His way for them in time brought on this calamity. How the Lord was to protect the guiltless in a general siege will become clear.

We cannot directly apply every line to our situation. Principles of responsibility and accountability also apply in this age of grace, but the situation today is different. We need to remember that we are on

this side of the cross, the Holy Spirit is now given to guide and strengthen; the law of God written in our hearts and we are His eternally.

8. Ezekiel 4:1-3. Ezekiel's commissioning is now complete. This vision on the plain continues the vision of the Lord beside the river v23. The bands v25 indicate that his companions physical or psychological restriction on him as an act of rebellion against God's message. The Lord also placed a restriction on voluntary preaching until the fall of Jerusalem (See 24:25-27). He was to wait until a specific message was given to him. Worldly people often try to bind up God's servants. 'Don't you come preaching to me.' Under these conditions, God may close the mouth of His servants for a time, but when the time is right, He gives them the right word. Isaiah 50:4. Learn to be led.

9. Ezekiel 4:1-7. This appears to be a mental moral lesson as well as a physical exercise. It is impossible to complete literally without breaks, being bound for 390 days to lie on his side, including calls of nature, the cooking of meals! We assume he did so daily to a schedule. It was an onerous task. God sometimes calls his servants to do the impossible. See Matthew 14:16. (So significant was the challenge to the disciples, the recording of the lesson is found in all four Gospels.) So in our lives today, God often challenges us to faith with things seemingly impossible. He knows how it will all end. Forbidden to speak until the last moment, Ezekiel is to act out his message. Think about it. There is a lesson here. We can apply the Gospel challenge by our actions in difficult situations when words are unacceptable. I knew a woman who regularly, rain or shine, tucked her Bible under her arm and walked to Church in full view of family, friends and neighbours. That was her answer to her situation.

The numbers of days can not be calculated to fit any of the known events of the period. The numbers however do correspond with the concept of a day for a year found in Numbers 14:34. This accords with Ezekiel 4:5&6 if a day stands for an historical year. It also accords to the prophecy given in Deuteronomy 28:68, in which there is a promise of punishments for disobedience and a declaration that the people would suffer a captivity like their Egyptian servitude, but in another land. The days that Ezekiel lay on his sides add to the number of years that the Hebrews suffered in their Egyptian servitude; $390 + 40 = 430$. See Exodus 12:40.

10. Ezekiel 4:8-17. The ropes indicate restriction. Ezekiel's diet is a starvation diet, the equivalent of six of our slices of grain bread plus a little over a litre of water for one day. It was a demonstration of starvation under siege. Ezekiel would have wasted to skin and bone. People were to even resort to cannibalism 5:10, 2 Kings 6:8, Jeremiah 19:9 & Lamentations 2:20 & 4:10.

God sometimes calls us to go against our scruples as he did for Peter when faced with the sheet let down from heaven Acts 10:14. The Lord does not mind our objecting to Him, so long as it is in obedience.

11. Ezekiel 5. A further prophetic symbolism, together with verbal warnings. The scales were not for dramatic emphasis but to demonstrate the accuracy and the measure of the prediction. These conditions were fulfilled. For sword read rather knife as in KJV.

Verse 5. 'This is Jerusalem, I have set her at the centre of the nations.' A Jewish concept saw Jerusalem as the navel of the earth. Look at a map of the ancient world, and you will see that Israel is indeed the crossroad. God's plan for the people He called them to bring a priestly blessing through a knowledge of God to the nations. However His people did not ever fulfil this design. They will yet do this.

At the ascension Jesus charged His embryonic church with the same instruction. Acts 1:8. The apostles were reluctant to move until persecution came and they were dispersed throughout the known world. Acts 8:1. It is still God's purpose in this current age. God is drawing from the nations of the world a people for His name. Despite heavy ongoing persecution it is happening in our lifetime.

12. Ezekiel 6:1-7. Now begins a series of prophecies of judgement. First against the mountains of Israel, for there the Israelites practised their immorality v13. Prophecy to the hill tops is a technique these ancient preachers used. See also 36:1 and Micah 4:2. Before worship was centralised in the temple, sometimes sacrifice to the Lord was carried out on mountain tops. But after Solomon's reign idolatrous worship was often carried out there.

Despite the severity of the impending siege, and the judgement of God upon His people, here is a lightening moment. A remnant will survive the carnage. God always preserves a remnant of His people who are faithful and true, no matter how dark the outlook. See 1 Kings 19:11-18. Elijah thought that he alone was left. But no, 7,000 others! God's remnant. God's silent majority. So it is today.

13. Ezekiel 7:1-3. "The end has come." According to Adam Clarke the ancient Hebrew (without the

modern pointing) reads, "The end cometh, come is the end." It was a few years before the final siege. However the end was irrevocable. There was no turning back. The phrase is taken from Amos 8:2 The summer fruit ended the harvest cycle in Palestine. That fruit is the last. From here on even that fruit would rot. After maturity there is only decay. It is akin to the doctor saying, "I am sorry. You have this condition. There is no more can be done." The cycle of God's warnings had come to an end.

There is an end even to God's patience. God is patient giving a people time for repentance. See Genesis 15:16 and in our own age 2 Peter 3:9. Sin is a galloping consumption bringing its victim to an untimely end, a cancer that takes such a hold that there is no further hope of cure. When God has waited until the last, as in the days of Noah before the flood, or in the judgement of Sodom. The fruit in the basket is at its full ripeness, the next stage is rotteness and there is nothing more to be done but to throw it out.

The four corners of the land represent its completeness, both the condition and the judgement.

14. Ezekiel 7:5-9. Taylor says, "It is impossible to catch the staccato style of the Hebrew (language) in any translation, but an indication of it is to be found in the repetition of words, especially the word *come* which occurs six times in vv5-7." My comment is to look at the bombardment of short phrases linked to almost echo the sound of battering rams on the city gates. Close your eyes. Imagine the panic. While Jeremiah was in Jerusalem before, during and after the siege with the remnant, Ezekiel in Babylon prophesied through this time to Judah's leaders. The three phases of Ezekiel's haircut are at hand v15.

15. Ezekiel 7:10-22. Property has become worthless. They will throw their silver into the streets, their gold they will treat as an unclean thing. If they were caught with these treasures by invading soldiers, their lives possibly would be worthless. Once Jerusalem's leaders stole, cheated and murdered to gain possessions. Now these things are a liability. How easily values change. Riches will be a witness against us in the day of judgement if not used appropriately. James 5:3. Rather, resources given to enable us to bring others to Christ Luke 16:8-10, or to be shared in love 1 John 3:17.

16. Ezekiel 8 p95- begins a new series of prophecies which extend through to chapter 19. The date given indicates that they began fourteen months after the first. The next date is found in chapter 20 v1 which allows 11 months, five days to have elapsed. Chapters 8 - 12 are directed toward Jerusalem exclusively which are all part of the one vision, then they become general once more.

The vision of the heavenly messenger differs to the previous one, and experienced in the presence of the elders, seemingly for verification. The reference Old Testament 'The Spirit' with capital initials in most of our English Bibles indicate the Holy Spirit. However as Taylor points out it is not so in the Hebrew, and that the spirit indicated is possibly a temper of the mind indicative of the vision. Young correctly translates 'a spirit.'

Ezekiel is mentally transported the temple in Jerusalem v3. There he makes a hole in the wall by which he sees the idolatry of his brother priests and the Levites, things that were done in secret.

We are reminded that there is nothing which God does not see "For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor *anything* secret that shall not be known and come to light Luke 8:17. Let us order our lives accordingly, for we also may be called to account.

Holding a cutting to their nose seems to be an ancient Akkadian custom to show humility when making homage to a god. It is not a Hebrew tradition, but an act imported along with their foreign idols. It annoyed the Lord intensely.

17. Ezekiel 9. The executioners started their judgement with the elders of Israel. Leaders and teachers are privileged with a knowledge of God, and are looked to by others to give a lead. Therefore they were the most culpable for their iniquity. They taught others to sin. Peter tells us that judgement must begin at the house of God. It must begin at us. See 1 Peter 4:17.

Some who had put on them the mark by the Heavenly recorder which saved them v6. This mark is the 'taw,' the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It was a identifier or signature or seal that sanctifies under the authority of him to whom the seal belongs. See Ezekiel 3:21. It reminds us of 2 Timothy 2:19 - 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' See also Revelation 9:4.

18. Ezekiel 9:11-10:22. Verse 1 is similar to 1:26 and v15 confirms 'They are the living beings I saw beside the river Chebar.' v2 indicates continuation from the previous chapter and the man employed in mercy and protection is now the agent of judgement. The coals of wrath come from the beings surrounding the throne. Judgement is righteous and in the hands of Mercy. Jerusalem was burned when it was sacked. In this chapter the throne is described, but not the Lord. The Lord's glory was found in the

temple. Despite the misuse, it is still 'My house Luke 19:46.'

19. Chapter 11:1-13 concludes these visions, but the detail is different. The men number 25, as in 8:16, but are now civic leaders, not priests. In v3 the English bibles give various renderings because the Hebrew text assumes the readers had a knowledge of current events. The first thirteen verses are of judgement against them for their corruption in office and now a policy of resisting the attack of Babylon, even as a cooking pot protects the food from the flames they saw themselves secure. Silly, silly. The Lord's prophecy strips this illusion from them. The death of Pelatiah was taken as prophetic.

20. Ezekiel 11:14-25 speaks of the promise of grace of both and all Israel and Judah v15. It meant protection for their period of exile v16, to return them to their land in a spirit of revival and renewal v17-19. The theme of these chapters is summarised in v20&21 Wherever there is cloud there is the promise for the child of God that the cloud will pass. In v 22 the glory of the Lord departs and Ezekiel in his vision is returned to his own place. The promise of this verse exceeds in brief reference, anything that happened under the return of Israel to the land under Ezra and Nehemiah.

A new heart. Even in Paul's day a veil lay over the heart of the religious Jew. This veil is taken away in Christ as the inner eye is enlightened. With Jewish people returning to Palestine today we do not see the spiritual quickening promised here, which will happen when Jesus comes. See Zechariah 12,13&14. And Hebrews 10:16. The Lord is gathering and will yet gather His people from all the nations of the world. It is happening now and is not yet complete.

At this point the Jerusalem visions ended, the presence was withdrawn and Ezekiel returned to his home on the plain.

21. Ezekiel 12:1-28 contains two demonstrations and responses answering the objections the people put up against the prophecies of doom they had heard. However the people closed their eyes and ears to the urgency of the Lord's entreaties.

Ezekiel packed a refugee's bundle, dug through the wall of his house and made as if to escape. In the end of the siege king Zedekiah breached Jerusalem's wall and tried to escape 2 Kings 25:4, Jeremiah 39:4. They were caught. It is an allegorical drama answering the Judahites disbelief v2.

Then Ezekiel was told to eat his meals trembling, a sign of the fear of Jerusalem against the fulfilment of God's word. When it happens then they will believe that God exists. v20. To disbelieve God's word is to deny that God is God.

In the end days says Peter, even if one day is as a thousand years to God, He is not negligent about His prophetic word. What he has predicted will happen. Nebuchadnezzar did sack Jerusalem, so also some hundreds of years afterwards according to the prophecy of Jesus, Titus again sacked Jerusalem. In relation to these two events compare v25 and Matthew 24:34. Do not be lulled by the day of grace. Rather, says Peter, be found by Him in that day in peace, spotless and blameless.

22. Ezekiel 13. False prophets. Men and women who were not called but daring to speak as if from the Lord aiming to turn a dangerous situation to personal profit. We see similar things when our politicians use their privilege for personal gain. Verse 4 - They are like the foxes in the ruins (Not deserts as in AV). The fox is cunning (Luke 13:32). It spoils what it cannot eat (Songs 2:15); living in niches and holes. (Nehemiah 4:3; Lamentations 5:18). So the false prophets were crafty, and laid waste the vineyard of the Lord of hosts (Isaiah 5:7), made their profit out of the ruin of Israel. They made a bad situation worse, like a badly built wall that fell.

Women, fortune telling new agers, with their magic charms (pillows AV is an unfortunate rendering) led the gullible astray to the hurt of many; and the people who for a handful of corn listened to them.

The true prophet must deliver as clearly as possible the message that the Lord has expressly given, not his own morals, thoughts or ideas.

23. Ezekiel 14:1-11. Idols in our hearts. There will be no idols in your house if there are no idols in your heart. The first commandment, 'You shall have no other gods before me,' does not refer to graven images alone, although Judah had them in abundance. If we have taken Jesus as our Lord, He must be central in our affections. Our obedience is to Him. Anything that we cherish more than Him becomes an idol in our hearts, be it material possessions, personal ambitions, or even our desires. Put Jesus upon the throne of your heart. 'Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these *other* things shall be added to you in their proper order and place.' Beware of idols.

24. Ezekiel 14:12-23. National righteousness brings national salvation. This is true of any nation. When a people do what is right as in a time of revival, right principles cause them to advance. But when the nation

gives its self to sin opportunity is wasted and freedom is lost. When that nation gives its self wholly to evil. God steps in, as in the days of Noah, or in the instance of Sodom and Gomorrah. In these extreme situations those who seek after the Lord will find favour with Him, but those who reject Him put themselves and others in jeopardy. It is always the case. Ezekiel's prophecy was to the nation at a time when every grace of God was exhausted. For this principle in balance see: Psalm 30:5, 103:9 Isaiah 57:16 & Micah 7:18-20. Lot was saved but Sodom was lost, and his wife had Sodom in her heart.

25. Ezekiel 15. Today's discussion is a short simile with the single point; that they had totally failed to meet the Lord's purpose for them. There were those who thought God's vine was indestructible. When the harvest is over, the vine has no residual value The allegory of the vine is found throughout Scripture. See for example, Psalm 80:8-16 for Israel and John 15:1-8 for the believer.

26. Ezekiel 16:1-34. Part 1 of 3. Israel's Sin. This chapter is an extended allegory in three acts. It is a tragedy as it raises painful emotions in us. Some readers find the language crude. Ezekiel intended it to be earthy. Israel is a girl, abandoned at birth, not cared for in the traditional way. But the Lord provided for her v6, to maturity v7.

To spread the skirt of his garment is to claim her in espousal. He provided the largess of his household v8-14. But she then gave herself to gross immorality. Any parent experiences these fears as our children develop, and more so if they become wayward. Here we see good reason for God's children to keep a wholesome relationship with Him. Take time today to pray the matter through. Let us be sure to not disappoint Him.

27. Ezekiel 16: 35-58. Part 2. Israel's Punishment. This section anticipates the series of prophecies to come concerning Israel's neighbours. Her lovers become her judgement. Not mentioned by name here are: Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and the Philistines, see chapter 25.

The mention of Sodom is a reference to a small city of the past, still vivid in the memory of Judah and also Samaria the larger capitol of the northern nation of Israel, also by then destroyed. Both had already come under the judgement of God and were no more. The Hebrew words younger and older derive from words more literally 'smaller' and 'larger.'

The mother an Hittite and thy father an Amorite are symbolic of the nations of ancient times dispossessed from the land by the Lord due to their iniquity. Israel and Judah occupied their territory. Genesis 15:16.

Like mother like daughter, a version of like father, like son, is a phrase with which we all are familiar. This genetic tendency urges us to ensure that we pass on to our children the highest possible example and tradition in all areas of life, but particularly in the things of the Lord.

28. Ezekiel 16:60-63 Part 3 Israel's Restoration. The portion begins with a word encouragement and relief. "However." When doctor gives us an unfavourable diagnosis, how we hang on that word, 'However,' which means there is perhaps hope. And there is hope for Israel and Judah. The Lord has not abandoned His people. Even after all these long centuries, we in our day see the beginning of this restoration in the affairs of this nation and its neighbours. Here is forgiveness and reconciliation intimated.