

THE VISIONS AND ORACLES OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL

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by

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The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 1)

Some Preliminary Observations

By certain scholars the Book of Ezekiel is considered the crown jewel of prophecy of the Old Testament; by others it is not given such a high rating, though it is recognized as a marvelous revelation from God. It is unique among the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The prophet is very vivid and graphic in his expressions. He employs every method known by the literary artist to convey his thoughts to his fellow-men. He is the first to adopt that peculiar type of prophecy known as apocalyptic, the employment of visions and symbolic acts such as we see in the Books of Daniel and Revelation. The word *Ezekiel* means "God strengthens" or "God will strengthen." The Lord certainly did strengthen Ezekiel for the task, the difficult task, which he had to perform. He was indeed a present help to the prophet in time of need.

The Political Situation In Israel

Life is a chain of causes and effects, of antecedents and consequences. The environment in which one generation lives is created by its predecessors. There are however times when an individual or a generation does change or modify its environment—for better or for worse. All too frequently people settle down complacently into the environment into which they were born and drift with the tide.

Upon the death of Solomon the ten northern tribes revolted against the house of David, called for Jeroboam to return from Egypt, and made him king. In order that his subjects might not feel a loyalty to Jerusalem and the Davidic house, Jeroboam built temples in Dan and in Bethel and instituted the Egyptian bull worship. Thus a new religion was introduced into Israel, the northern kingdom. Later Ahab, king of Israel, married Jezebel, a Sidonian princess, who brought Baal worship from her native land into Israel. Thus the worship of Jehovah was practically rooted out from the northern kingdom and was supplanted by these pagan religions. Like a flood beating against the banks of a stream, idolatry in the northern kingdom kept beating against the frontiers of Judah in an effort to overflow into the southern kingdom.

In the days of Isaiah, who lived in the latter half of the eighth century B.C., according to the Ussher chronology, the floodtide of idolatry was threatening the nation all the time. This great statesman-prophet fought with all his might against such paganism. The greatest classics hurled against idolatry are to be found in his writings. By prophetic insight he looked out into the years ahead and saw the time when idolatry would come like a flood and would inundate Judah. Finally it did.

The time in which Ezekiel lived was a turbulent period. King Manasseh of Judah had led the nation away from Jehovah and had introduced every type of idolatry into the kingdom. With these false gods and religions came immorality and a low standard of ethics and morals. Thus the nation of Israel took a nose-dive down into the very depths of sin and degradation during the fifty-five years of the reign of Manasseh. This condition continued through the reign of his son and successor, Amon, for two years. During the first eighteen years of the reign of Josiah, the successor of Amon, it seems that there was little or no improvement in the conditions. In the eighteenth year of Josiah, however, the Book of the Law was discovered in the Temple, was brought to Josiah and read to him. The king, being stirred by the impending judgments threatened in the law, began one of the most thorough reforms ever launched in Israel. Although it was the most thoroughgoing of the four great revivals in Israel, great were the difficulties. For idolatry had gripped the country for seventy-five years (from the beginning of Manasseh's reign to the eighteenth year of Josiah). By the apostasy of Manasseh Judah took a plunge which landed her beyond all possibility of being spared the overthrow of the nation. The Lord could no longer brook the sin of the nation. In the language of the writer of II Chronicles the nation had reached that point where there was no remedy (II Chron. 36:16).

The reforms of good young King Josiah could not prevent a national catastrophe, but did postpone it a few years. Upon his death the forces of evil were again turned loose. The nation began backsliding. Men got their eyes off God and put them upon men. Israel began to rely upon the Egyptians for help and assistance.

God works in and through history. His invisible guiding hand is directing the movements of the nations. While He lets every nation and the individuals within such groups exercise their own free choices, nevertheless He overrules providentially and makes their free acts

contribute to the advancement of His plans and purposes for the nations. It was all too evident to everyone who had spiritual vision that there was but one thing that could come to Judah from the hand of a holy God—punishment in the extreme, because of her disloyalty to her God and her going off into idolatry. The Lord in His wisdom had decreed to punish Judah for her sin by using the neo-Babylonian Empire. Ancient Babylon had gone down under Assyria and had lain dormant for centuries. Just about the time that Jeremiah began his ministry, God began to raise up the neo-Babylonian Empire. Providentially he brought forth Nabopolassar who raised it from out the dust of the past and caused it to become a growing and a mighty state. He reigned over it for twenty-five years and was succeeded by his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who in turn reigned forty-three years. This prince brought Babylon to the zenith of its power.

Habakkuk lived and engaged in his ministry probably in the first part of the reign of King Josiah—though we may not be absolutely dogmatic in regard to the date. He called the attention of his contemporaries to the fact that God was raising up the bitter and cruel nation of Babylon in order to punish His people Israel for their sins. To men of the world and those who had no spiritual insight into the workings of God, the rise of the neo-Babylonian Empire, its rapid growth, and its reaching the zenith of its power in a little over half a century were simply natural phenomena without any special significance. But to those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, Habakkuk called attention to the fact that God was raising up this nation in order to correct His people. The language is so very graphic and important, I wish to quote this oracle.

"5 Behold ye among the nations, and look, and wonder marvelously; for I am working a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. 6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, that march through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs. 7 They are terrible and dreadful; their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves. 8 Their horses also are swifter than leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves; and their horsemen press proudly on: yea, their horsemen come from far; they fly as an eagle that hasteth to devour. 9 They come all of them for violence; the set of their faces is forwards; and they gather captives as the sand. 10 Yea, he scoffeth at kings, and princes are a derision unto him; he derideth every stronghold; for he heapeth up dust, and taketh it. 11 Then shall he sweep by as a wind, and shall pass over, and be guilty *even* he whose might is his god" (Hab. 1:5-11).

God "... made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation" that they should seek after God who is not far from anyone of them (Acts 17:24-28). According to this statement of the inspired Apostle Paul it is God who determines when a nation shall arise to statehood, the extent of the territory to be occupied, and the strength and power to be gained. When God has raised up such a nation as the Chaldeans and has used it for a given purpose, He punishes it and frequently causes such a power to go back into oblivion (Isa. 10:5-12).

Habakkuk realized that God was raising up in his day and time the Chaldean Empire for the correction of the Jewish nation. When he realized how ruthless and wicked the Chaldeans were, he asked how it was that God could use such a degenerate race to punish the Hebrew people who, though sinful, were living on a much higher plane than the Babylonians. God uses men for the positions for which they fit themselves by their own free choices and by their conduct and lives. But He always punishes everyone for his wickedness after he has been used of Him.

It is a source of great consolation to know that the nations of the world—even all of them combined—are no more than a drop in the bucket or a particle of fine dust upon the balances. (See the majestic oration of the Prophet Isaiah found in chapter 40 of that book.)

In fulfillment of the prophecy of Habakkuk God was, in the sight of all the nations, calling the neo-Babylonian Empire out of the dust of the past and was shaping its destiny in order that it might become the dominant power of the world of that day and time. When Nebuchadnezzar mounted the throne, he was pushing his boundaries toward the Mediterranean and was coming in contact with Judah. He sent his armies therefore against Jerusalem and caused Jehoiakim to swear fealty to Babylon.

Later Jehoiakim broke faith with Nebuchadnezzar. Hence in the third year of his reign Judah was invaded, some of the vessels from the Temple were taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, and exacting conditions of peace were imposed upon Jehoiakim. Worldliness and a non-religious sentiment gripped the people. Many, however, were turning to idols and were

practicing all the abominable and immoral acts attending such worship. Thus there was a rapid disintegration of the nation during the reign of Jehoiakim.

His son and successor, Jehoiachin, mounted the throne upon the death of his father, but he reigned only three months and was taken to Babylon into captivity. Nebuchadnezzar took his father's brother, Mattaniah, changed his name to Zedekiah, and placed him on the throne of Judah. Zedekiah swore loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, but soon became involved in plotting with neighboring kings against Nebuchadnezzar his overlord. An intimation of this plotting is to be found in Jeremiah 27:1-11, which speaks of ambassadors from certain nations and their being at Jerusalem. Probably Nebuchadnezzar learned of this plotting and sent for Zedekiah in the fourth year of his reign. (See Jer. 51:59.) As the reign of Zedekiah progressed the deterioration became more rapid; until finally, in the ninth year of Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar sent his armies to overthrow and to destroy the city.

Jewish Attitude Toward The Book Of Ezekiel

To note the ancient attitude of the Jewish people toward the Book of Ezekiel is very interesting. According to tradition the younger and immature minds were not allowed to study that book. In fact, it was classified with certain others that were called "the hidden" books. Among these were the Book of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, and the Book of Esther. Because Ezekiel was placed in this group of books and was kept from immature persons, certain rationalistic critics have twisted the facts and have said that the ancient Jews doubted the authenticity and canonicity of the book, and that they therefore put it in this class of literature. This claim is contrary to the facts. Esther was placed in this list of books and yet its authenticity and canonicity were never questioned for one moment. Neither was the genuineness of Ezekiel questioned by any of them.

The question arises. Why did the ancient synagogue place Ezekiel among these hidden books? There may have been several reasons; but chief among them doubtless are the following: To them there appeared to be contradictions between the law as delivered by Moses and the legislation found in the last nine chapters of Ezekiel. Thus the ancient rabbis feared that the younger generation, before reaching maturity when they could think things through, would hastily jump at a conclusion and form the opinion that Ezekiel contradicted Moses.

But there is no contradiction between Moses and Ezekiel, or the legislation as given by Moses and that set forth by Ezekiel. Moses gave the legislation and the ritualistic services that were to be observed during the Mosaic Age. That which is given by Ezekiel is to obtain in the great Kingdom Age as we shall learn in our exposition of the Book of Ezekiel. Certain of the ritualism will be carried over into the great Kingdom Age. Other portions of it will be omitted—doubtless for good and sufficient reasons known unto the Almighty. When therefore we see that Moses legislated for one time and Ezekiel prophesied concerning another, we see that there need not be found any contradiction at all.

Another reason why the book was kept from the younger ones was that in the very first chapter appears the record of a theophany. As we shall learn in our first exposition of the Book of Ezekiel, one like unto a Son of man appeared on a portable throne supported and carried forward by cherubim. This one was none other than Jehovah. We shall discover that this was Jehovah the Son. This portion, together with that found in chapters 10 and 11, describing the same thing, was considered very holy portions of Scripture. The immature and undeveloped minds were not supposed to be able to understand and comprehend the realities and the holiness of this marvelous revelation.

Probably the Book of Ezekiel was withheld from the great masses of Israel because of the various enigmas, parables, visions, and symbolic acts which the prophet performed or experienced. These, it must be admitted, are more difficult to be understood than the straightforward statements of facts and utterances of prophecies.

We should not be surprised at the Jews for withholding this portion of the Sacred Word from the younger people. We see the same tendency among Christian people today. In fact, there are many well-taught people who avoid the study of such books as Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation. I well recall, several years ago, the practices of various churches in their Sunday schools. They had Bible classes that studied the New Testament, beginning with Matthew and continuing through to Jude. When they finished that last book, they turned back to the beginning and restudied the New Testament, stopping always with Jude. They felt that the Book of Revelation could not be understood. There was therefore no necessity or profit in even reading it. Even now, in certain quarters, there are those who do not believe that we

can understand the prophetic word and are averse to the study of prophecy. If a person studies and teaches the prophetic word, he is considered by such groups as a speculator.

Anyone who marks off any portion of the Word and forbids or discourages the study of that portion is robbing those whom they influence of deep spiritual blessing. The Books of Revelation and Ezekiel were included in the Bible for us to study, the same as any other portion of the Word. Let us therefore come to the study of Ezekiel with receptive minds, praying that the Lord will open our eyes to see and behold the wonderful things in His Word.

The Modernistic Attitude Toward The Book Of Ezekiel

Since rationalism has entered the Christian ranks, the entire history of Israel has been reconstructed and changed utterly. This is the work of the higher critics—rather, destructive critics. These rationalists deny that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. They dissect the Books of Moses, together with Joshua, into various supposed original documents. These primary sources they designate as: Elohist, Jehovistic, Deuteronomic, and priestly writings. These first two imaginary writers lived in the eighth or ninth century before Christ and wrote their history of the Jewish people from creation downward to their day and time.

Throughout the centuries down to the time of Josiah, according to this rationalistic theory, there was no centralized worship. But the children of Israel carried on their worship in the high places—just as the Canaanites had done before them. Finally, in the days of Josiah, a conniving priest, who wanted to centralize the worship and make Jerusalem the only shrine for the nation, wrote that which is substantially the present Book of Deuteronomy. He manipulated the affair so very cleverly that, when it was discovered in the Temple by the priest Hilkiah, his deception was not discovered. Instead, Hilkiah believed that this was a genuine work of Moses. He sent it to the king, before whom it was read. Then King Josiah instituted reforms in accordance with the teaching set forth in this document. Those who had been conducting the worship in the high places throughout Israel were invited to leave those places, come, and join the forces of the central sanctuary in Jerusalem. Thus, according to the theory, the cultus of Israel was changed by this Deuteronomic Code.

Ezekiel carried the reforms demanded by the Deuteronomic Code further and thus degraded

the priests who had officiated at the high places and allowed them to engage in only the minor services of the central sanctuary at Jerusalem. These were known as the Levites. Thus, according to the rationalistic theory, a definite turn was given to the religion of Israel by Ezekiel.

Finally, around 444 or 445 B.C., the priestly writer produced his document, which recognized the changes that had been wrought by the Deuteronomic Code and also by Ezekiel's influence. Thus the religion became fixed.

The rationalistic critics depend upon Ezekiel 44:4f as the central stone in the arch of their reconstruction of Israel's history. When the facts of history prior to Ezekiel's time and those of his day together with prophecies regarding the future are taken into consideration, it is seen that there is no support for this radical reconstruction of the biblical history as set forth in the Old Testament.

Whenever the books of the Old Testament are read and are allowed to tell their story, as it appears on the sacred page, all is consistency; when, however, the books of the Scriptures are cut up into arbitrary documents, as is done by the rationalists, then there are endless contradictions and abnormalities. It is my personal conviction that the Lord will bring the curse upon those who thus alter and change His record in the Old Testament, which is mentioned in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation. A severe anathema is there pronounced upon anyone who adds to or takes from the Book of Revelation. What is true of that book is also true of the entire Book. Thus those men who have arbitrarily, in the interest of a theory, dissected, cut up, and mutilated the various books of the Old Testament, as well as the New, will come in for the punishment that is threatened in the last chapter of Revelation.

Law Versus Gospel

Because of Ezekiel's great emphasis which he places upon the law, many have thought that he exalted law to the very highest pinnacle of authority. He has been misunderstood as teaching that if a man would observe the law, he would thus live by his good works. To interpret this prophet as teaching such is to misunderstand him entirely.

Men are saved in all ages and dispensations upon the simple principle of grace through faith. From the roll call of faith in Hebrews, chapter 11, we see that men have been saved by faith on the human side and by grace on the divine side. Everyone who has ever been saved, who is being saved now, or ever will be saved will be saved in no other way than that of grace through faith.

What then was the function of the law? Paul tells us in Galatians 3:19 that it was added because of transgression. In Galatians 3:25 he stated that the law was a tutor or schoolmaster to bring us (Jews) unto Christ. In the seventh chapter of Romans he affirmed that the law was given in order that the exceeding sinfulness of sin might become known. Moreover he spoke of the law as holy, good; but man is a slave to sin which dwells in him. The Old Testament prophets magnified the law and looked at it as a divine revelation of God graciously given to Israel in order to discipline her and bring her to the point where she could receive the Messiah with His salvation.

Unfortunately many in Israel who were living on the carnal plane sought justification and eternal life by observing rites and ceremonies. By works of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight. It was God's plan and purpose that men should trust Him, just as Abraham did (Rom., chap. 4) and be saved, be counted righteous as Abraham was.

We might compare the law to a mirror into which a person looks in order to see whether or not there is anything on his face. If there is dirt, the mirror will not wash it away. It reveals the fact that the dirt is there, but it takes water and soap to remove it. The law showed the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Those during the Dispensation of Law who walked by the faith of Abraham came in simple faith doubting nothing, trusting God for salvation and redemption.

Because Israel sought justification and life by observing ordinances, rites, and ceremonies, the old covenant became the ministration of death. (See II Cor., chap. 3.) But when rightly interpreted and obeyed, it proved indeed a blessing to the Israelites.

At the present time we are not under law but are under grace. The fact that we are not under law does not grant license to us to do wrong in any way whatsoever. If one continues in the

same way in which he lived prior to his conversion, that fact is absolute, positive proof that such a one has never been born again.

The Times Of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, And Daniel

Jeremiah the prophet began his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. He continued in his ministry during the remaining years of that king and the reign of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. After the fall of Jerusalem Nebuzaradan, the chief officer of Nebuchadnezzar, granted the prophet freedom to go anywhere he desired. He chose to go with Gedaliah who was appointed to be the Babylonian governor over the people that were left in the land. Gedaliah was slain by Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. Finally Ishmael fled to the king of Ammon and took refuge with him. Finally Johanan the son of Kareah, together with others, came to Jeremiah pleading with him to inquire of the Lord as to what they should do. They gave him every assurance that whatever the Lord spoke to them through him they would gladly do. When the Lord did give a reply to their inquiry, they refused to obey, claiming that Jeremiah was simply speaking his own words and not giving those of the Almighty. They therefore fled to Egypt and forcibly took the prophet along with them. Thus he disappears from the sacred page. From the historical facts we see that Jeremiah's ministry covered forty-odd years, the greater portion of which was in Jerusalem, though he lived at Anathoth, about three miles northeast of the Holy City. In the beginning of his ministry Jeremiah dealt with the nation as a whole. After the deputation of the captives, along with Jehoiachin, had been taken to Babylon, Jeremiah ministered to the people who were left in the land. At the same time, however, he wrote a letter to the captives who had been taken to Babylon along with Jehoiachin. This letter constitutes chapter 29 of the Book of Jeremiah.

Ezekiel was a much younger man than Jeremiah and was of priestly descent. He began his ministry in the fifth year of the reign of the captivity of Jehoiachin. At the time he went into captivity, he probably was twenty-five years of age. Then five years later, the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, he began his public ministry. His field of service was among the captives who went to Babylon with Jehoiachin. Thus it is clear that his ministry ran parallel with the latter part of that of Jeremiah. In order to get a clear picture of the situation one must be familiar with the closing chapters of II Kings and II Chronicles and then study the prophecies of Jeremiah along with those of Ezekiel.

Another contemporary of Ezekiel was Daniel the prophet. He was taken to Babylon in the third year of Jehoiakim, when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem and deported certain ones of the seed royal and of the nobility to Babylon. This third year of Jehoiakim was the last year of Nabopolassar the father of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar's first year was the fourth of Jehoiakim. (See Jer. 25:1ff.) In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar, which was the fifth year of Jehoiakim, Daniel began his prophetic ministry by interpreting the significance of the dream which the Lord presented to Nebuchadnezzar and which is found in Daniel, chapter 2. As we learn from his book, Daniel became the prime minister of the Medo-Persian Empire. The last of his ministry which is recorded for us is found in the revelations set forth in Daniel, chapters 10, 11, and 12. One should study along with Ezekiel and Jeremiah the Book of Daniel and correlate its material with theirs.

The Message Of The Book Of Ezekiel

A survey of the Book of Ezekiel shows that his prophecies eddy around two general ideas: first, the judgments that would come upon Judah and Jerusalem, together with the surrounding nations, because of sin and of rebellion against God. This is found in the first thirty-three chapters of the book. The central thought around which the second half of the book revolves is the final restoration of Israel and of Jehovah's reign in her midst here upon earth. The book may be divided upon different principles. Some scholars close the first division with chapter 24 and consider chapters 25-48 as the second section. Still others, dividing the book according to other principles, consider that the first twenty-four chapters constitute the first division speaking of the judgments coming upon Jerusalem and Judah. The second division consists of chapters 25-32, which give the judgments pronounced against the nation. The third and last section, beginning with thirty-three and running to the close of the book, deals with the final restoration of Israel. In our study of the book in this series of expositions, we shall consider that the book has the two-fold aspect: the judgments coming upon the sinful nation and its final restoration.

The Various Types Of Oracles

The book abounds in various types of expression. The prophet received visions from God concerning various things. He performed symbolic acts signifying certain great events or epochs. Again we see him using allegories such as those appearing in chapters 16 and 23. At times he, like Jeremiah, employed lamentation because of the deplorable conditions which faced him.

The Chronological System Of Ezekiel

Ezekiel dates his prophecies in the era of Jehoiachin's captivity, because he went along to Babylon with Jehoiachin and the captives deported at that time. The prophet received his call, as we see in 1:2, in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. The second dated prophecy is found in chapter 8. This revelation was received in the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. In the seventh year of this era, he received the revelation found in chapter 20. The next prophecy is found in chapter 24 and is dated in the ninth year. In this prophecy Ezekiel saw a boiling caldron which symbolized the horrors and distress that would come upon Jerusalem when it would be besieged. This was actually fulfilled a year later, to a day. The vision was in the ninth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, which synchronized with the eighth year of Zedekiah's reign. We know therefore that this vision was given exactly one year ahead of the real investment of the city by the Babylonians.

The predictions concerning Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Philistia are not dated. The one pertaining to Tyre is placed in the eleventh year of this era (Ezek. 26:1). The one concerning Egypt is dated in the tenth year of the era (29:1). In 29:17 is another one which was in the twenty-seventh year of this era. This prediction is, however, the last dated event in the Book of Ezekiel. The oracle regarding Egypt found in chapter 31 is placed in the eleventh year, and the one in the thirty-second chapter the twelfth year of this period. In 33:21,22 appears the account of Ezekiel's being told concerning the fall of the city. It took from four to five months for the travelers to go from Palestine to Mesopotamia. This is seen in such passages as Ezra 7:9. Let it be remembered that this twelfth year of 33:21 is of the era of Jehoiachin's captivity.

The last date of the book is found in 40:1, which is the twenty-fifth year of Jehoiachin's

captivity and which synchronized with the fourteenth year after the fall of the city of Jerusalem. Jehoiachin's captivity was in the year 597 B.C. of the Ussher dates. The fall of the city in the same system was in 586 B.C. The fourteenth year after the fall would be 573 B.C. It was at this last date that Ezekiel received the marvelous revelations concerning the glorious millennial Temple and the conditions which will exist throughout the country during the Millennium.

A Picture Of The Millennial Palestine

In the last nine chapters of Ezekiel we are presented with the most glorious picture concerning the conditions that will exist in Palestine during the reign of our Lord. Great topographical changes will take place. The land will be divided into equal sections for the twelve tribes of Israel. There will be seven portions north of the "oblation" and five sections south of it. This great oblation, or mountain of Jehovah, will be 25,000 reeds from north to south and from east to west. Since five hundred reeds make a mile, the dimensions of this marvelous mountain of Jehovah's house will be fifty miles by fifty miles. It will be divided into three sections. In the northern most one will be the Temple area. That section will be for the priests. The central section will be for the Levites. In the southern section of the mountain will be the city of Jerusalem, the millennial Jerusalem.

People will flock there in a constant stream from all parts of the world to worship Jehovah of hosts in His holy Temple, which will be a house of prayer for all nations. They will listen to Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as He teaches the Word of the Lord, which will go forth from Jerusalem. At that time Jerusalem will be called *Jehovah-shammah*, Jehovah is there.

Outline of the Book of Ezekiel

INTRODUCTION: The date and place of the prophet's call (1:1-3).

- I. The call of Ezekiel (1:4-3:11).
- II. Prophecies regarding the judgment upon Jerusalem (3:12-33:33).
 - A. The opening phase of Ezekiel's ministry (3:12-21).
 - B. Second phase of Ezekiel's ministry (3:22-7:27).
 - C. Prophecies given in sixth year of Ezekiel's ministry (8:1-19:14).
 - D. Prophecies given in the seventh year of Ezekiel's ministry (20:1-23:49).
 - E. Prophecies given in the ninth year of Ezekiel's ministry (24:1-27).
 - F. Prophecies concerning the nations (25:1-32:32).
 - G. Ezekiel the watchman for Israel (33:1-33).
- III. Prophecies regarding Israel's glorious future restoration (34:1-39:29).
 - A. Predictions relating to the end time (34:1-39:29).
 - 1. The true shepherd of Israel (34:1-31).
 - 2. The future fate of Edom (35:1-15).
 - 3. The lifting of the curse from the land of Palestine (36:1-15).
 - 4. The conversion of Israel (36:16-38).
 - 5. The restoration of Israel nationally (37:1-14).
 - 6. The union of Judah and Israel in the future Kingdom Age (37:15-28).
 - 7. The destruction of the forces led by Gog against the land of Israel (38:1-39:29).
 - B. Predictions relating to the millennial Jerusalem (40:1-48:38).
 - 1. The millennial Temple (40:1-43:12).
 - 2. The altar and its services (43:13-46:24).
 - 3. The river flowing from the Temple (47:1-12).
 - 4. The land divided among the tribes of Israel (47:13-48:29).
 - 5. The holy city with its gates (48:30-35).

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 2)

The Call And Commission Of Ezekiel

The book of Ezekiel in its introduction (1:1-3) speaks of something as having occurred in the thirtieth year when the prophet was among the captives by the river Chebar, at which time he saw certain visions of God. In verses 2 and 3 he speaks of these visions as occurring in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity and states that at that time the word of Jehovah came expressly to him. From these facts it is clear that the thirtieth year of verse 1 is the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. It is quite likely that this thirtieth year indicates his age, as stated in the former discussion. All the dates of Ezekiel's prophecy are in terms of Jehoiachin's captivity.

The Call Of The Servants Of God

It has been recognized by spiritually-minded Bible students throughout the centuries that one, in order to do efficient service in the Master's cause, must be called of God. This statement is a truism that should be recognized by all. At the same time it is also true that all people who are redeemed should labor as they have time and opportunity—and should make opportunities—to forward the cause of God among men. Those, however, who are to engage in full-time Christian service certainly should have a definite call from the Lord.

The Call Of The Servants Of God In General

One should study carefully I Samuel, chapter 3. The boy Samuel had been dedicated to the Lord by his parents at his birth, but God gave him a very definite and clear-cut call as we see in the passage just referred to. The prophet Isaiah received a very definite call to enter the ministry of the Lord, the record of which is found in chapter 6 of the Book of Isaiah. If the early chapters of Isaiah are put in chronological order, the prophet delivered three masterful discourses by the power of God even before he received his official call. Then the Lord

appeared to him and gave him a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory seated upon the throne in the great millennial Temple. Jeremiah, likewise, received a very specific call, as we see in Jeremiah 1:11-19. When we come to the New Testament, we see that the Apostle Paul was very clearly called by the Lord Jesus Christ when he was on his way to Damascus. (See Acts, chapter 9:22; and 26). Others received definite calls and commissions but these suffice to give us some idea as to the divine method of calling specially those who are chosen vessels into full-time service.

Ezekiel's Special Call

In Ezekiel 1:4-3:11 we have a record of Ezekiel's call. As we study this call, we shall do well to note the three different types of God's communicating His will to man. In the first place the Lord appeared, especially in primitive times, to various ones of His servants, coming in a personal manner. For instance, the Lord Jehovah appeared in the Garden of Eden in the form of man and talked to Adam and Eve. He did this also in numbers of cases, as we read in the Old Testament. This is what we call a theophany—God's appearing in the form of man and communicating personally with His servants.

At other times He has made revelations through visions. Should I be permitted to illustrate this mode of communication, I would compare it to television, which is just now beginning to come into use. Those who enjoyed such communications seem to have been in a trance—to have been lifted to a higher plane of perception, and to have had their mental horizon enlarged. With their intellectual and spiritual faculties heightened, the prophets viewed, as one does in television, spiritual realities which passed before their minds like a moving picture. Thus we would designate this type of communication as spiritual television.

In the third place we may list what is usually termed inspiration, God's breathing into His servant the message and the ability to comprehend it and express it. This mode of communication we might compare to a telephone message. At the present day a person may be in one country and talk to another person in a different land, thousands of miles away, by means of the telephone. By this method the exact thought and word is conveyed by one person to another. One receiving the message can deliver it to whom it pertains or can act

accordingly. Thus by spiritual telephone the Lord communicated His ideas very frequently to various servants of His at different times.

Ezekiel, in different passages, uses this expression, "The hand of Jehovah was there upon him [Ezekiel]." Examination of this phrase shows that it indicates the power of the Lord in a supernatural manner and its resting upon and working through the one concerning whom the statement is made.

Ezekiel declares that he saw "visions of God." This statement is in perfect accord with that which we find in Numbers 12:6-14: "... 6 And he said, Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. 7 My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: 8 with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses?"

According to this statement the Lord spoke directly in a personal manner to Moses as He has not done since to anyone. Although there are theophanies recorded as having occurred after God made this statement to the great lawgiver, we are to understand that such appearances of the Deity to men could not be compared with those which Moses enjoyed.

When we notice that, in Ezekiel 1:1, the prophet claims he enjoyed the visions of God, that in verse 3 the word of Jehovah came especially to him, and that in verses 4-28 we are given a description of the appearance of one like unto a Son of man who was seated upon a throne, we come to the conclusion that, on the occasion of which the prophet was speaking, he was granted a vision in which the Word of God came to him, not as by spiritual telephone (as explained above), but in a personal living way. In other words, the one who appeared to the prophet in the vision was like a Son of man and is called the Word of God—the Living Word. When all of these facts are taken into consideration, a person can not avoid this conclusion. This scripture is suggestive of Genesis, chapter 15. In verse 1 we are told that "the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying ..." Below, in verse 5, we are told that this word of Jehovah "brought him [Abram] forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, so shall thy seed

be. 6 And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness." Obviously this one who is called the Word of Jehovah in verse 1 is the one who brought Abram forth out of his tent and called his attention to the stars in the heavens (evidently at night) and made a promise concerning the multitudes of those who would descend from him. In the vision then the one whom we call "the Living Word," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ in His prenatal state, appeared to Abraham and entered into a covenant with him. This experience which Abram enjoyed we might list as spiritual television, described above. We see a similar thing in the call of Samuel (I Sam., chap. 3). In verse 4 of this chapter we are told that Jehovah called Samuel. Again in verse 6 we find the same statement. In verse 7 we have the significant declaration, "Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him." When we view this statement in the light of the knowledge drawn from other passages, we conclude that "the word of Jehovah" in this passage refers to the Living Word. In verse 10 we are told that Jehovah came and stood and called Samuel as at other times. Finally in verse 21 we have this language, "And Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah." By a thorough exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4, which declares, "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah, our Gods, is Jehovah a unity," we know that the word, Jehovah, in certain contexts refers to God the Father; but in others the same expression indicates Jehovah the Son; while in others it refers to Jehovah the Holy Spirit. In still other connections it signifies the Holy Trinity. When, therefore, we study I Samuel 3:21 in the light of its entire connection and also in the light of the usage of the term, we come to the conclusion that the first occurrence of the word, Jehovah, in this verse refers to Jehovah the Living Word; but the second time it occurs, it signifies the Triune God, who, it is stated, was revealed to Samuel in Shiloh by "the word of Jehovah," the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. That the expression "the word of Jehovah" is used in the personal manner in referring to the second person of the Trinity is evident from a careful study of Psalm 33:4-7. In this passage the psalmist in speaking of "the word of Jehovah" said that "all his work is *done* in faithfulness," that "He loveth righteousness and justice," and that the heavens were made by Him. This interpretation was placed upon Psalm 33 by the ancient rabbis and is in perfect accord with the whole tenor of the teaching of God's word.

The vision of the Living Word which Ezekiel saw may be similar to that which Job experienced (Job, chap. 38). It is altogether possible that this is similar to the one found in Acts 7:56. In this latter passage we have a record of the vision which Stephen experienced when he, standing, before the Sanhedrin brought the great indictment against the Jewish people

concerning their rejection of the Messiah. They, being enraged, gnashed upon him with their teeth; but he, being filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up into heaven and declared that he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

According to Ezekiel 1:4 he looked toward the north and saw a stormy wind coming out of the heavens from that direction. "And I looked, and, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, a great cloud, with a fire infolding itself, and a brightness round about it, and out of the midst thereof as it were glowing metal, out of the midst of the fire."

There is a very definite place in the universe which is called in the Holy Scriptures "the heaven of the heavens." This is what Christians call the "immediate presence of the Almighty." It is in this special location that the throne of God is. This might be called the capital of the entire universe. For a picture of this glorious locality read Psalm 103:19-22. For another glimpse of the throne of God see Psalm 89:5-15. In this long passage we not only get a glimpse of the throne of God, but we see set forth the evidences of His authority and prerogatives found throughout His vast domains. In Ezekiel 28 we see a graphic picture of Eden, the garden of God, that was upon the earth in primitive times—prior to the catastrophe which overtook the earth as is recorded in Genesis 1:2. Thus this Eden was entirely different from the earth in primitive times. This Eden was entirely different from the Eden of which we read in Genesis, chapter 2. The anointed cherub was in his crystal palace in this garden of God. Prior to this time he was in the mount of God, which was not upon this earth, but which is, figuratively speaking, the presence of God. In Isaiah 14:12-14 we have the following language: "12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning; how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst lay low the nations! 13 And thou saidst in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; and I will sit upon the mount of congregation, in the uttermost parts of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

From the context in which this passage occurs, we see that it applies to the world ruler of end time, the Antichrist, the last king of Babylon. This individual will be conceited and deceived by the devil to think that he can ascend to the very presence of God and can overthrow the authority and power of God. The Antichrist, according to this passage, speaks of the throne of God's being in the north, that is, in a position north of this earth. According to Psalm 75 deliverance from foes does not come from the east, or the west, or south; but God is the

Judge; He is the one who passes decisions and brings deliverance. Since three of the cardinal points of the compass are referred to as the place from which deliverance does not come, and since he speaks of God as being Judge or the one who brings deliverance, it is clear that the writer thought of God in terms of the location of one of the points of the compass, the north.

The description of this stormy wind and great cloud out of the north reminds one of that which is described in Exodus 19:16-20. "16 And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. 18 And mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. 19 And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. 20 And Jehovah came down upon mount Sinai, to the top of the mount: and Jehovah called Moses to the top of the mount; and Moses went up."

This passage describes the descent of Jehovah to Mount Sinai when He delivered the law to Israel. Jehovah, the Living Word, doubtless was the one who descended to Mount Sinai and spoke the Ten Words, the Ten Commandments. This vision also reminds us of that which is presented in Nahum 1:2-8.

As we read Ezekiel's description of the vision which he saw, we are overcome with the majestic glory of this great sight. There came forth, as he tells us, out of the great cloud, with its fire infolding itself and its brightness round about, the appearance of glowing metal, and out of it came forth four living creatures. The general appearance of each was that of the likeness of a man. Each had four faces and four wings. Unlike the feet of men theirs were straight, the soles of which were as the soles of a calf and had the appearance of burnished brass. Under their wings were the hands of a man, on each of their four sides. Moreover each had four faces: one of a man, one of a lion, one of an ox, and one of an eagle. These faces were separate, as were also their wings, but they were attached to the same body. With two of their wings they flew and with two of them they covered their bodies.

Their movements were always in straight lines, never in curves. The appearance of the living creatures was that of burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches. Fire also went up and down among the living creatures. This fire was bright and went out like lightning. Moreover, these living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

Besides each of these living creatures there was a wheel which was let down to the earth. According to verse 15 there was a wheel for each of the faces of each of these living creatures. The appearance of these wheels was like that of beryl, and the four wheels attending each of these living creatures were alike. Whenever the living creatures went, the wheel went in their four directions. Their rims were full of eyes round about which were dreadful. These wheels were within wheels. It seems impossible for us to develop a clear conception of what is meant by this expression. Whenever the living creatures came down to the earth, the wheels touched the ground. Whenever, on the other hand, they left the earth, the wheels left it and accompanied them. Wherever the spirit went these wheels went. Where the living creatures stood, they stood.

Who are these living creatures? In the third vision which was granted to the prophet, he describes what he saw and declares that it was the same vision as that which he saw by the river Chebar. The record of this third appearance is found in chapters 8-11. In chapter 10 these living creatures are called *cherubim*. The word cherubim is the plural of cherub. The first time of which we read of these living creatures or cherubs is in connection with man's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. When Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, he was driven from the tree of life in order that he might not partake of it and live in his fallen state forever. Cherubim were placed on guard to keep the way of the tree of life. There was an appearance of a flaming sword which was turning in every direction. The cherubim with the sword thus guarded the approach to the tree of life. In the Tabernacle, which was constructed by Moses at Mount Sinai, two cherubs were made and were placed upon the mercy seat, the cover of the ark. These were placed in the Temple constructed by Solomon. Figures of these living creatures were woven into the curtain in connection with the most holy place. It seems that these cherubs had only one face. In a vision of the future millennial Temple Ezekiel speaks of cherubim and describes them as having two faces (Ezek. 41:18). From all this data it appears that there are different types of cherubim.

We also read of *seraphim*. In the record of the call of Isaiah, chapter 6, we are told that the prophet saw seraphim and heard them singing in the presence of King Messiah—seated on His throne in millennial glory—the following song: "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). Each of these seraphim had six wings. With two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they did fly. The Apostle John, according to Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, saw a vision of the throne of God and observed living creatures round about the throne who likewise were singing the song of the triple holiness: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Rev. 4:8). Each of these living creatures had six wings. I thus identify the living creatures of John's vision with those of Isaiah's. It must be noted, however, that the vision which was granted to John was one of the throne of God in heaven at the time of the beginning of the Tribulation; whereas that which was granted to Isaiah to see was a vision of Christ in the millennial Temple when He is seated upon His throne and is reigning in righteousness upon the earth. Thus the seraphim are seen in heaven in John's vision. They are, according to Isaiah, also upon earth when our Lord returns to reign. They constantly cry, according to the records, both in the presence of God and in the presence of Christ in the Millennium, "Holy, holy, holy...." Thus they seem to be creatures who are devoting their entire time to the praise of the Almighty. They have the proper sense of His holiness, majesty, and sovereignty. They therefore praise Him.

Whether or not the seraphim are of a higher order than the cherubim has never been determined. In Ezekiel, chapter 28, we read of the anointed cherub that covereth, who was the very embodiment of wisdom, beauty, power, and authority. In fact, one gathers from the record that he was the highest order of being which God could bring into existence, and yet he was called a cherub. When, however, unrighteousness entered his heart, he rose up in rebellion against the Almighty. His revolt was the occasion of his downfall. Since this highest order of being which God could call into existence is called a cherub, it may be that the cherubim are the highest order of celestial beings. There are, however, various ranks, orders, and files of angels, to which both cherubim and seraphim belong. Since our information concerning these is so very much limited, we must be very cautious in drawing conclusions regarding them.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 3)

The Call And Commission Of Ezekiel (Part two)

Turn now to Ezekiel 1:22-25 and read the description of the firmament that was supported by these living creatures or cherubim. The firmament was like a crystal to look upon and was stretched forth over the heads of the living creatures. It reminds one of that which is described by Moses in Exodus, 24:9-11: "9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness. 11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: and they beheld God, and did eat and drink."

A very clear description of the throne of God, and of the Almighty upon it, is to be found in I Kings 22:19-23. In connection with this passage one would do well to read Revelation, chapters 4 and 5. When anyone reads these accounts, he can see that the pavement and the throne of the Almighty are described in terms similar to those of human monarchs.

The occupant of the throne which was resting upon the firmament described by Ezekiel is presented in Ezekiel 1:26-28. In verse 26 we are told that "upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above." His bodily appearance from his loins and upward was veiled in the semblance of a fire of glory. From his loins and downward there also was the appearance of fire. But since there is a distinction made here in the description, everyone must recognize that fact—though he may not be able to picture clearly the difference. The thing for us to notice is that upon this throne is one like unto a Son of man who is seated upon the portable throne which comes out of heaven to earth. If this passage were the only one in the record, we would be at a loss to determine why this representation. But there are other data which will throw light upon this most important question. In the first promise of the Redeemer, Genesis 3:15, the sacred writer spoke of "the seed of the woman." This is the only occurrence of such an expression, as genealogies were always reckoned after the *male* and never after the female. But this one is called the seed of

the woman, a most striking and unique expression. The fact that this term was employed is proof that this one is indeed different from all others. Isaiah the prophet declared to the house of David, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). Here is a prediction that a virgin shall give birth to one whom she is to call *Immanuel*, which means *God is with me*. By the ancient rabbis this passage was interpreted as a reference to King Messiah, whose supernatural character they all recognized. The Messiah was also known as the Son or descendant of David, who in a vision saw Him, and who spoke in Psalm 110 concerning Him: "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool. 2 Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies" (Ps. 110:1-2). David recognized the fact that this descendant of his was his Lord and declared that God in heaven would speak to Him when He came to earth and when the Jews of Jerusalem were hostile to Him, would invite Him to leave earth, to ascend to glory, and to sit at His right hand until He, Jehovah, would make the enemies of King Messiah the footstool of His feet. This passage shows that when Messiah comes to Israel, the leaders of the Jews reject Him; but it does not tell to what extent their hostility drives them. That information is obtained from other passages, such as Psalm 22:1-21 and Isaiah 53:1-9. That this virgin-born Son, who is God in human form, is killed is seen clearly from Zechariah 13:7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones." In this passage the Lord, speaking to the sword (by metonymy, to the one handling the sword), commands it to act against his shepherd, who is a man, and who at the same time is His "fellow." The meaning of the word, fellow, in the Hebrew indicates *an associate, an equal*. By the use of this term in his message, the prophet meant to affirm that this man, the shepherd of Jehovah's flock, is equal to God—though He is a man. From other passages which bear upon the same subject, we learn that, when the Messiah is killed, He is invited to leave the earth and to take His seat at the right hand of the throne of God where He is to remain until the Jews, His enemies, accept Him and plead for His return.

In Daniel 7:13,14 we have this language: "13 I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his

dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

In this marvelous prediction we see that "one like unto a son of man" is in heaven, is escorted into the presence of Jehovah the Father, and is invested with authority over a world-wide kingdom, which is to last as long as the earth endures. This passage, viewed in the light of the others which we have just been studying, is clearly a reference to the Messiah of Israel, who entered the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth, was rejected and executed by His people, ascended to the right hand of the throne of God when He was raised from the dead, has been seated there for nineteen hundred years, and will return to earth when penitent Israel pleads for Him to do so. This scripture is a prediction of the time when the Jews, having been given the truth concerning Him, repent of their having rejected Him and confess their national sin, pleading for Him to return. Thus He will be ushered into the presence of the Ancient of Days and will be invested with world dominion. At that time He will come to earth again and set up His reign of righteousness.

It seems most plausible and logical to interpret the Son of man of Ezekiel's vision, recorded in chapter 1 of his prophecy, as being identical with the Son of man of Daniel's prediction. The two visions are very much alike—with some slight difference. The general thought is the same. Daniel's vision is purely prophetic of the end time when Messiah, invested with world-dominion, will return to take unto Himself world-wide authority. Ezekiel's vision is of the same Son of man, the Messiah of Israel. That which differentiates Ezekiel's vision from Daniel's is this: Ezekiel in the first thirty-three chapters, roughly speaking, deals with the judgments that have already come upon the children of Israel because of their persistence in sin. In the rest of his book Ezekiel devotes his entire attention to the final restoration of the nation, when the Messiah, who is at present in glory at the right hand of the throne of God and has been since His ascension nineteen hundred years ago, will be invested with universal power and will return and reign for a thousand years. In anticipation of His incarnation and of the special work which He would do for Israel as her Messiah, He, the Son of man, appeared to the prophet. In view of all the related facts, one therefore can not avoid the conclusion that this one who is the Living Word is none other than the Son of man, the Messiah of Israel.

In Ezekiel 1:28 the prophet tells us: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about." Thus the brightness of this bow seemed to encircle the throne of the Son of man. This statement instantly recalls to one's mind the first record of the rainbow, which is found in Genesis 9:1-16. In this passage we read of the everlasting covenant into which God entered with all humanity at the conclusion of the Flood. A careful examination of this passage reveals the facts that there was imposed upon the human family a fourfold obligation: To be fruitful and to multiply and replenish the earth (9:1-11); to live on a diet consisting of animals, fish, and vegetables (9:3); to abstain from eating blood and things strangled (9:4); and to execute all murderers by capital punishment (9:5,6). All of these conditions are constantly being ignored by man. The covenant of which these are the conditions was entered into by the Lord with every man, woman, and child upon the face of the globe. It is therefore called "the everlasting covenant."

In Isaiah 24:1-20 we have a description of the wreckage upon the earth that will be wrought during the Tribulation by the judgments of the Almighty. These will be sent because the inhabitants of the earth "have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:5). Since there is but one everlasting covenant into which God has entered with all races—the one referred to above—and since the world is to be punished because of its having disregarded the laws, violated the statutes, and broken the everlasting covenant, we may be certain that reference is here made to the Noahic Covenant, the sign of which is the rainbow.

In the scene of the throne of God (Rev., chap. 4) we see it encircled by a rainbow. This doubtless is the rainbow of the Noahic Covenant which appears on this occasion to remind the people of earth that they are being punished because they have violated the conditions of the everlasting covenant. At the same time it is most highly probable that the appearance of the bow encircling the throne of the one like unto the Son of man which Ezekiel saw has the same significance. It will remind the world of the broken everlasting covenant.

Ezekiel's Commission

Evidently the sight of this chariot or portable throne with the one like unto a Son of man seated in glory, power, and majesty did overwhelm the prophet who instantly fell to the

ground. This supposition is the necessary inference drawn from the statement "and he said unto me, son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak with thee." When this command was given, the spirit of God entered into the body of the prophet, put him upon his feet, and gave him strength—both physical and spiritual. He was then ready to receive the message, the commands from the Lord of all the earth.

The Message

The one like to a Son of man, the Messiah of Israel—seated upon the throne—addressed the prophet, calling him "son of man." The expression, son of man, is but a synonym for man. This is clearly seen in such a passage as Psalm 8:4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" *Man* in the first question is a synonym for *the son of man* in the second. (Some scholars not knowing Hebrew parallelism have understood that the one called "the son of man" here is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of man par excellence. But this is a misinterpretation of the phrase.)

As we have seen, this one who was seated upon the throne is the Son of man in the highest sense of the term because of His being God who entered the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth and who is the God-man. Though He is God, He is also man. Let us not think of Him as God and man, a monstrosity. But He is *the God-man* because of His taking the form of man; and, being most profoundly interested in man in every particular, He is the Son of man in the highest sense of the term. Thus this expression in the gospel record is messianic in its import as it is here in Daniel 7:13, 14.

But why did the God-man address Ezekiel as *son of man*? In the light of all the facts it seems most highly probable that He used the expression to indicate His kinship with Ezekiel—and to man in general—to whom He was making His revelation known. In other words, that which is set forth in Hebrews 2:5-18 constitutes a background for the use of "son of man" as applied to Ezekiel. In the Hebrews passage we are told that the God-man identified Himself with us, taking the form of flesh and blood in order that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest

in things pertaining to God for us. Expressed in different terms, there is echoed in the use of our expression, "son of man,"—as applied to the Saviour and to Ezekiel—the thought of the Messiah's being man's Kinsman-Redeemer. Thus the *Goel*, the Redeemer, aligned Himself with man for his redemption and ultimate glorification.

Ezekiel was told that the children of Israel, to whom he was sent, were a rebellious people. Here Israel is spoken of as "nations." Doubtless "nations" here is applied to the tribes of Israel. Moses declared, "Jehovah hath not given you a heart to know, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day" (Deut. 29:4). Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). While the Apostle Paul stated: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him" (I Cor. 2:14).

The prophet was reminded of the fact that, though His message would not be received by the people, he was to give it forth. We are not held responsible for results. It is ours to obey and to give the truth, believing that the Lord's word will not return unto Him void but that it will accomplish that whereunto He has sent it. According to the Apostle Paul the gospel is a savor of life unto life, and of death unto death. To those who are hungering for the truth it brings life and they grow and increase in spiritual life and stature, and finally enter into eternal life. On the other hand, those who do not want the truth are living in the shadow of spiritual death. The preaching of the gospel hardens the hearts of all who do not want the truth. Thus the gospel becomes a savor of death unto death to such.

The Prophet's Receiving His Message

In this section of our lesson (2:8-3:3) we are told that "a roll of a book" was given to the prophet on which were written "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." He was commanded to eat this scroll, which he did. This reminds one of the statements made by Jeremiah, who was a contemporary of Ezekiel: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart: for I am called by thy name, O Jehovah, God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16). It also suggests John's receiving a further revelation from God by eating a little book which in his mouth was sweet, but in his stomach was bitter (Rev., chap. 10). The process of receiving this message from God was enacted symbolically by the Apostle,

who ate, devoured, digested and assimilated the scroll. This act signified the reception of the message from God and a spiritual and intellectual grasp of it. It was doubtless a delight, as it was to the prophets, to receive a further revelation from God. But upon grasping the import and the significance of the same, he was made sad, which fact was set forth by the book's being bitter in his stomach.

In 3:4-11 Ezekiel is again reminded of the fact that the people to whom he was being sent were rebellious, and that they would not accept his message. But he was not, he was told, being sent as a foreign missionary to a pagan nation whose language he could not understand. He was going to his own people, who had hardened their hearts and steeled themselves against the message from God. In order to meet such opposition as that which was facing the prophet, the Lord declared that he had made Ezekiel's forehead hard against them. It was as adamant and as flint. In other words, the Lord reinforced the heart, the soul, of the prophet, so that he could meet opposition and declare to the children of Israel their sins.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 4)

The Beginnings Of Ezekiel's Ministry

In our former studies we have seen the call and commission of God to Ezekiel the prophet. The Son of man appeared in a theophany to Ezekiel and gave him his commission. At the same time He warned him of the character of the people to whom he was being sent. Nevertheless, he was urged to speak forth the message just as the Lord gave it to him. In the providence of God He has seen fit to convey His truth to men through the preaching of His servants. The message does not affect all the same way. To some it becomes a savor of life unto life; to others, a savor of death unto death. But it is necessary that the Word be preached in order that those who want to do God's will may have an opportunity of accepting it and in His power practicing it in their lives. On the other hand, it is essential that the truth be given those who do not wish to do the will of God in order to prepare them for the just and righteous condemnation which will fall upon them. This was made plain to the prophet. He was therefore not to seek the favor of any, but to preach the Word of God with impartiality to all.

Ezekiel's First Missionary Tour

In Ezekiel 3:12-15 appears the record of the prophet's going first to his field of labor. Ezekiel declared, "Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed be the glory of Jehovah from his place" (3:12). It is altogether possible that the prophet was lying down and resting, when the Spirit of God entered him and made him stand upright. At the same time he heard this mighty rushing and the pronouncement of the blessedness and the glory of Jehovah. At that time he likewise heard the noise of the wings of the living creatures that supported the throne upon which the Son of man, Jehovah, was seated in the theophany, an account of which we read in chapter 1. Here again this same Son of man appeared seated upon a throne of glory. According to verse 14 the Spirit of God entered the prophet, took him away, and brought him to Tel-abib, which was on the river Chebar. Was this a literal transportation of the prophet from one place to another? If we are

to accept the language at its face value, we must come to this conclusion. But this should not be thought strange by anyone who believes that Enoch was translated from earth to heaven, as we see in Genesis, chapter 5. Moreover, Elijah was taken up to glory by angelic chariots of fire. In Acts, chapter 8, we read that, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea" (vss. 39, 40). We have every reason to believe that Philip was physically transported from one place to another by the Spirit of God. It seems that the case of Ezekiel was similar to that of Philip the Evangelist. There are, however, some conservative scholars who say that the prophet was transported only in vision and not in reality. They assign their reasons for this belief, but they are not conclusive to my mind. Hence I take the language at what it says.

Ezekiel went in the bitterness of his spirit. He did not want to go. But the Lord required him and forced him to do so. There are those who do not want to go to the mission field today. No one is now being taken as was Ezekiel and transported to his field of future labor. God is calling for volunteers and is not conscripting anyone. However, it is fatal to one's spiritual interests to refuse to go when God calls. We have been saved for service. The Lord wants to use us in giving forth His message to those who have never heard.

When Ezekiel was transported to his field of labor, he sat there overwhelmed among his brethren for seven days. It seems that he was getting his bearings. When a person realizes the slow motion of the ancient East, as well as at the present time, he can understand how the prophet could remain there for seven days before engaging in his ministry. He had plenty of time to cool off and to think of the seriousness of the situation and the momentous issues that were involved in God's taking him to minister to his brethren. We are to learn a lesson from this, to meditate upon and consider every phase of our work, and to know what we are doing in order that we may make just as few mistakes as possible.

A Renewal Of The Divine Charge

In Ezekiel 3:16-21 we read of the Lord's repeating His charge to the prophet. In giving it the Lord spoke in military terms. The language is so very forceful that I wish to quote it: "And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 17

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity: but thou hast delivered thy soul" (vss. 16-19).

The Lord in this language compared the prophet to a watchman or a sentry who is on patrol duty. He had a grave responsibility and was required to give everyone warning from the mouth of Jehovah.

In verse 18 the Lord showed exactly what He meant, for He was very specific. Whenever God said to the wicked that they should die, the prophet was to give the message unvarnished—exactly as God had spoken. If the prophet failed to give the warning, the wicked would die; but the prophet would be held responsible for not giving them the warning. Men must preach the Word. They are not held responsible for results. We are to preach the Word and let God attend to the effect. Of course we delight to see results from our labors. If, on the other hand, the prophet warned the wicked and his message was unheeded, the wicked died in their sins, but the prophet was not held responsible.

Verse 20 is a most important one: "Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand." In this verse we are told that God puts a stumbling block before the righteous man who turns from his righteousness and goes on committing iniquity. Even under those conditions the prophet was urged to give forth the warning in order that the erring man might see the gravity of his situation and might turn. Various prophets speak of the Lord's putting a stumbling block before those who are determined to go on in their own self-willed way. On this point see Ezekiel 14:1-5 and Isaiah 66:3,4.

The Third Appearance Of The Glory Of Jehovah

"22 And the hand of Jehovah was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. 23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of Jehovah stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. 24 Then the Spirit, entered into me, and set me upon my feet; and he spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house. 25 But thou, son of man, behold, they shall lay bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: 26 and I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt, be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbearth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house" (Ezek. 3:22-27).

According to verse 22 the hand of Jehovah was again upon the prophet and He spoke to him. This expression, the hand of Jehovah, is a favorite one with Ezekiel. An examination of all the occurrences of this phrase indicates that he was simply speaking of the power of God's being upon him.

Commentators generally think that there was a little period of time between the events recorded in verses 16-21 and those in 22-27. This is quite probable. He thus engaged in this public ministry, warning all the captives just as the Lord commanded him.

In verse 23 we see the record of the Lord of glory appearing to the prophet for the third time. On this occasion the Lord said for him to go, shut, himself within his house, and not to engage in a public ministry. This fact seems to point to the conclusion mentioned by various commentators that Ezekiel carried out the commission of verses 16-22 in a public ministry. After he had completed that task, the Lord forbade his continuing such a ministry. This seems to be the probable interpretation of these verses.

According to verses 25, 26 the Lord revealed to the prophet that they, the people, would lay bands upon him, bind him with them, and that after that he should not go out among them.

Moreover, he was told that his tongue would cleave to the roof of his mouth, and he would be dumb to the people so far as engaging in a public ministry was concerned. This dumbness remained until after the news of the fall of Jerusalem came to the prophet as is recorded in chapter 33:21ff.

According to verse 27 the Lord told him that, when he opened his mouth, he, the prophet, should say to Israel what had been given to him. But he was always to call their attention to the word of the Lord: "He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let, him forbear: for they are a rebellious house." Since Ezekiel received his call in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity and Jerusalem fell in the twelfth year, and since the prophet was to be dumb to the people—not engaging in any public ministry—from the time of this first initial ministry until after his tongue was loosed, we see that, in all probability, Ezekiel did not engage in a public ministry for something like six or seven years.

Though he did not go out to speak to the multitudes, nevertheless he did receive revelations and did speak to those who came and sought for advice from him in a private manner. This fact is set forth in chapters 8-24.

Two Symbolic Acts

4 Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and portray upon it a city, even Jerusalem: 2 and lay siege against it, and build forts against it, and cast up a mound against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it, round about. 3 And take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face toward it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel" (Ezek. 4:1-3).

The prophet was to take a tile and to portray on it the picture of a city that was being besieged. He was to represent forts and mounds as being thrown up around about the city. Moreover, he was to picture the camp of an opposing army that had battering rams and all kinds of implements of warfare, such as were being used in that day and time. In this drawing he was to take his stand out from the city and was to place an iron pan between himself and it. He was instructed thus to depict this on the tile. In his doing this, he himself was laying siege to

the city, which was Jerusalem. This representation was to be a sign to the house of Israel—a sign in that it was a pictorial, vivid, graphic representation of what would come to pass. One can look on the bas-reliefs of the monuments that have been unearthed in the various capitols of Assyria and can see carved in the stone just such a representation. These scenes by the Assyrians represented sieges of different cities that had actually been besieged and taken. But this picture which Ezekiel was to make was to show ahead of time what was coming to Jerusalem. He, the prophet himself, was laying siege against it in that he was setting forth that which would surely come to pass.

After making this picture the prophet was instructed to lie on his side. First he was to lie on his left side for three hundred and ninety days; following that he was to lie on his right side for forty days. From the context it is very clear that these are symbolic acts. For in his lying on his left side, God was laying the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it. The house of Israel here means the ten northern tribes. In his lying on his right side for forty days, he was bearing upon it the iniquity of the house of Judah.

That these were symbolic acts is evident from the fact that we are told that the days were appointed to represent years. The three hundred and ninety days signified three hundred and ninety years of the iniquity of the house of Israel. The forty days indicated the forty years of the iniquity of the house of Judah.

It is rather difficult to determine the exact meaning of the prophet's bearing the iniquity of the two houses of Israel and of Judah. Some scholars think that the three hundred and ninety days, representing three hundred and ninety years of the iniquity of the house of Israel, are to be reckoned from the disruption of the kingdom upon the death of Solomon to the overthrow of the northern kingdom; and the forty days, representing the forty years of Judah's iniquity, were the last forty years of the kingdom of Judah. I am inclined to this position, although I shall not be dogmatic in regard to it.

It is clear from the record that the iniquity of Israel was far greater and more prolonged than that, of Judah, but Judah's forty years of sin and iniquity were aggravated by the fact that they had more light and opportunities than the northern kingdom had. God punishes sin. Wrongdoing must be expiated by punishment. This is a general principle, as all will

acknowledge. Thus God was righteous and just in bringing punishment upon these two kingdoms for their iniquities.

Throughout the four hundred and thirty days during which the prophet was lying on both sides, he was to eat his food and drink his water according to measure. Thus, in 4:9-17 specific instructions were given to him as to how much food he should take and what sort it should be, together with the proper amount of water he should take each day. Moreover, he was told to prepare his food in a certain way. But the prophet protested and begged earnestly that he be permitted to prepare it in another way, which request was granted. The Lord took into consideration the feelings and the desires of his faithful servant.

Upon Ezekiel 4:4-8 and Numbers 14:34 is built what is known as *the year-day theory*. In substance this hypothesis assumes the following position to be correct: A day in prophecy always foreshadows a year in history. Upon this theory is based great chronological schemes. Jews and Christians have adopted this method in order to unravel the future, but all of these efforts which have been based upon the year-day theory have failed.

It is true that, in these symbolic acts of Ezekiel, each day he lay upon his side represented a year in actual history, but it seems that these days symbolized years that were already passed. Israel's iniquity had already been committed and so had Judah's, and they had been and were still being punished. Thus Ezekiel, chapter 4, does not lend itself and its support to this theory. God said to Israel when she refused to enter the land of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea that they would have to wander around in the wilderness for forty years. The statement is made that, as the twelve messengers spied out the land of Canaan for forty days and the people acted upon the advice of the ten unfaithful spies, the nation would have to wander around in the wilderness for forty years—a year for a day. This historical account is used as proof of the year-day theory. It is true that, in this instance, the prophet was looking forward to the forty years of wilderness wandering, but there was a natural basis upon which this statement was made. It took forty years for that disobedient, rebellious generation to die off and for the new generation to arise to take its place. Thus we can see the appropriateness of the statement, a year for a day.

Let us assume that the year-day theory is correct and apply it to some other instances of

Scripture. For example, let us look at Genesis 15:13,14: "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Here we are told that Abraham's seed (Isaac and his descendants) would be under foreign domination and slavery and that after four hundred years, they would come forth from this slavery. We know that this referred to Israel's being under Egyptian rule, and that their coming forth indicated their leaving the land of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and their coming into the land of Canaan, out of which God would cast the seven nations dwelling therein. At the casting out of Ishmael from the family circle of Abraham and the adoption of Isaac as *the* seed, we may count a four-hundred-year period, which terminated with Israel's coming forth out of Egyptian bondage under Moses. Let us suppose that the year-day theory is correct and apply it to this instance. Then we must multiply four hundred years by $365\frac{1}{4}$, since there are $365\frac{1}{4}$ days in a year, and consider that Israel is in servitude to Egypt for that period—146,000 years for Israel to be under Egyptian domination. Now this is absurd. Thus the application of this so-called year-day theory makes an absurdity, which is contrary to all facts and all reason, out of this passage.

Again, let us apply this theory to the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity. Accordingly Israel would not be in Babylonian captivity for seventy years, but would be there $25,567\frac{1}{2}$ years. The record says that they would be there seventy years only. We know also from the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah that, at the end of the seventy-year period, Zerubbabel, the prince of the house of David, and Joshua, the high priest, led back to the land of their fathers those captives who wished to return to their native soil. Thus, in applying this so-called principle to concrete cases, we see that the passages are reduced to absurdities.

But many of those who believe in this theory (and they are honest, good, sincere men of God) turn to Daniel, chapter 9, and find there positive proof for it. They call our attention to the fact that the angel Gabriel said to Daniel that there were seventy weeks determined upon the holy city and upon Daniel's people (the Jewish race) for the bringing in of six things, which will characterize the Millennial Age. These weeks are interpreted as periods of seven days, literal days. The initial date of this period under discussion begins with the issuing of the decree to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem. The end of the 69th week is the year when Messiah is cut off and has nothing. Or, from the issuing of the decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem

to the cutting off of the Messiah are 483 days of this prophecy. But those that adopt the year-day theory say that there were not 483 days but exactly 483 years. Then they turn to the year 444 (5) B.C., which was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem, they count from that time to 32 A.D., and figure 483 years to the very day. Thus they say that though the angel Gabriel spoke in terms of days, he meant years since the year-day theory is the true principle upon which prophecy is written. Spoken of in engineering terms, the years are scaled down to days. Draftsmen in making blueprints draw their plans according to scale. Sometimes a quarter of an inch on the diagram represents a foot of the project for which the plans are drawn. Thus we are told that God's blueprint of prophetic times is drawn to the scale of a year for a day. Daniel, chapter 9, is used as positive proof of this position. Is this correct?

My answer to this query is a most emphatic denial. Let us remember as we approach this question that "a text apart from its context is a pretext." We therefore must look at the context to determine what is meant by a week. A glance at verses 1 and 2 shows that Daniel the prophet was reading the prophecy of Jeremiah which foretold the seventy years of Babylonian captivity of Israel. He understood that the prediction found in Jeremiah, chapters 25 and 29, when studied in the light of "the books" meant the number of years of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely, seventy. Thus he understood that seventy years of these prophecies meant seventy years—nothing more, nothing less. Then he began to pray about Israel's condition, for it then was the 68th year of the seventy years of the Babylonian captivity. In answer to his prayer the angel Gabriel came and told him that he had been sent from God to give him wisdom and understanding. Daniel therefore was urged by the angel to give heed to what he was about to tell him. Thus Gabriel said, in substance, to Daniel: Daniel, there are seventy sevens decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy people. The word that is rendered *week* in the English Version simply means *seven*. Daniel had been thinking about a period of seventy years. He was thinking and praying about Israel's restoration. He did not understand the prophecy fully. This is seen by the fact that the angel was dispatched to give him wisdom and understanding—wisdom and understanding in the things which he had been studying. Hence he had not arrived at the correct conclusion with reference to the prophecy. Gabriel therefore said that there were seventy-sevens decreed upon Jerusalem and upon the holy people. The question immediately arises, *Seventy sevens of what?* The answer is: *Seventy sevens of the things about which he had been reading, thinking, and praying.* About what had he been reading and praying? Verse 2 tells us, namely, *years*. The Babylonian

captivity lasted for one period of seventy years. But this great period of exile for Israel and of foreign servitude is not to be a period of seventy times one year, but seventy times seven years, or 490 years. Thus the seventy weeks should have been rendered seventy sevens. Then we can understand what the angel meant—that he was talking about years. The seventy sevens are seventy sevens of years. This passage, therefore, lends no support to the theory that a day in prophecy foreshadows a year in history.

In conclusion, let me call attention to the golden rule of interpretation which is this: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

The reader should by all means turn to the article under the Laws of Interpretation in this issue and study the discussion of the [golden rule of interpretation](#). If it is followed, then many, many unnecessary errors and wrong conclusions in the interpretation of the Scriptures will be avoided.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 5)

The Final Collapse Of Judah Under The Babylonian Siege

This month's study in the Book of Ezekiel will consist of chapters 5, 6 and 7. These chapters are comparatively easy to understand and need very little interpretation or special notice. But, in order that the reader might get the most out of the explanation, I am asking each one to read these three chapters carefully. In doing this, one will be well repaid for the effort. — D.L.C.

We have already seen in Ezekiel 4:1-4 that the destruction of Jerusalem was portrayed by the prophet on a piece of tile. Following this graphic representation of the coming calamity were the symbolic acts of the prophet, who lay upon his left side for 390 days and upon his right side for forty days. In doing this, he was symbolically representing himself as bearing the iniquity of the northern kingdom and of the kingdom of Judah. Following these symbolic acts is a description of the horrible conditions that would exist during the final stages of the coming war against Judah. This last prophecy is found in 4:9-17. These symbolic acts are completed in the action of the prophet in having his head and his beard shaved as set forth in 5:1-4, to which we now turn our attention.

Message Regarding Jerusalem

The siege of Jerusalem, which occurred in the ninth year of Zedekiah and continued until the eleventh, is set forth graphically by the prophet's shaving his hair and his beard, by his taking the hair and dividing it into three equal parts, and then by his disposing of it as follows: One-third he burned in the city; the second third he smote with the sword round about the city; the final third he scattered to the winds and drew out a sword after it. But he was to take a part of that last third and to wrap it in his garment. Even a part of this small portion he was to cast into the midst of the fire and burn.

The third of the hair that was burned within the city was to represent the population that would be destroyed by famine and other events incident to the war; the second third was to set forth those that would be destroyed in the fighting round about the city; and the final third was to represent those that would survive and would be scattered among the nations, some of whom would be killed in various ways.

In verses 5-17 the prophet set forth in a most vivid, graphic manner this final siege of Jerusalem. He, however, prefaced his description by telling the cause and showing why God had to deal with His ancient people thus. In verse 5 the Lord declared: "This is Jerusalem: I have set her in the midst of the nations, and countries are round about her. 6 And she hath rebelled against mine ordinances in doing wickedness more than the nations, and against my statutes more than the countries that are round about her; for they have rejected mine ordinances, and as for my statutes, they have not walked in them" (vs. 5,6). Palestine, as we learn from Ezekiel 38:12, is the center of the earth. God gave this strategic position of the nations to His Chosen People in order that they might hold aloft the torch of His revelation to the nations round about. When God dispersed the nations at Babel and directed by His invisible hand the people to those parts of the earth that were to be their future homes, He did this with reference to the children of Israel; that is, He gave the ancestors of the Chinese people that country which is now known as China. The ancestors of the Hindus were directed by God's overruling providence to the country that is now known as India. What is true of these two nations is correct concerning all others. When God was thus allocating the earth to the various races and tribes, He did this with reference to the children of Israel; that is, He related all nations to the people of Israel; for it was, and continues to be, His plan to bless all nations in and through the Jew. The Lord's calling attention to Israel's being in the midst of the nations is an echo of the strategic position which she occupies in world history in the plan of God. Israel has been called the hub of the nations. All movements of the nations throughout the centuries have revolved around the Jewish people. They are doing the same thing today. Palestine and the Jew are foremost in the eyes of the people today and will continue to be more and more as the days pass.

With increased light come added responsibilities. God gives us advantages and opportunities and expects us to use them in the forwarding of His plans and His purposes. When, however, we do not measure up to these responsibilities, the punishment for delinquency is

commensurate with the failure. The Lord spoke of Israel's being more turbulent than the nations round about her. In reality she did not do worse than they had done; but when we take into consideration the opportunities and advantages that the people of Israel had enjoyed, they actually had acted worse.

In Ezekiel 5:8 the Lord said: "Behold, I, even I, am against thee; and I will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations." It is an awful thing for anyone to be in such a position that God has to array Himself against him. But God, being a holy, moral Being who cannot countenance sin, must take this attitude whenever His people sin against light and refuse to live up to their advantages and opportunities.

According to 5:9,10 the Lord stated that He would do in Israel what He had never done in any nation. Here He declared that the fathers should eat the sons in the midst of the city and the sons should eat the fathers; that is, during the siege famine would stalk on every hand and, in the dire extremity to which the people would be brought, the populace would turn to cannibalism. Josephus tells us of things like this that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. But it is clear that Ezekiel was talking about the siege of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Palestine. But we may be certain that history duplicates itself.

The reason that God would pour out His punishment upon Israel to such an extent is that she had defiled His sanctuary with her abominations—idols and idolatrous practices. According to the symbolic representations only one-third of the people of the city would survive the final collapse and would be taken into captivity. They would be followed by the sword because of their wickedness.

The Lord indicated to the people through Ezekiel that He would let His wrath and anger burn against them until His holiness should be satisfied and rest. He could not do otherwise. Holiness cannot tolerate sin. Every sin and transgression must receive a just recompense of reward.

In the latter part of chapter 5 the prophet declared that the city of Jerusalem should be

destroyed, forsaken, and become a reproach, a hiss, and a by-word among the nations who lived round about. This prediction was literally fulfilled.

The Message To The Mountains Of Israel

In chapter 6 we have another graphic illustration of a prediction that was made against the mountains of Israel, that is, the land of Palestine.

The prediction found in 6:1-7 is very easily understood. The language is addressed to the mountains of Israel as if they were persons, that could understand a message from God. On the tops of the mountains, when Israel entered the land of Canaan, were the high places in which the idols of Canaan were worshiped. Israel was commanded by the Lord to destroy all of these places. She, however, disobeyed the Lord and went after idolatry as she had done in Egypt. The prophets constantly hurled their invectives against this paganism. During the great reforms of Kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah the high places were broken down, as a rule. In some of these campaigns, however, they were not. The reforms under Josiah were more thorough-going and systematic than those under his three predecessors in this fight against idolatry. The language of these seven verses shows that idolatry was to be swept from the land of Israel by the final collapse of the kingdom of Judah under the blows of the Babylonians. We are constantly told that Israel was cured of idolatry from the time of the Babylonian Exile until the present. This statement, roughly speaking, is correct. Yet Israel has not been purged entirely of idolatry in every shape, form, and fashion. A person can erect an idol of most anything and can worship it. There are certain systems of philosophy which men practically revere. Many worship at the shrine of education and scholarship. They give the devotion of their souls to these things just as Israel rendered her homage to pagan idols. We learn, however, from various predictions, especially those in Isaiah and in Revelation, that in the end time idolatry will spread all over the world; and the Israelites, as well as all other peoples, will fall down and worship the works of their own hands. This will occur, as we learn from various passages, in the time of the Tribulation. At that time, however, the great world-wide revival will take place. This campaign will be conducted by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and multiplied hundreds of millions of people will turn from their idolatry to the true and living God. Then, and only then, will Israel, as well as all other nations, be purged from all idolatry.

In Ezekiel 6:8-10 the Lord, still speaking to the mountains of Israel, declared that there would be a remnant that would survive the sword and escape the trying ordeal of the siege. Moreover, this remnant that would survive would be scattered among the nations. By the dire experiences through which the nation would be caused to pass, the people would learn something of how God's heart had been broken by the lewd heart of His delinquent, disobedient people. This portion of the prophecy concludes with the prediction that she would be brought to the point where she would loathe herself in her own sight because of the evils which she had committed. Finally, Israel will learn the truth that Jehovah is God, and that He has not spoken in vain to His ancient people.

Finally, the last paragraph of chapter 6, consisting of verses 11-14, renews the threat against Israel because of her idolatrous practices. In order to emphasize the gravity of the situation, the prophet was commanded to smite with his hand and stamp with his foot and say, "Alas! because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel; for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. 12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my wrath upon them. 13 And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, on all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the places where they offered sweet savor to all their idols. 14 And I will stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate and waste, from the wilderness toward Diblah, throughout all their habitations: and they shall know that I am Jehovah" (6:11-14).

Dirge Over The Downfall Of The Kingdom Of Judah

"Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me saying, 2 And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah unto the land of Israel, An end: the end is come upon the four corners of the land. 3 Now is the end upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways; and I will bring upon thee all thine abominations. 4 And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity; but I will bring thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah" (7:1-4).

In these verses God announced that an end had come upon the four corners of the land. This judgment was due to the fact that Israel had sinned. The situation had developed to the extent that God declared that He would neither pity nor spare the nation, but would bring upon her the ways of her evil actions. A person or a nation may continue in the practice of sin until he or it reaches the point beyond which there is no possibility of escaping the severest judgments of God. The psalmist, in Psalm 119:126, declared: "It is time for Jehovah to work; *For they have made void thy law.*" This is exactly what had occurred in Israel. The Lord is long-suffering and is kind, refusing to deal drastically with any situation until He is actually forced to do so. As proof of this proposition I simply need to call attention to the statement found in Genesis 15:16: "And in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full." The Lord revealed to Abraham that his seed should sojourn in a land not their own and that his seed should serve the people of that land. They would have to remain there for four generations, until the Canaanites in the land of Palestine would have filled up the cup of their iniquity to overflowing. Although God had given the land of Palestine to Abraham and his descendants, He would not let Israel come forth out of Egypt to take possession of the country until after the original inhabitants of the land had gone so very far that they were beyond reach of the truth. When they did fill up their cup of iniquity to overflowing—when they had gone beyond all possibility of recovery—the Lord then brought Israel out of Egypt into the land and permitted her to destroy the people who had sunk so low into sin that nothing could reach them and bring them back to God.

Zedekiah and the nation of Judah had continued to sin against light and to plunge to the depth of rebellion against God until it was impossible to reach them. A summary statement of the condition of the nation is set forth in the following passage: "Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. 15 And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: 16 but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (II Chron. 36:14-16).

In Ezekiel 7:5-9 the Lord reiterates the thoughts that are presented in the first four verses. Following this paragraph, in verses 10-13, the prophet continued the same dirge over the

nation: "Behold, the day, behold, it cometh: thy doom is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded. 11 Violence is risen up unto a rod of wickedness; none of them *shall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of their wealth: neither shall there be eminency among them. 12 The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 13 For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they be yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, none shall return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life."

In verses 14-27 we have a picture of the dissolution of the state and of the terrible havoc that would be wrought in the final downfall and collapse of the nation. According to verse 14, when the enemy invades the country, the trumpet is sounded, but the people have no heart for the war. The reason for this apathy is stated in these words: "... for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof." In verse 15 the prophet portrays the siege of Jerusalem. Fighting is being carried on outside of the city of Jerusalem and pestilence and famine are raging within. Those living in the open country are killed with the sword, and those in the cities of the land die with pestilence and famine. The helpless and hopeless condition of the nation is set forth in verse 16. Those who are not killed by the famine and the sword are seen as doves of the valleys upon the mountains, who are lamenting and mourning the national situation. Then in verse 17 he describes the people as having hands that are feeble and knees that are weak as water. At this time the people gird themselves with sack-cloth in a half-hearted attitude of repentance. They stand dazed at the situation, being unable to analyze and to evaluate their situation before God. Being in the slough of despair, they lose all interest, even in material things. They cast their silver in the street and their gold is considered as an unclean thing. At times Israel had purchased immunity to invasion by giving large sums of money to an aggressor nation. For example, she paid ransom money to Assyria. But on this occasion they are not able to do this. Their silver and their gold, according to verse 19, shall not be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's wrath. Neither their souls nor their stomachs, according to this prediction, will be satisfied with that which is available. Everything that has been considered of value and prized by the people is seized and destroyed. The people, instead of accepting God as their Sovereign and Lord, have made their images and abominable things and are worshiping them. On account of these things, God turns His face away from the nation and declares that "... they shall profane my secret *place*," namely, the sanctuary.

In the final paragraph, verses 23-27, we seen an invincible conqueror, ruthless and cruel, being brought by the Lord against the nation. The people of the land are puffed up with pride, and bloody crimes are the order of the day. The condition of the people, spiritually and morally, has deteriorated to the very lowest level. The die is cast; the Rubicon crossed. Nothing can now avert the complete catastrophe. In their extremity the people seek for a vision from the prophet of God. But it is too late. The law has perished from the priest and council from the elders. The king and the royal family mourn over the desolate condition. The people of the country are troubled. National collapse and disintegration are inevitable. All of these catastrophes are the judgment of God upon the impenitent nation. After the collapse and fall the people in their sober moments, in reflecting over the national disaster, will recognize that Jehovah is God and that He is the one who has punished the nation for its evils.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 6)

Jehovah's Withdrawal From The City And It's Downfall

Ezekiel received his call to the ministry on the fifth day of the fourth month of Jehoiachin's captivity. A year and two months later, on the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of the same captivity, Ezekiel received a second communication from the Lord in the form of a vision. This oracle is found in chapters 8-11. They therefore must be studied as a single unit.

From Ezekiel 8:1 we learn that the elders of Israel had come to the prophet's house and were sitting before him. During the interview the prophet fell into a trance and was caught up in the visions of God and taken to Jerusalem, where he saw the actual conditions that existed there. To him was revealed also the punishment of God that would come upon the evildoers.

The question immediately arises as to why God made this revelation concerning the conditions in Jerusalem to the prophet among the exiles in Babylon. As one studies the Book of Ezekiel, he must likewise study the supplemental data which is found in the Book of Jeremiah. From this latter prophet we learn that there were prophets in Babylon who were speaking falsely in the name of the Lord, promising the people that, within a very short time, the exiles would be permitted to return to the land of their fathers. Believing the false predictions of these unworthy prophets, the exiles were constantly kept in a state of uncertainty, hoping all the time to hear the good news that they would be able to return. The exiles believed the false messages of these untrue prophets and discredited absolutely the divine revelation which had been made through Jeremiah concerning the duration of the captivity and its being seventy years. Jeremiah therefore wrote a letter, which is now chapter 25 of his book, to the exiles telling them to settle down into a well-ordered life and to become obedient to the laws of the country in which they lived. He, however, assured them that, at the expiration of the period of exile, they would be permitted to return to the land of their fathers in fulfillment of the prediction. Thus these exiles were on the tiptoes of expectation, hoping to hear some good news concerning the return to the homeland. It was quite likely that the elders of the people

came to Ezekiel to discuss this question and to receive a message from God relative to the same.

On the other hand, the people who had been left in Jerusalem and in the land of Israel had misunderstood the situation. They concluded that the exiles were out of fellowship with God, and that they had lost all share in the homeland. Moreover, they thought that they themselves were still in the favor of God by virtue of the fact that they had not been deported with the other two groups of captives who had already gone into exile. Thus these who remained in the land assumed an attitude of superiority toward their exiled brethren. They went so far as to speak out against them and to say that the land was theirs in possession and that they were secure.

Instead of their being the favored ones who, in the eyes of the Lord, were the better of the two classes, the Lord made a revelation through Jeremiah to the effect that those who had been taken into exile were like good figs in a basket, while those who were left in the land were like rotten figs (Jer. chap. 24). In view of the two interpretations upon the national situation placed there by the two groups of Israelites, the Lord made to Ezekiel the revelation found in chapters 8-11.

A Second Theophany

8 And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord Jehovah fell there upon me. 2 Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire; from the appearance of his loins and downward, fire; and from his loins and upward, as the appearance of brightness, as it were glowing metal. 3 And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the gate of the inner *court* that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. 4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the appearance that I saw in the plain (Ezek. 8:1-4).

In Ezekiel, chapter 1, we have the theophany which was granted to the prophet at the time

of his call. The second theophany is recorded as having taken place a year and two months later and is the one which we have for consideration at the present time. It pertains, as we shall see, to the overthrow of the city of Jerusalem. As we know from subsequent history, the siege of the city by the Babylonians began only four years later, in the tenth year of Jehoiachin's captivity which was the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign. The final collapse of Jewish resistance occurred in the eleventh of Zedekiah's reign. The third theophany occurred in the twenty-fifth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, which was fourteen years after the downfall of Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign. In this final theophany God revealed to the prophet the conditions which will exist in Israel and Jerusalem during the great millennial reign of our Lord.

In verse 1 of the quotation above we are told that "the hand of the Lord Jehovah" was upon Ezekiel. This is a phrase which we see frequently occurring in the Old Testament Scriptures. What is its significance? On this point we gather information from I Kings 18:45,46: "... And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel: 46 and the hand of Jehovah was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." From this verse we see that the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah, and that he was thereby enabled to outrun Ahab's chariot in going from Mount Carmel to Jezreel, a distance of something like ten or fifteen miles. Thus the hand of the Lord imparted strength and superhuman power which enabled the prophet to outrun the horses. In II Kings 3:15 we have language to this effect: "But now bring me [Elisha] a minstrel. And it came to pass that when the minstrel played, that the hand of Jehovah came upon him." Here it is quite evident that the result of the hand of Jehovah's being upon Elisha was that he was enabled to see a vision which portrayed the results of the coming of the present conflict between Judah and Moab. A glance at Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, shows that the significance of the hand of Jehovah's being upon the prophet was that he was granted a vision to foretell the future restoration of Israel to favor with God and to millennial blessing.

As the prophet sat in his house before the elders of Israel, the hand of the Lord Jehovah fell upon him and, lo, in the visions of God he saw the appearance of the throne-chariot which he had seen at the time of his call, when he was with the captives by the river Chebar. That this throne-chariot was identical with that which he had seen in the former vision is asserted in verse 4: "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the appearance that I saw in the plain." If the vision is not clear to the reader's mind at the present, he should

turn back and read Ezekiel, chapter 1. There he will see a description of this theophany. Cherubim were supporting a pavement above them, upon which was located a throne. On it in regal majesty sat one like unto a Son of man, whose presence was draped and veiled with the out-shining of glory.

Ezekiel says that, when this vision appeared to him, the one who sat upon the throne reached forth His hand, took him by the locks of his head, and transported him in the visions of God to Jerusalem. The prophet is very careful to note the fact that this was in the visions of God. This fact shows that it was not an actual transportation of the prophet to Jerusalem, but that only in the vision was he transported to the land of his nativity. In this connection, let me say that we must not confound his being transported in the visions of God to Jerusalem with the account of his being taken by the Spirit of God from the place where God first called him to Tel-abib, preparatory to his delivering his first message to the exiles. As we saw when we studied this portion of the Word, this was a literal transportation of the prophet from one place to another location and is similar to the case of Philip, who was taken by the Spirit of the Lord from the place where he baptized the eunuch to Azotus, probably a distance of about fifty miles (Acts. 8:39,40).

The Idolatrous Condition Of Jerusalem

One would think that Israel, who had enjoyed such unparalleled opportunities and advantages to learn the truth concerning the true and living God would never have lapsed into idolatry. But human nature is very strange and does the unexpected. Even when Israel was in the land of Egypt, she worshipped idols. After she had been miraculously brought forth out of Egyptian bondage and had seen the various manifestations of God's presence at Mount Sinai, she made the golden calf to worship (Exod., chap. 32). During the period of the Judges the history of the Chosen People ran in cycles of apostasy from God, being delivered over to foreign domination, servitude, and repentance and calling upon God for deliverance. Even during the Monarchical Period the nation lapsed into idolatry. Then a king, faithful to God, arose and instituted reforms. The four great reformers in Israel were Kings Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. All of these men did a marvelous piece of work for God against idolatry.

Never did the nation sink so low into idolatry as she did in the days of King Manasseh, who

reigned over Judah for fifty-five years. The reader should stop here and read the account of his reign in II Kings 21:1-18 and II Chronicles 33:1-17. Amon, the son of Manasseh, continued the idolatrous policy of his father. But young King Josiah reversed the national policy and instituted the most thoroughgoing reforms throughout the nation of all the great men of Israel.

History, we are told, repeats itself. Notwithstanding the marvelous work of restoration to God during the reign of Josiah, the nation plunged into idolatry under Zedekiah, the last king who sat upon the throne of Judah. The extent of this turning to idolatry is set forth in the eighth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy, to which we now turn for a further study.

In verses 5 and 6 of this chapter the prophet records his being taken in vision to the Temple at Jerusalem. Upon his arrival he was told to lift up his eyes toward the north. When he did so, he saw north of the gate of the altar the "image of jealousy in the entry." From all of the data given, it appears that this image was in the outer court just north of the gate through which one passed from this outer court to the inner one. This gate was due north from the brazen altar of sacrifice. One standing in the gate and looking northward from the inner court could see this image.

What is the significance of its being called "the image of jealousy"? Various answers have been given, most of which are very unsatisfactory. Some have thought that it was the Phoenician goddess Astarte, the consort of the male god, Baal, of that nation. Others have surmised that it was Adonis of the Greek pantheon. There is some plausibility to the arguments advanced for these identifications. Others, on the contrary, have thought that this word, jealousy, is an echo of Deuteronomy 32:21, which passage foretells Israel's provoking the Lord to jealousy by idols—her giving to idols the worship and reverence that was due to His holy name.

Having seen this idol which the people of Jerusalem were worshiping, the prophet was brought to the door of the court. This door probably was the door of the gate, near which this image of jealousy stood. On either side of the passageway through this gate were chambers, for priests and for various purposes. Ezekiel was told, "... dig now in the wall," which thing he did. He found a door that had been plastered over and upon opening it, saw the gross

idolatry into which the nation had plunged. Painted on the walls were pictures of all creeping things, abominable beasts and all the idols of the house of Israel.

Before these pictures there stood seventy of the elders of Israel, who were engaged in the worship of these icons. Among these men as their leader was Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. All of these men had their censers and were offering incense to the icons—as we call them in the Greek Catholic Church today. This Jaazaniah must be distinguished from the man of that name mentioned in Ezekiel 11:1. Jaazaniah, the leader of the seventy elders, was the son of Shaphan, as already noted, whereas the Jaazaniah of 11:1 was the son of Azzur.

Let us, as we think of the prophets digging into the wall and discovering a door and opening it, remember that Ezekiel saw this in vision. It was not an *actual* digging into the wall. But what he saw in vision was the reality that was literally being carried on by the men in Jerusalem as they in actuality were worshiping heathen, foreign gods.

From the place and the chamber where these men were worshiping idols, the prophet was taken to "the gate of Jehovah's house which was toward the north." This door of Jehovah's house is understood by the best scholars to be the gate in the north wall of the sacred enclosure which opened into the city north of the Temple area. Upon being brought here, the prophet saw the women of Jerusalem worshiping the Babylonian god, Tammuz.

From this place Ezekiel was brought to the inner court of the Temple and was in a position between the brazen altar and the door of the Temple proper. Here he saw twenty-five men with their backs toward the Temple and faces toward the east, worshiping the sun, the queen of heaven. The Babylonians, especially, worshiped the sun. Many other nations have likewise worshiped it, because they have realized that life upon earth would not be possible if it were not for its shining, giving forth its life-giving rays.

Thus the prophet was shown some of the many abominations of Israel.

Though Israel was cleansed from gross idolatry by the Babylonian siege and the fall of Jerusalem under the sledge hammer blows of Nebuchadnezzar and has never until this day fallen into idolatry, the time will come when she with all nations will take a plunge into the

grossest idolatry of all the ages. This turning from the living God, the Creator of all, to the creature and worshipping it is set forth in various passages of Scripture. For instance, in Isaiah's message to Damascus we get a picture of the Tribulation Period and learn that men throughout the world will revert to worshipping idols. The gospel will be preached and then vast hosts will turn from their idols to their Maker and serve Him. We learn the same truths in Revelation 9:20,21: "And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."

The inhabitants of Jerusalem had gone so very far in apostasy from God that judgment was inevitable: "Therefore will I also deal in wrath; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ezek. 8:18; cf. II Chron. 36:11-16).

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 7)

Jehovah's Withdrawal From The City And Its Downfall (Part II)

Since in this article Ezekiel, chapters 9,10, and 11 are studied, the reader is requested to turn to his Bible and read them. By his doing so before examining this article, he will be better prepared to understand what is being said. It is always a good practice to read a certain portion of Scripture before listening to or reading an exposition of the same. Let the Word of God have the opportunity to make its own impression upon the heart.—D.L.C.

As we saw in our study last month, Ezekiel, chapters 8-11, constitutes one vision, which was granted to the prophet in the sixth month of the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. We studied the idolatrous condition of Jerusalem as set forth in the eighth chapter. We shall now give special attention to the remaining chapters which record this vision.

The Sealing Of The Faithful In The City

The seal is the sign of ownership. To illustrate, the seal of the United States Government indicates that anything that is thus put under it is the property of the Government and is under its protection. This conclusion is confirmed by a study of various passages of the Word in which we read of the sealing of certain ones.

According to 9:1 the one who was escorting the prophet around on his tour of inspection of the city (in his vision) cried in his ears when he issued a command, "Cause ye them that have charge over the city to draw near, every man with his destroying weapon in his hand." Certain ones are called forth who are represented as having charge over the city of Jerusalem. When we read the Scriptures, we are impressed with the thought that the angels are ministering spirits who are sent forth to do service for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation. Moreover, from the Book of Daniel we see that Michael, who is an archangel, has charge of

the Jewish nation. In the Book of Revelation we see that certain angels are assigned positions of responsibility and trust with reference to various things. For instance, there is the angel who has charge of the waters. Another has control of fire. Thus when we study the Scriptures, we come to the conclusion that these celestial beings are God's lieutenants who carry out His orders with reference to nations, cities, and individuals.

When the order was issued, "six men came from the way of the upper gate ... every man with his slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man in the midst of them clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side." These seven came and took their stand near the brazen altar of the Temple. In the light of what has just been said, we conclude that these were angelic beings, to whom special authority had been delegated with reference to the city of Jerusalem.

Again we see the vision of the "glory of the God of Israel." Doubtless this is the same vision as the one which he had just beheld in the beginning of the vision. It was like the one which he saw when he received his call (chapter 1). The God of glory was seated upon the throne which was located upon a pavement placed above the heads of the cherubim. On this occasion the one thus seated upon this throne went up from his seat and called to the man with the writer's inkhorn. He immediately instructed him to go through the midst of the city, even through Jerusalem, and to set a mark upon the forehead of every man who sighed and wept over the conditions that existed in the city at that time. Then turning to the six others, the Lord told them to follow the man who was putting his mark on the innocent God-fearing ones. These were to have no pity upon anyone, but they were to slay the old and the young, male and female alike, who had not been marked by the one with the writers inkhorn. God knows the heart. Man may justify his actions and put forth certain claims as to his loyalty to the Lord and his innocency in regard to various matters. The Lord sees and knows the motives that prompt every action. It is therefore impossible to deceive the Lord.

This angel was to begin his work at the sanctuary and so were those six who were to destroy the wicked to begin at the same place. Judgment always begins at the house of God (I Pet. 4:17).

These destroying angels were commanded to defile the house of God by filling its courts with the corpses of the slain. A dead body in Israel always defiled the land or anyone who touched

it. Thus these messengers of death went forth and smote the city. As the prophet saw, in vision, the slaughter, his heart was moved to intercession in behalf of the remnant of the nation (vs. 8). In answer to the prophet's prayer in behalf of this remnant, the Lord declared, "The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of wroth *of judgment*: for they say, Jehovah hath forsaken the land, and Jehovah seeth not. 10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will bring their way upon their head" (vss. 9,10). After completing his mission, the man with the inkhorn returned to the side of the Lord and reported that he had done what had been commanded of him.

The innocent people of this vision were marked by the man with the inkhorn. This mark protected them, for those angels with the weapons of destruction passed them by. This mark was what we might call a seal, denoting ownership by the Lord. This incident reminds one of the sealing of the believers in the New Testament—though of a different kind and character. All believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13,14). This sealing denotes ownership, protection, and security. Everyone who has been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise belongs to the Lord and is certain of his eternal salvation.

Again, one is reminded of the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will conduct the world-wide revival in the Tribulation Period. These future evangelists will be sealed by the Lord and will thus be protected from all harm and danger and from the judgments of the Tribulation. Thus they go forth and proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to the entire world during that period of judgment. The results of their labors will be an untold number of people from every nation, tribe, tongue, and language who wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Of course, the true church of Jesus Christ is taken out of the world prior to the Tribulation; hence this epochal event is prior to the sealing of these 144,000 Jewish evangelists.

The Destruction Of The City Of Jerusalem

In chapter 10 we again get a full description of Jehovah who appeared to the prophet in his vision, as He sat upon His portable throne. The information which we receive in chapter 10 supplements that which is given in chapter 1. Hence it should be read along with chapter 1.

Over the heads of the cherubim was a firmament which was "as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne." The sapphire stone reminds one of the vision which was granted to Moses, Aaron, and seventy elders of Israel (Exod. 24:9-11). The reader should also look at Revelation, chapter 5, in this connection, as he thinks of this sapphire stone upon which the throne of God is placed.

The one seated upon the throne, according to Ezekiel 10:2, spoke to the man clothed in linen and gave him instructions to go among the cherubim who were supporting the firmament upon which the throne was placed. He was to enter among the whirling wheels and go under the cherub, fill his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. "And he spake unto the man clothed in linen, and said, Go in between the whirling *wheels*, even under the cherub, and fill both thy hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in my sight" (10:2).

According to this verse the man clothed in linen was to go among or between the cherubim supporting the throne and at the same time he was to go under *the* cherub. When we notice the cherub of this verse and then look at the cherub of 9:3 and consider these two verses in the light of Psalm 18:10ff, we come to the probable conclusion that the cherub here referred to assumes the form of a throne, or it is he who immediately and directly supports the throne upon which Jehovah is seated in majesty.

The man in linen was to get the coals of fire from between the cherubim and to scatter them over the city. This of course was a symbolic act which signified the agency by which the city would be destroyed. This part of the vision was literally carried out by the destruction of the city when it fell under the blows of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

When the man clothed in linen went in between the cherubim, *the* cherub stretched forth its

hand, took coals of fire, and placed them in his hands. He therefore took them, went forth, and did as he was commanded.

The fact that fire was used in this symbolic action signified that the judgment here portrayed would be one that would cleanse and purge the nation of evil. Fire is always used to signify some agent that cleanses or purges. In this connection one is reminded of coals of fire taken from the altar and placed upon the lips of the prophet Isaiah as seen in Isaiah, chapter 6. This symbolic act signified the cleansing of the prophet and his being forgiven.

In Ezekiel 10:9-22 we get another clear vision of the living creatures which supported the throne of Jehovah who appeared to the prophet. In chapter 1 they are called "living creatures." In this passage they are termed cherubim. These creatures seem to be a very high order of angelic beings. The word *cherub* is singular; *cherubim* is plural. A Hebrew word brought directly over from the original into the English which closes with *im* is always a plural noun in the masculine gender, with a few exceptions.

In verse 15 is a statement with reference to the cherubim, which in this instance signifies the four living creatures, supporting the pavement upon which the throne of God was located. In the verse we see this statement: "This is the living creature that I saw by the river Chebar." The same type of language is used in verse 20. Some have concluded that, though the word, cherubim, is plural and indicates more than one, yet because of the use of the term, the living creature, a living creature such as the one here designated consists of four cherubs. Those taking this position reason this way: The prophet speaks of cherubim and then calls them a living creature. As I view things, such a being would be a monstrosity. Each cherub has his own personality and individuality. Four separate and distinct personalities could not be joined by any method whatsoever so as to constitute one living creature. Such a conception, to my way of thinking, is confusion. But what is the significance, then, of the term, living creature? My answer is this: As the prophet stood near this portable throne of Jehovah, he was nearer one of the cherubs supporting it than he was to the others. The cherubim were all of the same nature and essence. To see one was to see the others. Thus he focused his attention upon the cherub that was nearest him and spoke of it, not as a compound unity, but as a representative of the class to which it belonged. This usage I might illustrate by a quotation from Psalm 33:17,

A horse is a vain thing for safety;
neither doth he deliver any by his great power.

Here horse is used in the singular number. But, when we look at the entire context, we know that the sacred writer was not thinking of a single horse, but had in mind soldiers mounted on war horses, who were in ancient days one of the most efficient types of soldiers. Thus the writer, though he used the word, horse, in the singular number, was speaking of a great army of horses and horsemen. In a manner analogous to this usage the prophet employs the word, living creature, in his referring to the various cherubs who supported the throne.

The cherubs seen in the Book of Ezekiel had *four wings* each. Those seen in chapter 1 had *four faces* each. The cherubs, however, appearing in Ezekiel 41:18,19 had only *two faces*. Why the difference? I do not know. The explanation lying back behind this unusual phenomenon may be this: God makes His angels and His ministers assume the forms of fire and winds, whenever the mission upon which they are sent demands their taking these forms (Heb 1:7). Since this is true and since, in one instance, they have four faces and on another occasion have two, we may assume that the conditions in each demand their appearing thus.

When Isaiah was called to the ministry he "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple," the millennial Temple. There were also seraphim present, who were praising the Triune God. Each of these creatures had six wings. In Revelation, chapter 4, we see living creatures who likewise have six wings and who are praising God in the same manner. We conclude, therefore, that both Isaiah and John saw the same angelic beings.

Whether or not these who are called seraphim are of the same order and rank as the cherubim, one may not be positive in asserting. The evidence is too meager to warrant dogmatism on this point.

But we may be absolutely certain that these cherubim and seraphim are a very high order or rank of celestial beings, who stand close in the counsels of the Almighty, and who perform mighty acts and carry out important missions. As proof of this position, one need only to turn

to Revelation, chapter 6. It is one of the seraphim, or living creatures, who issues the order for the coming forth of each of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse—as they are called in theological terms. When each of these issues his orders, the great hosts of angels who are in charge of earthly affairs immediately carry them out. Thus in the Book of Revelation we see that not only the seraphim are carrying out the commands of Jehovah the Almighty, but the lesser angels likewise execute His decrees.

The Conclusion Of The Vision

According to Ezekiel 11:1-4 the prophet was brought to the east gate of Jehovah's house. There he beheld twenty-five men who were under the leadership of Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, the princes of the people. These men seem to have been the leaders of the people during that great crisis. They were the ones who were devising iniquity and giving wicked counsel. By reading the historical portions of the Books of Kings and Chronicles, together with Jeremiah and Ezekiel, one comes to the conclusion that there was a pro-Egyptian party as well as a pro-Babylonian clique in Jerusalem. The former group was in favor of calling upon the Egyptians for aid and assistance in the crisis. The second group was in favor of placating the Babylonians, by the doing of which they hoped to avert a clash with Babylon. When Zedekiah was made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, he swore fealty to him. Notwithstanding his oath, Zedekiah was sponsoring the formation of a group of small nations in Western Asia, that would come together in an alliance for the purpose of revolting against Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom. This is seen in Jeremiah 27:1-11. That Zedekiah had sought assistance from Egypt is evident from Jeremiah 27:6,7. Thus King Zedekiah was in a very embarrassing position within the city and was face to face with a national crisis.

The group in Jerusalem led by the two princes, mentioned above, gave evil counsel by saying that it was not the time to build houses. They, by their propaganda, were hindering all daily commerce and trade. On the other hand, they were declaring that war was inevitable and that all energies must be expended for the purpose of preparing for the war. In other words, they were the war party. Doubtless these encouraged Zedekiah to enter into this alliance of aggression against Babylon. In setting forth their political doctrine, they declared, "This city is the caldron, and we are the flesh." It is altogether possible that this figure was borrowed

from that which was employed by the Lord in the call of Jeremiah to his prophetic ministry (Jer. 1:13ff).

These warmongers compared the city of Jerusalem to a caldron and its inhabitants to the flesh. Thus they declared that war was inevitable, and that everyone must make the best of the situation and bend all energies toward the prosecution of the war.

This group was opposed, as we learn from Jeremiah, by others who were led by this prophet, and who insisted that Israel should turn from her wickedness and sins and should observe the law of God which had been given to her by Moses.

Jeremiah pleaded with the king and the people to observe strictly the law of God and look to Him for deliverance. He likewise promised that God would bring the deliverance if only the people would turn back to Him. Had the people followed the preaching and advice of Jeremiah, the war with Babylon would have been averted and there would have been no Babylonian Exile. But the warmongers of the time were stirring up the people and engendering war. Hence they were said to be devising iniquity and giving evil counsel in the city.

When the prophet was in the presence of these men, the Spirit of God came upon him and he, in speaking for Jehovah, declared to the people: "... for I know the things that come into your mind. 6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. 7 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this *city* is the caldron; but ye shall be brought forth out of the midst of it. 8 Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, saith the Lord Jehovah. 9 And I will bring you forth out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. 10 Ye shall fall by the sword; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. 11 This *city* shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; I will judge you in the border of Israel; 12 and ye shall know that I am Jehovah: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither have ye executed mine ordinances, but have done after the ordinances of the nations that are round about you" (Ezek. 11:6-12).

From this quotation it is evident that the war party had already been the cause of the slaying

of various ones in the city. The prophet therefore, speaking in terms of the figures which they had used, said that the corpses of the people whom they had already slain were the flesh in the caldron. The city of course was the caldron. But according to the prophet those who had been sponsoring the war were not to be slaughtered in the city and thus become flesh in the caldron. On the contrary, they were to be taken out of it and to be destroyed within the borders of Israel. Thus a holy and a righteous God, according to this prediction, would execute vengeance upon them because of their wickedness. The Lord always knows whom to punish and whom to spare.

At this point of the vision Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Of course, his death was the result of the stroke of the judgment of God. Then the prophet thereupon fell upon his face and cried to the Lord, "Ah Lord Jehovah! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" It is to be remembered in this connection that this is what the prophet saw in vision. Of course that which was set forth in this communication was actually carried out in reality.

As we have already seen, certain of the people of the land, the leaders, were taken to Babylon in the third year of King Jehoiakim when Nebuchadnezzar fought against Jerusalem. Still others were carried away into captivity when Jehoiachin was dethroned and carried to Babylon.

The people who had been left in Jerusalem especially and those within the borders of Judah came to the conclusion that God had sent their kinsmen into Babylon because of their wickedness and their sins, but that He had spared them and allowed them to remain in the land of their fathers because of their goodness. They therefore spoke arrogantly against the exiles and boasted of their favored position. Jeremiah, however, inspired by the Spirit of God, took a different view of the situation. He compared those who had been taken into captivity to a basket of good figs, whereas those that were left in the land were thought of as a basket of bad figs, that were so very bad they could not be eaten. But those who were left in the land after the first two deputations of captives took the attitude, expressed in the following words, toward the exiles: "Get you far from Jehovah; unto us is this land given for a possession" (Ezek. 11:14,15). In verses 16-21, however, God spoke about those who had been deported from the land and who had been scattered among the nations as those whom He would gather back eventually from their dispersion among the nations and would establish

them in their own land. At the time of the regathering He would give them a new heart and place a new spirit within them, and they, as a result, would walk in His ways and please Him. That the prophet was not talking about the return under Zerubbabel at the end of the seventy years of Babylonian captivity is evident from the fact that the promises of this passage were not fulfilled in them and to them. But we know from other passages of Scripture that every promise contained in this passage will be literally and completely fulfilled when the Lord gathers His people from all nations and restores them to their land when they acknowledge their national sin and plead for the Messiah to return. This prophecy will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation.

The vision presented in chapters 8-11 comes to a conclusion in 11:22-25. Jehovah on His chariot throne was lifted up from the prophet, going forth from the midst of the city and stood on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. Thus Jehovah departed from His people. Then said the prophet, "The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that Jehovah had showed me."

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 8)

The Flight And Capture Of The King Symbolically Represented And Warning Against A Wrong Attitude Concerning Prophecy

In the first eleven chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy the note which is sounded is that punishment of the nation for its sins was a *certainty*. Such is the gist of each separate oracle. In chapters 12-19 the *necessity* for bringing this punishment is emphasized.

As the people listened to the prophecies from time to time, there doubtless arose, in the minds of many, thoughts and considerations which caused them to doubt the fulfillment of prophecy. Thus these predictions were, as far as they were concerned, invalidated.

Jeremiah in Palestine and Ezekiel in the Exile constantly hurled their philippics of warnings against the nation as they foretold further disasters. Because the predictions were not fulfilled immediately but seemed to be delayed, the people ceased to take the warnings seriously. It was a case similar to that of the boy who cried "wolf, wolf!"—so far as the people were concerned. Thus they doubtless came to the conclusion that, since these prophets had shouted "wolf, wolf!" so very many times and the danger had not materialized, they therefore were not to be terrified by such predictions.

Another consideration must be examined in this connection. There were the true prophets who spoke from the mouth of God. They made revelations of what would be. There were others who spoke out of their own minds and hearts, not having received any disclosures from the Lord. This latter class of prophets are spoken of as prophesying falsely in God's name. They had Moses and the Prophets and could study them. They made their own deductions from what these former prophets had said. These men thought that they had a right to speak upon the basis of former revelations and their deductions therefrom. In other words, these prophets who spoke falsely in the name of the Lord were like many ministers and preachers of the Word today. They study the Bible and draw certain general vague deductions from their investigation of the Sacred Word. They look at the present-day situation

and tell the people what they are confident will be. There are others who study the Word and then tell us that, according to the Word of God, a great, rosy, and beautiful future lies out before us; the church is making wonderful progress; and we are just on the verge of a great change and a new era for which the world is yearning and longing. They see on the political and spiritual horizon nothing that is of an ominous nature. Moreover, they conclude that we, who believe the word of prophecy, who are confident that the prophetic word means exactly what it says and says what it means and that it foretells the perilous times which are immediately before us, are alarmists and calamity howlers. Thus they warn the people against the study of prophecy or the listening to any messages based upon prophecy. These men believe that we who thus see the great dangers that confront us and the fulfillment of prophecy in our day are traditionalists—narrow-minded and bigoted. On the other hand, however, they feel that they are abreast of the times, that they have a clear perception of the present and can see certainly the dim outlines at least of the future. Many of these men of course are sincere and believe that they are interpreting correctly the times in which we are living.

This class of ministers certainly do not interpret the Word correctly, even though they are sincere. They misrepresent God. They are giving forth a vision of their own hearts and not the correct message from God. They are thus speaking falsely in the name of God and misrepresent the teaching of the Word. They are in our society today what those who spoke falsely in the name of the Lord were in the days of the prophets. These men in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel stoutly and bitterly opposed those two prophets and influenced the people against them.

There is, however, a difference between those who spoke falsely in the name of the Lord in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and those who are misinterpreting the Scriptures and are seeing only advancement and progress in our civilization of today. The false prophets of Ezekiel's day reached their conclusions from the study of the Word and from the conditions which existed. But they appeared before the people and declared that what they were giving forth was what they had received at the mouth of God—in the same way as the true prophets received revelations from God. In making these statements they spoke falsely. The false prophets today—and every minister who studies the Word and claims to be preaching the revelation of God is a prophet in one of the biblical senses of that word—do not deliver their

messages and claim that they have received what they are presenting directly by means of a special revelation from God. Nevertheless, they present their messages as ultimately having come from God to them through the Word. But they mislead the people and cause them to believe error.

There is always a margin for the exercise of faith or of doubt. For example, when Moses appeared before Pharaoh and performed miracles by the power of God, the magicians of Egypt likewise appeared with their enchantments, being backed up by the power of Satan, and duplicated some of the miracles which Moses wrought. Finally, however, they confessed that they were not able to duplicate certain ones of the miracles which Moses had wrought. In this situation there was a margin for the exercise of faith and of doubt on the part of the people. The same situation existed in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and all the prophets. The true prophets received visions from God and communications from the Almighty and delivered these faithfully. On the other hand, there were those who were in no sense inspired as were the true prophets; but they learned some general principles from the study of the Word. They began to rationalize and to philosophize concerning the present and the immediate future. Then with oracular dignity they made their pronouncements as bona-fide revelations from God. Of course, what they said was always misleading and false. But there was under those conditions the opportunity for the people to believe or to disbelieve. A like situation exists today. When some faithful servant of God has studied honestly, conscientiously, and thoroughly the Word from cover to cover, he sees and understands by the illumination of the Spirit of God what the Lord has revealed. He therefore gives forth his messages. There are others who hold a different attitude toward the Word, who do not believe that the Bible is a unique and absolutely inspired revelation of God, but who rationalize trends and events today and promise to the people a glorious new era in the immediate future. Thus the people have an opportunity of exercising faith or doubt.

In this connection we should likewise see another consideration which seemed to break the force of the predictions of the prophets. The Hebrew people were chosen of God for a special mission. God called them His people. The idea gripped the nation. The people therefore thought that it was impossible for the Lord to cast them off—even though He had threatened to do this. Was not the Temple in their midst? Was it not Jehovah's Temple? Was it not inviolate? Certainly they were the people of God and the calamities which the true prophets foretold would never materialize.

The Lord spoke to Ezekiel saying: "Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of the rebellious house, that have eyes to see, and see not, that have ears to hear, and hear not; for they are a rebellious house" (Ezek. 12:2). The Lord declared regarding the people among whom the prophet was living that they had eyes to see, but that they did not see. Likewise they had ears to hear, but they did not hear. There was nothing imperfect or faulty with their eyes or with their ears. It is with our physical eyes and ears that we can look and see what is around about us and hear, if there are any sounds or noises. Our eyes and our ears are so constructed as to give us a truthful and faithful account of things and conditions which are around about us. So there is no need of our not being cognizant of our immediate environment. The philosophers are all wrong when they say that there is a maladjustment between our organs of sense and the world external to us. Ezekiel makes this affirmation. On the contrary, there is the proper adjustment between our organs of sense perception and our environment when they are normal. We can thus get a correct idea of the situation in which we find ourselves.

But in his saying that the people had eyes to see but did not see, and ears to hear, but did not hear, he was affirming that they had spiritual eyes and intellectual ears to comprehend, to weigh, and to evaluate the situation in which they lived. But instead of using these God-given faculties in order that they might know their situation, they would not use them. They did not want truth and facts. There are none so blind as those who will not see. Prejudice—judging ahead of time—always befogs every issue involved. It biases the mind and causes the one thus influenced to fail to see things in the proper light.

Concerning Ezekiel's associates God said that they did not use their eyes and ears for the proper purpose "for they are a rebellious house." These people did not know the will of God. Neither did they want it. They were set and determined to go their own way. Hence they closed their eyes and stopped their ears and refused to receive facts as they were. They remind one of the people of Isaiah's day concerning whom we read in Isaiah 6:9,10: "And he said, Go, and tell this people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10 Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn again, and be healed."

The Symbolic Act By Ezekiel Of Removing His Household Goods

The prophets very frequently were instructed to perform certain acts to which a symbolic meaning was attached. Possibly Ezekiel performed more of such acts than any other of the Old Testament prophets.

According to verses 3-6 the Lord instructed the prophet to prepare his household belongings for removing and to carry this out by day in the sight of the people. Within their view he was to remove his stuff from his place to another. In giving him these instructions the Lord said, "It may be they will consider, though they are a rebellious house." God does everything possible in order to reach the hearts and the souls of men; that is, He does all things within the proper limits under His moral government.

He was again instructed to remove his goods and go forth at evening time "as when men go forth into exile," enacting this role in the sight of the people. Evidently he dressed as if he were going into exile and acted in the same manner. Then he was instructed to dig through the wall in their sight and carry out his belongings through the breach. This may have been the city wall, or some wall which was in the vicinity. Moreover, he was to carry out his goods upon his shoulder and do it in the dark. At the same time he was to cover his face that he might not see the land or anything connected therewith.

The Lord thus gave him these instructions, informing him, "For I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel" (vs. 6). Isaiah and his family were for signs unto the house of Israel, in a manner similar to this (Isa. 8:16-18).

According to the seventh verse of this chapter the prophet did exactly as he was told. The emphasis is placed upon his strict obedience to the divine instructions. This reminds one of the note that is sounded throughout the Scriptures. For instance, Noah was given positive instructions as to how he was to construct the ark. Then we are told that Noah did as Jehovah

commanded him. The same thing is true with reference to Moses. It is also true with reference to others of the servants of God. Their doing this reminds us of the repeated statement of our blessed Lord, who emphasized the fact that He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him. He felt that He had to do the work of Him who sent Him while it was day, because the night for Him was coming in which He could not work. Oh, that the people of God could realize the necessity of following the Lord implicitly, doing His works while it is day; for the night is coming in which none of us will be able to work. We shall be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body—not in the spirit world. Let us be faithful to the Lord in all things while we have time and opportunity!

On the following morning "came the word of Jehovah" to the prophet, asking him if any of the people had inquired as to what was the significance of his actions of the day before. Then he was instructed to say to them, "This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel among whom they are" (vs. 10). (The prince, of course, was Zedekiah.) He was to declare the following oracle to the people: "Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall go into exile, into captivity. 12 And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the dark, and shall go forth; they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, because he shall not see the land with his eyes. 13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there" (vss. 11-13). What the prophet did was a little miniature enactment of the prince's attempt to escape out of the hands of the Babylonians and of his being caught by the enemy. The covering which Ezekiel put over his face as he was going out through the breach of the wall made by him was to signify that the prince would not be able to see the land to which he was being carried into exile.

The Lord, in verse 13, said that he would spread his net upon Zedekiah and take him to Babylon but that he would not see it, though he was to die there. In Jeremiah 39:7 and 52:11 we see that Zedekiah was taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah. After slaying his sons in his sight, Nebuchadnezzar had Zedekiah's eyes put out. Then he was carried in fetters to Babylon, where he remained until the day of his death.

In verses 14-16 is the prediction that the Lord would scatter those men who were around

about Zedekiah to help him "toward every wind"; and that He would "draw out the sword after them." They would, according to verse 15, be dispersed among the nations and scattered throughout all countries. There would, however, be left a few of them from the sword, the famine, and from the pestilence, that they might declare "all their abominations among the nations whither they come"; and that they might come to know Jehovah himself personally.

In verses 17-20 the prophet was commanded to perform another symbolic act by eating his bread and drinking his water trembling with fearfulness. Thus he was to go through these motions while he experienced these emotions within. And he was to declare to the people, "They shall eat their bread with fearfulness, and drink their water in dismay, that her land may be desolate, *and despoiled* of all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. 20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be a desolation; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah" (vss. 19b,20).

The Attitude Of The People Toward Prophecy

As said in the introductory discussion of this lesson, many of the people had come to the conclusion that, since the judgment threatened was not executed immediately, prophecy therefore was not to be depended upon; because the visions which the prophet had seen before had not, as they thought, materialized. Thus the people formed a proverb and repeated it constantly: "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth." Because of this attitude, the Lord commanded the prophet to speak to the people and say: "I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the fulfillment of every vision" (vs. 23). The judgment was to fall upon the nation. There would be no occasion for anyone's seeing any false visions or flattering divinations within the house of Israel regarding the fall of the nation. In order to emphasize the certainty of the vision, God said, "For I am Jehovah; I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall be performed; it shall be no more deferred: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I speak the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 24,25). On the other hand, there were those who declared that the visions which Ezekiel had seen were not for their own time but were for the distant future. In reply to this attitude, therefore, the Lord said: "There shall none of my words be deferred any more, but the word which I shall speak shall be performed, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vs. 28). "We have the word of prophecy *made*

more sure," declared Peter, "whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (II Peter 1:19). That is the message regarding the word of prophecy for us today. Every word from God is backed up by the power of the Almighty. He will fulfill every promise and carry out every threat.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 9)

Prophecy And Idolatry

In last month's study we looked at the subject of prophecy in general and at false prophets. This was done in connection with the message of chapter 12. The section of Ezekiel, chapters 12-19, shows the necessity for the judgments that were pronounced in the first eleven chapters. Chapter 13 continues the discussion of false prophets and false prophetesses, whereas chapter 14 deals with idolaters who sought confirmation of their positions in the messages of false prophets. It concludes with the thought that the presence of the righteous is no guarantee of security for the wicked.

CHAPTER 13

In this chapter we are to study the subject relating to false prophets and false prophetesses.

The Typical False Prophet

13 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own heart, Hear ye the word of Jehovah: 3 Thus saith the Lord ..." (Ezek. 13:1-3). The Lord calls the men of this prediction "the prophets of Israel." In speaking of them in this manner, Ezekiel was emphasizing the thought that they were not the prophets of Jehovah, but were the ones whom the situation and the people brought forth. It is true that certain situations produce a given type of men. In other words, they are the product of their age and environment. They arise and fit into the local situation, preying upon the credulity of the people and the times. To illustrate by a modern example: Between the Great War of 1914-1918 and World War II and even to the present time, we have the period of dictators. The conditions, politically and economically, as well as spiritually, demanded dictators. There are always opportunists who take advantage of all situations. Thus these dictators are the products of their age and at the

same time they lead the people and control them. Thus such men were the prophets of Israel who ministered to the masses. Micah recognized this fact and thus spoke in 2:11: "If a man walking in a spirit of falsehood do lie, *saying* I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people." The age of Isaiah and of Micah demanded prophets of this type, those who would cater to the feelings and the desires of the people. Hence there arose those who would fit into the situation and would soothe the conscience of the people and encourage them to go in the way in which they were determined to proceed. Jeremiah the prophet sounded the same keynote in the following passage: "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: 31 the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30,31). Jeremiah thought that it was a wonderful and horrible thing that had come to pass in the land when the prophets prophesied falsely and the priests bore rule by their means and the people were perfectly satisfied with such a regime as that. In fact, they loved just such conditions. There are always opportunists and time-servers who arise and who give the mad world what it wants. There are men today, unfortunately for us, who are of the same caliber, and who are entering the ministry, purporting to be ministers of the Word of God, whereas they preach to suit the people. They are time-servers, but not messengers of God at all.

These prophets of Israel, said the Lord, prophesied "out of their own heart." They were not studying the Word of God to see what was the mind and thought of God as He had revealed it through His true and inspired prophets that had gone before. But these prophets, seeking to please the people, spoke out of their own heart and did not give a message from the Lord.

The False Prophets Compared To Foxes And To Workmen Daubing A Wall With Untempered Mortar

In verse 3 Ezekiel pronounced a woe upon the foolish prophets that followed their own spirit but had not received anything from Jehovah. Then turning to the people of Israel, he compared their prophets to foxes in waste places. In desolate places and among ruins the foxes burrow here and there and cause more devastation. Continuing his speech to the people, Ezekiel declared that the people had not gone up into the gaps, neither had they built the walls for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of Jehovah. But these false

prophets, time-servers, had seen falsehood and lying divination. The Lord had not sent them. Yet they had made men to hope that the word which was spoken by them might be confirmed. Then turning to the prophets, he asked them if they had not seen false visions, if they had not spoken lying divinations, in their claiming that Jehovah had spoken through them. Nevertheless, declared Ezekiel, God had not spoken through them.

In verses 8 and 9, the Lord declared that they had spoken falsehood and seen lies, and that therefore He was against them. "And my hand shall be against the prophets that see false visions, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the council of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah" (vs. 9). There were registers in which the people were written. For instance, when Israel returned from Babylonian captivity, certain ones claimed that they were of the Levitical priesthood. But when the genealogical tables were examined, their names did not appear there. Thus they were denied the privilege of officiating in the priestly capacity, because they were not written in the register. In the great Millennial Age the people will be written in the book, as we see in Isaiah 4:3. See also Psalm 87:6 and Isaiah 44:5. Thus God declared that these false prophets would not be written among the citizens of His people in the future. In other words, they will be lost.

If the Lord were speaking of those preachers of the present day who are time-servers, and who are just giving messages to please the people and are not speaking faithfully His Word, He would say that they shall not be written in the Lamb's book of life. They therefore, when they pass out of this life, will go into outer darkness from which they shall never emerge. It is indeed a fearful thing for anyone to attempt to speak for God, unless he has been called of God, and unless he will study faithfully the whole Word of God and speak fearlessly the message as it is recorded in the Word.

In verses 10-16 Ezekiel compared the false prophets—who were seducing the people and declaring that there were no indications of a threatened judgment, but that, on the contrary, there were signs of peace whereas there was no peace—to those masons who build up a wall but daub it with untempered mortar. Of course, such a wall would not stand, but in time would simply lean and eventually topple over, since the mortar used was not the proper kind and would not hold the rocks together. He was therefore instructed to speak to these unfaithful

workmen, who thus daubed the wall with untempered mortar, that it might fall, saying, "There shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it. 12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it? 13 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my wrath; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in wrath to consume it. 14 So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered *mortar*, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be uncovered; and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah. 15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered *mortar*; and I will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it; 16 *to wit*, the prophets of Israel that prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and that see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 11b-16). The day of reckoning always comes to every evildoer, just as the day of reward will come to the faithful servants of God. All work that is rendered in the cause of God by men who are of the same type as the false prophets whom Ezekiel condemned will come to naught, and all those who have thus labored will suffer loss throughout all eternity.

Having exposed and denounced the false prophets, Ezekiel then turned his attention to the prophetesses who were engaged in all types of divination and deception in connection with their misleading the people. To them the prophet declared: "And thou, son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, that prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, 18 and say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe to the women that sew pillows upon all elbows, and make kerchiefs for the head of *persons of every stature* to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and save souls alive for yourselves? 19 And ye have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies" (vss. 17-19).

Ezekiel was to take a definite stand against these women who were prophesying, like the false prophets, out of their own hearts. They made pillows or bands to tie on the joints—possibly the elbows, wrists, and shoulders—of those whom they were attempting to deceive. They likewise made kerchiefs for the head or some kind of covering, for the persons who would come to them for advice and for messages from God. They made these little pillows for people of different stature and build.

Concerning these women the prophet declared that they were hunting the souls of the people, and that they were saving souls alive for themselves. They would render their service to the unsuspecting, deluded people, "for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hearken unto lies" (vss. 17-19).

According to verse 20 God declared, "I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms; and I will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly." Moreover, He promised to deliver these people out of the hands of these wicked, false prophetesses. Ezekiel charged them with grieving the hearts of the righteous with lies and making them sad. At the same time they strengthened the hands of the wicked "that he should not return from his wicked way, and be saved alive; 23 therefore ye shall no more see false visions, nor divine divinations: and I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah." Jehovah, the God of truth, loves truth and hates lies and deception. He therefore is against all false and wicked people who lead others astray by their deceptions and lies.

CHAPTER 14

In chapter 14 we are told that certain of the elders of Israel came to Ezekiel and sat before him. When Israel was in Egypt, she had her elders and leaders who carried on and conducted the communal life of the nation. Even in Babylonian captivity the Jews had their semi-political organizations presided over by their elders. In modern Jewry, especially in orthodox circles in Europe, there exists a semi-political and religious organization of a communal life. The life of the people to a certain extent—but always under the superior power of the country in which they resided—has always been governed by the authority of this semi-political organization in Israel.

God knows the hearts of all. He understands the motives which prompt every action. There is nothing hidden from Him with whom we have to do. The Lord therefore informed Ezekiel as to the type of people who had appeared before him. Those who can read human nature can look into the face of others and can tell the general type of character they are. But not

all people can thus read character. At the same time it is possible to misread a person's face. Because of this fact the Lord urges people not to judge lest they be judged.

But Ezekiel did not have to judge these people. God who knew their hearts revealed to him the very type of people they were.

They had taken their idols into their hearts and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Nevertheless they came and inquired of the Lord concerning His will. There are people like this today. They espouse a cause; they are determined to maintain and retain their position regardless of circumstances. At the same time they want confirmation of their position and desire approval of the course which they are pursuing. When any such people come to a true servant of God, a minister of the Word, he should not respect the person of those appearing before him; but he should, after deep prayer and thorough thought, deal with such upon the principles of God's Word. That is all that one can do today. But let us see how Ezekiel dealt with these wicked ones. Having been given the message of God he declared: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Every man of the house of Israel that taketh his idols into his heart, and putteth the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I Jehovah will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; 5 that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols" (Ezek. 14:4,5).

If a man wants truth, God will give it to him. On the other hand, if he wants error and is determined to continue in his wickedness, God will answer him according to the desire and motive of his heart.

On this very point let us see how the Spirit of God spoke through Jeremiah: "16 Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, We will not walk *therein*. 17 And I set watchmen over you, *saying*, Harken to the sound of the trumpet; but they said, We will not hearken. 18 Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19 Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words; and as for my law, they have rejected it. 20 To what purpose cometh there to me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet

cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing unto me. 21 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will lay stumbling blocks before this people; and the fathers and the sons together shall stumble against them; the neighbor and his friend shall perish" (Jer. 6:16-21).

Through Isaiah we have a similar revelation: "Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations: 4 I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not" (Isa. 66:3b-4).

The Lord through Ezekiel urged those men who had taken their idols to their heart to "Return ye, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations" (Ezek. 14:6). In the following two verses He warned everyone who put the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face and came to the prophet to inquire from him of the Lord, that He, Jehovah, would answer him and would set His face against him and make him an astonishment, a sign, and a proverb. Moreover, He threatened that He would cut him off from the people.

According to verse 9 of this chapter the Lord declared that, if the prophet be deceived and speak a word, He, Jehovah, had deceived that prophet, and that He would stretch forth His hand and destroy that man from the midst of Israel. God always gives truth and light to the honest, sincere, and seeking soul. But for those who receive not a love of the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness, God sends delusions that they might believe a lie, be deceived, and eventually be condemned. Read Thessalonians 2:1-12 on this point.

In Ezekiel 14:12-23 the Lord showed that the people of a land could commit trespasses and continue in them until He, the Lord, would stretch forth His hand, break the staff of bread, and bring famine upon the country, so that there would be nothing for man or for beast. The Lord, who is Sovereign of the universe, frequently does this to punish the people. But in sending such a judgment, He does it in love. All of His judgments are designed as corrective measures and executed for the eventual good of all concerned.

According to verse 15 the Lord does send wild beasts through a land to ravage it. According to verse 17 He at times causes a sword to come against a land and leave destruction and wreckage in its wake. Then, according to verses 19 and 20, He sends pestilences on lands at times. According to the Lord Jesus He causes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good and sends His rain upon the just and unjust. But regardless of what the Lord sends, all are designed for man's good.

When, however, the Lord sends any judgments upon a land, even though "Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, they ... they should but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." The prayer of the righteous man availeth much in its working. When Israel sinned, Moses stepped into the breach and interceded in behalf of the people. Doubtless many other countries have been spared by the faithful prayers of some one giant of faith, one of God's noblemen or noble women, or by the united prayers of God's faithful servants. But when the circumstances require the Lord to send forth His four sore judgments in punishment for sin, even though these three giants of faith and prayer should be there and intercede, they would only deliver themselves; they could not alleviate the national crisis. There are things that God can forgive and times when he can forgive and avert calamities, as in the case of the people of Nineveh, to whom Jonah preached. There are times, however, when nations, like individuals, go beyond all hope. Then there is only one thing that can be done, and that is to let punishment fall.

In verses 12-20 Ezekiel was discussing the general proposition of God's sending His judgments upon a wicked population, deliverance from which could not be procured by the faithful prayers of men like Noah, Daniel, and Job. We must not, however, confuse this threat with the instructions found in II Chronicles, chapter 7, regarding the nation of Israel. In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, the king, inspired by the Spirit of God, declared: "13 If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; 14 if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent, unto the prayer that is made in this place. 16 For now have I chosen and hallowed this house, that my name may be there for ever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually" (II Chron. 7:13-16).

This passage referred to Israel when she was in her land with the Temple standing intact. If God should punish the nation for some evil, then the people should come to this house of God, humble themselves before Him and seek His face, turning from their wicked ways. The Lord assured them that, if they did that, He would hear from heaven, would forgive their sins, and heal their land. This promise was one made only to Israel while she was in the land, and while the Temple was standing intact.

It is a misinterpretation of the Word of God to take II Chronicles 7:14 out of its connection and apply it to any nation. Let us not warp the Word of God nor make it to mean something that it does not say. God will not honor this promise when it is wrested out of its connection and applied to someone other than Israel. The passage which applies to any nation in general, and which deals with such a point as this is found in Jeremiah 18:5-10: "5 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, 6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith Jehovah. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel. 7 At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; 8 if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9 And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; 10 if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them."

Returning now to the last paragraph of Ezekiel, chapter 14, I wish to quote this statement: "21 For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the evil beasts, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! 22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be carried forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings; and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. 25 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their way and their doings; and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 21-23).

It is God who sends His four sore judgments upon Jerusalem and at times upon other nations.

If, whenever God sent one of His sore judgments upon a nation, the presence and prayers of any of His saints could not cause Him to spare the wicked on account of the righteous; how much more shall the wicked not be spared if God sends at one time His four sore judgments upon the land? Nevertheless, the Lord promised that there would be a remnant both of sons and daughters that would be left when He sent His four sore judgments upon Jerusalem. These would escape and would show by their lives and their conduct that God was just and righteous in bringing His judgments upon the city. Thus the people in the captivity to whom Ezekiel was speaking would be comforted in seeing the justice and the righteousness of God in sending His judgments to purge the nation of the evil. But seeing the lives of even those wicked who escaped they would know that God had not done what He did without a cause. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 10)

Israel, The Burnt Vine And The Unfaithful Wife

In our study of the Book of Ezekiel we have come to chapters 15 and 16 which present the necessity for Israel's punishment. In chapter 15 Israel is represented as a vine that, at its best and unimpaired, is not good for material out of which to manufacture any articles. Much less is it of any value after it has been burned and charred greatly in the fire. In chapter 16 the prophet has changed his figure and has represented Jerusalem, the capital of the Israelitish nation, under the symbolism of an unfaithful, adulterous wife. Thus in these two graphic symbolic representations the prophet has shown the necessity for the punishing of Israel.

CHAPTER 15

Israel, The Charred, Burnt Vine

In Psalm 80:8-16 the hymn writer represented Israel as a vine, which the Lord got in the land of Egypt, brought to Palestine, planted in a most fruitful hill, and prepared room before it. Under the most favorable conditions it "took deep root, and filled the land." It sent out its roots "unto the sea, And its shoots unto the River"—to the Mediterranean on the west and the Euphrates River on the east. Finally God removed the hedge which He had placed about it and allowed the boar out of the forest and the wild beasts from the fields to come in and to tread it down and thus destroy this vine. There is a cause for everything which God does. When we read this passage in the light of others which have bearing upon the subject, we see that it is for the sins of Israel that she, the vine, is trodden down.

Again, Isaiah the prophet, in chapter 5, spoke of Israel and compared her to the Lord's vineyard, which He planted in a most fertile and prepared hill. He spared no efforts in order that it might be a fruitful and a productive vineyard. At the time of fruit the owner of the

vineyard came, looking for fruit. Instead of finding large, luscious grapes of justice and righteousness, He found the wild bitter grapes of injustice and oppression. Thus He threatened that He would destroy this vineyard.

Again, in Matthew 21:33-46, the Lord represented Israel by a vineyard which the owner thereof let out to husbandmen. At the time of fruit he sent his messengers, but the husbandmen refused to turn over the fruit to them, but rather mistreated his servants. Finally the owner sent his only son, thinking that they would respect him. Instead of recognizing his authority, they slew him. Then the landlord said he would come and destroy those miserable servants and would let out the vineyard to those servants who would bring forth the fruit thereof.

All of these passages to which I have just referred present the same lesson under a similar symbolic representation as that which was employed by Ezekiel in chapter 15. Each of these messages sounds the note of Israel's sin and of her sure punishment.

The grapevine, when it is whole without having been injured in any way, is not good for the purpose of manufacturing any article; much less is it of use after it has been injured by being burnt in the fire. Israel was created for a special mission in the world—to be the repository of the truth of God and to give it forth to the world. She was to preserve the sacred forms of religion intact and deliver the message of divine love without modification—addition or subtraction. Her mission in the world is a spiritual one. It is not any of the regular tasks and vocations of life. God wished to make a holy priesthood out of her (Exod., chap. 19). But she would not be obedient to the calling of God. The time will come, however, when she will, and thus she will fit into her world mission eventually when the Lord returns, and she accepts Him as her long-rejected Messiah.

CHAPTER 16

Israel, The Adulterous Wife

Hosea was one of the earliest writing prophets. He represented Israel as the wife of Jehovah. The Lord instructed this prophet to take to himself an adulteress for a wife and to rear a

family, which thing he did. After their home had been blessed by the advent of three children, the prophet's wife went back to the old life from which she had been rescued when he married her. The Lord used Hosea, his wife, children, and their experiences to set forth the spiritual conditions that existed in Israel. In this presentation Gomer, Hosea's wife, represented Israel who proved to be unfaithful to Jehovah, her husband. Isaiah presented the same picture; however, not in such a graphic manner as did Hosea.

Throughout the messages of the prophets we see that Israel is represented as committing adultery. This term was used with reference to her going off into idolatry and joining herself to some foreign god. Since she was considered the wife of Jehovah, and since she turned from Jehovah, her true husband, to some foreign gods, she was said to commit adultery. We should always remember this representation as we read the messages of the prophets.

One should read very carefully Ezekiel, chapter 16, and then turn to Ezekiel, chapter 23. In the latter passage the prophet goes more into detail concerning the two cities, Jerusalem and Samaria. But in these two chapters the low spiritual condition of Israel is presented.

The Foundling Period Of Israel

In the first seven verses of Ezekiel, chapter 16, God speaks of the origin of the city of Jerusalem and says that an Amorite was the father and a Hittite the mother of the Holy City. This statement might be understood as having an historical basis. Possibly the original founders of the city were Amorites and Hittites. The history of Jerusalem has been indeed a checkered one throughout the centuries.

The Lord represented Jerusalem as a newborn baby girl that was cast out at birth to perish as was the custom of the times among many heathen nations with reference to girl babies. For instance, the Romans did not care very much for the girls, but they took their pride and delight in the boys. Very frequently a girl baby was cast out to perish and die. Only by the mercy or providential overruling of God was such a child as that picked up and preserved. Thus God represented Jerusalem as a baby girl cast out to perish. He passed by, His heart was moved with compassion and love, and He took the child and cared for it.

The Wedding Time

In verses 8-14 we advance from the earliest period of Israel's history to the time of the Exodus. The little foundling baby girl has grown to womanhood and is ready to be married. The Lord passes by. He sees her. He falls in love with her and takes her to Himself. This is the time of love. The Lord therefore spreads His skirt over her. This was an ancient custom of betrothal and marriage. See Ruth 3:9. Thus at this time the Lord swears to her and enters into an oath with her that He will be her husband and that she, Israel, shall become His wife. The time when the Lord entered into covenant relationship with Israel is none other than that when Moses went down into Egypt and by the mighty power of God brought Israel forth to Mount Sinai, where He entered into a covenant with her and gave her His law.

One should, if he is not altogether familiar with the historical facts, read carefully Exodus, chapters 1-24. In these historical chapters, one will see that Israel was in Egypt suffering terrific bondage. The Lord brought her forth to Mount Sinai and thus entered into the state of matrimony with her.

From that time and onwards Israel's husband, the Lord Jehovah, gave her everything that was necessary for her happiness and well-being. As a loving husband spares no pains or expense in providing everything that is calculated to make his bride happy, joyful, and contented, thus the Lord did for Israel. Hence, in verses 9-14, the Lord speaks of the spiritual blessings and like-wise the material ones which He bestowed upon her after they entered into covenant relation. She was so very highly favored and blessed that she prospered and advanced to royal estate. She became the queen of Jehovah.

Israel's Numerous Infidelities

It was not long after the marriage ceremony and festivities were over until Israel began to play the harlot. Historically she did it at Mount Sinai when Moses was in the mount and when she made the golden calf to worship. From that time and onward she began to flirt with other gods and to give them the loyalty of her heart. Thus we see in verses 15-34 a graphic representation of the lewdness of the chosen people. The prophet began this section by

saying, "But thou didst trust in thy beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy whoredoms on every one that passed by; his it was."

If anyone will read carefully verses 15-22, he will see that the prophet speaks of the idolatrous acts in which Israel engaged in relation to the nations of Canaan who were in the land of Palestine when she came out of Egypt and entered it.

But when we come to verse 23, we see that there is a change in the description. Instead of playing the harlot with the Canaanitish gods, she became tired of her early paramours and began to run after foreigners. Among those to whom she went are the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians, or Chaldeans. In going after the gods of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, Israel conducted herself in such a way as to make even the Philistines ashamed of her. Thus she uncovered her nakedness and committed abominations in the sight of God constantly.

Her playing the harlot with the gods of the Canaanites, the Amorites, and all of the nations of Canaan, is set forth in a clear picture in the Book of Judges and the early history of Israel as recorded in the Book of First Samuel. One may turn to the Books of Kings and Chronicles and there see Israel as she engaged in her idolatrous practices with foreign nations, the greater powers, who lay on the political horizon of the day.

In verses 30 and 31 the prophet exclaimed, "How weak is thy heart, saith the Lord Jehovah, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an impudent harlot; 31 in that thou buildest thy vaulted place at the head of every way, and makest thy lofty place in every street, and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire." Israel's heart was indeed weak. Otherwise she would have been faithful and true to God who manifested Himself to her in a signal and a marked way, in a way that was unmistakable. Israel therefore was without excuse. Only through the weakness of the heart could she have done what she did.

The Punishment Of The Adulterous Wife

In verses 35-43 we have a detailed prophecy concerning the punishment which God would bring upon Israel, His adulterous wife, who had played the harlot from the very beginning of her marriage to Him.

The Lord therefore said that He would bring her lovers with whom she had played the harlot, would gather them against her on every hand, and would uncover her nakedness unto them that they might see all of her nakedness. The Lord threatened to judge her as a woman that breaks wedlock. Moreover, He threatened to bring upon her the blood of wrath and of jealousy. God, her husband, was jealous because of what she had done and was doing. He therefore had a right to be wrathful and jealous toward her. He therefore threatened that He would bring upon her the wrath of blood and of jealousy. In verse 39 He spoke of her under the symbolism of an unfaithful woman and said that He would bring her into the land of her paramours, would throw down all of her high places, would strip her of all of her clothes, take her fair jewels, and leave her naked and bare. This is a prophecy concerning the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Finally, under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldeans came and fought against Israel, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, threw it down, and took its population into exile. This prophecy of the siege under the Babylonians is continued in verses 40 and 41.

Because Israel had forgotten how God had taken her up, had blessed her, and had been merciful to her. He declared that He would punish her for all of her wicked ways and doings.

The Daughter Like The Mother

The familiar saying, "blood will tell," is true every time. It is a wonderful thing to be well-born, to have good ancestry lying behind one. Those people who are thus well-born have much to praise and thank God for. But it is far better to be born the second time, which experience brings one into the great family of God and gives one a new nature, the divine nature.

God spoke in verses 44-52 of Israel and of her being like her mother and like her sisters. All too frequently good men have married girls of a low origin, whose mothers before them were harlots. Though they may be reared under good influences that are brought about by the

father and may be shielded in a way under the paternal roof, when these good influences are removed the low character of the birth of these girls asserts itself and they go into harlotry. I have seen and known of numbers of instances like this. Of course, had these girls been born again they would have been lifted above such a life of sin and vice. But when they are not thus born again, the original bad blood will tell. As one noted evangelist shouted, "Blood will tell! blood will tell! blood will tell!" Thus the prophet, in verses 44-52 centered all of his remarks around that one thought. Jerusalem, the wife of Jehovah, unregenerated, continued to hobnob with her sisters, Samaria on the left and Sodom on the right. And she even exceeded them in sinfulness. When we judge sin, we must take into consideration the advantages and opportunities which a person has enjoyed. Thus Israel, after having had unparalleled advantages and opportunities which neither Samaria nor Sodom ever enjoyed yet surpassed them in her lewdness and in her departures from God. She therefore was far worse off than they.

The Restoration And Punishment Of Jerusalem, Samaria, And Sodom

In the next paragraph (Ezek. 16:53-59) we see a promise that God will bring back the captivity of Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem. While the people who were actually in the city of Sodom when it was overthrown were destroyed, doubtless there were many of their inhabitants who were living abroad, just as there are Europeans who are residing in this country. Nevertheless they are citizens of their native land. So there were doubtless many of the Sodomites who were living in other lands when the stroke of judgment from God wiped out Sodom. These descendants will be restored to their native fatherland and Sodom will rise again in the end time, together with Samaria and Jerusalem. Each of these will bear the punishment of their sins. An inviolable law of God Almighty is that anyone reaps what he has sowed. He should not deceive himself. This law is universal. Thus these various cities must suffer the punishment for their sins after being restored.

God's Remembering His Covenant With Israel

In verses 60-63 the prophet concluded his message concerning Israel and her lewdness in departing from the Lord. Notwithstanding what she has done in the past, the Lord declared, "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will

establish unto thee an everlasting covenant" (vs. 60). As is well known by all Bible students, especially those who have given particular attention to the prophetic word, God entered into an unconditional covenant with Abraham and his seed. According to the promise the Lord will bless the world in and through Israel. No provisos were stated, nor were any conditions implied. By no unbiased study of the Scriptures can one read into this covenant any conditions. Of course when Israel was disobedient to God, she was unusable. The gifts and the callings of God are not repented of. Isaiah spoke of the Lord's entering into an everlasting covenant with Israel when He brings her back at the end of this age and restores her to fellowship with Himself. This is seen in Isaiah 61:8. Again, Ezekiel speaks of this everlasting covenant in 37:26. Jeremiah also foretold this covenant, as is set forth in Jeremiah 31:31ff. Great will be the day when Israel turns to her God and pleads for her Messiah to return, and He enters into this everlasting covenant with her.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 11)

The Riddle Of The Two Great Eagles

And The Messianic Reign Of Christ

Though the prophecy which we are about to study is not dated, it is in all probability to be assumed as having been uttered between the sixth and seventh years of Jehoiachin's captivity. Chapters 8-11 were given in the sixth year of that era; chapter 20, in the seventh year. The material from chapters 12-19 in all probability was uttered between those two dates. We have come to this conclusion since the prophecies of Ezekiel in the main are all given chronologically—in terms of the captivity of Jehoiachin. The seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity would be the sixth year of Zedekiah.

The data discussed in 17:1-21 assumes Zedekiah's treacherous act of fostering a conspiracy against his master, Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he owed his crown and to whom he had sworn fidelity. That there was such a conspiracy on the part of Zedekiah with surrounding nations who had sent their delegates to Jerusalem is quite evident from Jeremiah 27:1-11. From Ezekiel 17:7-10 we see that Zedekiah was negotiating with Egypt for assistance in the case of rebellion against Babylon. Thus the circumstances seem to point to a developed political situation in Judah at the time when this oracle was given. Such a situation had developed by the sixth year of Zedekiah's reign.

I. The Riddle Of The Great Eagles

In verses 1-10 of this chapter we read of the two great eagles whose influence was brought to bear upon Judah. Immediately the question arises: What is the significance of this riddle and who are the two great eagles? What is meant by Lebanon? What is the significance of the topmost twig on the cedar of Lebanon? Mention is made of the city of merchants. What city is that? What is indicated by "the seed royal"? We know that this language is not literal, that is, not to be understood literally, but is a riddle. A riddle is a conundrum, an enigma. Possibly

the word *allegory* would be more accurate. In defining an allegory Webster says that it is "The veiled presentation, in a figurative story, of a meaning metaphorically implied but not expressly stated. Allegory is prolonged metaphor, in which typically a series of actions are symbolic of other actions." Obviously that is what we have here in our chapter for consideration. Certain ones are represented under the symbolism of the great eagles. Someone is likewise represented by the twig from the topmost bough of the great cedar of Lebanon. It is quite evident that there is a veiled or hidden meaning attached to this narration. We shall therefore attempt to unravel the mystery.

In verse 3 we read of a great eagle "with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers, which had divers colors," and which came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar. Nations in ancient times, as in modern days, used birds and animals as their national emblems. For instance, the American eagle is the symbol of the United States of America. That such was the significance is quite evident from Ezekiel's statement in verse 12: "Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the King of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and brought them to him to Babylon." This statement points definitely to the symbolic significance of the eagle; namely, that the first one represented the king of Babylon. The specific king here referred to is none other than Nebuchadnezzar, who in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah (the same was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon), first came in touch with Judah. See Jeremiah, chapter 25. At this time he began to get a hold upon the Jewish nation. In the reign of Jehoiachin, son and successor of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar again came into Palestine, besieged the country, and took Jehoiachin to Babylon as an exile. He then took Mattaniah, one of the sons of King Josiah, changed his name to Zedekiah, and made him king. The record of these events is found in the historical accounts of Kings and Chronicles.

What is meant by Lebanon? Today the word, Lebanon, applies to the little republic north of Palestine on the Mediterranean coast. Through this territory runs the Lebanon and Ante-Lebanon Ranges, which extend southward through Palestine and Transjordan. In ancient times all of this country consisting of the present Lebanon and Palestine was known as Lebanon. Thus Lebanon in our passage refers to the whole Levant. But of course Ezekiel is speaking of that portion of Lebanon that was in Palestine.

We know that this great, gorgeous eagle with its mighty wings and feathers of various colors came to Lebanon and took the top of a cedar. The cedars of Lebanon were famous in ancient days—and at the present time also. I had the privilege of visiting the place where the cedars of Lebanon are. There was a grove of approximately four hundred of these cedars. The largest one was thirteen feet in diameter, according to reports of the attendant. The cedars of Lebanon were used as symbols of the royal house of Judah. This eagle took the topmost bough of one of its twigs and carried it to the "land of traffic." This twig symbolized the Jewish king whom Nebuchadnezzar dethroned and took into exile. This one was none other than King Jehoiachin, who was dethroned after a short reign of three months. He was taken to Babylon where he spent the last of his days. Babylon was the land of traffic and the city of Babylon the city of merchants.

Nebuchadnezzar, this great eagle, also took of the seed of the land and planted it in a beautiful soil. When we look at the historical facts, we see that Nebuchadnezzar took Mattaniah, one of the sons of Josiah, and made him king and changed his name to Zedekiah. He was of course of the seed royal and was planted in the fruitful soil with the favor of Babylon shining upon him. Under those conditions this twig became a mighty tree. Zedekiah prospered, having commercial relationships with Babylon and also with Egypt. Thus it was as a willow tree by many waters; it grew and spread and became as a spreading vine of low stature, "whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs" (vs. 6). Thus in this symbolic representation we see that Zedekiah was by his allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar put in a favorable position of growth and development and expansion.

According to verse 7 "There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers." This vine, Zedekiah, who in the preceding verses had been compared to the twig of the cedar tree that developed into a vine, began to lean toward the second eagle and to send its shoots toward him and directed its branches toward him in order that it might be watered by this second great eagle. When we look at the historical records and also at the predictions of Jeremiah, the contemporary of Ezekiel, we know exactly who this second great eagle was, namely, Egypt. Pharaoh-Hophra was the then reigning sovereign. Zedekiah began

negotiations with Pharaoh with a view of forming an alliance of the powers in Western Asia in order to throw off the Babylonian yoke.

Although the environment in which Zedekiah and his government had been placed providentially under the supervision of Babylon was the very best under the existing conditions, the prosperity, the influence, and prestige were thrown away by Zedekiah in his plotting a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he had sworn fealty. Thus Ezekiel was commanded to speak the following oracle: "Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it may wither; that all its fresh springing leaves may wither? and not by a strong arm or much people can it be raised from the roots thereof. 10 Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the beds where it grew" (vss. 9, 10). Blessed is the man who swears to his own hurt and changeth not. When men assume obligations personally they are honor bound to keep those promises and fulfill conditions to which they give their word. God expects men and nations to ponder well any matter before giving their word of honor regarding the same. When they have pledged their word and sworn that they will do certain things, they are in honor bound to carry out the assumed obligations.

When, however, force is used to impose the will of one upon another, such circumstances might alter the case. It is my conviction that the person or nation that assumes obligations and swears loyalty to others should comply with the conditions of the contract. If, however, there are injustices imposed by the stronger power, those who are servants of God should submit to the injustice, but should look to the Lord to overrule circumstances and change the conditions. "The king's heart is in the hand of Jehovah as the watercourses: He turneth it whithersoever he will" (Prov. 21:1). Since Zedekiah had sworn his loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar, God expected him to keep his word. As a matter of fact, the Lord had instructed all of those nations that were contemplating the formation of a federation against Nebuchadnezzar to submit to the yoke of Babylon for a period of seventy years. God owns the earth and gives it to whomsoever He will, as He deems right and proper. In urging those nations to submit to Babylon, the Lord said that, at the expiration of the seventy years, many nations and great kings would make Babylon their bondman. Thus the Lord would turn the tables at the proper time.

If only the people of God could realize that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, that it is He who changes the course of history, that it is He who gives the rule and the authority over nations to whomsoever He will, and that He is working all things together for the good of those who love Him—those who are called according to His purpose—they could look to Him under all conditions and circumstances and pray for immediate deliverance or for sustaining grace to enable them to endure that which He permits to come to pass. Life for such people would be holy and sacred, even in the midst of persecution, privation, and sufferings.

God had expressed Himself that Zedekiah should be faithful to Nebuchadnezzar. It was best for Western Asia and for Judah especially to be under the yoke of Babylon. The Lord therefore gave Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty over the Jews. For Zedekiah and his political advisers to institute, to foster a coalition of nations for the purpose of rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar was to rebel against the expressed will of God. Could Zedekiah and Judah expect to prosper under those conditions? The answer is a most emphatic negative. No country nor individual can hope to prosper and be blessed that goes contrary to the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, and that goes against one's pledged word of obligation.

The doom which was awaiting Zedekiah and the nation of Israel is expressed in verse 10: "Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the beds where it grew." Shall it prosper under these conditions? Absolutely not. It would wither when the east wind of Babylonian armed forces blew against it. It would wither in the place where it had grown prosperously.

II. The Interpretation

God had put His revelation concerning this situation in the form of a riddle or parable. This unique method was evidently designed to impress the lesson upon the minds of the hearers. But God always makes His Word sufficiently plain to people, especially those for whom it is primarily designed, in order that they might be without excuse. It is also true that sometimes the Lord Jesus spoke in parables to a certain group under special conditions. He thus veiled His teaching because those people were not desirous of the truth. When, however, those who wanted to know the facts in the case came to Him privately, He explained thoroughly what

He meant. Thus, after giving forth His riddle, Ezekiel was commanded to say to the rebellious house of Israel, "Know ye not what these things mean? tell them. Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and brought them to him to Babylon." This refers to the dethronement and exile of Jehoiachin, which had occurred six or seven years earlier.

Then Nebuchadnezzar "took of the seed royal, and made a covenant with him; he also brought him under an oath, and took away the mighty of the land; 14 that the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping his covenant it might stand." Mattaniah was the seed royal who was elevated to royal dignity and given the name of Zedekiah. He made a covenant with Nebuchadnezzar and entered into an oath before God and man that he would carry out the stipulations of the covenant. Nebuchadnezzar thus made him swear fealty to him in order that he might not rise up in revolt against his authority. Notwithstanding this oath, he did foster a rebellion. As we see in verse 15 he "rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt that they might give him horses and much people" for the contemplated revolt. "Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? shall he break the covenant, and yet escape?" These questions God asked. Then He himself answered: He said that Zedekiah, because of his disloyalty and his failure to keep his oath and his promise, would have to die in the land of the king of Babylon "whose oath he despised." In verses 17 and 18 God explained that, although Zedekiah was looking to Egypt for deliverance, the hoped-for assistance would never materialize and would avail him nothing.

The Lord is very emphatic in verse 19 regarding the oath which Zedekiah had taken. Here He called it His oath. "As I live surely mine oath that he hath despised and my covenant that he hath broken, I will even bring it upon his own head. 20 And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will enter into judgment with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. 21 And all his fugitives in all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward every wind: and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it" (vss. 19-21). Indeed, blessed is the man who sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not!

III. The Promise Of The Messianic Kingdom

In verses 22-24 the Lord gave a promise of the Messiah and His great glorious reign. He had taken a topmost twig from the royal cedar of Lebanon and had made him king. That promise had already been fulfilled in the crowning of Mattaniah as king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. But the Lord in this prediction says, "I will also take of the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain: 23 in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shade of the branches thereof shall they dwell" (vss. 22, 25). This twig, cropped from the topmost bough of this royal cedar of the house of Judah, is likewise to be planted. But it will be planted in the high and lofty mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel. It will grow and prosper, bear fruit and become a goodly cedar. In the shadow of its boughs, according to the promise, will be birds of every type. When this passage is read in the light of predictions relative to King Messiah, it is seen clearly that this is a prophecy regarding Messiah put in this symbolic language.

"And all the trees of the field shall know that I, Jehovah, have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it" (vs. 24). With this verse the prophecy of chapter 17 concludes. When this prediction likewise is read in the light of related passages, the high tree, which is brought down, is seen to refer to none other than the Antichrist, the world dictator of the end time. The low tree that is exalted obviously is none other than the meek and lowly Nazarene who was rejected by men when He came the first time, but who will be exalted by the word when He returns in the day of His power and glory. The green trees that are dried up are none other than the nations of the world that will flourish under the Antichrist. And the dry tree that then will flourish is none other than Israel who, when she accepts Christ, will be made the head of the nations instead of being the tail as she is at the present day.

The guarantee that this prophecy will be fulfilled is found in these words: "I, Jehovah, have spoken and have done it."

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 12 and 13)

God's Reply To The Proverb, "The Fathers Have Eaten Sour Grapes, And The Children's Teeth Are Set On Edge."

The overthrow of the Jewish monarchy and the exile of the captives in Babylon indeed closed a chapter in the history of Israel in different ways. From the Exodus until that momentous event, the Lord had largely dealt with the nation as a group, rather than with the individual. At the same time it is clear that He did deal specifically with certain individuals. But the general trend of the course of Israel's history was founded upon the basis of His dealing with the group rather than with the individual. Sometimes the group with which God dealt specifically was small and on other occasions it was larger. Sometimes it embraced the entire nation; at others, it included a tribe, or one of the kingdoms into which the monarchy fell upon the death of Solomon. As proof of the proposition that God dealt with the group, read carefully Numbers 16:1-35. Here we have an account of the rebellion of Korah. The Lord dealt with the families of the rebellious sinful men. In the case of Achan, when Israel was in the Plains of Jericho, God dealt with the entire group regarding Achan's sin. Again, we see that God, on many occasions, dealt with the southern kingdom of Judah as a unit and also with the northern kingdom of Israel as a political entity. The exiles of the northern kingdom were carried into Assyrian captivity, whereas those deported from the homeland by the Babylonians were taken into Babylonian captivity. Thus the welfare of the individual was tied up indissolubly with the regime or environment in which the individual lived. While this is true generally, even now among the Gentiles, it was especially true with reference to Israel.

There was a special reason why the people of Ezekiel's day comforted themselves in their sorrows and distresses by taking refuge in the proverb which God denounced: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (18:2b).

In the days of Manasseh, whose reign was the longest in Israel (fifty-five years), the kingdom of Judah sank to the lowest depths of sin, idolatry, and degradation. For an account of the situation read especially II Kings, chapter 21. Then read chapter 23 concerning the great

reforms of good King Josiah. Although this man endeavored to undo the terrible harm that was caused by the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, his son, the nation had gone so far that it was impossible for God to allow the nation to continue as it had. Judgment was inevitable. Hear God's decision as recorded in II Kings 23:26,27: "Notwithstanding, Jehovah turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations wherewith Manasseh had provoked him. 27 And Jehovah said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there." In II Kings, chapters 24 and 25, we have a record of God's overruling providentially and of His bringing the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem, who fought against it, overthrew the monarchy, and deported the flower of the nation to Babylon. Thus came to a conclusion the Hebrew monarchy.

It is to be noted that, in the height of the reform of Josiah, God made the statement that He could not brook the situation and pass it by unpunished. But that He would remove Judah out of His sight and cast off the city of Jerusalem, because of the horrible idolatry and the sins of the nation, committed under and during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon. Jehoahaz reigned three months in Jerusalem upon the death of his father Josiah. Jehoiakim likewise reigned eleven years, and Jehoiachin, his successor, three months. When this latter king was dethroned and carried to Babylon, Mattaniah, named Zedekiah, mounted the throne. The oracle from the mouth of Ezekiel which we are studying was probably spoken around the sixth year of the reign of Zedekiah. It was abundantly evident to all that the prediction uttered by the Lord during the reign of Josiah regarding the overthrow of the monarchy was on the verge of complete fulfillment. Thus the people to whom Ezekiel spoke had some justification for saying that they were suffering for the evils of their ancestors. Truly, the fathers had eaten the sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge. They were suffering, not only for their own sins, but also for the sins of their fathers. Confirmation of this position is seen also in II Chronicles 36:15,16: "And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: 16 but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy." The people of Israel, during the last years of the Hebrew monarchy, refused to hear the messages of the prophets whom God sent to them. They rather mocked these messengers

of God, despised their words, and scoffed at the prophets, "until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy."

It is true that heredity is a great factor in the life of every one of us. "Blood will tell." We inherit the evil as well as the good qualities of our parents and foreparents. From the scientific point of view, therefore, the fathers do eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. Because of this fact many people try to shirk the responsibility resting upon them, consoling themselves with the thought that they could not do any better because they have inherited certain weaknesses from their foreparents.

There is no reason for anyone's lamenting the fact that he has had a bad heredity, since he can, by accepting the Lord Jesus Christ, be born again and thus get the very best heritage possible. Being linked up with God, he can become more than a conqueror through Him who loved him and gave Himself up for him, as Paul asserts in Romans, chapter 8.

The people of Israel, who had taken refuge in this proverb of the father's eating sour grapes and the children's teeth being set on edge, were interpreting life from the standpoint of fate purely. According to them they could do nothing about the situation, in which they found themselves. The prophet now says that, with the fall of the monarchy, the last chapter of her national history is closed and the new chapter is to begin. Conditions will change and God now is in a particular manner dealing with the individual, upon the basis of the merits of each case. He will not, as formerly, deal with the people as groups, to the extent to which He has before this time.

In view of the changed situation, God declared through Ezekiel that He would cause this proverb to cease from the land of Israel.

All souls belong to God. He takes note of the motives and the desires of the individual. The soul that sins is the one that dies. The Lord by His overruling providence will see to this.

The Security Of The Individual Is Not Involved
In The Fate Of The Community.

I urgently request the reader to turn to the Scriptures and read Ezekiel, chapter 18, at this point, in order that he might catch the force of what I am going to say.

In Ezekiel 18:5-9 the prophet sets forth the character of the man whom he terms just, and who will be preserved by the Lord in the national crisis. The passage is so very important that I herewith give it: "5 But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6 and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a woman in her impurity, 7 and hath not wronged any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath taken nought by robbery, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; 8 he that hath not given forth upon interest, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true justice between man and man, 9 hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept mine ordinances, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, said the Lord Jehovah."

Let us note that the prophet is not talking about a man who has been justified by faith in the sight of God. He is simply describing the just man, the one whom we would call a good, moral, upright man who is living up to the light that he has, and who is living according to the high principles set forth in this passage. God assured the prophet that such a man as the one whom He has described would survive the calamity of the collapse of the nation and would continue to live. We have every right to believe that every man whose character squared with this description was providentially protected by the Lord during the collapse of the Jewish nation and survived it. This does not say that he was saved eternally in glory.

Such a man as this one will be open to light and truth. This man is such a one as Cornelius, of whom we read in Acts, chapter 10. Cornelius was living up to the light that he had and was praying for more. When one walks in all the light that he has, seeking for more, the Lord always brings it to him and gives him an opportunity of stepping out more fully in the light. "The way of the just is uprightness: thou that art upright dost direct the path of the just." (Isa. 26:7).

The people of this type, living in the time of the Tribulation, will be preserved and will survive the ordeals of that day and will enter the Millennial Age. This is seen by a careful study of Psalm 15 and Psalm 24:1-6. It is my profound conviction that everyone who is thus living up to the light that he has as set forth in these verses will be given more light by the Lord in order that he might see the truth and the Saviour, accept Him, be regenerated, and thus be prepared for life eternal and immortal glory.

Verses 10-13 discusses the case of the son of a good man, a man of the type set forth in verses 5-9. Though the son has a good father and has the very best example of clean life set before him, he goes into sin and does that which is wrong in God's sight. Such a son will be dealt with upon the basis of his own life and conduct and will not be judged by what the father is and does. He, according to Ezekiel, shall die for his sins. Thus the proverb that the fathers have eaten the sour grapes and the children's teeth are on edge is not true, according to this revelation, and will not be true.

Installment 13

The prophet advances in his discussion further, in verses 14-18. In this passage he discusses the case of the grandson of the good man of whom we have studied in verses 5-9. The grandfather, as we have already seen, lived up to all the light that he had. The son, according to verses 10-13, refused the light and the good example of the good father. But now the grandson, who is the son of the man not living up to the light that he has, is influenced by his grandfather's life and is repelled by the life and conduct of his father. This grandson lives up to the light that he has and longs for more, according to the promises of these verses. This grandson will live and survive the catastrophe and will have an opportunity to receive more light and thus prepare for eternity and immortal glory. The case of this man proves that the proverb is not true.

Notwithstanding the facts which the prophet has set forth, the people still came to him and, said, "Wherefore doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?" God's reply through the prophet was this: "When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die:

the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." This clear statement shows that the proverb was incorrect. Each one will be judged and dealt with on the basis of his own life and conduct.

The Fate Of The Individual Is Not Involved In His Past.

In verses 21-30 Ezekiel discussed the case of the individual and showed that, though a man had lived in unrighteousness and had violated the laws of God, he could turn from all of his wickedness and sin and serve the Lord. In the event of his turning from his sins and unrighteousness and his turning to God and doing that which was pleasing in His sight, such a one would not be judged upon the basis of his former life of sin, but would be judged and dealt with upon the basis of what he is at the time of the judging. The Word of God on this point is more forceful than I can express in my language. Hence I am quoting verses 21 and 22 which deal with this case: "But if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 22 None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live."

In verse 24 the prophet supposes another case. This time he thinks of one who has been living up to the light that he has according to the moral and ceremonial law which God had given to Israel. This man ceases to walk in the light and turns from his correct manner of living to that of sin, transgression, and degradation. God no longer deals with him as He did when he was living a morally clean life. On the other hand, the Lord will deal with him on the basis of his present life. Thus the proverb of the one's having to suffer because of the sins of the parents is untrue. Moreover, it is untrue when it is applied to two different periods in the life of the individual. Regardless of the past God deals with the individual upon the basis of his present attitude and outlook. The Lord can and does overlook the past, when a person has forsaken the evil past and has turned his face toward God. At the same time one should recognize the fact that God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. This is a law that is operative in the spiritual realm. But the basis of God's dealing with the individual is upon his present status.

Notwithstanding the plain demonstration that the prophet gave to the people concerning the principles upon which He deals with the individual, the people continued to say to the prophet that God's ways were unequal and that their ways were right and just.

In verses 25-30 the prophet showed the inconsistency and the contradictions of their position. Instead of the Lord's being unrighteous and His ways unequal, the prophet showed very clearly that Israel's ways were unequal and unrighteous.

God's Call To Salvation

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live" (vss. 31,32).

The death of which the prophet has been speaking in the first twenty-nine verses of this chapter is physical. Being spared death was being spared physical death in the calamity that was just ahead of the nation. Of course it would have applied to any other calamity or catastrophe that might confront the nation in the future. But in verses 31 and 32 the prophet has ceased to talk simply about physical death. He has gone into the realm of the spiritual and is discussing the conversion of the soul and spiritual life and death.

That this is true may be seen by a glance at the words of these last two verses which we have just quoted. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" They were to turn from their wickedness and sin. They were urged to get them a new heart and a new spirit. They of course could not in and of themselves, or by themselves, get a new heart and a new spirit. The only way to have a new heart and a new spirit is to come to the Lord and accept His full and free salvation. Whenever one does that, the Holy Spirit regenerates the heart and places the right spirit in him. Since no person can come to God the Father except through Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, he must come to Him for this new heart and new spirit. One must be born again, said the Lord Jesus to Nicodemus. This is

a spiritual birth. For "That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

There, is no need nor occasion for anyone's dying a spiritual death and passing out of this life into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. The Lord Jesus Christ tasted death for every man. He pleads with all to come and accept Him and procure this new heart and this new spirit. Have you, dear friend, accepted Him? Have you experienced that regenerating and renewal in your soul that is mentioned in the Scriptures? If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new. Without the Saviour and this experience, life is vain.

To those who have accepted the Lord Jesus, I would urge that they press forward in the cause of God, working and toiling for Him during life's short day; for the night is coming in which no man can work.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 14)

The Young Lions And The Rods Of Judah

Ezekiel began the prophecy contained in chapter 19 by calling it a lamentation. Our prophet used this term frequently. Especially did he employ it with reference to Tyre and her King. A lamentation is a weeping and mourning over a situation. In the present case, the word, lamentation, may refer to the entire chapter or simply to the first nine verses. I am inclined, however, to believe that it refers to the entire passage.

The prophet begins speaking of the young lions of Judah in verse 1 and continues from this point of view through verse 9. In verses 10-14, however, he changes his representation and speaks of the nation of Israel as being a vine and her kings as being rods. As we shall see by an investigation, both comparisons are dealing with a like situation.

The reader should turn to Jeremiah, chapter 22, and study carefully the revelation which that prophet made to the kings of the house of Judah. In this chapter Jeremiah spoke of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin. But Ezekiel, in chapter 19, spoke of Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. But it is interesting to study both passages and see that each supplements the other.

The Young Lions Of Judah

Since the passage which we have for consideration is so very short in this study, let us read the first nine verses:

19 Moreover, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2 and say, What was thy mother? A lioness: she couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she nourished her whelps. 3 And she brought up one of her whelps: he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men. 4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their

pit; and they brought him with hooks unto the land of Egypt. 5 Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. 6 And he went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men. 7 And he knew their palaces, and laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, because of the noise of his roaring. 8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces; and they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit. 9 And they put him in a cage with hooks, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into strongholds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel" (vss. 1-9).

This language is either figurative or literal. Taken literally, it has no significance whatsoever; but when taken figuratively or metaphorically and interpreted in the light of related passages, it becomes very intelligible and has a profound message. Since one of the young lions was taken to Egypt and the other was taken to Babylon, one immediately thinks of Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, who reigned only three months, and who was taken by Pharaoh-Necco to Egypt. Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was carried by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. Since two of these young lions were taken—one to Egypt and the other to Babylon—and since obviously the passage is used symbolically, one naturally understands that these lions are symbols of kings.

An animal, when it is used symbolically in the Scriptures, always signifies a civil government and its sovereign. That this is true is evident from the study of Daniel, chapter 7. In the night visions this prophet saw a great sea, the waters of which were disturbed. Out of it there first emerged a lion like beast which came upon the land, and which dominated all that it surveyed. Following this one, when the waters were again agitated, there came forth a second beast, which was like a bear. It too came upon the land and became master. Again the waters were troubled and there emerged a beast like a leopard, which took the place of the second one. Finally, the waters were disturbed the fourth time, and there rose from them a nondescript beast. Daniel was eager to know the significance of these beasts. The interpreting angel gave him the desired information, for in 7:17 he told the prophet: "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth." Each of those beasts represented a world empire. They came up in succession, each succeeding one conquering its predecessor and taking its place.

The fourth one emerges and takes the place of the third one, continuing until the Ancient of Days takes His seat upon the throne and pronounces judgment upon its ruler, who speaks great swelling words against the Almighty. Thus Gentile world dominion is portrayed in the most graphic manner by the four symbolic beasts, that came up out of the troubled waters before the prophet's eyes. These four beasts, by general consent of all conservative, biblical scholars, are recognized as representing Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Sometimes the floodlight is flashed over the entire empire and one sees it as a whole. At other times, the spotlight is used by the prophet, figuratively speaking, and one sees the ruler or sovereign only. This is seen in comparing Daniel 7:17 and 7:23. In Psalm 80:13 the boar out of the forest and other beasts are likewise used symbolically to refer to the Gentile powers that had trodden down the Jewish people. Again we see beasts used symbolically in Jeremiah 2:15 to represent nations. To interpret Ezekiel 19:1-9 symbolically as thus setting forth the historical facts of the latter part of the last days of the monarchy is intelligible.

"What was thy mother?" asked the prophet of his auditors. "She couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she nourished her whelps." The representation here is that of a number of lions lying around. There is a lioness among them. She nourishes her whelps that become young lions. Evidently these lions are symbols of the nations lying around about the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea. The kingdom of Judah was a lioness who had nourished her whelps and made young, strong lions out of them. These whelps that were made into young lions were the leaders of the people, namely, the kings.

A study of the history as contained in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles shows that there were a number of brave, great, and mighty kings who reigned in Jerusalem. Of course David and Solomon were the greatest. Asa was a good king and a great man. So was Jehoshaphat. Hezekiah and Josiah likewise were great and noble men, powerful kings. The Babylonians recognized that Jerusalem had had many mighty and powerful kings. Different ones of these young lions "learned to catch the prey; he devoured men." This language is a reference to those kings of Judah who were aggressive in their relations with other nations and who got gain thereby.

But in verse 4 we read of one of these young lions that was caught—taken in a pit, and then carried with hooks into the land of Egypt. It is true that in the days of Shishak, king of Egypt, Rehoboam was conquered by Egypt and taken there temporarily; but he was restored to his kingdom. Ezekiel is not speaking of that incident. That which he had in mind was doubtless the dethroning of Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, and his being taken to Egypt to remain there until his death.

After Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt, Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, mounted the throne and reigned for eleven years. He is passed over in this symbolic representation by Ezekiel. After the lioness, the kingdom of Judah, saw that one of her young lions had been taken into captivity, "she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion"—he became king. "He went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion, "and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men. 7 And he knew their palaces, and laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, because of the noise of his roaring." Then the nations "set against him on every side from the provinces; and they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit." He was captured, put in a cage with hooks, and deported to Babylon. He remained a prisoner of the Babylonians until the day of his death. Nevermore was his voice heard "upon the mountains of Israel." This can be none other than Jehoiachin, who reigned only three months and then was dethroned and carried into captivity.

The Rods Or The Scepters Of Judah

"10 Thy mother was like a vine, in thy blood, planted by the waters: it was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. 11 And it had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and their stature was exalted among the thick boughs, and they were seen in their height with the multitude of their branches. 12 But it was plucked up in fury, it was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up its fruit: its strong rods were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them. 13 And now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. 14 And fire is gone out of the rods of its branches, it hath devoured its fruit, so that there is in it no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation (vss. 10-14)."

In these verses the prophet has changed his symbolical representation or picture. This was

common among the Orientals. For instance, in Psalm 23 David spoke of the relationship of Jehovah to His people under the symbolic representation of a shepherd and his flock. In the last two verses of his psalm, he changed his figure and compared God to a host who prepared a banquet for his people. Thus two entirely different symbolical representations appear in the short space of the six verses of Psalm 23. When we come to verse 10 of Ezekiel, chapter 19, we see that our prophet has changed his symbolism. He no longer compares the kingdom of Judah to a lioness and her kings to young lions. Here he reverts to the familiar method of comparing the nation to a grapevine. This imagery is familiar. We see it in Psalm 80:8-16, Isaiah, chapter 5, and Matthew 21:33-46. The kingdom of Judah is here represented as a vine that has been planted by the waters. It therefore was fruitful and full of branches by reason of the fertility of the soil and the abundance of water.

Since it was thus in a productive soil and had sufficient watering, it naturally had strong rods for scepters of them that bore rule, "and their stature was exalted among the thick boughs, and they were seen in their height with the multitude of their branches." These rods that grew on the vine are called rods or scepters "of them that bore rule." The scepter of a kingdom is a symbol of the rule and authority that the king has in his position as sovereign.

When we take this language and strip it of its symbolical character, we see here presented the thought that the kingdom of Judah had been planted beside many waters, had been established in a very favorable location, and as a result she had become strong and powerful. She produced strong and mighty kings who bore rule over the people and who guided the destiny of the nation. These rods or scepters were the very highest part of the vine and towered above all the rest of the vine. These rods or scepters, by metonymy, were the strong and mighty kings in Judah of the Davidic dynasty who had borne rule in the land.

In verse 12 we are told that "it was plucked up in fury, it was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up its fruit; its strong rods were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them." When Ezekiel spoke this prophecy the nation had not actually been plucked up, but it was on the very verge of being overthrown by the Chaldeans. The time for the fulfillment was so very close at hand that the prophet represented it as an accomplished fact. Thus he saw this vine pulled up out of its native soil cast down to the ground, and then there came forth out of the desert a burning, scorching east wind that withered the vine and dried up its fruit. At the same time its strong rods were broken off and withered. The fire consumed

them.

The strong east wind that scorched and withered this vine when it was pulled up could be nothing less than the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar, that came from the east against Jerusalem. This language becomes especially forceful to the one who recognizes that the scorching east wind from the Arabian Desert causes vegetation to wither in the Holy Land. Thus Israel herself and her civilization was withered and scorched by the Babylonians. The nation was pulled up from its native soil by the roots and thrown down, and two of her kings, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, were broken off.

In verse 13 the prophet sees this vine of Israel after it has been pulled up out of its native soil and has been planted out in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land. This sentence of course refers to the overthrow of the nation and the Exile.

The cause of all this conflagration and the burning of this vine was that "fire is gone out of the rods of its branches, it hath devoured its fruit, so that there is in it no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule." The fire which consumed the vine in this symbolic representation refers to the wickedness and the evil of the kings of Judah who led the nation into sin and caused the fire kindled from God's wrath to burn and consume the nation.

Certainly the rulers of a people have a marvelous, profound, and far-reaching influence upon the people and upon the destiny of a nation. This has always been true and will continue to be. The welfare of the people of Israel was indeed wrapped up with their rulers. The welfare of the American people is, in a similar manner, wrapped up with our political leaders. Let us therefore pray that they may enact proper laws and rule in such a manner that we may lead quiet and peaceful lives in all gravity and godliness, serving the Lord and pushing forward the interests of the kingdom of God until Jesus comes.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 15)

Israel's Past And Future Experiences

Ezekiel dates many of his prophecies. The present one came to him "in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, the tenth *day* of the month ..." of the captivity of Jehoiachin (Ezek. 20:1. cf. Ezek. 1:2).

A survey of chapter 20 shows that it is like a number of other passages in the Word. For instance, in Deuteronomy chapter 32, we have the entire history of Israel from the Exodus to the Millennium set forth graphically and pictorially. Nehemiah recounted the history of Israel in Nehemiah, chapter 9. The same thing is found in Psalms 78, 105, and 106. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, recounted the same history (Acts, chap. 7). Ezekiel, under symbolic form, represented the same thing in chapter 20 of his book.

The occasion of the prophecy in this chapter was the coming of the elders of Israel to the prophet to seek information on some point (cf. chap. 14).

Ezekiel 20 falls into three natural divisions:

- I. Israel's Past History (vss. 1-32);
- II. The Regathering of Israel (vss. 33-44);
- III. Introduction to the Prophecy of Chapter 21 (vss. 45-49).

In the Hebrew text chapter 20 closes with verse 44. Verses 45-49 are the first part of chapter 21. The division therefore of the Hebrew Bible, in this instance is far better than that of our English translation. Israel wanted to inquire of God concerning certain things; hence she sent her elders to the prophet for this information. But God refused to answer them. He therefore asked the prophet if he would judge them. This rhetorical question was equivalent to a command that the prophet should judge the sinful nation. In judging them he would be

pronouncing condemnation upon them for their actions. He was therefore commanded to make them know all the abominations of their fathers.

Israel's Past History (vss. 1-32)

In verses 5-9 the prophet describes the condition of the people spiritually when they were still in the land of Egypt. According to verse 5 Jehovah chose Israel when she was in Egypt and swore unto the house of Jacob and made Himself known unto them. This language must be understood in the light of other related passages. For instance, in Isaiah 43:1 we are told that God created the nation of Israel. He did so by performing a biological miracle upon the bodies of Abraham and Sarah who were past the age of parenthood. This miracle made possible the birth of Isaac. Having a definite plan running through the centuries and placing Israel in the center of that plan, the Lord at Babel dispersed the nations, directing each group to that portion of the earth's surface which should be their future home. In making this allotment of the earth to the various groups, He did so with reference to the children of Israel, that is, Israel was to be the hub of the nations, and all peoples were to revolve around her. This principle has been exemplified throughout the centuries and is in evidence today. The choosing of Israel then in Egypt was the carrying out of this prearranged plan to bless the world in and through her.

According to verses 5 and 6 God "swore unto them, saying, I am Jehovah your God; 6 in that day I swore unto them, to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt ..." In delivering them from their galling yoke of bondage, He said that He would bring them into "a land ... flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands" —Palestine, the country which He had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their seed after them.

Israel in Egypt

When the Lord sent Moses to deliver Israel, the latter charged her to cast away her abominations and the idols which she was serving in Egypt. It is strange that the Chosen People, after going down into Egypt, would turn to idols. But this is what they did. They forgot God, rebelled against Him, and would not hearken to Him in any way. Hence they made their idols, which are in verse 8 called *abominations*. This is a technical term for idol. This specific

meaning is found in many passages. This word has this special import in such a vital passage as Matthew 24:15, which refers to the idol or image that the Antichrist will set up in the middle of the Tribulation in the Jewish Temple at Jerusalem.

When Israel thus plunged into idolatry in Egypt, she trespassed sufficiently to justify God's blotting her from the face of the globe. But He would not do that for His own name's sake, as well as for the oath which He swore unto their fathers. He therefore withheld His wrath and brought them out of the house of bondage.

Israel in the Wilderness (vss. 6-17)

God, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, executed judgment upon the Egyptians and brought the Hebrews out into the wilderness of Sinai. In this connection one should study the first nineteen chapters of the Book of Exodus. The itinerary, briefly stated, is found in Numbers, chapter 33.

When they arrived at Sinai, God gave them His statutes, ordinances, and the ceremonial law, together with the sacrificial system of offerings which the nation was to make to God. At that time He gave her His sabbaths, which were to be a sign between God and her that she might know Him, that He is Jehovah. What is meant by "sabbath"? It can have two meanings: the regular weekly sabbath that came every seven days; or it could mean the entire sabbatical system, consisting of the weekly sabbath, the sabbatic year, and the Year of Jubilee, together with all related Ordinances. In Genesis, chapter 2, we are told that God finished His work on the seventh day and rested and hallowed that day. "Whether or not the immediate descendants of Adam and Eve observed the sabbath as a day of rest and worship toward God we are not told. Archaeology reveals the fact that the Babylonians had a sabbath on the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days. We are not able to say whether or not they divided the year up into weeks. The Egyptians do not seem to have known anything about the sabbaths. At Sinai, however, God revealed to Israel His sabbaths, which became a sign or ordinance to Israel, indicative of the special relationship which existed between Jehovah and the chosen nation.

The sabbath is the seventh day of the week and should not be confounded with the first day of the week. On the first day, or Sunday, Christians meet together for worship and praise to God. They do not thus observe this day because of the regulation regarding the sabbath found in the law of Moses. It is a good thing, however, to have a day of rest in which one can meditate upon sacred things and can worship God.

Notwithstanding all the marvelous works that God did in bringing Israel out of Egyptian bondage, she rebelled against Him and rejected His ordinances. She did this to such an extent that He declared that He would pour out His wrath upon her to consume her in the wilderness. Nevertheless He wrought for His own name's sake that it should not be profaned among the nations, in whose sight He brought her forth. Then He swore unto her that He would not bring her into the Promised Land because the people were so very rebellious and their hearts were going after idols. A careful perusal of the Book of Numbers shows that God had to punish them from time to time and thus destroy that generation that came out of Egypt, and that was so very rebellious.

The Generation Arising in the Wilderness (vss. 18-26)

In verses 18-26 the prophet deals with the generation that arose in the wilderness. God therefore spoke to them, urging them to walk in His statutes and ordinances, avoiding doing as their fathers had done in rejecting His will. According to verses 19 and 20 the Lord urged them to walk in His statutes and His ordinances and to hallow His sabbath, always remembering the relationship which existed between them. Nevertheless they rebelled and constantly disobeyed Him.

When this rising generation continued to persist in rebellion and disobedience, the Lord said that He would pour out His wrath upon them to accomplish His anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless He withdrew His hand, according to verse 22, and wrought for His name's sake, that His name should not be profaned among the nations. Then He swore that He would scatter them among the nations because of their rebellion and their disobedience.

At that time He gave them, according to verses 25 and 26, statutes and ordinances that were not good and in which they should not walk. He also allowed them to pollute themselves in their own gifts and in their waywardness. How could God give people ordinances that were not good for them and things in which they should not walk? This is very easily explained when we understand that God has an A-number-1 plan for every life. If a person will not accept this and walk therein, the Lord will give him a less honorable path in which to walk, or plan number two. If he will not accept plan number three or number four plan, the Lord will give him an even less honorable position in life. There is such a thing as being in the center of God's holy directive will. God's number one plan for one's life. There is also such a thing as being in God's permissive will. As an example of ordinances that God gave that were not good, all one must do is to turn to Deuteronomy, chapter 24, and also to Matthew, chapter 19. In the beginning God made man male and female and said that a man should leave his father and mother and should cleave to his wife, and that they two should be one flesh. Israel, during the wilderness wanderings, rebelled and continued in the course of disobedience until the Lord gave her ordinances that were not good, one of which was the privilege of divorcing a companion. Moses granted this statute or wrote it into the statute book because of the hardness of the hearts of the people. But from the beginning it was not that way. Concessions therefore were made by the Lord to the people on account of their disobedient, hardened hearts. Let us, on the other hand, never be willing to accept anything but that which is God's number one plan for our lives.

Summary of Israel's History in the Promised Land (vss. 27-29)

This brief summary is found in verses 27-29. Notwithstanding all the marvelous works which God wrought in behalf of Israel at the time of the Exodus, throughout the wilderness wanderings, and at the time of Israel's being established in the land, the people soon forgot God. The prophet Ezekiel therefore told his auditors, "In this moreover have your fathers blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. 28 For when I had brought them into the land, which I sware to give unto them, then they saw every high hill, and every thick tree, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offerings; there also they made their sweet savor, and they poured out there their drink-offerings. 29 Then I said unto them, What meaneth the high place whereunto

ye go? So the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day" (vss. 27-29). This statement is a terse, yet complete evaluation of Israel's long history in the Land of Promise.

The prophet was then commanded to speak frankly and plainly to the people, charging them with their sins and abominations. His language is found in verses 30-32. The Lord therefore refused to listen to their inquiry or to consider any of their petitions. Moreover He asserted that He would not allow their plans to materialize. They wanted to be like the nations and the families of the earth and go into idolatry. God declared that He would block them in their plans and purposes.

Israel's Future (vss. 33-44)

In verses 33-44 we have one of the most unique prophecies concerning the regathering of Israel to be found anywhere in the Scriptures. The view prevailing almost universally among prophetic students is that at the end of this age God will gather out the Jews from the countries in which they have been residing for centuries and will bring them back in unbelief into the land of their fathers. When they are thus settled in their land, enjoying peace, plenty and prosperity, then God will pour out His wrath upon them because of their unbelief. Those who formulated these ideas certainly did not study carefully what Ezekiel said in verses 33-39 of this chapter. Let us therefore look more particularly at the prediction.

Ezekiel saw Israel scattered among the nations. Then He declared that God with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath and indignation poured out would gather Israel from among the nations and bring them into what he called "the wilderness of the peoples," and there, said the Lord, will I enter into judgment with you face to face" (vs. 35). What is meant by the expression "wilderness of the peoples"? There is no land or country upon the face of the globe that is known by this title. There never has been. There is not likely to be any by that name. This language cannot be taken literally. Evidently then, it is figurative. What type of figure is it? An examination of the entire context shows that it is a play upon words, a figure that recurs possibly more often than any other in the Scriptures. The student of the Word therefore should acquaint himself with this most important figure, for in many instances the entire thought depends upon our understanding the play on words.

As we have already seen, in the first part of the chapter the prophet spoke of God's delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage and bringing her out into the wilderness of Sinai and there entering into judgment with the disobedient, rebellious people. Thus He purged out from among the people by His terrific judgments the rebels. There arose during their wanderings in the wilderness a new generation. Many of them were disobedient of course and judgment fell upon them. But it was the generation which arose during the wilderness wanderings that entered into the land of Canaan. The prophet, therefore, thinking in terms of Israel's past deliverance, declared that God would gather His Chosen People, now scattered among the nations, out from the place where they reside and would bring them into, not the wilderness of Sinai—as on the former occasion—but into the "wilderness of the peoples" and would there enter into judgment with them, purging out all of the rebels and the disobedient ones. Then the purged nation is to be brought into the Land of Promise and to be a joy and a blessing to the entire world.

According to this passage, then, God will in the conclusion of this age gather the Jews out from among the nations and will bring them into a place which He, by a play on words, calls the wilderness of the peoples. An examination of other passages bearing upon this question shows that in the end time Israel will be gathered largely out of all the nations and will be settled in what is properly called "the fertile crescent" consisting of the following countries: Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Assyria or old Babylonia. An examination of Isaiah 19:16-25 and Isaiah, chapter 27, together with other passages, shows that Israel will, in the end time, be gathered into this part of the world and the Lord will enter into Judgment with her there. During the Tribulation the purged nation will then be permitted to enter into the Land of Promise and will fill the earth with fruit, as we see in Isaiah 27:2-6.

In verses 40-44 we see Israel thus established "in the mountain of the height of Israel," that is, in the Land of Promise. Then she will offer sacrifices and make offerings that will be acceptable to God. At that time they will recall their willful, wicked ways, and they will mourn because of their former lives. God will deal with His people and restore them to their own land, fulfilling every promise that He has ever made to them. There is a wonderful future for Israel and for the world, when they all turn to God and plead for the Messiah to return, who will at that time establish the reign of righteousness and kingdom of glory upon the earth.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 16)

The Sword Of Jehovah

Our lesson this month is such a very important one. I therefore ask each one to read Ezekiel 20:45—21:32 before examining this exposition. D.L.C.

I shall assume that each one has read the text in the Scriptures which constitutes the exposition of this department in the present issue. Each therefore will understand that 20:45-49 is the prophet's parabolic introduction to his oracle which is contained in chapter 21. It is unfortunate that in the English Bible chapter 21 did not begin with verse 45 of chapter 20. In the Hebrew Bible the chapter division is in its proper place. Thus in it this preparatory paragraph is not cut off from the oracle which it introduces.

In this preface to the prediction the prophet thought of Palestine as a forest and spoke of it as "the forest of the field in the South." Since the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon Mountains run throughout Syria and Palestine, all of the eastern Mediterranean coast was thought of as a single country, Lebanon. Frequently the prophets thus spoke. The Lebanon Mountains were famous for their cedars, whereas Bashan, east of the Sea of Galilee, was noted for its great oaks. From history and archaeology we know that Palestine during the Hebrew occupation was well-wooded. Of course the valleys were well-tilled. Ezekiel, then, in referring to Palestine proper spoke of it as being the forest of the South—south of those countries which are now known as the Lebanonese Republic and Syria.

In vision the prophet saw a great destructive forest fire sweeping over the entire country, burning both the green and the dead trees alike. This fire could not be quenched. The entire country was to be burned. This conflagration was of such a kind and nature that all flesh would recognize that it was God who kindled it.

Representing the nation of Israel in her land as a great forest was the same imagery which Zechariah used in chapter 11:1-3. In this passage he described a fire as beginning in the

Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Mountains, sweeping southward into Bashan, and then veering to the southwest and coming down through the Jordan Valley into the southern part of the country.

Ezekiel's hearers realized that he was speaking in a parable. Being unwilling to receive the message of God, they, figuratively speaking, shrugged their shoulders and waived the matter by saying, "Is he not a speaker of parables?" Thus in this light, flippant manner they dismissed the revelation which God made to them and cast it into the limbo of fiction and folklore. What they did is characteristic of people today who do not wish to receive the Word of God.

The word parable is of Greek origin and means literally to throw something down beside another object. In other words, the known is laid beside the unknown in order that, by simple reasoning, one can arrive at the unknown. The prophets and the Lord Jesus himself frequently used this method of teaching. It is one of the most powerful ways of imparting truth. The flippant method of dealing with the sacred and unchangeable Word of God employed by the prophet's hearers reminds one of another incident in the life of Ezekiel. He had a vision of the future and faithfully proclaimed it to the people. In order to break the force of the revelation, they declared that the vision was for the distant future and that it did not pertain to them whatsoever. Regardless of how men treat the Word of God and what interpretation they put upon it, the Lord's will is established in heaven forever (Ps. 119:89).

The Sword Of Jehovah

In 21:1-7 the prophet frankly and fully explains what he meant by his parable. This reminds one of the parable of the sower, given by the Lord Jesus in Matthew, chapter 13. He spoke the parable and later interpreted it. Ezekiel used his parable and then interpreted it.

As one sees from verses 1 and 2, the oracle was especially directed against Jerusalem with its grand Temple and also against the land of Israel. In verse 3 the Lord spoke these awful words: "Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked." God uses these words "I am against thee," in His oracle against Gog, a future ruler of Russia when he decides to invade Palestine without

any provocation whatsoever (Ezek., chaps. 38 and 39). For God to be against one or a nation is a terrible situation.

The Lord represents Himself as a warrior whose sword at His side is in its sheath. But He is determined to go into battle; He therefore draws His sword and rushes into the fray. Going into action against the nation, He declares that He will cut off both the righteous and the wicked from Dan to Beersheba. Everyone who is acquainted with military action knows that, as a rule, the innocent suffer along with the guilty, the righteous together with the unrighteous.

The terrible consequences of this fight are so very appalling that the prophet, seeing the reality in vision, sighed and wept. See verses 6 and 7. His heart was overwhelmed at the sight.

The Lord frequently compared Himself to a warrior who had His sword and who used it on various occasions. One should in this connection read carefully Deuteronomy 32:39-42, where Moses used the same imagery and phraseology. Isaiah adopted the same figure in 66:15,16.

Another Picture Of Jehovah's Sword

A further description of this sword of Jehovah is found in verses 8-17. In this paragraph the prophet was urged to speak as follows before his audience: "A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished; 10 it is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning: shall we then make mirth? the rod of my son, it contemneth every tree. 11 And it is given to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword, it is sharpened, yea, it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the slayer." Thus in this most dramatic manner the prophet was to point the people to the fact that a sword, one that has been sharpened, one that has been furbished, one that has been polished, in order that it might be used in slaughter, was ready to be used against the land and the nation of Israel. It was to be put into the hands of a slayer who would use it in fighting against Israel.

On account of its brevity and cryptic brief expression, the sentence, "The rod of my son, it contemneth every tree," is most difficult to be understood. Another rendering is given, as a

second translation, in the revised version which is "it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree." A marginal reading of the English Revised Version is "It is the rod of my son, it despiseth every tree." Many explanations have been given of this language. I shall not therefore be dogmatic in interpreting it.

In order to approach this problem, one must turn back to Genesis 49:9,10. Here Jacob, in leaving his blessing with his sons, in verses 9-12 spoke to Judah in part as follows: "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up ... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh come; And unto him shall the obedience of the people be..." In this passage Judah, the head and representative of the tribe which descended from him, is thought of as seated with scepter in hand. The scepter of course is the symbol of rule and authority. The one into whose hand the Lord places His sword (Ezek. 21:11) looks with contempt upon the scepter of Judah in the hand of the king who is then upon the throne. Not only does he assume this attitude toward the ruling power in Judah, but he looks at all other scepters of the nations in the same manner and thus contemneth every tree. In verse 12 the prophet is urged to wail and to weep for the children of Israel and for her princes who are doomed to be delivered over unto this sword of Jehovah that is in the hand of an aggressor.

Verse 13 likewise gives great difficulty. The marginal reading of this verse is: "*What if the sword contemn even the rod? It shall be no more.*" If we accept this marginal reading, the prophet seems to say that there is going to be a trial through which the nation will be caused to pass. What will be the result if this sword makes a complete job and no longer contemns even the rod? If we take this interpretation, then it would imply that the throne would be swept aside and would not be occupied by any of David's descendants, at least for some time as we shall see when we investigate verse 27.

In verse 14 the prophet was commanded to smite his hands together and then double the sword the third time. This language likewise is rather vague. Some have thought that it meant that he was to cut in one direction with the sword and then back in the opposite direction. In this way he would be doubling or bending back the sword. He was to perform this act three times. This symbolic act was to indicate the ferocity and the vigor with which this sword of the Lord would be wielded by the aggressor. This would bring untold suffering and distress

upon the nation. In verse 17 the Lord declared that the punishment will be sufficient and that His wrath will rest—that is, for the time being—when this aggressor will have thus wielded the sword against His people.

The King Of Babylon The Wielder Of The Sword

In verses 18-23 we see that the king of Babylon, who was Nebuchadnezzar, was the one into whose hands God placed His sword in order that he might fight against His Chosen People. In these verses the prophet sees in vision Nebuchadnezzar on the march. In order to carry out the divine decree, he comes to the parting of the ways. The right hand road is the one that leads to Jerusalem; the left hand to Rabbah of Ammon, the capital of the children of Ammon. Here Nebuchadnezzar halts at the parting of the ways. He is undecided as to which way he will take—which people he will attack first. He solves his quandary by making sacrifices to his gods and by means of divinations and the casting of lots. The heathen people would make sacrifices and those who were considered as experts in divination would look at the vital organs of the slain animal and would attempt to interpret the nervous reaction of the vitals of the animals and interpret this as indicative of the will of the gods. Moreover the color of these vital organs was considered as revealing or helping to reveal the will of the gods. After the proper sacrifices were made, the lots were cast. Such divination was common throughout the world in Ezekiel's day and time. When Nebuchadnezzar had thus performed his sacrifices, and his diviners had pronounced the will of the gods, the lots were cast. The lot fell upon Jerusalem. Of course all of this divination was heathen, anti-biblical. In verses 22 and 23 the prophet reveals that Nebuchadnezzar is led by his divination to come against Jerusalem in order to fight against it and to overthrow it.

Wishful thinking is not something that is of recent origin. The Jews of Jerusalem and Palestine were doing some wishful thinking according to verse 23. They interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's following his divination to come against Jerusalem as something false. But it was a reality. Of course the gods did not reveal their will—for they were nonentities—through divinations to Nebuchadnezzar. God was overruling in the case and was directing him, Nebuchadnezzar, though he did not realize this fact, against His ancient people to punish them for their sins. But according to the last clause of verse 23 God was bringing Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem because of the peoples' sins and to bring iniquity to remembrance.

The Prince Of Israel In The End Time

Verses 24-27 contain a marvelous revelation. The passage is rather brief and concise and is, on this account, rather difficult of interpretation. But we shall endeavor to learn what we can about it. Verse 24 which speaks of God's overruling providence and His punishment of Israel for her wickedness is clear. But verses 25-27 are the difficult portion of the oracle.

Who is this "deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end?" Is this a native Jew who will attempt to reign over Israel in the end time? Obviously the prophet in these verses was looking across the centuries and was addressing this prince of Israel of the end time. Is there to be, then, a prince who will rise over Israel? If so, will he be the world ruler or will he be one of the ten kings symbolized by the ten toes of Daniel's metallic image, chapter 2, and one of the ten horns of the wild beast of Daniel, chapter 7? When we read this prophecy in the light of Daniel, chapters 2 and 7, and Revelation, chapters 13 and 17, we come to the conclusion that he is either one of the ten horns on the beast or that he is the little horn that comes up after the ten and is in the midst of them.

When we study Daniel, chapter 7, carefully, we see that the world will be headed up into one great colossal government (Dan 7:23). That world government will collapse and fall into ten separate kingdoms, over each of which parts there will arise a dictator who seizes the power. After this development there will arise out of obscurity a man symbolized by the little horn who will ingratiate himself into the favor of these ten dictators, and who will eventually draw the power and authority from these ten and center it in himself. In the midst of the Tribulation he will put down three of these ten, but he will be supreme over the seven that remain.

It is altogether possible that this prince of Israel of the end time mentioned in Ezekiel 21:25 may be one of those ten kings, who will be reigning over the Jewish people. Or it is entirely possible that he might be the Antichrist himself who will be reigning over the entire world, including the Jewish people. Since, he will be reigning over the Jews as he reigns over the entire world, he could be called the prince of Israel in this passage. Such an interpretation is in accord with the general usage of language.

If we are inclined to this interpretation, we might connect Ezekiel 21:25-27 with Revelation, chapters 13 and 17. In Revelation, chapter 13, we see the Antichrist going to Jerusalem, sitting in the Jewish Temple rebuilt in the end time presenting himself to the people as God, and opposing everything that is called God. About that time he receives a deadly stroke. In fact the Greek carries the idea that it is a death stroke. He descends to the nether world but is brought back by Satan and reigns with a hand of tyranny throughout the latter half of the Tribulation.

In Ezekiel 21:27 the deadly wounded wicked prince of Israel of the end time attempts to put on the crown and the mitre, the regal crown and the priestly mitre. God forbids his doing that and says that no one has any right to wear that crown "until he come whose right it is; and I will give it *him*." This one whose right it is to reign can be none other than the Hebrew Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be a King and at the same time Priest upon the throne of Israel and reign over the entire world at His return. (Read Zech. 6:9-15.) When we take all the facts into consideration that are set forth in the passages referred to, one is inclined to believe that this deadly wounded wicked one is the world ruler, the Antichrist, of the end time. If we accept this interpretation, does that force us to accept the proposition that the Antichrist will be a Jew? Not necessarily so. Herod the Great was part Jew and part Idumean, yet he was recognized as the king of Judea at the time when Jesus was born. In the same manner the Antichrist, who according to Daniel 9:26 is to be of Roman extraction, may be recognized as the prince of Israel. At the same time the Antichrist may be a Jew who comes to the throne of the world, and who goes to Jerusalem in the middle of the Tribulation and attempts to put upon his head a Jewish crown, in addition to the world crown, and also the priestly mitre. When he attempts to do this, God blocks the way; for such prerogatives and authority belong only to the Messiah of Israel.

The Oracle Against Ammon

In verses 28-32 appears the oracle concerning the children of Ammon. This same sword that was sharpened and furbished, and that was put into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar as he went against Jerusalem, was to be used against the children of Ammon, inveterate enemies of the

Jews. Thus a fate similar to that which came upon the Jews is here foretold as coming upon the children of Ammon.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 17)

Sinful Jerusalem And Her Punishment

Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah. Of course it was the principal city of the kingdom. All vices gravitated toward this spiritual center, as they always do with reference to any leading city of any nation, regardless of the time. All the prophets denounced the nation, as well as the city, for its corrupt living. At the same time they acknowledged any excellencies that obtained at any time.

Jerusalem The Wicked Bloody, And Idolatrous City

"Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 2 And thou, son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? then cause her to know all her abominations. 3 And thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: A city that sheddeth blood in the midst of her, that her time may come, and that maketh idols against herself to defile her! 4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, and art defiled in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the nations, and a mocking to all the countries. 5 Those that are near, and those that are far from thee, shall mock thee, thou infamous one *and* full of tumult" (Ezek. 22:1-5).

According to verse 2 the Lord asked Ezekiel to judge the "bloody city." In doing this, he was to cause her to know all of her "abominations." The word abominations has not only the idea of that which is abhorrent, but it has a specific technical meaning in the Old Testament in referring to an idol. It is quite likely that it has both of these significations in this place, because the city had been given over to idolatry and the people at the same time were engaging in abominable practices, things despicable to God. That it does have the technical meaning of being the name of an idol is immediately apparent from verse 3 where Jerusalem is called the city that sheds blood and that makes herself defiled with idols. The prophet was to inform the people that the city's time had come, that is, the time for the judgment of God

to fall upon it. The oracle in chapter 20 was spoken in the seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, which was the sixth year of Zedekiah's reign. Three years later the Babylonians drew up their forces in besieging the city and overrunning the country. Thus practically the time had arrived for the judgment of Almighty God to fall upon the city.

Israel by her conduct had brought all of these things upon herself. She had acted in such a way in the presence of the surrounding nations that they simply mocked at her. Not only those that were near, but those that were afar off who would hear of the conditions in Palestine made a laughingstock of her.

"Behold, the princes of Israel, every one according to his power, have been in thee to shed blood. 7 In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the sojourner; in thee have they wronged the fatherless and the widow. 8 Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9 Slandering men have been in thee to shed blood; and in thee they have eaten upon the mountains: in the midst of thee they have committed lewdness. 10 In thee have they uncovered their fathers' nakedness; in thee have they humbled her that was unclean in her impurity. 11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbor's wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter. 12 In thee have they taken bribes to shed blood; thou hast taken interest and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by oppression, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 6-12).

According to verse 6 the princes and the political leaders in the nation did that which was in their power, even to the shedding of blood. From verse 7 we see that the children had no respect for the parents—a sign of a decadent age. We also see that the inhabitants of the city took advantage of the sojourner and oppressed him. They had little regard for the fatherless and the widow. This is a terrible sin in the sight of God and one for which God will call everyone thus practicing it to a strict account.

From verse 8 we learn that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had little regard for holy and sacred things. Moreover they profaned the sabbath. They simply observed that sacred day because

they were by custom forced to do so. They were always eager for it to pass so that they could begin their commercial transactions again and thus make money.

In verse 9 we see that men with little regard for the truth would slander others and were swift to shed blood. They would eat upon the mountains. This statement possibly refers to the practice of engaging in idolatrous worship, which was conducted upon the high places. In connection with heathen services and pagan rites they would eat with idolaters and thus become defiled. The verse concludes with a statement that they also committed lewdness in the midst of the city where the sacred Temple of God stood.

Continuing his enumeration of prevalent sins, the prophet in verse 10 declared that a man would uncover his father's nakedness and would humble the woman who was unclean in her impurity. The morals were so very low that, according to verse 11, one would commit abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law. There were those who humbled their sisters. Such sins of immorality were being practiced there as were common among the Gentiles who did not have the light that the Israelites had.

Bribery was the order of the day. Men and women did not refuse to take bribes to shed innocent blood. They took interest and increase from the poor, which thing the Lord positively prohibited. The bulk were grafters and sought gain from their neighbors by oppression. They did these things because they had forgotten the Lord God. These verses at which we have just looked paint one of the darkest immoral pictures ever depicted by the prophets of Israel. A holy God cannot tolerate such wickedness. A day of reckoning must always surely come.

"Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. 14 Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and will do it. 15 And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries; and I will consume thy filthiness out of thee. 16 And thou shalt be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah" (vss. 13-16). Speaking for God, the prophet declared: "I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou has made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee." As a person who is indignant at the

practices of certain ones slaps his hands together in a most determined gesture against the evil, thus the prophet did in order to express God's great disapproval of the actions and the lives of the people to whom he was speaking.

From verse 14 we learn that the prophet asked the people whether or not their hands would be strong in the day that God would deal with them. God will certainly deal with everyone. There is no such thing as our escaping His dealing with us, whether our deeds be righteous or unrighteous.

The threat of the punishment which the Lord would administer to Israel for her sins is expressed in verse 15 in these words: "And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries; and I will consume thy filthiness out of thee." Moses and all the prophets warned the people that God would not tolerate their wickedness and sin but would on account of their persistent evil and wickedness scatter them among the nations of earth. He allowed the Assyrians to take some of the northern tribes into captivity. Judah, notwithstanding this stroke of judgment, persisted in her sin. The Lord therefore brought Nebuchadnezzar into Palestine and caused him to overthrow the government and carry many of the leaders into exile. It is true that, at the expiration of the seventy years of Babylonian captivity, the Lord brought back those who were willing to follow and serve Him. But when those in the land and those who lived dispersed among the nations rejected the Lord Jesus Christ as the Hebrew Messiah, the Lord used the Romans in scattering Israel among the nations and destroying every vestige of her national life and activity. Thus Israel has been scattered among the nations for practically nineteen hundred years. Since she has been scattered throughout the world, God has made her profane in the eyes of the nations. Anti-Semitism is rife on every hand. The Jew is a hiss, a curse, a proverb, and a byword upon the lips of all nations. God will, however, punish every anti-Semite and all those who abuse or mistreat the Jews. To Abraham He said that He would bless those who would bless him and his seed, and that He would curse those who curse the Jews. No nation can mistreat the Jews and escape severe punishment from God. At the same time the Lord punishes His Chosen People because of their sins and their having rejected their Lord, Saviour, and Messiah.

May the Lord hasten the day when Israel will see her mistake, will repudiate the national sin,

and will plead for the Messiah to return. When she does, that will be a great, grand, and glorious day.

Jerusalem's Punishment And Purification

"And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 18 Son of man, the house of Israel is become dross unto me: all of them are brass and tin and iron and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are the dross of silver. 19 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because ye are all become dross, therefore, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20 As they gather silver and brass and iron and lead and tin into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my wrath, and I will lay you there, and melt you. 21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. 22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I, Jehovah, have poured out my wrath upon you" (vss. 17-22).

In verse 18 Ezekiel speaks of the little kingdom of Judah as "the house of Israel." From the historical records we know that certain ones of the northern kingdom gravitated toward the southern kingdom and became absorbed in it. Jeremiah and Ezekiel use the terms, house of Israel and house of Judah, interchangeably. So do the prophets of the post-Exilic Period and the writers in the New Testament.

According to verse 18 Ezekiel declared that Israel had become dross, brass, tin, iron, and lead that are in the midst of the furnace. They were simply the dross of silver. In the verses first quoted the Lord compares Jerusalem to a furnace into which He puts the ore that contains the silver, the brass, the iron, the lead, and the tin. Having put the ore in, He declared that He would blow His fire upon it and melt it. Thus He spoke of the purging out of the dross from among His people in terms of the smelting process, of removing the dross from the silver and the gold.

According to verse 20 He does this in His anger and in His wrath. The same thought is repeated in verse 21, when all of the dross has been removed, the nation will know that Jehovah is God and that He has thus dealt with her as He has.

A Supplemental List Of The Sins Of Jerusalem And The Nation

"23 And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 24 Son of man, say unto her, Thou art a land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. 25 There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they take treasure and precious things; they have made her widows many in the midst thereof. 26 Her priests have done violence to my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they caused men to discern between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. 27 Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, that they may get dishonest gain. 28 And her prophets have daubed for them with untempered *mortar*, seeing false visions, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, when Jehovah hath not spoken. 29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery; yea; they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the sojourner wrongfully. 30 And I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. 31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I brought upon their heads, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 23-31).

On account of the uncleanness of the land the Lord declared that He would withhold the rain in the day of His indignation, in the time of His punishing the nation for its sins.

As we see in verse 25, there was a conspiracy of the prophets in the midst of the land. Ezekiel compared these prophets to roaring lions that were ravening the prey. Their prey was not that of animals, but of human souls. They by all means took every treasure and precious thing from the people and made many widows in the midst of the land.

The priests were no better, as we see in verse 26. They did violence to the law of God. They profaned the holy things in considering them as non-sacred matters. In other words, they did not take their services seriously. They were void of a conscience. They made no distinction between that which had been dedicated and was holy to God, and that which was for common

consumption.

Moreover, they did not cause people to distinguish between that which was unclean and the clean. Certain things were recognized as clean and lawful others were unclean and prohibitive. It was the priest's duty to call the people's attention to these distinctions which were set forth in the law of God. Furthermore, they did not have any regard for the sabbath day, and we may judge from other statements that they had little regard for the regular set feasts of the Lord.

The princes, the ruling class, are in verse 27 compared to ravening wolves. They shed blood and carried on traffic in men's souls. To get gain was their motto, regardless of how they procured it.

In verse 28 Ezekiel returned to the discussion of the prophets of the land, who are compared to masons building a wall, that builded with untempered mortar. Of course, structures thus built would tumble and fall. These prophets saw false visions and divined lies to the people, declaring that God was speaking through them. Unfortunately there are successors to these prophets in our modern pulpits today. Of course all of them are not of this character, but there are far too many who have never been called of God into the ministry, but who are simply making a profession of the ministry of the Word. They are not interested in men's souls and in speaking the revelation of God to the people.

Like priest, like people. We see in verse 29 that the people of the land used oppression and robbed the public. They vexed the poor and the needy and oppressed the sojourner wrongly.

Ezekiel, speaking for the Lord, declared that He had searched for a man who should build up the ruins and stand in the gap between Him (the Lord) and the land, that it might not be destroyed; but he found none. This calls to mind what Moses did. Israel complained continually against God's treatment of her. She sinned and rebelled against the Almighty. A crisis arrived. Moses threw himself in the breach and pleaded for the nation. Because of this marvelous petition of supplication, Israel was spared. On this point note what the Lord said: "Therefore he said that he would destroy them, Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach. To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*" (Ps. 106:23). Jeremiah went through the streets of Jerusalem looking for a man who was seeking justice and truth,

but he found not a one (Jer. 5:1). The person for whom he was looking doubtless was a man of the highest type of character who would be an intercessor pleading for Israel.

In our thinking of intercessors and of the great results which have flowed from the prayers of such men of God, one immediately thinks of the Lord Jesus Christ who stepped in the breach and whose intercession and sacrifice in behalf of the human family have rescued countless millions from a never-ending hell. What the world needs to-day is consecrated, surrendered Christians who are living the victorious life to engage in the ministry of prayer. Prayer changes things. Prayer brings victory.

The eyes of the Lord are running to and fro throughout the earth to find those whose hearts are perfect toward God in order that He might show Himself strong in their behalf (II Chron. 16:9). God is looking for men and women whom He can use, especially in intercessory prayer, in order that calamities and catastrophes might be averted. When there are no such ones to fall into the breach, the stroke of judgment must inevitably fall.

Since there was none to stand in the breach as Ezekiel says, God was forced to pour out His indignation upon the people and to consume them with the fire of His jealousy. God rewards each one according to his own works. That is the principle upon which He deals with men and will continue to do so.

While Christians are saved by the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they will be rewarded according to their works and their deeds. The Lord punishes His people here for their misdeeds. The time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God, declared the Apostle Peter. When we come before the judgment seat of Christ, He will try our works whether they be good or bad and will reward us accordingly. May we, dear friends, who know the Lord be sincere and urgent about our Father's business, glorifying Him by godly, consecrated lives.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 18)

The Lewdness Of Oholah And Oholibah

Although the people of Israel had been redeemed by the Lord in a marvelous manner from Egyptian bondage, had been nourished during their wilderness wanderings of forty years, had been given the land of Palestine as their home, and had been blessed in a marvelous manner, she still continued in her waywardness, departing from her God. No sooner had she entered the land and become settled there until she played the harlot with the various Canaanite gods. The Period of the Judges was characterized by apostasy from God; then chastisement by the Almighty. Following a period of correction were repentance, turning to God, and calling upon Him for emancipation. Then the Lord raised up deliverers in the form of the Judges. The Book of Judges is thus a series of cycles of history, passing through the various stages just mentioned. During the Period of the Monarchy the history likewise continued in cycles of apostasy from God, chastisement, repentance, and calling upon God for mercy. During this period there were four, great reforms or revivals in the nation. These were conducted by the following kings: Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. After each one of these great reforms or revivals, the people lapsed back into idolatry finally and apostatized from God. The prophets, constantly fought against idolatry in every sense of the term and plead with Israel to come back and be faithful to God.

This turning from God to idols is set forth both in Ezekiel, chapter 16 and chapter 23, in the form of allegories. The northern kingdom, whose capital was Samaria, is represented as a girl whose name was Oholah which means "her tent." The girl whose name is called Oholibah was Jerusalem. This word means "my tent is in her" and refers to the fact that the temple of God was located there. In this representation these two girls are set forth as having been in Egypt and having played the harlot there with the gods of the country. We are not to suppose that, since they are spoken of as having been in Egypt, the rift between the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes, which came upon the death of Solomon, existed while the Hebrews were in Egypt. It is true that there were differences between the mighty tribe of Judah on the one hand and that of Ephraim on the other in the early stages of the history of Israel. But the

rent never came until Solomon died and Rehoboam, Solomon's son and successor, refused to listen to the reasonable plea of the people to reduce the taxes. When he failed to do this, the ten northern tribes seceded from the kingdom and the throne of David. Ezekiel, in his allegorical representation of the two sections of the Jewish nation, spoke of them in terms of the situation of his own day and time. As we have already seen, when Israel was in Egypt, she began to worship idols (Ezek., chap. 20).

Oholah, Samaria, Flirting With Assyria

In verses 5-10 Ezekiel speaks to Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, and tells of how the people of that kingdom turned to Assyria for help and how they were influenced by that mighty pagan nation. Just as a young woman who removes all restraints and turns to become a harlot and makes advances toward certain paramours, thus this northern kingdom had done with reference to Assyria.

Since nationally Israel gave her attention to the Assyrians, the Lord turned her over to this mighty pagan nation. This historical account of the first serious interference with the northern kingdom by Assyria is recorded in II Kings 15:29-31. This occurred in the days of Tiglath-pileser III, one of the strongest monarchs who ever sat upon the Assyrian throne. A few years later Shalmaneser IV, the successor of Tiglath-pileser, came against Samaria. During the war Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by Sargon, who prosecuted the war to a conclusion. At the end of a three-year struggle Samaria succumbed to the mighty titanic blows of the Assyrians. The fall occurred in B.C. 719. Thus the northern kingdom never was restored.

Oholibah, Jerusalem, More Corrupt Than Her Sister Oholah

In Ezekiel 23:11-21 the prophet in similar imagery represented Jerusalem as a woman who has turned to be a harlot, and who is going after various paramours. She went after the Assyrians first, according to Ezekiel. The fact that she is spoken of here under the symbolism of a harlot and her going after paramours found its literal expression in the days of Ahaz, king of Judah. At that time Syria and Israel had formed an alliance against Judah and King Ahaz. Ahaz turned toward the Assyrians for help and deliverance. King Ahaz actually invited Tiglath-pileser to a conference and met him in Damascus, where a treaty of peace was negotiated.

At that time Ahaz sent instructions back to Jerusalem to change the altar at the Temple in Jerusalem and pattern it like the one in Damascus. Thus he began to conform to the Assyrian ideals. The account of these occurrences is found in II Kings, chapter 16.

Ezekiel also charged Oholibah, Jerusalem, with having played the harlot with the Chaldeans. The thing referred to by this language might be illustrated by the friendly relations that were instituted between Hezekiah, king of Judah, and Babylon. When Hezekiah was sick, the Babylonians sent ambassadors to him on a friendly mission. The Judean king, being flattered by such courtesies, opened up all of his treasures and showed to these pagan representatives the secrets of the kingdom. Thus friendly relations were established. Babylon, however, took advantage of such a situation and used it in its plans of aggression a little later, Hezekiah, in thus forming his policy of friendship, broke down the barriers that made Judah distinctive among the nations and paved the way for future Babylonian aggression against Judah. When Hezekiah did this, the Lord sent Isaiah the prophet condemning the action. (See II Kings, chapter 20, and Isaiah, chapter 39.)

The Chaldeans And The Assyrians Agents Of God's Wrath Against Judah

In verses 22-35 God in a very graphic manner shows that the Assyrians and the Chaldeans were only His agents in bringing chastisement to Judah because of her moral and spiritual delinquency. The overrunning of the country and the depredations committed by the Assyrians were a thing of the past at the time of Ezekiel's speaking; but the Babylonians' aggressive action was just being instituted; their campaigns were just beginning to be launched.

Israel spoke of the wrecking of the country and the destruction of the property by the Babylonians in terms of the heathen practice of mutilating the faces of victims. At times the victor would cut off the nose and the ears of the conquered and would strip them of their jewels and clothing. Thus, in a most graphic and vivid manner, the prophet described the depredation of the Babylonians which they would commit against Judah at the time of their aggressive action. These predictions were literally carried out at the time of the Babylonian captivity.

All Israel Indicted

In verses 36-49 the prophet is commanded to judge both Oholah and Oholibah. In doing this he simply declared the sins of the people and the punishment that had been meted out and was to be meted out because of the sins of the people.

Every sin and every transgression receives a just recompense of reward. What a man sows that he also reaps. This same principle governs nations as well as individuals.

When Israel's Messiah came, she rejected Him. As a result of this action God has had to punish His beloved people these nineteen hundred years. When, however, she humbles herself, accepts the punishment of her delinquency, acknowledges her national sin, and pleads for Messiah to return, He will do so. Then will dawn Israel's day. May that day speedily come!

"Draw nigh, draw nigh, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear!

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 19)

The Boiling Caldron

As we approach the study of Ezekiel, chapter 24, let us remember that the prophet was in Babylon in captivity, and that most of the visions which he received to be delivered to the people pertained to Jerusalem and the rest of the nation that still remained in the land. Of course the Jewish captives who had been taken to Babylon, and to whom Ezekiel ministered, were those that had been deported by Nebuchadnezzar in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign and those also carried away when he took Jehoiachin and numbers of the leaders of Israel into captivity. These captives of course were very much interested in their native land and in their beloved city, Jerusalem. They were eager to get the news from heaven concerning the events before the realities were unfolded before their eyes.

I might illustrate the situation in Ezekiel's day by that which exists today. There are Jews all over the world who are looking intently to the Jewish situation in Palestine. Since the open war has broken out there, Jews in other lands are eagerly listening to the radio and reading the papers to get the very last minute news concerning the development of the situation in their native land. In a manner similar to this one were the captives in Babylon at the time when Ezekiel was prophesying.

The Date Of The Prophecy

Much confusion has arisen among commentators because of their failure to understand the system of the dating of the prophecies of this book. Ezekiel received his call, according to 1:2, in the fifth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim and the predecessor of Zedekiah, who reigned only three months, and then was deported to Babylon. The prophet's next oracle is dated in the sixth year (8:1). The next one is found in 20:1 and is dated in the seventh year. The present prophecy is dated in the ninth year. Ezekiel does not say that this is the ninth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. Most students assume that this was the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign. But a glance at Ezekiel 40:1 makes it clear that Ezekiel dates his

prophecies in the era of Jehoiachin's captivity; for he declared that the twenty-fifth year of their captivity was the fourteenth year after the city fell. The wording is exact. That twenty-fifth year, when Ezekiel received the oracle found in chapters 40-48, was the fourteenth year after the fall of the city. From the account in Second Kings we see that the city fell in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign (II Kings 25:1-12). Thus Ezekiel 40:1 shows that the chronological scheme adopted by Ezekiel was that of the captivity of Jehoiachin.

The prophecy which we are studying now is that of the boiling caldron. The revelation came in the ninth year, in the tenth month and tenth day. Since Ezekiel used the era of Jehoiachin's captivity, the ninth year in that system was the eighth year of Zedekiah's reign. This being true, the prophecy was given exactly one year prior to the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. This was a memorable date, because from it is dated the period of the seventy years of indignation which is mentioned by Zechariah in chapter 1 of his prophecy.

The Symbolism

Jeremiah, a senior contemporary of Ezekiel, had a vision in which he saw a boiling caldron that was facing from the north. Its contents were boiling over and running in the direction of Palestine. The Lord interpreted this symbolism as indicating that there would come forth from the north all the nations under the Babylonians in an invasion of the land to wreck and to ruin it from one end to the other. This use of the symbolism must be kept distinct from that employed by Ezekiel.

In Ezekiel 11:3 we see that the people in Jerusalem employed this same symbolism. There were certain men in Jerusalem who were devising iniquity by giving wicked counsel and spreading propaganda among the inhabitants. They were therefore saying, "The time is not near to build houses: this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh." It is altogether possible, yes, probable, that they drew this figure of the caldron from the language of Jeremiah, who lived at Anathoth, three miles northeast of Jerusalem, and who came and spoke in Jerusalem frequently. Hence the men of the city of Jerusalem were in touch with his preaching. These subversive agents, possibly fifth columnists, were spreading their propaganda and were breaking the morale of the people. They therefore said that the people should not continue in their regular pursuits, but that Jerusalem was simply the caldron, and that they themselves

were the flesh placed in the boiling caldron. In reply to this subversive propaganda, the Lord declared: "Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this *city* is the caldron; but ye shall be brought forth out of the midst of it" (11:7). These underhanded, conniving teachers were actually the cause of the murder of various ones in the city. Thus the Lord turned the language upon these wicked ones by saying that they themselves had made Jerusalem the caldron, and that those whom they had slain, were the flesh in the caldron. But the Lord announced in no uncertain sound that these subversive teachers would be taken out of the city. The implication is that they would be taken out and punished and would not be suffered to remain there and to carry on their nefarious campaigns. Then again, He declared, "This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof; I will judge you in the border of Israel; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither have ye executed mine ordinances, but have done after the ordinances of the nations that are round about you" (11:11,12). The prophecy of these verses is in accordance with the prediction in the verse quoted above.

Ezekiel uses the word caldron in the same symbolic sense in chapter 24, as he did in chapter 11. The prophet's hearers were familiar with the caldron or pot and of the cooking of flesh in such a vessel. They knew that men gathered wood and put it under the caldron, poured water in it, and then placed the animal to be cooked, piece by piece, there. When the fire became hot, the water would boil and flow over its rim at places. Thus this boiling caldron with its flesh was a vivid pictorial representation or symbolic presentation of what God intended to do to Jerusalem.

The Meaning Of The Symbolism

The Lord by this symbolism indicated that He would gather together the people who were left in the land into their capital, Jerusalem, in which was the rust of the caldron, the filth and immorality of the people, that had never been purged by the past judgments through which the people had gone. Moreover the Lord indicated that they would pass through a terrible ordeal which should, like the boiling of the caldron, remove the rust but would not. Of course He was speaking of the siege of the Babylonians and Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. The city and the people were not purged of their corruption and vices although that ordeal was terrific.

It will, however, be cleansed of all its filthiness when the Lord causes His wrath to burn like a fire and consume the filth of the people. When it has thus accomplished the removal of all the wickedness in Israel, His wrath will rest or cease, as we see in verse 13: "In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have cleansed thee and thou wast not cleansed, thou shall not be cleansed from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my wrath toward thee to rest." God's wrath will burn and the caldron will boil to the nth degree and it squared, figuratively speaking, in the time of the great Tribulation, at the time of the end, when the Lord gathers all nations against Jerusalem to battle. (For a full description of these perilous times for Israel in the future, see Zechariah, chapters 12, 13, and 14.) When Israel is thus brought to her extremity, she will fully surrender to God and will call upon Him for peace, pardon, and cleansing. She will also pray that He send the Messiah, against whom she sinned nineteen hundred years ago when He first came, and whom she has rejected throughout the intervening centuries of the present era. When she thus acknowledges her national sin and pleads for Him to return, He will do so. Then His wrath will cease or come to rest.

The Death Of Ezekiel's Wife

In verses 15-18 we have an account of the death of Ezekiel's wife whom he loved very dearly. It seems from the language that she was stricken very suddenly and passed away. Although the prophet's heart was crushed by this severe blow, the loss of his true companion, the Lord forbade his weeping or giving any outward demonstration of the grief and sorrow that was in his soul. He was to lay her to rest without giving expression to his emotions and feeling. He was given this revelation that she would die. She passed away that evening. The next morning the prophet did exactly as God had commanded him.

Ezekiel's Interpretation Of The Situation

In verses 19-24 we have a record that the people came to Ezekiel and asked him to explain his strange conduct in passing through such an ordeal as the present one without giving expression to his emotions. By God's grace he was able to carry out the instructions which the Lord gave him. In this connection let us remember that God's commandings are God's

enablings. All one has to do is to look to God in faith and He will grant the deliverance and all things that are necessary for one under any condition.

When the people asked Ezekiel what was the significance of his strange actions, he delivered the following oracle from the Lord; "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left behind shall fall by the sword. 22 And ye shall do as I have done; ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23 And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet: ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away in your iniquities, and moan one toward another" (vss. 21-23). This of course was a prediction of the calamity that would come upon Israel because of her sins. The nation would be crushed, the city would be captured, the government overthrown, and the people carried off into a foreign land into captivity. All of this of course was fulfilled by the Babylonian conquest of the land and the consequent exile.

Thus Ezekiel became a sign, a living walking sign, to Israel of that which was inevitable. Men should learn that they reap what they sow, and that sin always finds them out.

Report Of The Fall Of The City To Be The Confirmation For The Prophet And The People

The oracle closes with verses 25-27. Thus a year before the siege began, the prophet made this revelation known to the people. He knew that this vision would be shortly fulfilled, but he at the instruction of the Lord said that he, Ezekiel, and the people would know when the prophecy was fulfilled that this prediction was a revelation from God. Of course Ezekiel and the others who were walking by faith knew that this message was an oracle from God. But the fulfillment, which was in the very near future, would be confirmation to strengthen the conviction of the people in the thought that Ezekiel was a true prophet of God, one who was speaking faithfully the Word of God to them. The thought of this paragraph and of the people's being confirmed in the prediction with reference to Ezekiel's true prophetic office might be illustrated by the nobleman of the New Testament whose son lay at the point of death. He left Capernaum, his home, and went to Cana of Galilee to meet Jesus. He reported to the Lord the condition of his son and asked Him to come down and heal him. Instead of going with him, Jesus assured him that his son would be restored and instructed him to return to his

home. This man believed exactly what Jesus said and started homeward. The next day he met his servants coming to meet him, who reported that his son was alive. He asked them when he began to amend. Their reply was that at the seventh hour of the preceding day the fever left him. John tells us then that the father believed, together with his whole house. He had faith to go and appeal to Jesus to restore his son. When Jesus told him that his son was living and that he should return home, he believed. When he heard the report that the fever left at the very hour when Jesus spoke the word, he believed, that is, his faith was strengthened. Nothing then could shake his faith in Jesus as the Saviour.

Thus the conviction regarding Ezekiel was confirmed by the prophecy's being fulfilled literally as God had spoken.

May we have our faith confirmed by our walking in close fellowship with God, by our bringing our needs and wants to Him, and by letting Him verify His promises in our lives. Thus our faith will be strengthened by each answer to believing prayer; O Lord, increase our faith; help our unbelief!

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 20)

Oracles Concerning Ammon, Moab, Edom, And Philistia

Various prophets spoke concerning different nations and pointed to the future which was before these nations. It is to be observed, however, that God spoke only of the nations of the world as they came in contact with Israel or would do so. Truly Israel is the hub of the nations. Palestine is the center of the earth and all events of history eddy around Israel as their center. That this statement is correct is evident from Deuteronomy 32:8,9:

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
"For Jehovah's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

The one who is interested in the way God spoke concerning various nations should turn to Isaiah, chapters 13-23. Jeremiah likewise surveyed the nations round about Israel and uttered oracles concerning them. See Jeremiah, chapters 46-51. With both of these prophets Babylon loomed very largely upon the distant horizon of the end time. This becomes evident from a study of Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14, and Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51. Ezekiel discussed certain nations in chapters 25-32. He had little to say concerning Babylon; but Egypt loomed largely on his political horizon. Amos in like manner dealt with the nations around about Israel (See Amos, chapters 1 and 2.) Some of the Minor Prophets spoke of only one nation. For instance, Nahum uttered his oracle concerning Assyria. Obadiah directed his entire attention to Edom. Habakkuk spoke largely of Babylon, as it was rising in the immediate future, and blended his description of the neo-Babylonian Empire with Babylon of the end time.

Daniel, in chapters 1 and 7, outlined the entire Times of the Gentiles, giving the succession

of four world empires under the symbolism of a metallic image and that of four vicious, ferocious beasts. To study the oracles concerning these various nations in their relations with Israel, to visit the spots, and to see the desolation that was described by the prophets, and that was actually accomplished, is to confirm one's faith in the infallible Book of God.

Oracle Concerning Ammon

Blood will tell. For the origin of Ammon and Moab one should read the latter part of Genesis, chapter 19. Such immorality is seldom seen, even among Gentiles. It is too bad that people come into the world under such conditions, being thus handicapped. The only thing, however, that can counteract the disadvantages and handicaps of one's first birth is the second, or new, birth.

The special sin of which the Ammonites were guilty was that of anti-Semitism and intense jealousy, and a spirit of revenge against the Chosen People. This diabolical spirit manifested itself when Israel was punished of God and her land was made desolate. The children of Ammon gloated over such calamities and with spiteful revenge gave expression to such satanic feelings.

Every sin receives a just recompense of reward. Let everyone be sure that his sin will find him out. Everyone reaps what he sows. Thus the God of justice and righteousness foretold that the children of the East would invade the territory of Ammon and would make their country desolate. Even its capital would become a stable for camels and a couching place for flocks. God literally fulfilled this prophecy in the past. By traversing the territory of the children of Ammon one will see the ruins of a once mighty civilization. For instance, the ruins at Gerash in the territory of the children of Ammon is one of the most interesting historical sites in the Near East. These, however, are a monument to the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Oracles Concerning Moab And Edom

As stated above, one should look to the nineteenth chapter of Genesis to see the lowly sinful origin of Ammon and Moab. Blood certainly has told in the case of the Ammonites.

The sin of Moab and Edom as here set forth and condemned was that they refused to see the truth that, though Israel was a nation, she was different from all peoples. Thus the children of Moab and Edom asserted, "Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the nations ..." (Ezek. 25:8). Israel is not "like unto all the nations." She is different in every respect. God performed a biological miracle which made possible the birth of Isaac. By so doing, He injected new potentialities, powers, and possibilities into the bloodstream of the Jewish nation. The history of the Jews to the present time shows that their contribution to the civilization of the world has far surpassed what might have been expected of her. The Jews have stood, and still stand, in the foremost ranks of all the sciences, the professions, and the arts.

Their special calling was to set forth the religion of the Almighty before the nations of the world. Thus their origin, their qualifications, and their special mission in the world are all different from that of the other nations. God punished the Moabites and the people of Seir because they refused to see and to recognize the divinely ordained position which Israel occupies in the world.

Because these nations refused to see the light and to act accordingly, God threatened that He would have Moab invaded from the east and the very best of her land devastated by the children of the East. This was actually accomplished. I have been throughout the length and breadth of the land of Moab and can testify that this prophecy has literally been fulfilled.

The Oracle Concerning Edom

The word, Edom, is a name to designate the descendants of Esau. He was the elder brother of Jacob. Of course, as all know, they were twins, but Esau was the first-born. Though naturally priority was his, by virtue of his being the first-born, it was not God's purpose that he should inherit the birthright. The Lord knew the type of character that he was, and into what he would develop. He realized that Jacob would be a man who appreciated spiritual things, and who had faith. On the other hand, Esau was a happy-go-lucky kind of person, with very little appreciation for spiritual things. God, therefore, passed by Esau and had the birthright given to Jacob.

What is the special sin mentioned in Ezekiel's oracle of which Edom was guilty? It is expressed in these words: "Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them ..." (vs. 12). From these words we can see that jealousy and envy rankled in the hearts of the Edomites, and that they took vengeance upon them whenever they could. They hated the Jews and revenged themselves upon every occasion. As we know from other oracles, when some calamity overtook the Jews, the Edomites gloated over the fact and rejoiced in the calamity of God's ancient people.

What was the punishment here threatened? Therefore thus saith the Lord: "I will stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; even unto Dedan shall they fall by the sword. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my wrath; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 13,14). No one can have a revengeful spirit and hatred in the heart and escape the punishment of Almighty God. This is true of the individual as well as of a nation or group of nations. Men and nations reap exactly what they sow.

The Oracle Concerning The Philistines

Who were the Philistines? According to Amos 9:7 they seem to have been of Greek origin and to have come from Cyprus to Palestine. Archeological discoveries are bringing to light many things which point positively in the direction that the civilization of the Philistines was similar to, if not identical with, that of the Greeks. The name, Palestine, is derived by certain phonetic changes from the name Philistia.

What was the sin of the Philistines? "Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with despite of soul to destroy with perpetual enmity ..." They, in common with other nations of whom Ezekiel speaks, seem to have been jealous of the Jews. This diabolical spirit seems to have manifested itself in all of their relations with the Hebrews. Whenever they could take advantage of them and could engage in some spite work, they did so.

What punishment was threatened? "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast. 17 And I will execute great vengeance upon them with wrathful rebukes; and they shall know that I am Jehovah, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them" (vss. 16,17). Every vestige of the ancient Philistine civilization was wiped out. God has fulfilled his Word to the very letter.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 21)

The Oracle Concerning Tyre (Part I)

In Ezekiel's day Tyre was the commercial center of the world. The Mediterranean Sea was a Tyrian or Phoenician lake. Colonies established by Tyre dotted the Mediterranean coast. Carthage in North Africa is supposed to have been settled by the Tyrians. The vessels of the maritime powers headed toward Tyre as the mart of the ancient world. The trade and commerce of the peoples of the known world of that day were linked with the welfare of the Tyrian nation. The prophet Isaiah saw this fact and in his oracle concerning the downfall of Tyre foretold that its collapse would mean the paralysis of trade and commerce of that day and time. The news of Tyre's fall, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction, which would be passed on by ships leaving the doomed city as they met other ships laden with commerce on their way to Tyre, would throw them into consternation and despair. In Isaiah's day Tyre did occupy a very prominent place in the world of commerce. But a hundred years later, in the time of Ezekiel, Tyre had gained for herself the topmost round of influence and power. Her position among the nations in the latter part of the seventh century before Christ was so very commanding that Ezekiel devoted three chapters to the discussion of her downfall.

Ezekiel, chapter 26, which is our study for this issue of the *Monthly*, naturally divides into four sections:

Tyre's Sin, The Cause of Her Downfall (vss. 1-6);

The Babylonians and The Greeks, God's Instruments of Punishment (vss. 7-14);

Dismay Among the Princes of The World Over Tyre's Fall (vss. 15-18);

The Descent of The Inhabitants of Tyre Into The Nether Parts of The Earth (vss. 19-21).

Tyre's Sin, The Cause Of Her Downfall (vss. 1-6)

This oracle was given in the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, which was the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign. This message therefore came a year before the downfall of Jerusalem, but political observers of that day could see the doom written over the Jewish state from the events as they were developing.

Little did the Tyrians realize that their history and their welfare were bound up with Israel, as is the fortune of all nations tied indissolubly with the Jewish people. This fact becomes apparent to everyone who realizes the significance of the following passage:

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
When he separated the children of men,
He set the bounds of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel.
"For Jehovah's portion is his people;
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance" (Deut. 32:8,9).

Israel is the hub of the nations and all things revolve around this people of destiny.

The special sin of the Tyrians as set forth in Ezekiel 26:1-6 is that of jealousy of the Jewish people and their gloating over the fact that some calamity was overtaking the Hebrews. In other words, the Tyrians were animated by the spirit of anti-Semitism. They therefore rejoiced at the downfall of the Jewish kingdom.

They thought that, by the downfall of Judah, the doors of commerce—especially from the south—would be opened up to them, and hence greater riches would come to them. Thus the prophet stated that the Tyrians had said with reference to Jerusalem's calamity: "Aha, she is broken *that was* the gate of the peoples; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste" (vs. 2). It is clear that this spirit of anti-Semitism and jealousy expressed itself in actual rejoicing at the calamity that overtook Judah. This spirit whenever it crops out in any peoples is always punished. One should realize this fact. It is set forth in

Psalms 137. God there pronounced judgment upon both Babylon and Edom because they hated the Jews and gloated over the misfortune that had come into the life of that nation. Let us always be sympathetic toward others, regardless of what their attitude is toward us.

The prophet foretold the downfall of Tyre as a judgment upon this people because of their wrong attitude toward the Jews. In describing the downfall of Tyre, he compared the various enemies that would come against that city to the lashing of the waves of the sea against the shore. In describing this calamity, he spoke plainly and stated that Tyre would be overthrown and that the site of the city would become a place for the spreading of fisherman's nets. This prediction was literally fulfilled, as we shall see.

The Babylonians And The Greeks, God's Instruments Of Punishment (vss. 7-14)

In verses 7-14 we have a direct prophecy concerning the Babylonian siege of Tyre and later that of the Greeks under Alexander. The reader should turn to his Bible and peruse carefully verses 7-11. In this passage he will see that the entire prophecy contained in these verses is a graphic description of the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar that laid siege to Tyre. From profane history we learn that the Babylonians besieged it for thirteen years, but were unable to overthrow the nation. In these verses the entire description eddies around Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Hence we see the repeated pronoun "he" occurring in these verses.

Beginning with verse 12, however, and continuing through verse 14, we see that the pronoun "he" has been dropped out and that the plural pronoun "they" has taken its place. This change of pronouns shows that there is a different situation described in verses 12-14. Who are the ones thus engaged in the operation described? This question is answered by a glance at these words: "... and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the waters. This prophecy is more or less enigmatic to those who have only the prophecy. But when we look at profane history, that which is rather indistinct becomes very sharp and clear. From archaeological discoveries and profane history we know that Nebuchadnezzar fought against Tyre for thirteen years, but was unable to capture it, though he did much damage to the city. At that time it was located on the mainland. Out in the sea, just west of this site, was an island with a channel of something like a half mile separating it from the mainland. After the Babylonians ceased their siege of Tyre, the leaders decided that they did not want

to pass through such harrowing experiences as they had endured during those thirteen years of warfare. They therefore abandoned their city on the mainland and built a new one on this island, which they fortified and made into one of the strongest citadels of ancient times.

Finally, in the fourth century before the Christian Era, Alexander the Great made his dash toward the east in his bid for the imperial purple of the world. Naturally he came down the Syrian coast and demanded the surrender of Tyre. The leaders, feeling their position was invulnerable to the attacks, refused to surrender. Thereupon Alexander built a causeway from the mainland out to the island. Part of the material he used was from the ruins left in the abandoned city on the mainland. Thus the rocks and timbers were thrown into the sea by Alexander and his workmen in building this causeway. When this was actually accomplished, Alexander sent his forces out to the island, attacked the city, and soon overcame it. In the light of these historical facts, we see that the ones described in verses 12-14 who take the timbers and the rock of the abandoned city and cast them into the sea are none other than the Greeks. Thus we may be confident that they are the ones who are mentioned in these verses.

An understanding of the prediction concerning the Babylonian and later the Grecian siege of Tyre is an illustration of the law of double reference. According to this principle the prophets frequently described two events or peoples separated by some distance of time and blended the descriptions into a single picture. This is a most important principle and must be understood by all students of prophecy.

Dismay Among The Princes Of The World Over Tyre's Fall (vss. 15-18)

In verses 15-18 we see a prediction that the various princes of the different kingdoms with which Tyre had commercial relations and dealings were amazed, yes, they were dumbfounded to learn of the downfall of this great commercial queen that was, figuratively speaking, reigning over international trade and commerce of that time. This paragraph reminds one of the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 23, in which he depicts graphically the consternation and the dismay that would be experienced by all when Tyre would fall.

The Descent Of The Inhabitants Of Tyre Into The Nether Parts Of The Earth (vss. 19-21)

In verses 19-21 of this chapter is a clear description of the results of the complete overthrow of Tyre. Here the Lord affirmed that He would make the city desolate like many others of former days that had flourished but that were lying in ruins. Since Tyre was beside the sea, and since the waves and billows when there is a hurricane often bring damage and ruin to coastal towns, the prophet thought of these various nations who would come against Tyre and who would finally destroy her, and spoke of them in terms of the waves of the sea. From this fact there grew out or developed the use of waters, especially agitated waters, as a symbol of peoples' and nations' being in a state of unrest and on the move.

The leaders of Tyre are represented here in this passage as descending to the nether parts of the earth, to Sheol (vs. 20). This type of language reminds one of such passages as Isaiah 14:9-20. A careful examination of this scripture shows that Isaiah was speaking of the world dictator or ruler of the end time. He will be slain and his spirit will descend into the pit of the abyss. The people living upon the earth at that time will learn of his being killed. The spirits of those who have gone on before and who are still in Sheol will recognize him as he enters the realm of Hades and will ask how it is that he has been reduced to the condition in which they are.

Sheol, or Hades, as it is known in the New Testament, is presented to us as being in the center of the earth. Before the death of Christ there were two compartments of it, separated by a vast gulf (Luke, chap, 16). To one of these the righteous upon death went; to the other the lost went. Since, however, Christ won the victory for believers at the cross, the saints of God today no longer descend to Hades as they did prior to that epochal event. Upon death, rather, they go into the immediate presence of Christ. At the same time, even today, the lost when they depart this life, go down to Sheol, or Hades, as the lost did before the death of Christ. To depart out of this life without God and without Christ is indeed the tragedy of all tragedies that can come into the life of the individual. There is but one wise way for a person to act, and that is to accept the Lord Jesus Christ by faith now before he is called hence from this life.

Our prediction shows that the Tyre of which Ezekiel spoke would go down in utter defeat and become a desolate city. This actually transpired. According to Isaiah's prophecy (Isa. 23:15), after seventy years it would be remembered and would come back and become a commercial center, but would be nothing in comparison with what it was before its overthrow. Insular Tyre is in existence even at the present day. Through the centuries the sea has washed the sand against the causeway which was erected by Alexander, and now there is an isthmus about three miles wide that connects insular Tyre with the continent.

The Messianic Hope

In the last of verse 20 the desolate condition and overthrow of Tyre and its not rising again to glory and power as it had been are contrasted with a vision of the future when God will "set glory in the land of the living." Since the expression, in the land of the living, is used, it is clear that the prophet had a world outlook—a view of men wherever they are. The Lord therefore said that He would set glory, His own glory, in the land of the living. When this passage is read in the light of parallel ones, we can see that this is a prediction of the time when the glory of the Lord will encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Thus in Ezekiel's mind Tyre, the commercial capital of the world, stood as the emblem of the world-city of the end time—rebuilt Babylon—which will go down forever. When that event occurs, then God will place glory in the land of the living—throughout the entire world. Then will be introduced that era of righteousness and justice, during which Messiah will reign for a thousand years.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 22)

The Oracle Concerning Tyre (Part II)

In verse 2 of this chapter we are told that its contents is a lamentation over Tyre. The word in the original which is rendered "lamentation" implies rather a funeral dirge. At the same time Tyre is represented as a gallant ship, the greatest of its day, that sails forth from port and into stormy seas where it is wrecked and where there is indeed a great loss of property and life.

The chapter falls naturally into three divisions

- I. Tyre, A Gallant Ship (vss. 1-11);
- II. The Markets Where Tyre Did Business (vss. 12-25);
- III. The Shipwreck (vss. 26-36).

Tyre, A Gallant Ship (vss. 1-11)

Since Tyre was a maritime power, in fact the leading maritime power of the day, the ship was naturally the thing concerning which everyone thought when their attention was directed to the Tyrian nation. What Great Britain has been for the last few centuries among the nations in conducting world-trade, Tyre was in her day and time. Her supremacy and priority in this sphere of human activity was unquestioned.

Orators have used this figure of speech with telling effect. Constantly we read from their pens and hear from their lips references to the "ship of state." Thus the state is compared to a ship. It is quite likely that this metaphor was drawn from our passage.

In verse 3 Tyre is quoted as saying, "I am perfect in beauty." Naturally a people that engaged in trade and commerce would acquire the very best from all lands. Thus they would have the very best tools with which to build and with which to adorn their city. In comparison then with

other cities of the world, we have a right to believe that Tyre stood in the foremost ranks. Of course it is to be understood that the Tyrians had a higher estimation of their own city than others doubtless would entertain. The word that is rendered "perfect in beauty" occurs in Psalm 50:1,2. In this passage reference is made to the millennial Jerusalem, which will indeed be the beauty spot of the entire world when our Lord returns and reigns there.

The Lord states that Tyre dwells at the entry of the seas. The word "entry" as we see from the footnote of the Revised Version, is in the plural number and means "entrances." The original city of Tyre was built on the mainland. About one-half mile out in the sea was an island. Thus ships coming from the south would enter the harbor from that direction, whereas those from the north would enter from the northern side of the island. All ships, as the word here is employed, would come into these two different harbors.

In verses 4-11 the prophet thinks of the Tyrian city-state and its great trade and commerce as a great ship which is the best of its kind and which has been built out of materials brought from various places. Its workmen, having the very best of materials and being experts in their field, are represented as building this most beautiful ship. According to verse 5 the planks were of fir trees which were brought from Senir. This word is the Aramaic for Sirion, which is just another word for Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is in the Anti-Lebanon range and is visible by its snow-capped peak for miles in every direction. The cedars from Lebanon are likewise used in making the masts of this gallant ship. The oars are made of the oaks of Bashan (vs. 6). The benches are constructed of ivory inlaid in boxwood brought from the Island of Cypress. The sail of the ship is made from Egyptian linen which is inwrought with brodered work, and into which was woven the emblem of the Tyrian nation.

This description of the various materials used and the place from which they were brought is continued in verses 8-11. But this much of the description suffices to bring before our minds the prophet's thought. By his description and by this metaphor the prophet meant to say that all the nations mentioned as contributing certain things for the construction of this Tyrian ship actually did make a contribution to the civilization which Tyre built up.

The Markets Where Tyre Did Business (vss. 12-25)

In verses 12-25 we are given quite an extended list of the countries with which Tyre carried on commercial relations. Heading this list is Tarshish. There is quite a dispute as to the meaning of this term. Some have thought that it refers to Spain; others, to Britain. I am persuaded that, when all of the facts are taken into consideration, the probabilities are found to favor Britain's being the country to which reference is made. In verse 12 we are told that Tarshish was a merchant who traded with Tyre, and whose goods consisted of silver, iron, tin, and lead. There is an echo of the barter system in this verse. These different commodities are found in Britain.

In verse 13 Javan, Greece, is first mentioned. Of course, Greece was on the mainland of the European continent. But the Greeks were a maritime people who did quite a bit of colonization and engaged in trade and commerce. Thus there were commercial relations between the Tyrians and the Greeks. But in no sense did the Greeks constitute a rival for them. Along with Greece is mentioned Tubal and Meshech. By many scholars Tubal is considered as the phonetic equivalent to Tobolsk, which is one of the large cities of Russia. Meshech is the modern Moscow of Russia. These two latter cities "traded the persons of men and vessels of brass" for merchandise. Of course these came overland to some port and then were carried to Tyre. It is altogether possible that they might have come overland down through Asia Minor and then along the Syrian coast to Tyre.

Next in the list is Togarmah, who traded with Tyre with horses, war horses, and mules. Togarmah was probably ancient Armenia, which has now been swallowed up by Turkey and Russia. The war horses and mules were used most efficiently in warfare as it was conducted in Ezekiel's day.

Dedan likewise carried on a lucrative trade with the Tyrians. These brought to the mart of Tyre ivory and ebony. The Syrians traded with Tyre in emeralds, purple, and brodered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies. Judah and Israel's articles of commerce were "wheat of Minnith, and pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm."

This list continues on through verse 25, but the examination thus far is sufficient to enable us to see the meaning of this passage.

The Shipwreck (vss. 26-36)

In the last paragraph of this chapter, verses 26-36, the prophet reverts to his metaphor in thinking of Tyre as a gallant ship that puts out to sea, and that eventually by its pilots is run into rough waters and a stormy sea. This storm wrecks the ship. There is a total loss of it with all its cargo. It therefore goes down never to reappear. All of those that were carrying on traffic and trade in this city of Tyre and the officials of the government directing the national life are all represented as being aboard the ship. For instance, the pilot, directing the movements of the ship, would represent the officials of the government. The marines in like manner would symbolize the people who were the merchants and the traders of the city. The artisan classes on the ship would represent the working classes of Tyre. When the ship is wrecked, it goes down, nothing being salvaged. It is never raised, brought back to port, and repaired—as is often done in connection with modern vessels that suffer shipwreck.

Tyre as the commercial, maritime nation of that day and time did suffer shipwreck. It went down and ceased to be the mighty mistress of commerce and trade. And yet Tyre has continued through the centuries to the present day as a small insignificant town on the island, where it stood when it fell. Of course by the action of the sea Alexander's causeway which he built has developed into an isthmus; but Tyre remains there an insignificant place today. The Word of God is always sure of fulfillment.

The repercussions from the fall of Tyre reverberated throughout the Mediterranean world, causing economic chaos in the commercial world at that time. All students of prophecy can compare Tyre and its fall, together with the results, to that of the fall of Babylon the Great in the very end of the age. As all students know, the prophecies concerning Babylon (Isa., chaps. 13 and 14; Jer., chaps, 50 and 51) have never been fulfilled completely. Since these predictions still await fulfillment, it will become necessary for Babylon to arise from the dust of the past and to gain the ascendancy and control over the nations there foretold. At the end of the Tribulation, as we see in Revelation, chapter 18, Babylon, the pride of the Chaldeans and of the men of the world, will fall. When that occurs, the reverberations will be heard throughout the entire world. With the fall of Babylon will come the end of the Tribulation, when the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven to the earth, lift the curse, take the world

situation in hand, and establish a reign of righteousness and peace that will endure for one thousand years.

As we consider the fall of Babylon, the city described in Revelation, chapter 18, we must differentiate clearly Babylon the city of this chapter from Babylon the harlot of Revelation, chapter 17. Those who are familiar with the Book of Revelation know that Babylon the harlot will be the ecclesiastical octopus that will be supported by the world government during the first half of the Tribulation. In the middle of the Tribulation the Antichrist will become so very jealous of those having in charge this religious world-system that he will cause it to be dissolved and overthrown in order that he might receive the worship, praise, and adoration of the entire world. Thus the overthrow of Babylon the harlot occurs in the middle of the Tribulation; the overthrow of Babylon the city takes place at the very end of the Tribulation.

Amid a world that is torn by strife, and that is wrecked by warfare, we who know the prophecies concerning earth's golden era long for that day to dawn. Thus we say, Even so, come, Lord Jesus—come quickly!

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installments 23 and 24)

The Oracle Concerning Tyre (Part III)

In our study concerning the oracle regarding Tyre we have come to chapter 28, the last portion of this revelation. This chapter naturally falls into five divisions:

- I. The Prince Of Tyre (vss. 1-10);
- II. The Anointed Cherub (vss. 11-17);
- III. The King Of Tyre (vss. 18,19);
- IV. The Oracle Concerning Sidon (vss. 20-24);
- V. The Restoration Of Israel (vss. 25, 26).

The Prince of Tyre (vss. 1-10)

Ezekiel, chapter 28, is one of the very important passages in the Old Testament that should be familiar to everyone who is interested in the proper understanding of the Word of God. In verses 1-10 we have an oracle that was addressed by the prophet to "the prince of Tyre." This prince was none other than the king of Tyre, whom the prophet saw in a vision. He was the monarch who would be reigning at the time of the overthrow of Tyre as foretold in this oracle.

There is a reason for everything which God does—a good and sufficient cause for His actions. God always resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. If a person will study the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, he will see that God has always brought calamity and disaster upon those who are puffed up with pride. Satan was led, as we shall see, by pride to the brink of his downfall and his being dethroned. The Pharaoh of the Oppression and also his successor, the sovereign of the Exodus, were puffed up by pride and resistance against God, the Creator, in whom they lived, moved and had their being. As a result, God had to bring His summary and drastic

judgment against them. The king of Tyre of whom the prophet here speaks was also puffed up with pride and conceit and even said: "I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas." This type of language reminds one of the ancient Pharaohs who claimed that they were gods. It also recalls the fact that, up to the time of the surrender of that nation, the present emperor of Japan was recognized by the people of Japan as being the son of heaven. He claimed for himself, and others claimed for him, that he was of divine origin. This is just like the old Roman emperors who in the thinking of the people were deified and were thus addressed in petitions and in state papers as a deified person. We learn that, in the end time, the Antichrist will lay claims to the same honor. God has to punish those who assume such roles, and who accept such adoration from others. In this connection we would do well to remember the speech which Herod made and the response of the people who declared that they were listening, not to the voice of a man, but to the voice of God. The Lord therefore smote him. (See Acts 12:20-23.) The judgment which the Lord pronounced against the king of Tyre was that, "... yet thou art man, and not God, though thou didst set thy heart as the heart of God" (28:2). Men may heap to themselves honors and demand adoration and even worship from others. They can even deceive men, leading them to believe that they are of divine origin. But Omniscience can never be deceived. The Lord states facts as they are and describes people and creatures in accordance with their true status.

In Ezekiel 28:3-5 the Lord acknowledged that this prince of Tyre was indeed wiser than Daniel, and that, by his wisdom and understanding he had been able to build up a commercial empire that was holding in its grip the entire commerce of the three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa, which surrounded the Mediterranean world. Some men are naturally prudent and wise and have keener insight and analytical powers than others. The prophet Daniel was a man of that type. He was a real statesman; he had keen insight into the great world problems. In addition to his natural endowments he enjoyed the benefit of his studies in the University of Babylon, as we see in Daniel, chapter 1. Such educational and cultured advantages widened his horizon and gave him a grip upon international problems such as he could never have got otherwise. His natural endowment and acquired ability were heightened by the inspiration which came to him by the Spirit of God. Daniel, enjoying these advantages, therefore outlined the grand march of world-empire through the centuries until the Son of man comes and takes the power of all government in His hands and reigns from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

In the Lord's saying that the king of Tyre was wiser than Daniel, we are not to understand the Almighty's meaning that this king was wiser than Daniel when the latter was inspired. On the contrary, He was simply looking at Daniel with his natural endowments and stated that this man, this prince of Tyre, had been endowed with keener analytical powers and had acquired greater capabilities than Daniel ever possessed. By his shrewdness he had been able to build up a commercial and financial empire that sat as mistress over all the kingdoms of the then known world.

Since this king had been able to build up this superinternational commercial institution, and since he had come to the conclusion that he was a god, the Lord pronounced the terrific judgment against him that He would overrule and bring up the nations against Tyre, which would overthrow his kingdom, and which would dim the luster of Tyre's prince. Moreover, the prediction, according to verse 8, was to the effect that the Lord would cause the death of this king, and that he would go down into the pit of the abyss, like the others that would be slain. Ezekiel, therefore, spoke to this future king and asked him if he, when he would be in a dying condition before those who would slay him, would still say, "I am God"? This king, according to the prediction of verses 9 and 10, would go down in utter defeat, pass out of this life, and descend into Sheol. According to this prophecy there would be a collapse of the empire which he by his wisdom, energy, foresight, and dogged perseverance would build up.

The Anointed Cherub (vss. 11-17)

Verses 11-17 are the very heart and the core of this prediction. They are so very, very important that I ask the reader to get his Bible and meditate upon these verses carefully and at the same time prayerfully. These verses are, according to verse 12, addressed to the king of Tyre. They are called a lamentation or funeral dirge that is to be pronounced over, or sung regarding, this king of Tyre.

By a careful reading, of verses 11-17 and by a person's taking this revelation at its face value, he will see that the description here far transcends anything and everything that could be spoken to a normal, natural human being. This language moves in a far wider and greater circle than any and all men put together have ever traversed. This king was certainly not born

by natural generation as all other men are. He was created and was given the high honor of being the "anointed cherub that covereth." The cherubim are the highest order of spiritual beings whom the omnipotent Creator brought into existence. But this one who is thus designated as the anointed cherub evidently occupied, under the Almighty, the highest position in the universe, being at the head of the cherubim, the seraphim, and all the ranks and orders of angels. We present the biblical truth when we say that he was the generalissimo of all of God's hosts.

It was impossible for God to create a higher, a more perfect, or a more powerful being than he. On this point the Lord declared that this one sealed up the sum, the pattern, or the measure, and that he was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. The omniscient, omnipotent God could not therefore have brought into existence any other creature who would be comparable to him. Omniscience could neither devise nor plan, and Omnipotence could neither create nor bring into being a higher type of creature. To think that He could is simply folly.

This one was created, the work of God Almighty himself. When he was created, he was perfect. He was absolutely righteous. There was not the slightest tint or trace of rebellion, sin, or unrighteousness in his being. He was confirmed in holiness and delighted in the ways of God.

He was put in Eden, the garden of God, when he was created—or rather when God created the material universe. This Eden, or garden of God, must not be confounded with the one of which we read in Genesis, chapters 2 and 3. It was in existence on the primitive earth prior to the calamity that came upon it, and that is described in Genesis 1:2. We know very little about that primeval earth, that continued for ages upon ages. There are only a few hints here and there in the Scriptures, which give us any definite idea of what then existed.

(For a discussion of this point see the study of "Eternity or the Plan of the Ages" in my volume, *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated*. Also see chapter VI of my treatise, *What Men Must Believe*.)

This anointed cherub held high, carnival and directed everything in his great kingdom. He

resided in what might properly, in material terms, be called a crystal palace, which is described in Ezekiel 28:13.

Finally, after age upon age had rolled by, going into the oblivion of eternity of the past, pride began to spring forth into existence in the heart of this anointed cherub. This continued to grow until it led him to believe that he was equal with God, and that he could even match swords with the Almighty. He therefore conceived the thought that he would ascend into the mountain of God, into the very presence of the Lord himself, and dethrone the Almighty. He started a "whispering campaign" among the great celestial hosts under him and he was able to persuade one-third of the angels to follow him in his rebellion (Rev. 12:4). When he did this, he was defeated, and cast down from his high and holy position of being generalissimo of the Lord's hosts. (For a further examination of this subject see the study, "Satan's Five Abodes and His Activities," in *The World's Greatest Library Graphically Illustrated*. Also see Chapter IX of *What Men Must Believe*. Also refer to my series, "The Unseen World," a group of nine articles appearing in the Biblical Research Monthly, January to September, 1943, inclusive.

The King Of Tyre (vss. 18,19)

In verses 18 and 19 we see the king of Tyre who is mentioned in the first ten verses. We might compare the vision which Ezekiel saw to a moving picture. As he sat at this spiritual moving picture, he saw thrown upon the screen the actual future king of Tyre who would be reigning at the time when the kingdom would be overthrown. This is seen, as has been stated above, in verses 1-10. By the time we reach verse 12 the scene has changed and there is thrown upon the screen a greater than the king of Tyre, who, is none other than the anointed cherub that rebelled against God, and was cast down and became known as the adversary, the devil. Finally the picture changes again, and we see in verses 18 and 19 another picture of the actual king of Tyre under whose regime the calamity of God's judgment fell historically. This passage shows that this king with his mighty financial and commercial empire would go down, never to rise again.

Oracle Concerning Sidon (vss. 20-24)

In verses 20-24 we have a prophecy concerning Sidon which was the mother city of Tyre. In other words, Tyre was colonized from Sidon. For some unexplainable reason the colony of Tyre outgrew and overshadowed Sidon and developed into a vast commercial empire, as we have already learned. Sidon continues until this day, on its ancient site north of Tyre, but it is of very little significance in the life of the Orient at the present time.

The special oracle concerning Sidon was that God was against this city, and that He would execute vengeance upon her. The Judgment would come in the form of a pestilence and warfare that would slay on all sides and reduce Sidon considerably. It then would no longer be the thorn in the flesh of Israel to vex and to trouble her as it had been in the past.

The Restoration Of Israel (vss. 25, 26)

In verses 25 and 26 we find an oracle concerning the restoration of Israel to her homeland. This passage presupposes the world-wide dispersion of the Chosen People. Seeing that Israel would dwell among the nations, the prophet foretold the time when God will gather them from among all nations and would settle them in the land of the fathers. At that time they will dwell securely. They shall build houses, plant vineyards, and dwell in safety. This prophecy will be fulfilled when God will have executed judgment upon all those around about that do them despite. God is jealous for His people Israel. He will punish all anti-Semitism. When He thus punishes the nations who mistreat His people, He will re-establish the Jews in their own land.

This prophecy does not give a detailed outline of the events as they shall occur in connection with the regathering of Israel. The program must be learned from parallel passages which delineate to a certain extent the events of the closing scenes of Israel's history. But all the prophets are unanimous in their proclaiming the final and complete restoration of Israel to God and His favor. When she is thus reinstated, she will become the channel of world-blessing and will be used of God in the spread of His truth to all peoples.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 25)

The Oracles Concerning Egypt (Part I)

In Ezekiel, chapters 29-32 we have this prophet's message concerning Egypt. But in the present study we shall note the outstanding events found in chapters 29 and 30, leaving the last two chapters for our next study.

In the ancient world Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt were the three outstanding powers. From times immemorial down to the latter part of the Hebrew monarchy Egypt was a tower of strength to those who were allied with her, but a deadly and an awful foe for those who were enemies. In the Tigris-Euphrates Valley Babylonia, the cradle of ancient civilization, was the mistress of Western Asia. The old Babylonian Empire, however, went down under the rising might of the Assyrian kingdom. This new power, therefore, became the dominant one in the East and was a constant foe against Egypt. Finally, however, in the seventh century before the Common Era, Assyria went down and was buried under the sands of time. The neo-Babylonian Empire was brought back to life by Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. "Under his son, Nebuchadnezzar, however, Babylon spread as a mighty bay-tree and became the dominant factor again in Western Asia. It even overran Egypt and devastated the country, as we shall presently see. But the time for the setting of the sun of even the neo-Babylonian Empire came. The occasion of her downfall historically was the rise of the mighty Medo-Persian Empire, which conquered Babylon and incorporated it within the borders of its rising power.

Pharaoh, The Great Sea Monster

In Ezekiel 29:1-7 Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt is represented as a great sea monster that was wallowing in the Nile River, which was his sea. The prophet represents him as saying, "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself." The thought of representing a kingdom or its ruler under the symbolism of a great sea monster or land animal is not uncommon in the

Scriptures. For instance, in Isaiah 27:1 we have this language: "In that day Jehovah with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea." By the best of commentators the powers of Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt are spoken of under the symbolism of "leviathan the swift serpent [Assyria]," "leviathan the crooked serpent [Babylon]" and "the monster that is in the sea [Egypt]." In all probability the adjective *swift* modifying "leviathan" is an echo of the fact that the Tigris River, upon which Ninevah, the capital of Assyria, was located, was a very swift stream. Well could it symbolize the direct, rapid and decisive action of this nation. The adjective *crooked* modifying "leviathan" is also probably an echo of the fact that Babylon, the capital of the Babylonian Empire, was located upon the Euphrates River which was very crooked and rather sluggish in its movement. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is doubtless referred to as "the monster that is in the sea." This language becomes apparent when one recognizes that the Nile River in ancient times—before the building of such dams as the one at Aswan which controls the flood waters of the Nile—flooded the valley below and made it have the appearance of an inland sea.

In view of Isaiah's use of such symbolism as we have seen, it is not strange that Ezekiel, whose ministry fell about one hundred years after that of Isaiah's, should use the same, comparing the ruler of Egypt to a great sea monster that wallowed in his river.

At the same time we must remember that Job spoke of Satan under the symbolism of the great sea monster which was the beginning of the works of God and of leviathan the great monster who is "king over all the sons of pride." Why then should these great animals and sea monsters be used as symbols both of the fallen, anointed cherub—Satan, or the devil—and at the same time of great empires or kingdoms? The answer to this question seems to be this: Civil governments are largely patterned after the government of Satan originally in the Eden of God and are yet very largely under his influence and domination. Thus the same symbol can at one time signify Satan, the prince of the powers of the air, and at the same time those visible kingdoms which are under his domination and control, and through which he works.

This double usage of the symbolism of great sea monsters and wild beasts is in keeping with God's methods in the use of symbols. For instance, beasts in the seventh chapter of Daniel

are used to represent both the rulers of great kingdoms and at the same time the governments over which they presided. (See Dan. 7:17,23.)

In the passage under consideration, Ezekiel 29:1-7, God foretells that He will pull Pharaoh, the great sea monster, out of his river, will cast him out into the desert, and will give him to be food for the animals, for the beasts of the field. This prophecy was fulfilled in God's providentially causing Pharaoh to leave his country and to go on an expedition against some enemy, who conquers him.

The Punishment Of Egypt

In Ezekiel 29:8-16 we see a prediction concerning the punishment that God will bring upon Egypt for her sins. Pride always goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Thus the Lord declared: "And the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste; and they shall know that I am Jehovah. Because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it; 10 therefore, behold, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from the tower of Seveneh even unto the border of Ethiopia" (29:9,10). The welfare of a nation is always wrapped up in the type of ruler whom God sets over a kingdom. A survey of history shows that this is true. God providentially always brings to the throne of a kingdom the type of ruler which the people desire. This statement being true, God is just in punishing the nation for the attitude of their ruler. Here this Egyptian Pharaoh, in claiming that the river was his, and that he would do as he pleased, was simply giving expression to the spirit of the people of his age. God was therefore righteous and just in punishing the nation for the spirit which their ruler manifested—for in punishing him He was punishing them for their shortcomings and sins.

We can see the same thing in the situation that developed in Germany during the hey-day of the Hitlerite regime. The people of the nation, as a rule, were ripe for just such a man as Hitler. He was simply the visible expression of the people. Hence the Lord providentially brought him to the kingdom for that time in order that He might punish the nation for its spirit of arrogance and self-sufficiency. The same thing was true of France at the time of the French Revolution and in the Napoleonic Era. Napoleon was but the outward expression of the spirit

of his people. God had to deal with its ruler and with the nation upon the basis of the merits of the case.

Unfortunately, it seems that the spirit of the majority of the American people at the present day has found its expression in the type of government that has been and is being administered in our beloved capital. From the reports over the radio and in the papers it appears that the communistic element, that has permeated every strata of American society, has infiltrated into key positions of our government. If these reports be correct, the one who has spiritual discernment can see the handwriting on the wall. God pity us in America if this diagnosis of the situation be correct!

After threatening the king of Egypt with punishment, Ezekiel foretold a period of desolation of forty years during which the people of Egypt would be taken into captivity. But at the expiration of this period God promised that He would gather back the natives to their own homeland. Egyptian history as well as that of other nations during the latter part of the neo-Babylonian Empire and that of Medo-Persia, is very dark, since we have very little evidence coming from that era. Hence archaeology has been able to supply us with very little information concerning this period of time.

According to verse 15 the Lord declared that Egypt, after this period of forty years of exile, would be "the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations: and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing iniquity to remembrance, when they turn to look after them: and they shall know that I am the Lord Jehovah" (vss. 15,16). The destruction of the might and power of Egypt was accomplished by the Babylonians. Egypt was therefore thrown down from the high pinnacle on which it had stood from times immemorial. It became, even after its restoration following the forty-year period of desolation, the basest of the kingdoms of the world. It has remained in this condition through the centuries to the present day and will continue this way. When one thinks of the debasing of Egypt, he is reminded of the great Spanish nation that was the dominant power in Western Europe up until the destruction of its armada. From that catastrophic blow she never recovered. She sank down from her high position of prominence to a very inferior place and has remained on

that level among the nations of the world to the present day. She probably will continue in this way.

God A Good Paymaster

In Ezekiel 29:17-20 we have an oracle that was given in the twenty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity. And yet it is inserted in this oracle that was given in the tenth year of this same era. (Let us remember that Ezekiel dates his oracles according to the captivity of Jehoiachin, with whom he personally was carried captive to Babylon. Thus his dating was natural and was the outgrowth of the circumstances in which the prophet found himself.) But why should this oracle, which was spoken seventeen years later, be injected into the record at this point? The answer is at hand. Prior to this time Nebuchadnezzar had, by the providence of God, been brought against Tyre and had fought against it. According to the scanty data which has been brought to light, Nebuchadnezzar, though he fought against Tyre for 13 years, was never able to conquer that strong fortress. He therefore "had no wages, nor his army, from Tyre, for the service that he had served against it. 19 Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt as his recompense for which he served, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord Jehovah" (29:18-20). God rules throughout the universe and overrules among the nations. He uses one nation and its rulers against another people and its king, when He can in righteousness do this. All of His works are done in justice. By His omnipotence, then, He controls the movements of the nations and their actions.

He is a good paymaster and always recompenses those who serve Him in the carrying-out of His plans and purposes. The case in hand is an excellent illustration of this principle. Again by looking at Isaiah 45:1-7 we see that God used Cyrus, king of Persia, in advancing His plans and purposes for the nation of Israel. At that time He paid Cyrus for his services very abundantly. But in the case of Nebuchadnezzar the Lord waited a number of years. We can be certain that He paid the debt with interest. Egypt became ripe for judgment. When she thus filled up her cup of iniquity, God opened up the way for Nebuchadnezzar to go there and punish her and allowed him to get his pay from the spoils of Egypt.

The Lord saves people by His grace—that is, those who accept the Lord Jesus Christ and the ample provision for salvation for time and eternity. Thus we are saved by grace through faith. But the Lord pays His children for every particle of service which they render for Him. Even if one gives only a cup of water in the name of a disciple to the least of His disciples, he shall in no wise lose his reward. It pays to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. By serving Him and others in His name, we keep on laying up our treasures in heaven—the thing which our Lord Jesus urges us to do.

The Promise Of The Messiah

"In that day will I cause a horn to bud forth unto the house of Israel, and I will give the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am Jehovah" (29:21). In symbolic language a horn always signifies a king or power in the abstract sense. The horn referred to here, which is to bud forth unto the house of Israel, is evidently the King of Israel, the Messiah, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

The phrase, in that day, has a technical meaning in many instances on the lips of the prophets. It, when thus used, always looks forward to the time at the end of this age and the introduction of the great millennial kingdom. In this case the prophet is talking about the time when this horn of David will arise and take the government of the world in His hands and will reign from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The Judgment Upon Egypt In The Day Of Jehovah Blended With Those Of The Time Of Babylon

The prophets gave their utterances and frequently blended descriptions of events and things separated by vast stretches of time. This principle is known as the double fulfillment of prophecy, or the Law of Double Reference. It has been illustrated by mountain ranges which are seen from a distance. In the foreground appear the lower mountains and towering about them in the far distance are seen higher ones. From the standpoint of the observer he can only see mountains in the distance. In describing what he sees, he may speak of the lower and nearer range and blend that imperceptibly with his description of the peaks of the more distant mountains. Again, he may speak of the higher peaks in the distance and then begin

to describe the foothills, or nearer ones. This is an excellent example illustrative of what the prophet does in chapter 30:1-9. In the first of this chapter, without a doubt, we see that Ezekiel looked out into the far distant future—to the end of this age, which concludes with what is known by the prophets as "the day of Jehovah." A study of this time which is called "the day of Jehovah" shows us that this is a period of seven years during which God pours out His judgments upon a God-defying world. At that time the civilization of the world will be wrecked. It will culminate with the personal bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth, at which time He will lift the curse and will introduce a new order. He will establish a reign of righteousness upon the earth and the glory of God will encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea.

But in verses 6-19 the prophet, figuratively speaking, lowered his eyes and stopped looking at the distant scene of the day of Jehovah and focused his gaze upon the time nearer him, when the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar would come against Egypt and would carry out the prophecy that He had made in chapter 29. Mention is made in verse 13 of God's causing the images at Memphis to cease. This ancient capital of Egypt was just south of Cairo. God wiped out the very existence of it and even the location of that ancient mighty metropolis was lost to the world until archaeologists dug and finally unearthed its ruins. The ancient city of Thebes is mentioned in verse 16 under the name of No. The ruins of this capital of the Middle Kingdom are among the wonders of the world today. An examination of the prophecies concerning No and a visit to the site of this ancient Egyptian capital shows that the prophet spoke accurately and literally in this prediction.

Pharaoh Impotent In The Face Of Nebuchadnezzar

In verses 20-26 we have another oracle which was spoken of in the eleventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity, but in the tenth year of Zedekiah. Of course this oracle was spoken in the midst of the conflict between the armies of Nebuchadnezzar besieging Jerusalem and those of Zedekiah defending it. In verse 21 the Lord spoke of His having broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and of its not having been bound up and healed. This seems to refer to some defeat that Pharaoh had suffered recently. It is altogether possible that this may refer to Pharaoh-Hophra and his advancing to the aid of the Jews, as is recorded in Jeremiah 37:5. The Egyptian armies advanced toward Jerusalem. The besieging Chaldean army raised the siege and departed. As to where they went or what they did, the record is silent. Some

think that possibly there was a pitched battle between the Egyptian and Chaldean forces and that the Egyptians were thrown back in defeat. In view of the lack of evidence we must refrain from making any decision on this point. It is clear, however, that the Egyptian king had suffered recently a defeat from which he had not recovered. One of his arms therefore is represented as having been wounded and as not having been healed.

In the verses under consideration God pictures the struggle between the Babylonian forces that would fight against Egypt and the Egyptian forces that would defend it. In this representation He speaks of it as a contest, or a duel, between Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh. At the time of the fight Pharaoh has one strong arm and one wounded one. On the other hand, Nebuchadnezzar has two strong arms. God places His sword in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and strengthens him for his duel with Pharaoh. Needless to say, Pharaoh is conquered. As a result of this sweeping victory for Nebuchadnezzar, the Egyptians are scattered among the nations. As has been said above, the history is very meager and it is impossible for us to gather any definite data concerning the complete fulfillment of this prophecy.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 26)

The Oracles Concerning Egypt (Part II)

In last month's study we investigated chapters 29 and 30 of Ezekiel. These chapters contain an oracle that was spoken in the tenth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, with a shorter one spoken later but incorporated in the body of this general prediction. The message contained in chapter 31 was delivered in the eleventh year and the two contained in chapter 32 were received in the twelfth year of this same era. These four chapters (29-32) constitute the longest oracles concerning any nation other than Israel to be found in the entire Book of God. The reader should study Isaiah, chapter 19, and Jeremiah, chapter 46, in connection with this oracle found in Ezekiel.

Oracle Given In The Eleventh Year Of Jehoiachin's Captivity

In verses 1-9 we have an oracle concerning the Assyrian national tree. In this paragraph the Lord spoke to the prophet and told him to deliver a message to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and his multitude, and to ask them: "Whom art thou like in thy greatness?" Without waiting for an answer, the Lord called Pharaoh's attention to the fact that the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, with a forest like shade, and of high stature. Its top was among the thick boughs. Of course, the prophet, in thus speaking of the great Assyrian Empire, was comparing it to a massive cedar tree of Lebanon. It was situated upon the Tigris with its capital, Nineveh, located immediately upon that river. Like a tree that is on the bank of a stream, and that has plenty of moisture, Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire were most favorably located and could and did grow into one of the most powerful kingdoms of antiquity. In such a massive political tree the birds of the heavens could lodge and make their nests. All other trees in the garden of God are represented as looking with envious eyes upon this great Assyrian monarch of the forest.

The Lord's comparing the nation to this mighty towering, strong cedar was His representation of the attitude of, not only the sovereign of Assyria, but also of the people constituting the

Empire. Pride always goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. This statement is the expression of an unchangeable law that is operative always and in every place. The Lord therefore pronounced judgment upon this great Assyrian tree, stating that it had been delivered into the hands of the mighty one of the nations who had dealt with it. The reason especially for this judgment was wickedness. The tree is represented as having fallen to the ground and the branches as having been broken off. Upon this prostrate tree the birds, of the heavens and the beasts of the field are represented as coming and lodging. The Lord brought this summary judgment upon Assyria in order to teach the other nations not to exalt themselves too much lest a similar fate should overtake them.

In verses 15-17 the Lord spoke to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and pointed out to him that the judgment which came upon Assyria was sent because of the wickedness of this nation. Historically, Nineveh succumbed to the titanic strokes of judgment dealt her by her adversaries. This occurred in the year 612 B.C. of the accepted chronology. This oracle spoken in the eleventh year of Jehoiachin was in reality the tenth year of Zedekiah, the last King of Judah. Judah fell in the year 586 B.C. Thus this oracle was spoken in 587 B.C. The Lord in it now called Pharaoh's attention to the fact that, when the Assyrian tree was thrown to the ground, its leader and the men of the nation made their descent into Sheol. There of course was great mourning at the catastrophe which had befallen this mighty empire. In a most graphic and pictorial manner the Lord represented Himself as having caused deep mourning to be observed at the downfall of Assyria: "I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the rivers thereof; and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him."

Just as a heavy tree, when it falls to the ground, causes the earth to shake in the immediate vicinity, thus God represents the fall of Nineveh as causing great consternation and terror to the nations, round about.

When Assyria went down, all of the leaders of the nation descended into Sheol. Prior to the death of Christ all people upon death went to Sheol. The righteous, or rather those who trust God, were put in one apartment, whereas those who did not trust God and did not know Him in a personal manner were sent to another apartment. These two places were separated by an impassable gulf as we learn in Luke, chapter 16. Since the death of Christ, however, the

saved upon death go immediately into the presence of God, whereas the lost will still descend into Sheol and will remain there until the end of the Millennial Age, at which time they will be brought forth before the great white throne judgment and will be sent to their eternal destiny of woe.

Having thus pictured the greatness of the Assyrian Empire that had only recently succumbed to the attacks of the enemy, the Lord warned Pharaoh and Egypt to consider their fate as a message to them to turn from their haughtiness and pride unto the true and the living God. Hence, after having described the downfall of Assyria, the prophet declared pointedly: "This is Pharaoh and all his multitude" (Ezekiel 31:18). Though he had spoken of Assyria under the term of this fallen cedar tree, it is clear from the context and from the quotation just given that the Lord meant by this language that Egypt would suffer the same fate as Assyria had.

The descent of the great heads of the Assyrian Empire and of the Egyptian Kingdom down into Sheol and their becoming weak and impotent like all the rest of the dead reminds one of the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 14, which foretells the descent of the last emperor of the world, the Antichrist, whom the Lord Jesus will slay by the brightness of His coming and His radiant glory. The reader should turn to this passage and study Isaiah 14:3-27.

Oracles Given In The Twelfth Year Of Jehoiachin

The oracles contained in chapter 32 were spoken in the twelfth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. The first one, found in verses 1-16, is spoken of as a lamentation which the prophet was to take up against Pharaoh, king of Egypt. In this funeral dirge the prophet speaks of Pharaoh's having been compared to a young lion of the nations, but now he thinks of him as a great monster in the sea which is taken in the net, and which is brought up out of his waters. When either Ezekiel or any of the other prophets compared Egypt to a lion, is not here revealed. However, we may be certain that he was compared to such. In this passage, however, he is thought of as a great monster in the rivers, possibly a great hippopotamus. The net is thrown over him by the nations and he is caught. He is thus brought up out of his waters and is pulled out upon the dry land. Then he becomes food for the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth. The fulfillment of this figurative language doubtless occurred when Pharaoh was caused to leave his country and go into another land on a military campaign. Then he was

beaten and his shattered army was cast forth into the desert. Naturally, when the bodies of men or beasts are lying on the open field, the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth come and devour the same. Pharaoh-Necho had, in the fourth year of Jehoiachin, gone up out of his land to Carchemish on the Euphrates where he had suffered a disastrous defeat; but this event was past history when Ezekiel uttered his prophecy. This prediction evidently refers to some event which proved a disastrous blow to Egypt after the fall of Judah. The history of Egypt at this time is rather meager, and our conception of the times is very faulty and limited.

At the fall of Egypt in fulfillment of this prophecy the Lord declared that He would cause great mourning: "And when I shall extinguish thee, I will cover the heavens, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord Jehovah. I will also vex the hearts of many peoples, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. Yea I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man, for his own life, in the day of thy fall" (vss. 7-10). It is altogether possible that this language may be figurative and may be similar to that which is found in 31:15,16. At the same time it is altogether possible, and I say probable, that this is yet to be fulfilled in the future. Egypt is still the basest kingdom of all the nations—as God said (29:15). Egypt may come to the front some time in the future, but of course she will never become what she was in the past. If this prophecy has not been fulfilled, it will yet be fulfilled in the Tribulation. This period, called the Tribulation, or the Time of Jacob's Trouble, will be a day when there will be supernatural events seen throughout the material universe. Prior to the bursting forth of the Tribulation there will be signs in the heavens above and upon the earth beneath; there will be a black-out of the sun; the moon will become as blood; and there will be vapor and pillars of smoke and the like in the heavens and upon the earth (Joel 2:28-32). Zephaniah tells us that, in that day, there will be clouds and thick darkness. John in Revelation informs us that these supernatural signs will occur before the Tribulation and at different intervals during it. Our Lord in Matthew 24:29-31 announced that these very signs that precede the Tribulation will follow it immediately, at which time He himself will return from heaven in glory and great power. In view of these various prophecies it is altogether possible that the prediction in Ezekiel, chapter 32, will find its complete and literal fulfillment in the time of the Tribulation.

In verses 11-16 the Lord speaks of using the sword of Babylon against Egypt. To what does this refer? We know from history and also from prophecy that Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar went against Egypt and conquered it. It is altogether possible therefore that this block of Scripture may have had its fulfillment in the subjugation of Egypt by Babylon. At the same time this may yet find its full and complete fulfillment in the end of the age when Babylon becomes a world power, as she is destined to be according to prophecies found in Isaiah, chapters 13 and 14; Jeremiah, chapters 50 and 51; and Revelation, chapter 18.

In verses 17-32 we have a glimpse into Sheol which, as we have already seen, is in the center of the earth. As a person looks through the lens of this prophecy down into the nether parts of the earth, he sees that weird place as a mighty graveyard. One portion of it is given to Assyria and her hosts; at the same time another, to Elam and its hosts. From other verses we see that there will be those of Meshech and Tubal (possibly Russia, Moscow, and Tobolsk) in another place. Likewise the Edomites will be in their particular spot. Thus it is with Pharaoh and his hosts. Of course, all nations who have ever lived, and who have gone out of this world unprepared to meet God, are down there now and will continue to be until the close of the great Millennial Age.

We see the expression, "... all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword. ..." Circumcision in the true sense of the term was the seal of faith in God and of acceptance with Him. The uncircumcised in the language of this passage are the lost. It is a fearful thing to pass through this life without having been reconciled to God. May God help everyone reading this message to turn to Him in simple faith and accept the salvation offered by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 27)

The Watchman On The Wall (Chapter 33)

With chapter 33 we begin a new division in the Book of Ezekiel. We have just completed the section dealing with the oracles against the nations found in chapters 24-32. The portion beginning with chapter 33 and ending with chapter 39 deals with Israel's great future in a general way. The last division of the book deals with the land, the city, and the temple under the reign of King Messiah (chaps. 40-48).

The Watchman On The Wall

In verses 1 to 7 the prophet delivered the message which the Lord gave him concerning watchmen who would be put upon the wall of a city doing sentry duty. In this oracle the Lord declared that He would hold any man personally responsible who was thus placed on duty if he, upon seeing the approach of the enemy as he invaded the territory, should fail to make the announcement to the people in order that they might escape the horrors of war. In the beginning of this oracle there is an important statement which is: "When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and set him for their watchman; 3 if, when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; 4 then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head" (33:2-4). In this passage the Lord speaks in general terms, concerning any nation. It is He who has charted the course of the various nations. Figuratively speaking, He has a blueprint of the nations on which is indicated the time for the rise of every nation, the extent to which the boundaries may be pushed, and the time for it to disappear. The Apostle Paul in his marvelous speech on Mars Hill in Athens, Greece, in so many words declared these important truths (Acts 17:31). On the point of the Lord's turning over to certain ones the land or country of another people for a given time, a person should read Jeremiah 27:1-11. In this passage the Lord declared, verse 5, that He made the earth and everything therein and the heavens above. Moreover, He declared that He gives it to whomsoever it seems right in His eyes. In the days of Jeremiah

He had given all of those countries in Western Asia and Northwestern Africa to Nebuchadnezzar. They were therefore urged to submit to his yoke without resistance. Should they be obedient to this divine message, all would be well with them; on the other hand, if they failed to accept the divine will, they would suffer the consequences in sorrows and distress. God still controls the movements of the nations and determines the bounds of their habitations, as well as the seasons during which they have an existence.

The Lord declared that, when He by His overruling providence brings one nation against another and the people of the land that is being invaded puts a watchman upon the wall to do sentry duty, if that man fails to give the alarm—fails to perform his duty to his fellow countrymen—the Lord will hold that man personally responsible. If, on the other hand, when he sees the enemy coming, he gives the alarm and allows the people the opportunity of making their escape, the sentry is not held responsible. During times of warfare in any country God holds these watchmen responsible. When they perform their duty and the people, who are depending upon them, have an opportunity to act, then they, the populace, bear their own responsibility. This language means exactly what it says.

But God has spiritual sentinels whom He places on guard duty to give warning to the people. Ezekiel was taken in the deputation of captives who went to Babylon with Jehoiachin. He was located with them in their captivity. He was sent along by the Lord to be their sentinel, and to deliver the Word of God to them. He had a special appointment, a definite assignment. God told Him that He would require the blood of the people at his, Ezekiel's, hands if he failed to deliver His message to them. Note the language which is most specific: "So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth and give them warning from me" (vs. 7). Ezekiel had quite a good sized congregation, but one that was not too large for him to minister to personally. The Lord therefore called him, gave him a definite commission, delivered His word to him on various occasions, and held him personally responsible for delivering those messages.

Does God call people and assign to them a definite commission today as He did to Ezekiel? If He does, He will hold such ones responsible for delivering His word. There can be no doubt that God does impress upon the heart of His faithful servants His plan for them—for instance, to go to a certain mission field. That specific work is laid upon the heart of the given individual

whom God calls. If such a person does not go, then he is disobedient and will be out of the will of God. Of course, he will lose untold blessings in this life and will not have the rich reward in eternity that he would have, had he been obedient to God's call.

On the other hand, when the Lord calls one, for instance, to China, He does not specify a certain number of people to whom he is to minister the Word and hold him responsible unless he gives out the message to everyone of those living in that section. If such an arrangement were made today, the missionary would never have any joy, satisfaction, or peace unless he was confident that he had given the Word to every individual in the given territory. Of course, the one who hears the call and obeys must be faithful, being conscientious with himself and with his God and doing all he can for the glory of God. He must be faithful in the study of the Word, in prayer for guidance, and in delivering the message to the people. In a general way therefore I would say that the person, being on the field to which God has called him, will have the smile and approval of the Lord.

On the other hand, Ezekiel was warned that, when the Lord spoke to him concerning certain wicked ones, who would die in their iniquity, the Lord would hold him personally responsible for delivering the message of truth to such individuals. But let us always bear in mind that the Lord spoke to Ezekiel personally and pointed out the ones to whom he should go and put in his mouth the message that he was to deliver. In giving him the message, He inspired him infallibly by the Spirit of God. The Lord does not deal that way with His servants today since we have the written Word. It is true that God does impress the heart of the yielded one with the importance of delivering a message to a community and sometimes to special individuals with whom they are in close contact. Let each of us who are called into the service of the Lord, whether it be on the home field or in foreign lands, deliver our message faithfully in the Spirit of God.

The Announcement Of The Watchman

In verses 10 to 16 the message which the prophet was to give to certain people is given very specifically. The exiles among whom Ezekiel lived, and to whom he was to minister the Word, had become more or less cynical and yielded themselves up to a dead fatalism. They therefore were saying, "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how

then can we live?" (vs. 10). It is true that they were transgressors and sinners, and that they were pining away in their wrongs.

To correct this error the Lord commissioned the prophet to tell the people that He had no delight in the death of the wicked, but that, if the wicked man turned from his ways, he should live. This statement was followed by a passionate appeal to the house of Israel to turn from their wickedness and to live with God's blessings resting upon them. Of course, the living of which he was speaking was in this life. He was not talking about eternal life specifically. If the righteous man should be living a consistent life when the calamity of judgment came upon the community, he would be preserved through it, would survive, and live to the normal age of that period of time. On the other hand, if he, after having lived a good and true, upright, honorable life, ceased to do so and turned to wickedness, then his life would be shortened, and he would be overtaken by some calamity. On the other hand, if the man who was living in wickedness and sin forsook his wrongdoings and turned to live an honorable and upright life; then, when some calamity would come upon the community, this one was promised to escape the calamity and to survive the ordeal. Thus the promises contained in the message of the prophet were based upon the good conduct and the upright actions of the individual. Since men are not saved spiritually and prepared for immortal glory by their good works, we know that this living could not be living spiritually unto eternal life. The Scriptures are abundantly clear on the proposition that men are saved by the grace of God through faith. We therefore know that the promises of life involved in these verses pertain to the natural physical life here.

Notwithstanding the clear, straightforward statement that the Lord made concerning the way in which He deals with people upon the basis of the merit of their cases, there were those, according to verses 18-20, who were saying that the Lord's ways were not equal. In reply to them the Lord asserted that *their* ways were not equal, but that His were righteous and just and equal. The prophet closed his discussion on this point by saying, "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways" (vs. 20).

In verses 21 and 22 we learn that one who escaped the tragedies of the fall of Jerusalem reached Babylon in the twelfth year of Ezekiel's captivity, in the tenth month, and in the fifth day of the month. On that day the messenger reported the fall of Jerusalem. In this connection

let us remember that the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the year of the fall of Jerusalem, was the twelfth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. The city fell in the fifth month of that year. In the tenth month—five months later—the escaped fugitive arrived in the community of captives over in Babylon and reported the disaster that had overtaken the mother city. It took him practically five months to reach Babylon traveling doubtless on foot as was most likely. When Ezra led the captives who accompanied him back to Jerusalem, he left Babylon on the first day of the first month of the seventh year of Artaxerxes and arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month of the same year. Thus it took four months for Ezra and his company to travel from the place they resided in Babylon to Jerusalem.

The mention of this historical fact in the midst of the oracle constituting chapter 33 probably is indicative of the fact that this prophecy was given on the day mentioned in verse 21 of that year.

In the following paragraph, consisting of verses 23-29, the prophet was instructed to speak to the people and to correct the error that was being held by certain of those people who lived in the scattered ruins of Palestine after the two awful wars that had been waged by the Babylonians when Nebuchadnezzar came in the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah and then eight years later in the day of Jehoiachin. Of course, the war left its terrible toll and scars upon the land. There were those who were living in caves and among the ruins of the desolated territory. They might be termed "the die-hards." These people had faith, a blind faith, and refused to see the situation as it was. They took the position that, when Abraham was one, God made promise to him that he should be heir of the land. They therefore considered that they were many, many in contrast to Abraham, a single individual. They therefore said that certainly, since they were far more in number than he, they should inherit the land.

When they took this position, they did not take into account that sin and idolatry are terrible abominations that will alter facts and that will hinder the fulfillment of the promises of the Lord. In verses 25 and 26 the prophet calls their attention to flagrant sins of which these people were guilty. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes unto your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26 Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination and ye defile every one his neighbors wife: and shall ye possess the land?" Since they were indulging in those sinful practices, the Lord declared that they would

not under any conditions inherit the land, but that the sword should take its terrific toll of them.

In the final paragraph of this chapter, verses 30-33, we learn that the people among whom Ezekiel ministered came frequently to him and delighted to hear him deliver messages from God. According to verse 30 in private conversations at home and in public places the people would say one to the other, "Come, I pray you, hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah." Concerning them, the Lord declared that they would come before Him and would sit and listen to His words, but that they would not do them. With their mouths they would show much love, but with their hearts they went after their gain. These people enjoyed hearing the oracles of God and the preaching of the Word. They looked upon the messages of the prophets as a lovely song, a pleasant voice, and as one that could play well on an instrument. In other words, they went to hear the prophet speak the words of God purely for intellectual satisfaction and pleasure. They, however, did not have any intention of doing the will of God. This passage reminds one of Isaiah 58 in which the prophet spoke of the people's coming and delighting to hear the Word of God, and then going back to their businesses and their professions, taking advantage of others, and actually engaging in sin and evil practices. The Word of God is a serious matter. People must consider it as such and act accordingly. It is for the Lord's minister to speak faithfully the Word of God; it is for the people to listen with open hearts, to receive, and to obey.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 28,29)

The Untrue Shepherds Of Israel

The Lord frequently uses human illustrations to set forth divine truths. He constantly thought and spoke of Israel as a flock of sheep and of His being the shepherd, or of some of His servants as being appointed to care for the sheep. For instance, in Psalm 95:7 and 100:3, He speaks of Israel as being the sheep of His pasture. In II Samuel 5:2 appears the language of the Lord to David saying, "Thou shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and thou shall be prince over Israel." Thus Israel in these passages is thought of as God's flock. David in the last quotation is spoken of as being the shepherd (under God) of the flock.

The Faithless Shepherds Of Israel

In Ezekiel 34:1-6 the Lord spoke through Ezekiel "against the shepherds of Israel." His message was one of condemnation because they, instead of performing their duties as they should have done, were not looking after the interests of the people of God. On the contrary, they were using their official positions for their own personal profit and aggrandizement. Like the literal shepherds to whom flocks of sheep were entrusted, and who did not care for the needs of the sheep and did not protect them, the political and religious leaders of Israel held their positions of influence and power over the nation but did not look after the welfare of the people. The well-being of a nation is wrapped up in the type of political rulers and their spiritual leaders, who are over it. Of course, in Israel the king with the princes was at the head of the political situation. Often good kings sat upon the throne. At other times there were men, wicked, evil, selfish, and self-centered who only used their high office for the forwarding of their own personal interests. Whenever the authority and power lay in the hands of such men as these, great distress and misfortune came upon the land and the people.

There were also the priests who were appointed to lead the people spiritually to carry on the true worship of God, and to minister to the spiritual welfare of the nation. All too frequently those who served in spiritual affairs descended to a very low level of morals and ethics. Isaiah

compared them to dumb dogs and said, "Yea, the dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; and these are shepherds that cannot understand: they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter" (Isa. 56:11). Once again this same prophet spoke of the priests and of the prophets saying, "And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they stagger with strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness, so that there is no place *clean*" (Isa. 28:7,8). On this same point Jeremiah gave the following utterance: "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30,31).

In the New Testament the spiritual leaders of the people of God are likewise spoken of as shepherds. Jesus just before His departure from this earth urged Peter to feed His sheep, to take care of His lambs (John 21:15-17). This Apostle later on, in addressing the elders of the church, urged them to tend the flock of God which was among them (I Pet 5:1-3). The Apostle Paul in his final talk with the elders of the church at Ephesus whom he met at Miletus thought of the church as the flock of God and of them as being shepherds to whom the care of the flock was entrusted.

Both the shepherds of Israel and the shepherds in the New Testament church are given great opportunities of service in looking after the spiritual welfare of the people and of teaching the Word of God faithfully and accurately.

In Ezekiel 34:7-10 the Lord spoke again to the shepherds of His people Israel and denounced them for their unfaithfulness. Hear him: "Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: 8 As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely forasmuch as my sheep became a prey, and my sheep became food to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my sheep; 9 therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of Jehovah: 10 Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep; neither shall the shepherds, feed themselves any more; and I will deliver my sheep from their mouth, that they may not be food for them."

Whenever persons are called by the Lord from secular pursuits and are entrusted with the spiritual welfare of other people, a grave responsibility is placed upon them. With privileges and advantages come grave responsibilities. The feeding and the caring for the people of God constitute a position that involves the eternal welfare of myriads of souls. The Lord therefore holds all who are thus entrusted with such high positions and privileges to a strict account of their stewardship.

If they discharge their duties faithfully, allowing the Lord to lead and guide them in all of their duties, they will lead many to the Lord and enrich their lives. On the other hand, if they are simply time-servers and are using their positions for their own personal benefits, great will be the condemnation that will rest upon them.

Everyone who is thus called into the ministry should prepare himself for efficient service in the Master's cause. He should by ceaseless toil and prayer ascertain the teaching of the Scriptures. He should likewise develop in the spiritual life himself, thus growing in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. Knowing the will of God the faithful servant will proclaim the Word to the people, regardless of whether or not it is popular.

The prophets of God of whom we read in the Scriptures were fearless, dauntless men. They put God first. They were willing to suffer, even martyrdom, in order that they might accomplish their course and fulfill their ministry. For instance, of Isaiah we are told by tradition that he was sawn asunder. Nevertheless, he would neither alter nor change his message but delivered it faithfully to the people. Jeremiah likewise suffered as few mortals have ever done for the truth. He was a true shepherd of Israel. Throughout the Christian Era there have been many, innumerable shepherds who have put God and the interest of His people first and have not considered themselves or their own peculiar wants or position. Thus God has been honored and people have been blessed by the ministry of such faithful shepherds.

Jehovah's Becoming The Shepherd Of Israel

In verses 11 and 12 is one of the most remarkable prophecies of the Old Testament. "For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek

them out. 12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." This prediction baffled the ancient rabbis. They saw the force of the statement: "Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep ..." They realized from this context that God, having denounced both the political and religious leaders of His people for a failure to perform their duty of office, promised to come personally and to perform the functions in which they had failed. According to their interpretation this passage was a prediction that God would come as a person and thus perform those duties. But it was difficult for them to understand this passage, since they could not see how God himself could personally come as a human being and perform these duties. This passage along with Isaiah, chapter 53, has been spoken of as the bad conscience of the synagogue.

This promise of God's becoming the true shepherd of His people and of His performing these functions—that of prophet, priest, and king—can be understood in the light of such predictions as Isaiah 7:14 which declares: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." From this passage we see that Messiah was scheduled to leave heaven and enter the world by miraculous power. When we turn to the New Testament and study Matthew, chapter 1, and Luke, chapter 1, we see how this prediction was fulfilled in the miraculous conception, and virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth.

Having performed His task at His first coming, the Lord Jesus, the Hebrew Messiah, surrendered himself to the Jewish leaders who arrested Him and condemned Him to death. But this sentence was executed by the Roman authorities. This seeming tragic death was foretold by Zechariah the prophet in the following language: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones" (Zech. 13:7). Thus the sword did its work in taking the life of the Messiah. Upon death He was laid in the tomb, but on the third day, according to His prediction, He arose bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel. Forty days later He ascended to glory where He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, awaiting the time when Israel, having been given the facts concerning her national sin, repudiates that crime and pleads for Him to return. "For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go

away; I will carry off, and there shall be none to deliver. 15 I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me earnestly. 1 Come and let us return unto Jehovah; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2 After two days will he revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him. 3 And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: his going forth is sure as the morning; and he will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth" (Hosea 5:14-6:3). When she thus prays for Him to return in fulfillment of this passage and Psalm 80:1-3, the Messiah will return and will perform the duties of a shepherd to His beloved people as set forth in our passage, Ezekiel 34:11-16.

He, the Lord Jesus, who was the Shepherd of Israel is also the Good Shepherd of His people from all nations who believe Him and accept His salvation. He has proved to be the gracious, loving, tender Shepherd of all who accept Him. He fulfills every promise that is set forth in Psalm 23. Are you, my dear reader, one of His sheep? If you have accepted Him with all your heart and surrendered your life to Him, you have been received by Him; for he who comes to Him He will in nowise cast out. If you have never accepted Him, may you do so now.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 30)

The Flock Of Jehovah And Its Shepherd

In the last installment of this series we studied the first sixteen verses of Ezekiel, chapter 34. Here we saw that the leaders of Israel, both political and religious, are represented by shepherds who, not being interested in their flocks but more concerned about living in luxury, in ease, and in pleasure, use their high offices for their own special benefits.

But in verses 11-16 the Lord foretold that He himself would come and become the Shepherd of Israel to gather her who is scattered in the dark and cloudy day and to restore her to her own land and to fellowship with Himself. In verses 17-24 the prophet continues the same figure of representing Israel and its leaders by the figure of a shepherd and his flock.

The Rams, The He-Goats And The Flock

In verse 17 the Lord showed that He intends to deal with the people individually and not simply collectively. He will therefore judge between sheep and sheep and the rams and he-goats. The rams and he-goats of course, in this extension of the figure, represent the leaders, both political and religious; whereas the sheep stand for the great masses of the people. In verse 14 the prophet spoke of these political leaders as feeding upon the very best of the pasture. It is always true that the leaders of any group usually have the best of the community. But Ezekiel reprimands these same leaders and tells them that they are not only getting the best portion of the pasture, but they go to watering troughs, there make the water muddy, and befoul it, but the sheep have no other place at which they go to drink. Thus they have to take what is left and accept the conditions that are created by the rams and the he-goats.

It is a well-known fact that the leaders of any group, race, or nation do create, as a rule, the conditions that prevail. They can either improve them or let the situation deteriorate. Then the people have to suffer for the misconduct and the misdemeanors of the leaders.

Happy and blest are the people who are guided by men of vision, men who are unselfish, who put the public interest first and foremost, and who make their own personal, private matters a secondary consideration. Isaiah spoke about the leaders of the people in his day and compared them to dumb dogs that bask in the sunlight and were too lazy to bark at the approach of danger. He spoke again and called them the shepherds of the flock and said that they were simply interested in the satisfaction of their own carnal fleshly desires and lusts: "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, a day great beyond measure." Judgment awaits people who are thus placed in positions of responsibility and leadership. God deals with everyone according to the advantages and opportunities which he has enjoyed, and the position which he occupies. Those, then, who are placed in the position of leadership, both in the state and in religious circles, will be held to a very strict account for the discharge of the functions and duties of the offices which they fill. This is especially applicable to the ministers of the Word, pastors, teachers, preachers, writers, editors, and officials in the denominations and in the local congregations. May God open our eyes and enable us to see the great responsibility that rests upon us to guide and to direct the thoughts and the lives of the people in accordance with the will of God. May He enable us who are teaching His Word to study it and to give it forth without fear or favor of anyone.

The True Shepherd Of Israel

The promise found in verses 23 and 24 has given occasion to much controversy. "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24 And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it" (34:23,24). Who is this one Shepherd whom God will place over His people Israel? Since this one is called David, many excellent Bible students see in this prediction a forecast that God will raise King David, bring him back to life, and will place him over Israel restored. It is therefore believed by these commentators that David will reign during the Millennial Age in Jerusalem over restored, converted Israel. It is furthermore believed by these expositors that Christ will reign in a Jerusalem that will be created, and that will be suspended in the air above the city. Thus these good brethren interpret the expression, "my servant David," literally and apply it to

King David, the father of Solomon. They should recall, however, that the word David is used also in an accommodated sense to refer to one of his descendants. In I Kings 12:16 we have this language: "... now see to thine own house, David." King David had been dead forty years when this statement was made. From the context we see that the people were talking of Rehoboam, the grandson of David and his successor. Since the term, David, is used both literally and in the accommodated, figurative sense, of referring to a descendant and successor of David—the meaning to be determined by the facts of each context studied in the light of related passages—it becomes necessary for us to determine whether this name in Ezekiel 34:23,24 is used literally in referring to King David or to one of his descendants and successors. What do the facts of this context indicate? Let us remember that chapter 34 is one single oracle. In verse 11 the Lord, having condemned the faithless shepherds of Israel for their failure to perform their duties, declared saying, "Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep and will seek them out." The ancient rabbis interpreted this passage as a prediction that God himself would come in the form of a man and perform the functions of the offices of both the political and religious leaders. With this thought in mind, that Jehovah himself would come and would play the part of a shepherd, in restoring Israel to her own land, we see that the promise in verses 23 and 24 concerning God's setting up one shepherd—in contrast to many—over His people, and that this shepherd should be David his servant, we come to the conclusion that the word, David, is used in the figurative sense of referring to a descendant and successor of David, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will wear the double crown—that of royalty and that of priesthood (Zech. 6:12-14).

The New Covenant And Its Privileges

Isaiah, foretold that God would make a new covenant with Israel, an everlasting covenant (Isa. 61:8). Jeremiah foretold the same thing (Jer. 31:31f). Ezekiel speaks of this new covenant as "a covenant of peace." And that covenant is made with Israel in real peace. Freedom from all danger of every sort will be the order of the day. At that time the Lord will establish the mountain of Jehovah's house on the top of the mountains and will make all places connected with it a blessing. For there shall be showers of blessing (vs. 26).

At that time the curse will be lifted from the earth and all the plants and vegetation and trees will bear their full increase. The people of course will enjoy the finest of the wheat, as the psalmist sang.

Israel's day of sorrow will be passed. She will no longer become a prey to the nations, to be driven from one place to another and to be robbed.

At that time the land of Israel will be "a plantation for renown." Never will there be any earthquakes, any calamities. There will be no tornadoes, no famine, nothing to blast fruits and vegetables, and nothing to plague man.

At that time Jehovah will be Israel's God in the true sense of the term. He has been and is her God now, but she will not let Him pour out the fullness of His blessings upon her. At that future time, she will. The same thing may be said of Christians today. But when this prophecy is fulfilled, Israel will be the sheep of God's pasture and Jehovah himself will be the true Shepherd, who will meet all of their needs.

Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;

He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life;

And I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever. (Psa 23:1-6)

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 31)

The Judgment Upon Edom

The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. From the earliest childhood of these two brothers there seems to have been on the part of Esau a spirit of jealousy and envy against Jacob. Because of this fact Jacob was sent by his mother to his uncle Laban, who lived in Syria. This feeling appears never to have died out during the personal lifetime of these two patriarchs. At times it seems to have disappeared, but it was simply smoldering underneath some seeming tranquil situation. It flared up from time to time and burst into raging warfare at different stages of the history of the descendants of these two brothers.

The country and people of Edom came in for consideration on the part of various prophets. For instance, Jeremiah issued an oracle against these people, as seen in Jeremiah 49:7-22. Ezekiel, in chapter 35, which is the subject of our lesson, and also in chapter 36, dealt with the relationship between the Edomites and the Israelites. Amos likewise in 1:11,12 issued an oracle against Edom. Obadiah devoted his entire book (one chapter) to a discussion of Edom and the hurling of a philippic against that inveterate enemy of the Jews. All of these passages should be read in order that one might appreciate the message of this study.

The Oracle Directed Against Edom

God instructed Ezekiel to set his face toward Mount Seir and to prophesy against it. The wording of this command shows that this was indeed a real burden in the true sense of the term which the prophet was delivering against the Edomites. It is a fearful thing to have God issue such a declaration against anyone.

God Threatens To Lay Waste The Country Of Edom

In verses 3 and 4 of this oracle God tells the nature and the extent of the judgment that He threatens. He warned the Edomites that He would reduce the country to a state of desolation and waste, and that its condition would be an astonishment to the people who would witness it. Though they had strong cities and fortifications, yet God would make all of them heaps of ruins. They would feel His might and recognize the power of Omnipotence in His thus destroying their country and overthrowing their civilization.

The Sin Of Edom

As stated in the first paragraph of this study, the outstanding sin of the Edomites was that of enmity against the Israelites, which feeling of animosity dated back to the days of Jacob and Esau. In various oracles that God uttered against the Edomites, He calls attention to that fact. Isaiah in foretelling the judgments of the great Tribulation concluded by saying that the Lord Jesus, when He comes to earth, will strike at Edom and assigns as the reason: "For Jehovah hath a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion" (Isa. 34:8). In Ezekiel 35:5 God emphasizes the thought that Edom's outstanding sin was perpetual enmity against the children of Israel. They at different times have done all that they could against the Israelites; but from this verse we see that they will in some way deliver over "the children of Israel to the power of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time of the iniquity of the end." This statement shows that this oracle finds its complete fulfillment in the time of the Tribulation. It is most important to note this fact. By all prophetic students the time of Israel's calamity is the time of Jacob's trouble, or the Tribulation, which is, according to this verse, to be in the time of the iniquity of the end—the end of this age, namely, the Tribulation Period.

Edom Reaps What She Has Sowed

One of the unchangeable laws of God is that a person or nation reaps what he or it sows. The Edomites have in the past and will yet in the future give the children of Israel over to the power of the sword. To this same fate, though in a more thoroughgoing and far-reaching manner, will God give the Edomites over to the power of the sword in the end time. She will have shed blood, and her blood shall be shed.

Edom's Desolations Perpetual

According to verses 7-9 the wreckage and the ruin, of the land of Edom will continue and remain in this condition perpetually. Her feeling of hatred against Israel has run through the centuries; her desolations will run throughout the centuries of the Millennial Age, since it will be perpetual, that is, continuing from the time of its being reduced to that condition onward as long as the earth stands. At the end of the Millennium, however, the entire physical universe passes out of existence, as we learn in Revelation 20, verse 11.

Edom's False Claims To The Land Of Palestine

In verse 10 we have this language: "Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas Jehovah was there; 11 therefore, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I will do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast showed out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I shall judge thee. 12 And thou shall know that I, Jehovah, have heard all thy revilings which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour" (verses 10-12). So far as the records go, there is no account of the Edomites' ever laying claim to the land of Israel, which was, upon the death of Solomon, divided into two countries: the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. Ezekiel thus speaks of the land of Palestine and the people of Israel in terms of the conditions which resulted after the division of the kingdom in the days of Rehoboam, king of Judah.

Since this oracle, as we see from verse 5, will find its full and complete fulfillment in the time of the iniquity of the end, we may be certain that yet in the future the Edomites will lay claim to all the land of Palestine west of the Jordan River. They will declare that they have a right to this land, and that they are going to have it in possession. As to how far they will press their claims, the Scriptures are silent. We therefore must stop there and await the time when this claim is put forward by the people of Edom. It is true that the Arabs—without any definitely defined actual racial and national lines—have laid claim to the land of Palestine. Thus the descendants of the various Arabic nations have indiscriminately made the claim that Palestine belongs to the Arabs; but here is a definite prediction that the descendants of Esau,

who have been amalgamated with the Arabic tribes, at the present, will make these claims before the world; but, of course, God will not honor them.

Edom's Magnifying Himself Against God

"And ye have magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard it" (vs. 13). The Edomites had every opportunity of knowing that Jehovah the God of the universe was the God of the Israelites. Nevertheless, they thought and spoke of Him as if He were simply a tribal god like the gods of the various nations around them. In their laying claims to the land of Palestine and in their open hostility against the Jews, they magnify themselves against God and speak against Him.

Whoever takes a stand against God in any such manner and spirit as this will suffer the horrible consequences. Note that the Antichrist of the end time does this very thing and comes to his miserable and horrible end at the second coming of our Lord.

Edom The Land Of The Curse During The Millennium

"Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate" (vs. 14). The curse will be lifted, at the second coming of Christ, from the entire earth with the exception of the lands of Babylon and Edom. That Babylon will remain under the curse is quite clear from the latter part of Isaiah, chapter 13, and from Isaiah 34:8 to the close. From this thirty-fifth chapter of Ezekiel it is clear that the land of Edom will not be delivered, but that a special curse will rest upon it. This condemned condition will be a living testimony against all anti-Semitism throughout the Millennial Age—and should be a warning to all at the present time to watch their step and not to take an adverse attitude against the Jew.

Survival After Death

According to verse 15 after the land of Edom has been destroyed and the people wiped from the face of the globe, "they shall know that I am Jehovah." This obviously refers to the people

of Edom who have gone on to their eternal destiny, and who will be conscious and know the actual conditions that obtain in the land where they lived during their lifetime.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 32)

The Curse Removed From The Land Of Israel

In Ezekiel 6:1-10 we have a prophecy concerning the judgment that would fall upon the mountains of Israel because of the wickedness of the people who resided in the country. In contrast with this prediction of calamity is the one which is made to the same mountains of Israel in chapter 36 (vss. 1-15), where we read that the curse will be lifted from these very same mountains.

The Strife In The Land Of Palestine

God promised Israel when He brought her out of Egyptian bondage that, if she would be faithful to Him, she would have bountiful crops, would be smitten with no diseases, would have no plagues, and that never would any foreign, hostile powers cross her borders and cause trouble. But Israel has been disobedient to the Lord through the centuries. Her land has been torn by strife and war continually. It has been said that Jerusalem has suffered forty-six major sieges during Historic Times. But the time will arise when the last gun will be fired in Jerusalem and the last victim fall to such a tragic death. How the population of Palestine look forward to the glorious era when deliverance will be brought to this unfortunate people!

In verse 2 we learn that the oracle, found in chapter 36, is spoken to Israel "Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha! and, The ancient high places are ours in possession." The enemy here, as we see from the preceding chapter which is joined very closely with this one, is none other than the Edomites and other Arabic countries associated with Edom.

In this same verse the enemy claims that the land of Palestine, which belongs to the Jew, is her own, and that she possesses the high places of the land. It is a well-known fact that the Jews have settled in the lowlands and valleys of the country, whereas the Arabs have been in the high places. They have claimed, ever since the trouble of recent years have arisen in

Palestine, that the country is theirs, because they had been in peaceful possession of it for centuries. Of course, this is only a claim.

From verse 3 we see that these enemies are the ones who have made the land desolate: "Because, even because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the nations, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and the evil report of the people; 4 therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord Jehovah. ..." The country is made desolate in fulfillment of this prediction. Those bringing about this condition are those termed enemies, of whom we have taken notice just above. The result is that the country is thrown into the lap of the residue of the nations.

Though we may not be dogmatic concerning the exact fulfillment of this prediction, a person can easily see how the recent strife in Palestine has brought about at least a certain amount of the conditions here foretold. The Arabs contested the Jewish claim to Palestine and their right to build their home in the land. Strife entered. The Palestinian situation was dumped into the lap of the league of nations, and they divided the country, which brought about the terrific war of recent months. As a result of that conflict, there has been much desolation and waste throughout the country. Though I am not claiming that this is the fulfillment of the passage, it certainly might be classified as a fulfillment.

In verses 4 and 5 the Lord gives a special message to these mountains of Israel: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the cities that are forsaken, which are become a prey and a derision to the residue of the nations that are round about; 5 therefore, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the nations, and against Edom, that have appointed my land unto themselves for a possession with the joy of all their heart, with despite of soul, to cast it out for a prey." God takes up the matter according to this prediction and champions the cause of Israel in the dispute that the Arabs launch against the Jews for claiming Palestine as their own. He who touches the Jew touches the apple of God's eye. One cannot entertain anti-Semitic thoughts in his heart and go unpunished by the Lord.

According to verse 5 the indignation of God is aroused against the rest of the nations and

against all Edom that appoint the land of Palestine to themselves for a possession. The oracle which the Lord thunders against the enemies of Israel is this: "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold I have spoken in my jealousy and in my wrath, because ye have borne the shame of the nations: 7 therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I have sworn, *saying*, Surely the nations that are round about you, they shall bear their shame" (vss. 6b,7).

Because of the active hostility that the Arabic nations around Palestine have shown toward the Jewish people, the Lord declared that these nations shall bear the shame, the reproach, and the chastisement for their sins.

Message Of Hope And Comfort To The Mountains Of Israel

The message of special hope and encouragement to the mountains of Israel is found in verses 8-15.

The date of this prophecy is given very clearly in verse 8: "But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they are at hand to come." This passage contemplates a time when the Jews are out of their land but are ready to return to it. When that time arrives, according to the prediction, the country is ready to shoot forth its branches and to bring forth its fruit to full fruition for His people Israel. This passage, studied in the light of related ones, can refer to none other than the final and complete, restoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers in the latter days. When this time comes and the Messiah appears, rending the heavens and descending to the earth, He will lift the curse and then the land of Palestine, will bring forth its fruit to the returning exiles. From these facts we see that the prophet was carried from his own time across the centuries to the very end of this age, to the times in which we are living.

Seemingly the Lord has been against the land which He gave to the Jewish fathers and to their children after them. But of course this language cannot be taken literally, for the Lord has not been against the land. But His judgment against the land on account of the people might, in popular thought, be expressed as His being against the land.

When the time arrives for Israel to return to the land of the fathers, and the soil is to be tilled

by them, God promises according to verses 10 and 11 that He will multiply the house of Israel upon the land. The cities of Israel shall be inhabited and the waste places shall be built up. Not only will the population of Israel be increased and Abraham's seed become as numerous as the stars of heaven, but the beasts of the field likewise will be increased —as we see in verse 11. Moreover, the crops will be bountiful. There will be sufficient rains at the proper time, and right climatic conditions to produce bumper crops. There will be no mildew, no blasting, no plagues by which the crops will be injured. According to the latter part of verse 11, God declares that He will do better by the nation of Israel in the future than He has ever done before. At the time, as we see in verse 12, the men of Israel will be restored to their land, and they will possess their inheritance within the boundaries of the land which God gave to Abraham, the great father of all the faithful.

In verses 13 and 14 we see the popular thought expressed concerning the land of Palestine and its being the cause of the people's being devoured and the population being depleted. But, as stated above, this is only popular language, since there is such abundant evidence throughout the land that it has been under the curse during the time that Israel has been in rebellion against God.

But when this prophecy is fulfilled, there will be no more curse and no more reproach upon the Jewish people. They will have been restored to their land and to fellowship with God. Then Israel will enjoy her place as the head of the nations instead of being the tail as she is at the present day.

It is very interesting indeed to the students of prophecy who follow the moving picture that is constantly being shifted in the land of Palestine today. At the same time it behooves us, as we study the Jewish situation, to avoid all speculation and guessing. In other words, it behooves us to be very sane and sound and avoid jumping at hasty conclusions. At the same time we must not be skeptical and consider ourselves unable to see the fulfillment of plain prophecies that God has made concerning the return of the Jewish people to the land of their fathers.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 33)

Israel's Restoration To The Land Of The Fathers And Her Conversion

Ezekiel, chapter 36, is an illustration of the law of recurrence. When the prophets followed this principle, they, figuratively speaking, painted, or blocked out, a certain scene of the future. After that they filled in new details and brought out in brighter or more lurid colors certain characteristics that they put in at the first. Thus in 36:1-15 the prophet foretold the strife between the Arabic nations and the Jews in the end time and of their being finally removed from the scene and Israelis being established in the land of the fathers.

At this future time great fertility will be the order of the day, and great will be the peace of Jerusalem with her children. In verses 16-38 the prophet went back over this picture and touched up some of the details, making them stand out in bold relief, and added new ones.

The Cause Of Israel's Dispersion

As a person studies the prophecies that were uttered by these various divine spokesmen, he should always remember the broad blueprint of Israel's history that is set forth in Leviticus, chapter 26, and Deuteronomy, chapter 28. In these two passages God promised Israel blessedness with all material comforts and freedom from disease and protection from all attacks by enemies. On the other hand, He warned her that, should she be unfaithful to Him, persist and continue in rebellion, He would be forced by her actions to cast her out of her land, to scatter her among the nations and then, eventually, when she repented of her sin, forsook, and confessed it, to restore her permanently to the land of the fathers. God watches over His Word to perform it. Every promise of blessing that He makes to anyone is fulfilled promptly and completely, whenever the one to whom the promise is made becomes obedient in the spirit and the letter of the command.

On the other hand, when men and women persist in rebellion and disobedience to God and will not turn from their wickedness, there is but one thing that a holy, righteous, and just God

can do, and that is, to bring the threatened punishment. This is what we see stated in Ezekiel 36:16-21 inclusive.

Israel Regathered And Purified

In verses 22-38 we see the bright future that lies ahead for Israel. In the first verse of this portion of the prophecy, God tells why He will restore Israel. It is not because of her goodness or her righteousness, but because of His holy name which she has profaned among the nations whither she has gone. Moses was led to make a similar pronouncement to the people of his generation and to warn them that they were in possession of the land, not because of any goodness or righteousness of their own, but because God loved their ancestors and had entered into a covenant with them. The same principle holds today. God will be true to the holiness of His character, and to the righteousness of His nature. Because of that and of His faithfulness, Israel is preserved. "For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6)

According to Ezekiel 36:23 God will sanctify His holy name among the nations, the name of Jehovah which Israel has profaned among them. Then the nations shall know that Jehovah, the Self-existing One, is the true and living God. The word, sanctify, means primarily to set apart from a common to an uncommon use. God is going to sanctify His name and set it apart in such a way that the nations will revere it and will worship Him who wears that ineffable name, Jehovah.

In verse 24 the prophet speaks of God's regathering Israel from among the nations whither she has been scattered through the centuries in the overthrow of the city of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70: "For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land. 25 And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." All the prophets, from Moses to Malachi prophesied that God would gather Israel from among the nations and place her in her own land. Thus this promise is quite familiar to the one who is acquainted with the prophetic word. When the Lord promises to gather Israel and to restore her to the land, He is speaking of the faithful few of Israel who long for the truth, and who will accept it when it is presented to her.

In verse 25 we see the promise that He would sprinkle clean water upon Israel and would cleanse her from all of her filthiness, even from all of her idolatry. Unfortunately some expositors, having forgotten the connection in which this promise was made, have thought that the word "sprinkle" here refers to water baptism, the Christian ordinance authorized by the Lord Jesus. It is clear from the context that the Lord is speaking of the gathering of Israel and of her being re-established in the land of the fathers. It is an unlawful use of language to take some portion out of an oracle which is purely Jewish and to apply it, in the Christian sense, to the people of all nations. This sprinkling of clean water upon those gathered back to the land can have no reference to water baptism whatsoever. To everyone who is familiar with the teaching of the law of Moses, it is quite evident that this is an echo of such a passage as that which is found in Numbers, chapter 19. Whenever anyone was defiled in any way, as for instance, by touching a dead body unwittingly, he was pronounced unclean ceremonially. He had to carry out certain ritualistic observances and to have the water of separation sprinkled upon him, which was prepared in connection with the ashes of a red heifer. When the defiled person thus observed all the requirements, and when the end of the ceremony of purification was completed by the sprinkling of the water, he was pronounced clean and could associate with the rest of the community as before.

Should this refer to water baptism in the Christian sense, it is clear that water baptism cleanses. But no one who has the proper conception of the New Testament teaching will for one second claim that the water cleanses or purifies. Such a thought as this is repugnant to the Christian consciousness. It is, however in perfect accord with the ceremonial regulations of the law of Moses. Hence this sprinkling of clean water upon regathered Israel is purely Mosaic and will be fulfilled by Israel when she returns to God in the future.

Israel, at the time when she returns and is thus cleansed by the Lord, is promised a new heart and a new spirit: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." God through Moses (Deut. 29:4) declared that He had not as yet given them a heart to understand; that is, that He did not regenerate the nation. It is true that those who by faith walked with God and trusted Him had created within them clean hearts, as David prayed. The

nation as a group were not regenerated. But when this prophecy is fulfilled, the entire nation will accept the Lord Jesus Christ whom they rejected at His first coming. When they act thus and repudiate their national sin of refusing to accept Him and plead for God to perform the miracle of grace in their hearts, according to Psalm 80, they will be given this new heart, and the Spirit will be given to them.

When God does put His Spirit within regenerated Israel, she will, as a result, truly walk in the statutes of God and keep the ordinances and do them.

They are promised in verse 28 that they shall remain in the land which God gave to their fathers. Nevermore will they be rooted up from it. They will be the Lord's people, and He will be their God in the special sense—as is set forth throughout the writings of Moses and the prophets.

The Lord also will save them from all uncleanness and filthiness of a physical or of a spiritual nature. The Lord will, furthermore, give them sufficient crops and multiply the increase of their fields. He will lay no famine upon them.

In verses 30 and 31 again the Lord reiterates the promise of freeing Israel from famine and exempting her from all evil and calamities.

The entire prophecy concludes with the thought that God will bring about Israel's return to Him and will regenerate and save the nation. At that time He will restore unto her her land, which will then be built up and inhabited. All of the ruins of the centuries will be removed, and the land will be as the Garden of Eden. They will lack nothing when they are thus established in their own land.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 34)

The Vision Of The Valley Of Dry Bones

In Ezekiel 37:1-14 we have a prediction concerning the gradual restoration of Israel to the land of the fathers. This is found in the first fourteen verses. Sometimes the prophets began their oracles by the regular formula, "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah," or "Jehovah of hosts." Sometimes the truth was communicated to them directly by a vision. Whenever this method of communication was employed, God made vivid and graphic before the spiritual vision of the messenger the truth to be received.

Several decades ago this passage was a favorite one for an evangelist to use when he began a series of revival services. Of course, when all of the facts of the context are studied, it is quite evident that this passage has nothing to do with the subject of revival in the Christian usage of the term.

The Restoration Of Israel Presented

The prophet was shown in vision a great valley. In fact, he was set down in the midst of this valley, which was full of dry bones. Then the Lord caused him to pass around among these bones. As he did so, he looked at them very carefully and declared that they were very, very dry.

Then the Lord put this question to him: "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel in a straightforward manner and with the proper attitude replied: "O Lord Jehovah, thou knowest." Ezekiel had an unswerving faith in God, a personal Being, who is the Creator and Controller of the universe. He believed that all things are possible with God—even those things which seem most highly improbable. It is God who can call and make the dead alive, and who can change the night into day.

At this juncture of the revelation the Lord commanded the prophet to speak to the dry bones and to command them to hear the Word of Jehovah. The message which he delivered to them was: "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah."

Ezekiel Prophecies

Ezekiel informs us in verse 7 that he prophesied exactly as he was commanded. There were no doubts nor questionings in his mind. To him God was equal to the occasion and could carry out anything that He commanded. Let us remember this: "God's commandings are His enablings." God never tells people to do anything that they themselves cannot do, assisted by His divine power.

When Ezekiel gave the command, doubtless he expected results, which certainly came. Thus, in the vision, as a direct result of his prophesying, there was a noise; or, as the marginal reading renders the word, *thundering*. "And, behold, there was an earthquake." Remember, this was in Ezekiel's vision.

When these two things occurred, the bones, scattered all over the valley, as if they were alive, began to move together, each bone taking its position with relation to other bones so as to form skeletons. When these bones had thus taken their position, the prophet noticed that sinews began to appear, connecting each bone to its neighbor bone. Following this, flesh began to appear, and skin formed upon the flesh. At this stage of the process, instead of bones scattered all over the valley, there were bodies of dead men. But let us continue to bear in mind that this is a *vision*.

The prophet was commanded to speak to the wind, or spirit, and command it to breathe life into these bodies. This thing he did. When he gave the command, then the Spirit came, imparted life to them, and they arose (in vision) a mighty army of God.

From this Scripture it is clear that the narrative is intended to be understood as implying that there is the relation of cause and effect existing between the great noise and earthquake on the one hand and the movement of the dry bones, on the other. Moreover, it is self-evident that a process is indicated by that which follows the earthquake and the great noise. This quite obviously is a process.

The Divine Interpretation Of The Vision

If the passage had stopped here, the entire revelation thus far would have been indeed an enigma, or a riddle. But the Lord was very gracious to give us the divine interpretation. At this point let us note that there is congruity and fitness between the symbol and the thing signified. God always chooses appropriate objects to set forth the truth which He has in mind. Thus He declared, in verse 11, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost! we are clean cut off." Since the bones could not literally be the whole house of Israel, it is immediately evident that they here are used symbolically to signify the whole house of Israel. This language reminds one of the vision which was granted to Pharaoh and interpreted by Joseph. He saw seven fat kine coming up out of the river that were followed by seven lean ones. The latter devoured the former. The vision was doubled. There came up seven stalks of grain, full, and most promising. Following them there came up seven blasted stalks that devoured the first ones. Then Joseph interpreted these two symbols and said that they both signified the same thing, which was that there would be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. He therefore said that the seven fat kine were the seven years of plenty; the seven lean kine the seven years of famine. It is clear that the bones in Ezekiel, chapter 37, are used symbolically of the nation of Israel.

Let us note that these bones represent the *whole* house of Israel—not a part of them, but the entire nation. Ezekiel knew nothing of "ten lost tribes." In this vision he saw all of the bones together—and they represented the twelve tribes, which fact shows that the ten and the two tribes of Israel were associated together and could not be separated.

This is a vision of the twelve tribes of Israel at a certain stage of their career. It represents them at the time that they say, "Our hope is lost, we are clean cut off." What is the hope of

Israel? Instantly the Bible student will reply, "It is the hope of the coming of the Messiah, who is to be the Redeemer of the nation." Thus the prophet looked forward to the time when the nation would give up all interest in and reliance upon the coming of the Messiah. We must remember that this vision does not represent the entire nation throughout the centuries, but only at the time when she has given up her national hope, which has been reposed in Messiah and His advent. Since the hope is trust in the coming of Messiah and His redemptive work, and since the nation of Israel has held tenaciously to this hope through the centuries up until modern times, we may be certain that this vision represents the nation only when it reaches the point that it has lost all faith in that hope and attempts to solve its own problems. When did the nation of Israel thus give up this hope? Those who are familiar with Jewish history know that it is only in these modern times after rationalism began to permeate the Jewish race as it has the Christian ranks. Thus it is quite evident that the prophet was carried forward in vision and saw the nation of Israel at the present time in her forlorn and despairing condition.

When Israel is thus in this state, that she has given up her national hope, then there is something that occurs and that affects the nation just as the earthquake in the vision occurred and caused the movement which brought the bones together. As stated above, there is congruity, fitness, and appropriateness in the Lord's selection of the symbol and His applying it to the thing signified. Earthquakes and tremendous noises that follow are always destructive. Thus we may be certain that this earthquake symbolized something destructive, something that affected the Jewish nation materially, causing them to come together.

Has anything occurred in the world since Israel has been in this forlorn condition, that has affected the nation of Israel causing her to come together? Everyone who is familiar with the events of World War I and its impact and effect upon the Jewish nation can understand what is here referred to. The great war and its aftermath affected the Jews to such an extent that they realized that they were unwelcome guests among the nations, and that their only hope of survival was by returning to the land of their fathers. Thus the Zionistic movement, which had been simply a little trickle of national hope and aspiration, was turned into a great stream that flooded world-Jewry.

As indicated by the coming together of the bones, the sinews appearing, the flesh growing, upon the bones, and the skin forming over the flesh, we have set forth in this passage of Scripture the thought that there would be a gradual development of a movement that would be quickened and accelerated by World War I with its aftermath, and that would eventuate in the restoration of Israel to the land of the fathers and her conversion. God uses men and means and natural occurrences to bring about the desired results.

Let us remember this: The human side of the situation and human efforts are set forth by the coming together of the bones, the binding of them together by the sinews, the appearance of the flesh, and the covering of the flesh with the skin. These are purely symbolic of efforts which Israel alone puts forth.

But the breathing into these lifeless bodies, by the Spirit of God, of life and vigor represents a supernatural event, the conversion of the nation. Thus there is implied in this passage the evangelization of the Jewish nation, her being brought under conviction of her need of a Saviour and of her final turning to the Messiah and accepting Him, at which time life and power are granted to the Jewish people.

To the end of Israel's conversion and restoration, let us labor and pray always.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 35)

The Scattered Nation Of Israel Reunited Under King Messiah

God's original plan for the nation of Israel as revealed in the revelation of Moses was that she should constitute a theocracy, a nation ruled directly by God. The high priest was the one who headed up the priesthood, which approached God for the nation. In the process of time, however, Israel desired to be like other nations and rejected the idea of a theocracy and insisted upon God's allowing her to have a king. The Lord, therefore, gave her a king in His anger and took him away in His wrath (Hosea 13:11). The Lord chose Saul but, when he proved himself unworthy for the honor, He rejected him and selected David, a man after His own heart, who reigned over Israel for forty years and was succeeded by his son Solomon, who likewise reigned for forty years.

Upon the conclusion of Solomon's reign the kingdom was rent in twain, ten of the tribes revolted from the throne of David and established a separate kingdom in the north, known as the kingdom of Israel, Ephraim, or Jacob. Thus the two governments, the kingdom of Judah in the south and that of Israel in the north, continued running along, side by side, for a period of 264 years. Finally, in the year 719 B. C., the northern kingdom was overthrown by the more powerful Assyrian Empire. According to the Assyrian records 27,290 leaders of the nation were taken into captivity and were colonized in certain portions of the Assyrian Empire. The great bulk of the people were allowed to remain in the land of their fathers. Governors, the choice of the Assyrians, were placed over those remaining in the land. There was a feeling of bitter enmity that arose at the time of the division of the Davidic kingdom and that continued through the years. This hostility was naturally heightened when the Assyrian monarch brought in Asiatics and colonized them among the masses who remained in the land. They intermarried more or less with the native Israelites. There, therefore, sprang up a mongrel nation that became known as the Samaritans. This turn of affairs embittered the Jews against the people of the northern kingdom.

Ezekiel, in chapter 37:15-28, foretold that this disrupted condition would cease, and that the twelve tribes would become a single nation under the reign of King Messiah.

Ezekiel spoke this prediction from the standpoint of his time. As stated above, the hostility that came about at the time of the disruption continued throughout the centuries. Ezekiel therefore spoke in terms of a condition that had been existing for decades.

The Symbolic Significance Of The Two Sticks

Ezekiel was commanded to take two sticks. Upon one he was to write, "For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions." On the other he was to write, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions." Then he was to join them together, binding them so that they would be united into one stick.

The Lord interpreted the significance of the symbolic action in the following words: "... say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them with it, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand ... Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all; 23 neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God" (vss. 19-23).

From this prediction it is very clear that the prophet was carried forward to some time in the future when all Israel—all the twelve tribes now scattered among the nations of earth—will be gathered back and will constitute one nation. In other words, the rift that was made at the time of the disruption shall be eliminated and all of them will come together, shoulder to shoulder, with one purpose—to serve the true and the living God. At that time God will restore the ancient order and will have only one sovereign over the entire nation.

When this vision is fulfilled, we are told that Israel will never more defile herself with idolatry or the detestable things; neither will she go off into the transgressions of which she was constantly guilty throughout the long centuries of her existence. This is another way of saying what Balaam foretold in Numbers 23:21:

"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob;
Neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel:
Jehovah his God is with him,
And the shout of a king is among them."

King Messiah's Reign Over The Nation

When this prophecy is fulfilled, the Lord will put His servant David as King over His people. Who is meant by this prophecy? King David raised from the dead? Or is this King Messiah? Many are the passages which tell us that, when Israel is restored to her land, God himself personally will reign over the nation. For instance, in Isaiah 33:17-24 we have a marvelous picture of the King of Israel in all of His beauty as He will reign in purified, glorified Jerusalem. In verse 22 we have language to this effect. "For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; he will save us" (33:22). Zephaniah gave us a marvelous and beautiful prediction concerning Messiah, who is none other than the second person of the Trinity in human form, and His reign in the city of Jerusalem: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. 15 Jehovah hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not fear evil any more. 16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; O Zion, let not thy hands be slack. 17 Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:14-17). From these and many other passages it is quite evident that Jehovah in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ will be Israel's King, who will reign in the new Jerusalem, glorified and magnified. But why is he called David? The reason is that He is a descendant of David. This use is certainly found in such a passage as I Kings 12:16. When Rehoboam refused to relieve the burden of taxes upon his accession to the throne of Israel, the people of the northern kingdom revolted and

shouted: "What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David." They were not talking to literal David but to Rehoboam, grandson of David. Thus, since it is Jehovah who will reign in Jerusalem during the Millennial Era, and since He is called David, it is quite obvious that the name *David* is simply used in this secondary or accommodated sense, indicating that He (Messiah) is of the lineage of David.

When Israel is thus gathered out from among the nations, she will dwell in her own land. When the people are thus restored in fulfillment of this prediction, they will never be rooted out and King Messiah, who is again called "David my servant" will be "their prince for ever," that is, continually, as long as the sun, moon, earth and this present material universe continues (Ps. 89:35-37).

At that time God promises to enter into a new covenant of peace with the nation of Israel. This is to be an everlasting covenant. It will never be changed. This doubtless is the covenant of which various prophets spoke. Especially did Jeremiah foretell it in 31:31.

God's tabernacle will be with Israel at the time. He will be their God; and they shall be His people. This sanctuary or Temple is described in the last section of Ezekiel, chapter 40ff.

At that time the nation of Israel will sanctify Jehovah, will reverence Him, will worship Him, and will never depart from Him any more. She will sustain a special relationship with Him. He will be the God of Israel, and they shall be His people. Israel will then be the head of the nations, instead of being the tail as at the present time.

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by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 36)

The Overthrow Of The Russian Forces That Invade Palestine

A Study Of Ezekiel, Chapter 38

We have come in this series to Ezekiel, chapter 38, which deals with the overthrow of the Russian forces in Palestine. This subject is a very arresting one and should stimulate in us an intense desire to investigate it. You may ask me why I am so bold as to talk upon something that is in the future. You may say, Have not men from time to time tried to unravel the secrets of the future, have erred in judgment, have become dogmatic by looking at the trend of events, and have made erroneous predictions? I must answer these questions in the affirmative. The Eternal God is the one who frustrates the prognostications of uninspired men. He does not run the universe according to a man-made timetable or schedule, but He has revealed to us certain things that will come to pass. Such prophecies are so very definite and specific that one can recognize the event as the time is approaching. Prophecies made by the men of God in ancient times, that are in the distant future from the people of a certain generation, may be hazy and indistinct from their point of view, but, as the time approaches and draws very close at hand when those predictions are to be fulfilled, the light from the times and the environment in which the prophecy will be fulfilled will throw a clear light upon the predictions, which will enable a person to interpret accurately the prophecies—provided he is willing to take God at His Word, discover what is in the prediction, and not attempt to read anything in the Word of God that is not there.

Everyone throughout the nation, yes, doubtless throughout all nations, are on the tiptoe of fear, dread, and deep anxiety concerning what Russia, with her satellites that are behind the iron curtain, may do at any time. According to reports that are heard on every hand—over the radio, in the press, and in lectures—Russia, like an overgrown bully, has been strutting around on the theatre of the world and acting as if she were the lord of creation. Every open-minded, unbiased person recognizes this fact.

From the time of the Russian revolution back in 1917 to the present moment the leaders of that godless movement have, in plain language, asserted their aims and objectives, namely, the subjection of the world to them. To do this, they do not hesitate to assert that they will destroy the capitalistic system, which to them is the very embodiment of greed, selfishness, and brutality on the part of the few who are simply exploiting the great masses. What the little clique of the Kremlin intends to do they attribute to the leaders of the free peoples. Of course, they always put up a smoke screen to cover up their diabolical, cruel, ruthless plans and schemes to enslave the world.

More and more, it is becoming clearly apparent that the Russians intend to continue their program of infiltration into the nations and, having captured key positions into which they put their own men, they cause revolutions, which bring into the camp of Moscow peoples who hitherto enjoyed freedom and liberty. The peoples of Eastern Europe are examples of this special technique of the Bolsheviks. Before our eyes we see China going down under the hammer and the sickle. Other nations are on the communistic slate, thus to be captured and brought into the fold of the Kremlin.

No intelligent, informed person can fail to see the development and spread of godless communism, as the sinister shadow of the Kremlin is creeping over the entire Asiatic Continent, especially.

The Communists are bold in declaring their plans and purposes to conquer the world and to enslave all mankind. This may be a surprise, and doubtless is, to the bulk of humanity. But it is no surprise to the one who understands the teaching of the infallibly inspired Word of God. What the world is slowly beginning to apprehend, the prophet Ezekiel drew in accurate outline and painted in the most lurid colors. There is no misunderstanding this prophecy, because it is very clear, specific, and straight-forward.

We have every reason to believe that the prophet Ezekiel was carried forward by the Spirit, as the prophets often were, in vision, and was set down in the midst of some future location or situation which he describes in detail. That this is true is evident by verse 8 of chapter 38. This is timed, or dated, for the latter days—the days in which you and I, dear friends, are

living. Conditions which exist today are reflected here and there throughout the prophecy contained in 38:1-39:16.

In order to get within the compass of a very few words the message of this mighty oracle, I will ask myself three questions and then answer them: *First*, who constitute the personnel of this oracle? *Second*, what does the prophet say will occur? *Third*, when will it transpire? Reduced to the simplest forms, the questions are who, what, when? Let us take these questions in order.

WHO?

Who are the personnel of this drama? First, the nations constituting the great northeastern confederacy—the nations behind the iron curtain. They are Russia, the leader of the group, Persia (Iran), Ethiopia, Put, which is probably Eritrea in the Angle-Egyptian Sudan, Germany, and Turkey. But, some ask, are these nations mentioned in prophecy? Most positively! Not, however, in their present-day nomenclature, but in terms that were current in the prophet's day. The study of these names involves an investigation into philology, the study of words. It is impossible for me to enter into this subject now. I do that in my volume, *When Gog's Armies Meet the Almighty*. Allied with these nations will be vast hordes of others, as the prophet Ezekiel said. I have no doubt, in the light of the present spread of communism, that the hordes of Asia which are now being brought into the fold of the Kremlin are the ones involved.

The second group of nations is "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, ..." (Ezek. 38:13). Sheba and Dedan are identified by many as being Muscat and Aden in Southern Arabia. Tarshish is England, as I prove in my book, *When Gog's Armies Meet the Almighty*. But who are the young lions thereof? In order to understand the significance of this expression, we must interpret it literally if the context demands such a meaning; if not, it is to be understood figuratively. Lions, here, cannot be understood literally, because they are represented as talking and joining their voices with those of Sheba, Dedan, and England. In the light of this fact, then, we are confident that these lions are symbols. When an animal in the Scriptures is thus used, what is its significance? From Daniel 7:17,23 we learn that they indicate kings and their dominions. "These beasts," declared the angel, "which are four, are four kings that arise out of the earth." In verse 23 we read that "the fourth beast is a fourth kingdom." Understanding, then, that beasts symbolize human governments, or kingdoms, we look at the passage under consideration, namely, Ezekiel 38.

Here are young lions joining their voices with those of England, Sheba, and Dedan. To interpret these young lions as civil governments—the younger powers of the Western World joined with England—is to see a beautiful harmony in the entire passage. We therefore conclude that these young lions are the younger Western Democracies that are allied with the British; in other words, those powers that are recognized as the powers of the West in contrast with the governments behind the iron curtain.

In Ezekiel 38:7-9 we see the State of Israel. It is spoken of as the people who have gathered back out from among the nations and are established in their own land, enjoying peace, plenty, and prosperity. The personnel of this prophecy, then, consists of the Western Democracies, on the one hand, who are opposed by Russia and her satellite nations on the other side of the iron curtain, and the youngest nation—yet, paradoxically, the oldest nation—of modern times, Israel.

WHAT?

Our second question is, *What is foretold as coming to pass according to this prophecy?* From Ezekiel 38:9 we learn that Gog, with all his hordes, ascends, comes like a storm against Israel, and then settles down over the land like a cloud. In the light of modern developments, this passage can mean only one thing: an airborne army with all its equipment and ordnance to carry on a mighty attack.

When this occurs, the wrath of the Almighty will come up into His nostrils, for in the fire of His jealousy and wrath hath He spoken: "Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel..."

When Russia thus seizes Palestine, the Western Powers will send a weak protest. They do not demand that Russia withdraw instantly, or else! On the contrary, they put their protest in the form of questions: "Art thou come to take the spoil? hast thou assembled thy company to take the prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take great spoil?" As I have already suggested, this mild language is seen in its proper perspective when one realizes the situation that has arisen in the last decade. This gentleness in dealing with such a serious, world-shaking event is the carrying out of the appeasement policy that began back at Munich. Moreover, another factor contributing to our understanding of this mild

language is to be found in the fact that there is a United Nations Organization, and all such international questions are supposed to be brought before it. Another element entering into this matter is an eager and earnest desire on the part of the Western Powers not to precipitate a world conflict.

God steps into the picture and champions the cause of His beloved people Israel. He causes an earthquake to shake down the mountains of Israel. Since there are vast hordes of people behind the iron curtain who invade Palestine in this initial spearhead in a drive for world domination, we can, while staying within the bounds of reason and fact, imagine millions of men engaged in this stupendous operation. I must emphasize the fact that there is but one force mentioned in the prophecy, and that is the invading army. The Western Powers do not so much as turn their hand upside down after they issue their mild protest.

The Almighty, by different means, completely wipes out the colossal invading army: "For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; 20 so that the fishes of the sea, and the birds of the heavens, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21 And I will call for a sword against him unto all my mountains, saith the Lord Jehovah: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 22 And with pestilence and with blood will I enter into judgment with him: and I will rain upon him and upon his hordes, and upon the many peoples that are with him, an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone" (Ezek. 38:19-22).

WHEN?

When will this great invasion by Russia occur? There are four different answers given by Bible students. Some date it as occurring before the Tribulation; others are convinced that it will occur during the Tribulation; while still others think it will take place during the Millennium; and some believe that it will take place at the conclusion of our Lord's millennial reign. Obviously three of these answers are incorrect.

Which is the right one? Let us take them in the reverse order. Is it possible for this prediction of the invasion of Palestine by the nations behind the iron curtain to be the one that is spoken of in Revelation, chapter 20? Many sincere expositors identify the two predictions as referring to the same event, occurring after our Lord's reign. One consideration disproves this position. The invasion foretold by Ezekiel is a local affair—local in contrast to a global, international military operation. We have already seen that those invading Palestine are simply the nations behind the iron curtain. The Western Democracies protest, even though weakly. What about the one prophesied by John in Revelation, chapter 20? At the conclusion of our Lord's reign of a thousand years upon the earth, we see that people will go up—being stirred by the devil, who at that time will be unloosed for a little season—against Jerusalem at the camp of the saints from the four corners of the earth. They will go there, as we learn by comparing scripture with scripture, to intimidate our Lord. Just such a movement as that occurred in the days of ex-President Herbert Hoover. There was a hunger march upon Washington. It was designed solely for the purpose of embarrassing the administration. Thus there will be a youth movement that will be going up from the four corners of the globe to try to intimidate Christ. This fact shows that the Apostle John was talking about an international affair. It is clear, then, from these facts, that Ezekiel foretold a purely local affair, whereas John prophesied concerning an international invasion. The two movements cannot be identical. Therefore we reject the fourth answer to this question as being impossible.

Can this occur during our Lord's reign upon the earth? My answer is an emphatic no! The reason for such a dogmatic position is that, when our Lord returns, He will destroy all the weapons of war. From that time on nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. It will be impossible to equip, under the regime of our Lord, such an army as the one mentioned by Ezekiel's prophecy. This fact discredits the third answer as to when Ezekiel's prophecy will be fulfilled.

The second answer places the fulfillment of this particular prophecy in the Tribulation Period, especially at the end. Is this interpretation feasible or reasonable? I say again, emphatically, no! Why? you may ask. When Russia invades Palestine in fulfillment of Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, the Jews will be dwelling in their own land, in peace, enjoying plenty and prosperity. They will be dwelling in cities without walls. During the Tribulation Israel's condition will be entirely different. According to Isaiah, she will be hounded down from time to time. Many of

the Jews will be languishing in prison; others will be in hiding in the caves and the holes of the earth, and in the mountain-fastnesses and gorges. Israel's condition when the prophecy is fulfilled, on the contrary, will be that of peace, plenty, and prosperity. The Chosen People's condition in the Tribulation will be anything else but that. We therefore know from this angle that Ezekiel's prophecy cannot be fulfilled during the Tribulation.

If this prophecy cannot be fulfilled at the conclusion of the Tribulation; nor at the conclusion of the Millennium; nor during the Millennium; nor during the Tribulation, it must be fulfilled *before* the Tribulation. From this position there is no possible escape.

In view of these facts it is quite evident that, since we are approaching very rapidly the end of this age and the Tribulation Period, we are much closer to the fulfillment of this prediction than most of us imagine. We shall not be illogical and err very far if we should say that there is a possibility that the fulfillment of this prediction is just around the corner.

May the Lord open our eyes and enable us to see the world situation and what is confronting us at the present time is my sincere, earnest prayer.

Do, friends, pray that the people of God may awake and be alert to the times in which we are living. Pray God that He may lead us to see clearly the import of these marvelous predictions and then adjust our plans to His.

Now may the blessing's of the Triune God rest upon each one of us until the Lord returns for His saints. Amen.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 37)

The Overthrow Of The Antichrist's Forces That Invade Palestine

A Study In Ezekiel, Chapter 39

Our study this month is a continuation of the study of Russia's invasion of Palestine and the one by the Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation.

You will bear with me while I call your attention to a very important fact regarding this prophecy that is so very greatly misunderstood. Because of a misunderstanding on this point, this prophecy has been the occasion of much confusion. Remember, the trouble and difficulty is not with the Word of God, but with our failure to notice carefully what it says. May I remind you, dear friends, that if we ignore even small words, which might seem very insignificant, we may fail to get the proper slant upon a passage and thus miss its meaning. Moreover, if we are to understand the Word of God correctly, especially the prophecies, we must know the fundamental principles that underlie them.

There are two principles of prophetic interpretation recognized by all interpreters. These basic principles find an application in this prophecy. The first one is called the *Law of Recurrence*. Remember that name, for it will stand you in good stead as you read your Bible. The *Law of Recurrence* what is it? The prophet very frequently described in a general way something which he saw as being fulfilled in the future. He described what he saw, omitting, however, some details. After thus fixing in our minds the thing in a general way, he filled in the details, or added new features, that clarified the first part of his oracle.

A simple little illustration will stamp this principle indelibly upon your mind. I once saw a famous artist paint the portrait of a lady. It took him quite a time to get the light in the room right. Moreover, it took him some time to satisfy himself with her pose and the expression on her face. Finally, when every condition was satisfactory, he did what artists call "blocking out" the portrait. In about ten minutes he had transferred to the canvas the likeness of the lady. Then to my surprise he said, "This is enough for today. When may we have the second

sitting?" The date was set. At this second sitting, when everything was ready, he began to bring out more clearly certain features and to add new ones. Thus he was going over the portrait that he had blocked out at the first sitting. Remember, friends, this illustration sets before us one of the basic principles of interpreting prophecy, which is known by Bible expositors as the *Law of Recurrence*.

In Ezekiel, chapter 38, the prophet, in terms of my illustration, blocked out the portrait, the picture of the invasion of the land of Palestine by Russia. We saw last month that, when she does that, she meets God Almighty, who in an open and manifest way completely destroys all of the Russian forces—both those invading Palestine and those remaining at home, together with all the war potential, and the Soviet spy system throughout the world. These are the things which we saw painted into the portrait or picture at the first sitting, that is, in chapter 38.

In chapter 39:1-16 we see the work which Ezekiel, our artist, did at the second sitting, as he completed his picture.

What did he do? Or what details then did he add? He touched up in lurid colors the main feature which I discussed last time, namely, the liquidation, the annihilation of all Russia's forces—first those invading Israel. Then he added new details—the destruction of the forces in her homeland and her war potential, together with the Soviet spy system throughout the whole world. This is seen in verse 6 of chapter 39.

Another detail which Ezekiel adds in the work at the second sitting is an account by the prophet of the vast amount of combustible material that will be left on the open fields of Palestine after the invading, besieging host have been completely destroyed by the Lord. I said "combustible" material. When you read this account in the 39th chapter of Ezekiel, you will see that the prophet speaks of it as wood. Wood was *the* fuel for warming the homes and for the cooking of the food in the prophet's day and time. Some have erroneously thought that this passage presupposes the discontinuance by the armies of the world of modern steel weapons and a reversion to primitive weapons, bows and arrows and the like. I have been unable to see any justification for such an interpretation as this. Everyone knows that much wood is used in the boxing and the crating of the munitions of war. It is altogether possible

that other material that may be burned, same as wood, will be used in the manufacture and the boxing of ammunition and other ordnance of that vast army. After its overthrow, this fuel will be left upon the open field. There will be a sufficient amount of it to supply fuel for seven years for the population that will survive that time. Let us remember that, in Palestine, very little fuel is consumed. Its climate is similar to that of Southern California. Moreover, the people are accustomed to the strictest economy in the use of fuel. Thus I have no difficulty with understanding this prophecy literally, as referring to the great amount of wood and combustible material that would be left by the destroyed armies.

Another detail is added in the work that the artist Ezekiel performs at his second sitting. This new information comes in the form of a prophecy that, for seven months, guards and groups of men will be employed in removing the dead bodies of the destroyed army and of burying them in a place east of the Jordan that will be known as Hamon-gog, or, "the company and host of Gog." Men will diligently search for the bones of those whose flesh has either been eaten by the vultures or birds of prey, or has decayed. Thus ceremonially, according to the law of Moses, the land will be cleansed during a period of seven months.

Thus by reading chapter 38:1—39:16, that is, the entire 38th chapter and the first sixteen verses of chapter 39, we get a full and complete prophecy—all that the Lord has seen fit to reveal to us—in this one block of Scripture. This part of the prediction will be, as we saw a week ago, fulfilled before the Tribulation, that period of judgment consisting of seven years, following the rapture of the saints.

There is another principle of prophecy that is operative at this point in Ezekiel's prediction, which we call the *Law of Double Reference*. Did you ever hear of that expression—the *Law of Double Reference*? I'm sure you have! What does it mean? I shall be very glad to tell you—but I believe that an illustration will make it clearer, bring it into sharper focus in your mind. You have attended lantern lectures, haven't you? Yes, many times of course! There are lanterns that give what we call the "dissolving effect." A picture is thrown upon the screen. The observer looks at it, studies it, is perhaps entranced and thrilled by it. But presently he notices that it begins to fade, to become dim, and then to vanish. At the same time there appear, indistinctly, new features that were not there at first. As the old picture fades out, the new features become clear and distinct; and presently an entirely different picture is

occupying the screen. This is a perfect illustration of the *Law of Double Reference*. Now notice, Ezekiel, chapter 38:1 to 39:16 gives us the first portrait for a picture that is thrown upon the screen. We have already sat and looked at it and found it very absorbing.

When we begin to read at verse 17 of chapter 39, we see this first picture—the invasion of Palestine by the Russians and their complete annihilation by God Almighty himself—becoming dim. It is at this point that the dim outlines of another picture begin to appear. Do you want to see these outlines? All right, let us read Ezekiel 39:17:

"And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Speak unto the birds of every sort, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood."

Here is a picture of a banquet which God prepares for the birds of the heavens, and beasts of the fields. The table is set; the invitation is given; and that which is placed before the birds and the beasts is spoken of as a sacrifice, "Even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood." Such language reminds one of passages like Isaiah, chapter 34, verses 6 and 7. But we find language almost identical to this in Revelation 19:17,18. Here it is: "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, Come and be gathered together unto the great supper of God; 18 that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great."

Since Ezekiel in this passage is speaking of something that is out in the future—something that obviously has never come to pass—and since John, in the passage from Revelation which I have just read, uses similar language to describe the Lord's slaughtering the armies of the kings of the world under the leadership of the Antichrist, we here obtain a possible clue to the interpretation of Ezekiel 39:17-29. When we read the 18th verse, we see the picture more clearly: "Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth."

Here we see the destruction by the Lord of an international force: "Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth." The princes of the earth, all of them, are in this picture. A realization of this point is absolutely necessary. Remember that, in 38:1—39:16, the prophet has been talking about the invasion of Palestine by the nations behind the iron curtain—a *local operation*—and of their being destroyed directly by the Lord. Beginning with verse 17 of chapter 39, on the contrary, we have a prophecy concerning the overthrow of an *international force* by the Lord God himself.

Confirmation of this position and further light may be gleaned from verse 21. "And I will set my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am Jehovah their God, from that day and forward."

From the flow of thought we see that, after the destruction of this international force which invades Palestine, God sets His glory among the nations and all peoples see His judgment that He has executed upon this international force, the armies of the Antichrist.

What is meant by God's setting His glory among the nations? When this statement is read in the light of others of the Sacred Word, it becomes apparent that the prophet was talking about the Messiah, who is the glory of the invisible God, and who will appear upon earth to reign in the city of Jerusalem for a thousand years, over all the earth—among all nations. God thus sets His glory among the nations by our Lord's return and by His creating Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth.

Further information that assists us in identifying this prophecy is found in verse 22: "So the house of Israel shall know that I am Jehovah their God, from that day and forward." From what day? From the day of God's destroying this international force that will invade Palestine and that will be overthrown by the Lord himself. When this passage is laid beside Revelation, chapters 19 and 20, a person can see that Ezekiel, in the latter half of chapter 39, was speaking of the same thing, namely, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation. His destroying the forces of the Antichrist, and of His establishing His reign of righteousness upon the earth. The two passages run parallel and are unmistakably predictions of the same events.

When we look at Ezekiel 39:25 we see still further confirmation: "Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Now will I bring back the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name." At that time the Lord will complete the second restoration of His people as He brings them back from among the nations where they have been scattered throughout the Christian centuries, and they will be established in their own land. The Lord will bring the judgments of the Tribulation upon the world, and especially upon Israel, in order to break the power of the Holy People (Daniel 12:7), with this purpose in view, that they will repudiate all of their sins, especially their national sin of rejecting Him, and will plead for Him to return. When they do this, they will be restored to their own land and become the head of the nations, instead of being the tail as they are now.

With this little survey of this most interesting and informative prophecy, we have seen the two pictures thrown by the inspiration of the Spirit upon the canvas before us: the invasion of Palestine by the forces of Gog, the nations behind the iron curtain, and their being overthrown, which mighty catastrophic event occurs before the Tribulation. We have seen the invasion of the land of Palestine at the end of the Tribulation by the Antichrist and all of his hosts, which are overthrown at the very end of the Tribulation. Thus the two invasions and their overthrow by divine interposition are blended in these two chapters.

If the reader wishes to pursue this little study further, read such a passage as Zechariah, chapter 14. There you see the invasion of Palestine by the armies of the world, Jehovah's appearing, and His feet standing at that day upon the Mount of Olives, at which time He completely destroys all of these nations. Then there will dawn a new day—that day which is compared to a cloudless day after a rain, with its clear shining: (II Sam. 23:4).

Friends, we who know God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, have every occasion to rejoice in the revelations which God has given to us in His Word. We may be in the minority now, we may be numbered among those who are accounted as the offscouring of the earth, but then—when He comes—it will be seen that we are on the winning side. Then the glory of the Eternal One will burst forth upon the world from which the curse will be snatched by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. At that time He will establish His reign of righteousness, peace, and justice upon the earth. For this coming day, we most ardently look.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 38)

The Millennial Jerusalem

In Ezekiel 40:1 to the close of the book we have the last oracle by this prophet. It is dated in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity, which was the captivity of Jehoiachin. This twenty-fifth year was the fourteenth year after the fall of the city of Jerusalem, which judgment fell in the eleventh year of Jehoiakim, since Jehoiachin's three months of reign are counted in the eleventh year of his predecessor, Jehoiakim. Ezekiel therefore dates his prophecies in terms of the captivity of Jehoiachin.

The fact that the prophets very frequently state that the word of Jehovah came unto them upon a certain date implies that they were not inspired all the time—under the guidance of the Spirit. Had they thus been inspired every moment of their lives, they would have had no occasion to speak of the word of Jehovah and its coming to them on certain dates. When they were thus moved, or borne along, by the Spirit, they spoke infallibly, everything which they said being absolutely and positively reliable in every respect, and true from every standpoint.

The Prophet Carried In The Visions Of God

On the day of which the prophet was speaking, he declared, "... the hand of Jehovah was upon me, and he brought me thither. 2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city on the south" (1:1,2). Frequently the prophets spoke of the hand of Jehovah's being upon them. By this expression they indicated that they were brought under the power and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Being thus inspired, they were carried from one place to another in the visions of God. The prophet, as we learned from the first chapter of Ezekiel, lived among the captives on the river Chebar, in Babylon. When the hand of the Lord came upon him, in the visions of God he was transported from his natural surroundings and was carried to the land of Israel. In dreams very frequently we go to some distant place and in the same dreams see surroundings with which possibly we have been familiar all of our lives. The dreams which

people have are little understood by the psychologists, but we class them among natural phenomena. In doing this, we are correct. In Biblical times God did reveal Himself to different people and to various ones of His servants, the prophets, by dreams. Such dreams were inspired by—in the fullest manner possible—the Spirit of God. There were no contradictions. They were accurate and true to facts and, whenever they constituted a prediction, were fulfilled literally as seen. For instance, Pharaoh had a dream and in it God made revelations to him. The same thing was true of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. When he forgot the dream, or it fled from him, Daniel by the Spirit of God was enabled to reproduce it and to interpret it. (See Dan., chapter 2.)

But there seems to be a difference between the biblical dreams inspired by the Spirit of God and the visions which were likewise granted to certain servants of the Lord by the Holy Spirit. Just what the distinction was, I have never been able to determine. In these visions, however, one would gather from that facts that probably the subject matter presented was made more graphic and vivid, and incidentally more permanent, than those which were given by inspired dreams. In the visions of God Ezekiel was transported to the land of Israel and saw a high mountain upon which a city was located. Thus in this vision the prophet was in full possession of all his intellectual faculties, and there appeared before him a high mountain upon which he was placed. On the southern portion of it was "as it were the frame of a city." That which was presented was as real to him as if he were actually in his wakeful hours present, standing upon the material mountains and viewing the literal city. But when this vision was granted him, he still remained bodily at his home on the Chebar River in Babylon.

In contrast with being transported in the visions of God, as on this occasion, I may call attention to the fact that the prophet informs us regarding his having been taken up literally by the Spirit and of his having been transported from his place on the Chebar to another locality called Tel-abib that likewise was on or near the river Chebar. When he was thus dealt with by the Spirit of God, the prophet became embittered, as he confesses in the statement found in chapter 3:12-15. In the same category of events is to be reckoned the experience which Philip the Evangelist had after he had preached to the Ethiopian eunuch. Luke declares: "And he [the eunuch] commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he

preached the gospel to all the cities, till he came to Caesarea" (Acts 8:38-40). Thus the Evangelist was taken up bodily by the Spirit of God and was transported to a place about fifty miles away. Realizing that God was dealing with him, and that the Lord had transported him to that place, he immediately began preaching the Word of the Lord and continued to do so as he went northward to Caesarea, the Roman capital of Palestine at that time.

The Land Of Israel

The prophet declared that the Spirit of God transported him from Babylon to the land of Israel. What is meant by this designation? There is but one answer: the country which God gave to the twelve tribes of Israel when He brought them out of Egyptian bondage and settled them in Canaan. Two and a half tribes of the twelve settled down on the east side of the Jordan Valley, whereas the other nine and a half located west of the Jordan rift. Thus all of the land south of Lebanon, or Syria as it was in Biblical times called, lying between the Arabian Desert on the east and Mediterranean on the west, and extending south to Kadesh-Barnea, was known in Biblical times as the land of Israel.

This country was given by the Lord himself to the twelve tribes that descended from Jacob, whose name was changed to that of Israel. These people were sometimes called Hebrews and at others, children of Israel, or Israelites. After the disruption of the kingdom upon the death of Solomon when the ten northern tribes revolted, the term, kingdom of Israel, was applied to the government set up in the north, whereas Judah was the name given to the two tribes—remaining faithful to the house of David—and that had their government in Jerusalem. Notwithstanding the fact that there were two rival governments reigning over the twelve tribes of Israel, the terms, Israel and Judah, were used interchangeably—toward the end of the monarchy. After Zerubbabel led all the captives back who wished to return to the land of Israel, the terms Judah and Israel were always used interchangeably. This is seen by a survey of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which give the account of the time of the restoration from Babylonian captivity. In the New Testament period the terms, Judah and Israel, are used interchangeably as may be seen from a cursory review of a number of passages in the New Testament.

As stated above, all the land below the Lebanese border—as far south as Kadesh-Barnea

which lay between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Arabian Desert on the east—has been known through Biblical and post-Biblical times as Palestine. When, however, the British divided the land, separating the territory east of the Jordan from that west of it, and gave the former the name of Trans-Jordan, the name "Palestine" has been applied to the territory lying west of the Jordan and extending to the Mediterranean Sea. This parting of the land occurred in 1927. In 1937 and again in 1939 I visited the land of Palestine. People therefore understood that I went to that portion of the land west of the Jordan River.

Recently I went to the State of Israel, arriving at Lydda on December 20, 1949. I spent seventy days in the land. I did not, technically and correctly speaking, visit *Palestine*. I simply went to the State of Israel. What, then, is Israel? It is that part of Palestine west of the Jordan which has been occupied by the Israeli government, which was set up on May 14, 1948—when the British withdrew from Palestine, giving up the Mandate. In my seventy days in Israel I made Jerusalem my headquarters. Mail directed to me in Jerusalem, Palestine, did not reach me, but that which was sent to Jerusalem, *Israel*, did reach me. The Jewish-Arabic War has never been settled. Only an armistice has been imposed upon the two contending governments by the United Nations. The lines of battle are drawn, with no-man's land between. This line of battle divides the city of Jerusalem, as well as the entire land. The old city of Jerusalem within the walls and part of it north of it are behind the Arab lines, whereas the modern city and the western part lies west of the battlefield and is in the hands of the Israeli government. But let us remember that God promised to the twelve tribes of Israel, not only that which was historically known as Palestine, but also He by oath gave to Abraham and his descendants all the land lying between the River of Egypt and the Euphrates. This territory is by divine grant the property of the Hebrew people—notwithstanding the babel of tongues today denying their right to that land. In the Lord's own good time, however, He will give all this territory to His chosen beloved people who, at the time that it is turned over to them, will become the channel of world blessing. May that day hastily come!

A Very High Mountain

The prophet was transported to the land of Israel and was set down on "a very high mountain." What mountain was this? From this chapter we do not learn. But when we read the 48th

chapter, we learn what it is. When this prophecy is fulfilled—at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints to reign upon the earth for a thousand years—the entire land of Palestine will be leveled down and will be like an extended valley, the Garden of Jehovah (Num. 24:6-8). The land will be at that time divided into twelve equal parts. Seven of these will lie north of the mountain which is called "the holy oblation," whereas five of them will be south of it. Thus the mountain will be located in a position a little south of the exact center of the land.

The measurements of this mountain are given in terms of reeds, but according to the best estimates, five hundred reeds make one English mile. According to the details given in chapter 47 this mountain will be fifty miles from north to south and fifty miles from east to west. It will be divided into three principal sections. The dividing lines will run from east to west. The first of these will be located twenty miles south of the northern border of the mountain. Thus from east to west this tract of land will be fifty miles; but from the north to south it will be only twenty miles deep.

In the center of this northern section there will be one square mile upon which the millennial Temple, God's house of prayer for all the nations, will be located. This will be the central point of attraction for the people of earth during the reign of our Lord. There can be no doubt concerning the fact that this structure will be the finest one which ever will be erected upon this globe. To this the nations of the world will flow constantly in order that they may go up and worship Jehovah of hosts, the Great King, who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

This northern section will be allotted to the priests who will devote all of their time to the worship, the service, and the ministry of God.

The second dividing line will run parallel to the first one, but twenty miles farther south. Thus the second section will be fifty miles from the east to west and twenty miles from north to south. This special part of the land will be for the Levites who will assist the priests in their daily ministrations.

The southern section of this mountain will be only ten miles deep from north to south but will likewise be fifty miles in breadth—from east to west. This territory will be assigned to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Let me say, quoting from Psalm 48, that this mountain height will be the beauty spot, "the joy of the whole earth." There will be nothing on the face of the globe that will be comparable to it. It is true that the curse will be lifted from the entire earth—with the exception of Babylon and Edom, upon which lands the curse will continue through the Millennium. The glory of God will encircle the earth as the waters cover the sea. Nevertheless, this mountain of Jehovah will surpass all other portions of the globe in exquisite beauty.

The City Of Jerusalem

According to Ezekiel's dimensions the city of Jerusalem which will be located in the southern portion of this mountain height will be nine miles by nine miles. It will be surrounded by a suburb a half a mile in width. Thus the city, with its suburbs, will be ten miles in length and in breadth. It will be located in the central part of this southern section.

Psalm 48 gives us a very clear description of this city. Isaiah (54:11-13) speaks of the city in terms of the precious stones that will be used in its construction. From such passages as Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-8 we see that the peoples of the world during the glorious reign of our Lord will go up from their places to this mountain of Jehovah to the house of the God of Jacob and will listen to Him as He instructs them in the law and in the Word of God—the law by which the nations of the world will be governed and the Word of the Lord, the gospel message of the truth of redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ and His precious blood.

In Psalms 15 and 24 the question is asked as to who will be permitted to go up into this mountain of Jehovah's house. Those questions are answered. These two psalms constitute a revelation concerning the situation of the importance of the city of Jerusalem in the great Millennial Era.

A Man

"And he brought me thither; and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate" (40:3). Since the prophet was in the visions of God when he was brought to Jerusalem, it is quite clear that this man appeared to him in the vision. Since the man was in the vision it is certain that he was not a literal man. He therefore must have been an angel or one who represented an angel. This is the one who conducted him, in the visions of God, throughout this great Temple, that will be built by the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns to earth.

The Divine Charge To The Prophet

This man of the vision gave a charge to Ezekiel saying: "Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thy heart upon all that I shall show thee; for, to the intent that I may show them unto thee, art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel" (vs. 4). According to this verse we see that the prophet was charged to give close attention to the things that were presented to him in order that he in turn might convey the proper idea to those to whom it was his privilege to minister. Though the visions were presented to him, it was in order that he might take them in by giving close attention and then pass on the information, thus supernaturally imparted, to those to whom he ministered. God wants His truth given to the people. He today calls people into the ministry. Anyone who is a God-called person should avail himself of every opportunity of studying the blessed, holy Word of God to know what it teaches—apart from all theories and speculation—in order that he might give it forth to the people. Nothing avails after all except the will of God.

Everyone thus called of God to minister in holy things should have the ideal which was ever before Ezra the Scribe. Concerning him the inspired writer declared: "For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances" (Ezra 7:10). May such a high ideal inspire everyone who thus deals with the Word of God.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 39)

The Millennial Temple

In last months study we learned something about the changes that will take place in the land of Israel yet in the future. The reason for this position is that the predictions concerning such mighty changes as are recorded in the Scriptures have never been fulfilled. Since the Word of God is to be taken literally if at all possible, and since these mighty changes have never taken place, we are to conclude that they will yet, in due course of time, be literally fulfilled exactly as foretold.

We saw that the land of Israel will be divided into twelve equal parts, seven of these being north of the high mountain, which is termed "the oblation," and five of them south of it. This oblation, or mountain, is described—in terms of English measurements—as being fifty miles from north to south and fifty from east to west. Its summit will be divided into three sections, the dividing lines running from east to west. Thus the northern section will be a plot of land fifty miles from east to west and twenty miles from north to south. In the center of this plot, covering one square mile, will be the great Temple of Jehovah. The second section of this high mountain plateau will be of the same dimensions as the northern one, but will lie immediately south of it. There will remain only the southern section, which will be fifty miles from east to west and ten miles from north to south. The city of Jerusalem with its suburbs will be located in the center of this southernmost part. It will cover one hundred square miles.

By a careful study of the Book of Hebrews we learn that the Tabernacle was a replica, miniature model, of eternal realities, the Temple of God which is in heaven and of which we hear various prophets and psalmists speaking—as well as John, in the Book of Revelation.

The holy place in the Tabernacle, as well as the most holy place, typified the two sections of this eternal Sanctuary in the heavens of the heavens. The most holy place typified the place where God is, and which is called in our modern phraseology, the very presence of God. Connected with the most holy place was the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not

man (Heb. 8:2.) The holy place of this eternal temple is the place where angels worship and where the saved, the redeemed from the earth, congregate and likewise worship. As to whether or not they remain all the time in this first tabernacle is a question that is not settled in the Scriptures.

Moses was given a vision of the eternal temple in heaven when he was on Mt. Sinai with God. He was warned to build the Tabernacle exactly as was shown him in the Mount, because it was to be a duplicate or replica of those eternal verities and realities in the heavens. The instructions concerning the building of this Tabernacle and of its furniture are found in Exodus, chapters 25-40.

The Tabernacle, when it was set up, was filled with the glory of the Lord and the symbol of His presence, the Shekinah of glory, which rested upon the mercy seat. Israel, in the person of the regular priest, went into this holy place to worship—before the second veil. Only on the Day of Atonement did the high priest pass through the first tabernacle as he went into the most holy place and there made the atonement for Israel. Thus the earthly Tabernacle was the center of all the worship which was authorized by the Lord for Israel during the giving of the law at Mount Sinai until King Solomon erected the Temple, which became the permanent structure in which God resided in the person of the Shekinah of glory.

Various Temples

King David, the founder of the dynasty which bears his name, was a man of war, who subdued his rebellious subjects and established a regime of peace and prosperity. He likewise conquered his foes that dwelt round about the land of Israel. Before his death he purposed to build a house, a temple, to the Lord. But since he was a man of blood, the Lord would not permit his erecting this sacred, holy structure. Nevertheless, he gathered and collected various materials for the erection of this national shrine. All of this he bequeathed to his son Solomon, who came to the throne upon David's death, and who actually built the Temple. He began it in the fourth year of his reign and completed it in seven. Details concerning the building of this sacred shrine and of its dedication are found in I Kings, chapters 6-8, and the parallel passages in the Book of II Chronicles. In round numbers, it stood for four hundred years and was finally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, when he overran the

little state of Judah, destroyed all the elements of Jewish civilization, and took the flower of the people into Babylonian captivity, where they remained for seventy years—just as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold.

Obviously it is clear that the temple which Ezekiel saw was not Solomon's, for the prophet had his vision after the destruction of Solomon's Temple.

According to promise, when the seventy years of Babylonian captivity had run their course, God raised up Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, who led back the exiles desiring to return to the land of their fathers. Under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, and a little later under Ezra the Scribe, and still later under Nehemiah, practically fifty thousand exiles returned to the land to start life anew under the most unfavorable circumstances. In the second year of their return an earnest attempt was made to begin the reconstruction of the Temple, but on account of interference from the foreign element of the population that had been imported into the land by the Assyrian king, this work was stopped and was not resumed until fifteen years later, when the old prophet Haggai and the young prophet Zechariah, moved by the Spirit of God, stirred up a spirit of loyalty and devotion to God. Then Zerubbabel and Joshua led the nation in the rebuilding of the Temple, which Temple was very much smaller than was that of Solomon. It was so very far inferior to the former Temple that those Jews who had seen the Temple of Solomon wept because of the insignificance of that which was being built by the returned exiles. This structure was called "the second temple." There is no evidence that the Shekinah of glory, that departed from Solomon's Temple, ever returned to it. In fact, Jewish tradition and legend affirm that it never did return. This Temple remained intact from the time of its erection to the days of Herod the Great who tore it down, piecemeal, and erected it upon a much more magnificent scale. This is the structure that was standing during our Lord's ministry. Finally, in A.D. 70, it was destroyed when Titus took Jerusalem, destroyed the Jewish Commonwealth and sent the survivors into captivity.

It is quite evident that the temple which Ezekiel described so very minutely could not be this one which Zerubbabel erected, and which Herod the Great enlarged and beautified.

There is a class of interpreters and commentators who experience difficulty in attempting to interpret this temple described by Ezekiel in chapters 40-44 as being a literal structure. To

them there arise many grave and insurmountable difficulties. For instance, there are those who call attention to the fact that this central mountain will be fifty miles from east to west; and east of this mountain, as well as west of it, there will be a portion of land that will belong to the prince of that day and time.

To this group of commentators it is impossible for this mountain to be located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Moreover, the terrain of this part of the country is mountainous, especially the central part. Jerusalem is over 2,700 feet in altitude, whereas the Plain of Sharon is a little above sea level. The Jordan Valley is 1,390 feet below sea level. To these expositors such facts render the literal interpretation of this prophecy as being untenable. But they forget that certain predictions foretell the change of the entire topography of the land of Israel during the great millennial reign of our Lord. For instance, Balaam, in his third prophecy (Num. 24:1-9), was granted a vision of the land of Israel under King Messiah. Thus he spoke of it as a level valley and as the garden of Jehovah with its pristine vegetation. Moreover, there are predictions that God will establish the mountain of Jehovah upon the hills and that it shall be exalted above all surrounding mountains. From this line of prophecy we see that there will be great topographical changes that will take place in the land of Israel. In view of these prophecies no one should have any difficulty, from the topographical standpoint, in interpreting Ezekiel's prophecy as one of the literal city of Jerusalem and the temple.

Another reason leads this same group of commentators to refuse the literal interpretation of this passage. They see that, in predictions concerning the future, the temple is spoken of as being in Zion; that is, in Jerusalem. But in Ezekiel's prophecy the temple enclosure will be very large, covering one square mile. This will be in the northern section of this mountain of Jehovah. To be accurate, it will be exactly thirty miles north of the north wall of the city of Jerusalem, which will, as we have already seen, be in the southern section of this mountain. Since this temple, then, is not located within the walls of the city as it is here described, these commentators reject the literal interpretation of the same. They are therefore led to understand Ezekiel's prophecy as symbolic.

At first this objection seems to be quite formidable. But upon further investigation the discrepancy vanishes. While there is a city to be located in the southern section of this mountaintop, the entire mountain is called "the mountain of Jehovah." The whole area may

be thought of as Jerusalem, since it will be holy and devoted entirely to the Lord. The whole thing will be called "the mountain of Jehovah," or "the hill of the Lord." The mountain of Jehovah's house was, in historic times, within the walls of Jerusalem. Thus it becomes quite easy for us to think of the entire top of this mountain as being Jerusalem, or Mount Zion. From this viewpoint, then, the temple will be in this great future city of Jerusalem.

Those thus rejecting the literal interpretation for the reasons discussed above, and for several others, conclude that this is a prophecy that must be understood symbolically. What therefore is symbolized, according to them, by this mountain or oblation and the temple described? Instantly they arrive at the conclusion that it can be none other than the spiritual kingdom of God, which came into existence on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of our Lord. This spiritual kingdom is known in the New Testament as the church of the Living God, or the kingdom of God.

If we follow the golden rule of interpretation, [When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.] which has proved to be practically an infallible guide in our interpretation of the Scriptures, we cannot adopt this symbolic meaning.

One is never justified in departing from the literal meaning of a passage unless there is positive warrant in the context itself, or unless authority is shown from a parallel passage. In this case such negative evidence is lacking. We are therefore bound to reject the symbolic meaning that is attached to this prophecy.

According to prophecy the Jews will rebuild their temple in the end of this age. Read Isaiah 66:1-6. Our Lord assumed that it will be standing during the Tribulation (Matt. 24:15 ff). Paul likewise assumed its existence at this future time (II Thess. 2:1-4). The Apostle John also spoke of it as standing in the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 11:1-14).

Can this be the temple which Ezekiel saw and described? No; for the temple which the Jews will build will be destroyed in the Tribulation (Ps. 74:1-11). But the temple foretold by Ezekiel

is seen standing after the great topographical changes have been made that occur when our Lord returns at the close of the Tribulation.

Zechariah, the prophet of the post-Exilic Period, foretold the great and glorious millennial temple which our Lord will build when He returns to earth. The occasion of his prediction, which throws light upon its message, was this: Certain men had returned from Babylon with gold and silver to be deposited as trophies or offerings in the Temple, Zerubbabel's Temple. Zechariah took this silver and gold, made a crown, and set it upon the head of Joshua at which time he held a public ceremony. Joshua the high priest stood there in the garments of holiness with this crown or crowns upon his head. Then the prophet pointed to him and uttered this marvelous prediction: "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; 13 even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6:12,13). Though the prophet pointed to Joshua and called upon his audience to look and behold "the man whose name is the Branch"—a purely messianic designation—it is clear that he did not mean that Joshua was the Messiah. A study of the various "Branch" passages shows that the Messiah is meant by such a designation. Moreover, Joshua was either in middle life or in old age and was high priest of the nation when this prediction was made. In uttering this prophecy, Zechariah declared that the man "whose name is the Branch ... shall grow up out of his place." His coming is in the future, declared the prophet. Thus it was obvious to his auditors that the prediction pertained to the coming of the Branch, the Messiah, yet in the future. The prophecy, moreover, declared that the Messiah would be born in the place as indicated by another prophet, namely, in Bethlehem of Judea (Micah 5:2).

The Messiah, when He returns in glory and power, will build the temple of Jehovah. He will build it, not with His literal hands, but with His creative power and activity. He will then "bear the glory" of it; that is, all praise, honor, and glory connected with its construction, or rather, its creation, will be attributed to Him. Moreover, He will sit and rule upon His throne—being both Priest and King, after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110). In view of this and other predictions concerning the erection by Jehovah of the future temple, it is quite evident that there will be a literal temple built, as Ezekiel affirms, on the summit of this great mountain of

Jehovah. It will be the house of prayer for all the nations. To it all nations will go in a constant stream throughout the great Millennial Age, will worship Jehovah of hosts, and will listen to the Messiah, the God of Jacob, as He expounds the law of Jehovah that will govern the nations during the Millennium and the Word of the Lord, the gospel message of redemption.

It is impossible to call attention to the description, plans, and specifications for this glorious house of Jehovah. In fact it is not necessary. Those however who wish to pursue a more minute study of the structure of this building should consult a good Bible encyclopedia.

It is enough for us to note the fact that this shrine is the replica of the eternal Tabernacle in the heavens, the abode of the Almighty and the place of worship of His creatures.

To attempt to see a typical significance for every part of either the Tabernacle in the wilderness or of the temple in Jerusalem is to go beyond the bounds of all reason and to read into the Word of God our own ideas. I shall, recognizing this principle, call attention only to an outstanding point that is brought out by the prophet.

In Ezekiel 43:1-5 appears a prediction concerning Jehovah's entering in at the east gate of the temple. He is spoken of as "the glory of the God of Israel" and at the same time reference is made to His voice which "was like the sound of many waters." By His coming "the earth shined with his glory." Thus His glory will fill this house of Jehovah, the house of prayer for all nations. This prediction will be fulfilled when the Lord has returned to the earth and has conquered all His foes. He will perform the topographical and geographical changes that are foretold in the Scriptures and will build, that is, create, this house of Jehovah.

Since He enters this great temple by the east gate, it shall be shut so that no one can go through it—simply because the Lord himself enters through it (Ezek. 44:1-3).*

Isaiah's Vision Of The Millennial Temple

"In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for, mine eyes have seen the King Jehovah of hosts" (Isa. 6:1-5). This temple is clearly one that is in existence when the entire earth is full of the glory of God. It will only be thus filled with His glory after the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth and fills this most imposing and most important of all structures that ever graces this earth.

From the facts that may be gathered from the contexts of all the passages referring to this temple in the future, it is clear that they all refer to the literal temple that will be built by our Lord, and that will stand during His reign of righteousness for one thousand years.

Footnote:

* Some expositors of the Word, ignoring the facts of the context, have applied this passage to the Golden Gate in the present east wall of the city of Jerusalem, which was walled up by the Turks because of a legend or tradition concerning a conqueror's entering the city through it. Such exegesis is unscientific for it ignores every principle of interpretation.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper
(Installment 40)

The Prince And The Glorified Millennial Temple

Since it would be entirely too tedious and would involve much detail to present a verse-by-verse exposition of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, I shall call attention only to the outstanding features of this portion of the Word. For those who are interested in a minute study of the plans and specifications, the ordinances and ceremonies of the millennial temple, I would suggest that they consult a reputable, sane, sound, and scholarly commentary on the Book of Ezekiel. In accordance, then, with this purpose, I shall in this study call attention only to the fact that Jehovah himself enters the temple through the east gate, that there is one who is called "the prince" who will reign in Israel, that the glory of the Lord will fill this great edifice, that sacrifices will be renewed during that great era of righteousness, and that certain ones of Israel's special feasts, or festivals—holy days—will be again observed.

Jehovah's Entering The Sanctuary Through The East Gate

"Then he brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looketh toward the east; and it was shut. 2 And Jehovah said unto me, This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut. 3 As for the prince, he shall sit therein as prince to eat bread before Jehovah; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the way of the same" (44:1-3).

Those who have been following this exposition know that I have called attention to the fact that an angelic creature appeared to Ezekiel and escorted him in this vision throughout the temple and its sacred precincts, showing him what is yet to be a reality in the future. This one, according to 44:1, brought Ezekiel back "by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which looketh toward the east." When they arrived there it was shut. This fact was such a significant one that it demanded an explanation which is given in verse 2. "This gate shall be

shut; it shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it; for Jehovah, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it; therefore it shall be shut."

When we consider the memorial name of God, Jehovah, we must remember that it has a fourfold signification: In some contexts it indicates the Holy Trinity; in others, it refers to God the Father; in still others, it unquestionably points to the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity; and in a few passages the context shows that it signifies the Holy Spirit. The question in connection with our passage is, What is its meaning here? To the one who understands the prophetic word, the answer suggested by all the facts would indicate that this one who is thus designated *Jehovah* is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who entered the world by miraculous conception and virgin birth, and who laid down His life for the redemption of the human family—for all who will avail themselves of His redeeming grace, love, and power by accepting Him personally as their Saviour. The language in this passage is such that it immediately suggests that Jehovah enters in through this gate the same as any other individual might pass through a gate or door. We who believe that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the God-man, who thus miraculously entered the world, naturally think of Him, of His return in glory, and of His building the millennial temple—as Zechariah informed us—and that this passage refers to His entering it in an official capacity. When He thus enters in this manner, the ground and the floor are made holy; therefore no human being will ever be allowed to enter that sacred structure through that door.

The Prince

In 45:7 we read of "the prince" whose shall be the land on the four sides of "the holy oblation," that is, the mountain of Jehovah in Palestine during the Millennium. As we shall learn in the next installment of this series, this mountain of Jehovah will be fifty miles in length and fifty miles in breadth. All the territory on this high mountain will be occupied by different groups. But He who is called "the prince" shall own land at the base of this mountain on all four sides. Again, we read of this prince in Ezekiel 46:16-18. In this passage we see that he will have sons. The instructions are of such a specific nature that one cannot avoid the conclusion that this prince is some man who will occupy a high position in the government under King Messiah, who will have sons and daughters to whom he will allot a certain inheritance, and who will have servants. Obviously this prince is one and the same person. We are to suppose that,

since he is a prince, he will have an official position in the government. But there is no clue, so far as I am able to find, as to his identity.

Some students of the Word have identified him with the prince of whom we read in the following passages: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24 And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it" (Ezek. 34:23,24). "And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in mine ordinances and observe my statutes, and do them. 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers dwelt: and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever" (37:24,25). Can it be that the prince mentioned in these two passages is the same one to whom reference is made in the two other passages just studied? Let us look more closely at the details.

In Ezekiel 34:11-16 we have this prediction: "For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13 And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them with good pasture; and upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Jehovah. 16 I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice."

From this quotation it is evident that Jehovah himself—and not some angelic being or some man—becomes the Shepherd of Israel who regathers His scattered flock into the land of their fathers. The language of Ezekiel, chapter 34, is of such a specific nature that the old rabbis could not avoid the conclusion that this is a prophecy concerning Jehovah's assuming the

form of the shepherds of Israel, who were men, and performing in a personal manner the duties and functions of these shepherds. Thus they saw in this passage a prediction of the incarnation of Jehovah for the purpose of becoming the Shepherd of Israel. But to them such an idea was an impossibility. They therefore had great difficulty in understanding Ezekiel, chapter 34.

But to us who understand the prophetic word, this passage is quite clear. It assumes the miraculous conception and virgin birth of the Messiah, which is foretold in other passages, in order that He might thus become the Shepherd to gather the nation of Israel, scattered among the peoples of earth, into their own land eventually.

With this teaching in the preceding part of the chapter, verses 23 and 24 immediately fall in line and are to be understood as a reference to Jehovah who by incarnation becomes the Shepherd of Israel. Thus in 34:23 Jehovah the Father promises to "set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them." This one is none other than His servant David. From what has preceded in this chapter, it is clear that this Shepherd, even David, is none other than Jehovah who assumes the human form and who will yet shepherd Israel. Thus there can be no controversy concerning the fact that the Shepherd of verse 23, "even David," is none other than Jehovah who becomes the Shepherd to regather the scattered nation. According to verse 24 God again asserts that He will be "their God," the God of Israel, and that His "servant David" shall be "prince among them." This "servant of Jehovah" who is called David here is likewise to be the "prince" and the "shepherd."

Does the word "David" here refer to King David, the head of the dynasty which bore his name, which reigned in Jerusalem during the Monarchical Period? My answer is a most emphatic *no!* David was simply a human being. This Shepherd is God, who assumes the form of man. Yet He is called David. But we who are acquainted with the language of Scripture should not be surprised at such a usage, when we remember such passages as I King 12:16. From the context of this verse it is clear that Rehoboam, the son and successor of Solomon, is here called David. He literally was David's grandson, yet he is called by the name of his illustrious grandparent. Why was this? Because he was a descendant of the great king and was seated upon the throne of David. From this we can see that a descendant of David could be and was called by the name of the illustrious king who was the founder of the dynasty. Since "the

shepherd," "the prince," "my servant David," of Ezekiel 34:23,24 is clearly Jehovah the Son in human form, and since He is called David, it is obvious that the word David is used in the secondary sense as seen in I Kings 12:16.

In the light of all these facts, then, we conclude that the "prince," even "my servant David," of Ezekiel, chapters 34 and 37, is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah and King of Israel, and the Saviour of the world. But the prince of whom we read in Ezekiel 45:7 and 46:16-18 is another prince, who of course will occupy a subordinate position in relation to King Messiah. He will be some man, a Jewish prince, who will be living at the time of our Lord's return. Since no definite clues are given as to his identity, we shall have to be satisfied in our ignorance on this point and await the coming day when it will become clear to all.

The Glory Of The Lord

To all Bible students it is quite evident that both the Tabernacle and the Temple were patterns of the spiritual temple of God in the heavens of the heavens. In other words, the Tabernacle and the Temple were simply replicas, or models, of the temple of God in heaven, of which we read in such passages as Psalm 29 and Revelation 11:19. Each of these structures consisted of a holy place and of a most holy place. Of course all Bible students know that the Tabernacle was the temporary model of the eternal heavenly realities and was superseded by the Temple which Solomon constructed in Jerusalem as the permanent model of the same.

Since God dwells in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, it was natural that this fact should be represented in the earthly model. Hence, when the Tabernacle was set up, as we learn in Exodus, chapter 40, the glory of the Lord filled the place (Ex. 40:34). Then this glory assumed the form of what is known as the Shekinah, which abode above the mercy seat, the covering of the ark of the covenant. When Solomon built the Temple, and it was dedicated by the proper ceremonies, the glory of the Lord also filled this earthly sanctuary—as we see in II Chronicles 7:2 and parallel passages. This glory again assumed the form of the Shekinah, the symbol of God's presence, and abode above the mercy seat and dwelt there in the midst of Israel, the people of Jehovah.

When, however, the nation had apostatized from God to such an extent that He could no longer abide in the midst of a sinful and gainsaying people, this Shekinah of glory arose from its place above the mercy seat, reluctantly—as it were—arose and hovered over the threshold of the sacred structure, then departed to the eastern gate, and finally left the sacred enclosure for the Mount of Olives—on the east of Jerusalem. At last it departed, vanishing into oblivion. This was foreshadowed by the prophet, (chap. 9). Ezekiel, being given the vision of the Jerusalem of the Millennial Age and the restoration of the temple, naturally spoke of the glory of God and of its filling the house of Jehovah (44:4). When the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, enters that sacred structure officially, as we have already seen He will do, then that house of prayer for all the nations will be filled with the glory of God as foretold by Ezekiel.

Renewal Of The Animal Sacrifices

In Eden animal sacrifices were first inaugurated. During the Patriarchal Age they were observed by the command and the instruction of God. When He gave the law to Israel through Moses, He incorporated these animal sacrifices in His revelation and in the requirements for Israel. They were all typical of the one supreme sacrifice of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

When our Lord came and offered Himself as the all-sufficient atonement for mankind, the animal sacrifices, which were simply typical, were abolished: "And you, being dead through your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, you, *I say*, did he make alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses; 14 having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross..." (Col. 2:13,14).

Thus those animal sacrifices served their purpose in typifying the all-sufficient atonement of our Lord. When He made His sacrifice, there was therefore no further need—so far as the present Christian Age is concerned—for any further sacrifices.

But according to Ezekiel's prophecy, when this temple of Jehovah is built in Jerusalem and becomes a house of prayer for all the nations, there will be offerings and sacrifices made daily. The question immediately arises, For what purpose will they serve? At first it may seem

strange to us that they should again be brought into service—especially since they have been discontinued for two thousand years.

In approaching this problem, let us remember this one fact: That when the sacrifices were discontinued, our Lord instituted what is called the Supper, which is a memorial observance to celebrate His laying down His life for us and shedding His blood for the remission of our sins. Believers are urged to observe this constantly "till he come." By observing this ceremony, we are reminded of the fact that our Lord purchased redemption for us. It is most essential that we remember that fact and keep His atonement ever before our eyes—for we are too prone to forget.

When our Lord returns in glory, lifts the curse, and establishes a reign of righteousness and peace upon the earth, ideal conditions will exist. People will not know from experience the ravages and wreckage that have been caused by sin. They naturally will take for granted that such an ideal world is their rightful inheritance. It will be rather hard for them to recognize the necessity of Calvary, of the Lamb of God, and of the sacrifice which He made for them. By the Lord's re-inaugurating those bloody, animal sacrifices, there will be constantly kept before the people of the world, who will go up to Jerusalem from year to year to worship Jehovah, the thought that their redemption was very costly and precious. I can therefore see why it is that the Lord will re-inaugurate those sacrifices to keep ever before the people of that era the price of their redemption.

The Various Festivals

In Ezekiel's foretelling the reconstruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem and the worship and service that will be rendered in that house of prayer for all of the nations, it was natural that he should speak of certain festivals. Thus he tells us that the new moon will be observed, that is, the first day of every month will have a service and ceremony that will give it special significance, bringing before the peoples of earth the great fundamental truths of God's being the beginning or source of all things. The people will need to realize that it is in God that they live, and move, and have their continual being.

The weekly sabbath likewise will be strictly observed. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—perfect. But sin marred this marvelous handiwork of the Lord. When this catastrophe struck the earth, in six days God repaired the damage done and completed His task of reconstruction on the seventh day. Then He rested on that day. He therefore gave the command to primitive man that he should work six days and rest on the sabbath. This sabbath regulation was incorporated into the Mosaic legal system. In fact, the sabbatic system was worked out in its various ramifications in the legislation of Moses. In the future, when Israel is thus restored, and our Lord is on the throne, the sabbath will be observed. That is seen not only in Ezekiel's prophecy, but in Isaiah, chapter 66:22-24.

The passover supper will again be observed. On the last night of our Lord's earthly pilgrimage before He was arrested, He observed the passover supper as we see in the records of the Four Gospels. Luke, however, is very explicit in giving us the events that occurred on that occasion. In Luke 22:14-18 we have a record of His observing with His disciples the passover supper. When He did that, He said to them that He would never more partake of passover until He should do it anew in the kingdom of God—in the time when the kingdom of God is established on the earth, and the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven. Then in Luke 22:19,20, we find a record of the institution of the Lord's Supper after the passover was observed. From this scripture therefore we learn that the passover will be observed in the great Millennial Age.

Ezekiel likewise informs us that the passover will be observed in this future time. Doubtless this feast will be observed in order to emphasize the necessity of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in order to impress upon the people born in the Millennium the tremendous cost of their redemption. People will have to be saved in the same way during the Millennium as now—by the grace of God through faith.

From Zechariah 14:16 we learn that the feast of tabernacles, the occasion of the ingatherings and great joy in Israel, will likewise be observed. Not only will it be kept by Israel as a people, but also by the nations of the world. For we are told by Zechariah that, if there should be any nation that refuses to go up to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah of hosts, the great King, God, will withhold the rain from that country and thus deprive it of the physical blessing upon which

the nation will have to depend. Thus we see that certain feasts, or festivals, will be observed during the Millennium.

But nothing is said concerning the observance or ritualism of the Day of Atonement. There are various speculations that have been put forth, explaining why nothing is said about it. We know from the 16th chapter of Leviticus that the ritualism of the Day of Atonement was primarily to set forth the time when Israel will accept the full atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, her Redeemer and Messiah. Since Israel will have at this time—the time here foreseen in the prophecy—repudiated the national sin and accepted unqualifiedly the atonement of the Messiah, there will be no necessity for setting that truth before the nations. This may be the true explanation why the ritualism of Yom Kippur will not be observed then. But there may be other fundamental reasons of which we have no knowledge, and concerning which we cannot afford to speculate.

According to the prophetic word, there are great and marvelous times and seasons awaiting the world. The troubles of the present time will never cease until King Messiah is invited back by repentant Israel. When she acknowledges the guilt of her national sin, repudiates it, and pleads with Him to return, He will do so and stop all wars. Never again, then, shall nation lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But peace and joy will reign supremely throughout the earth for one thousand years, during which our Lord will reign in righteousness and in justice. May that day speedily come, is our earnest, sincere prayer!

"Lamb of God! thou soon in glory
Wilt to this sad earth return;
All thy foes shall quake before thee,
All that now despise thee mourn:
Then thy saints too shall attend thee,
With thee in thy kingdom reign;
Thine the praise, and thine the glory,
Lamb of God, for sinners slain!"

Laudes Domini.

The Visions And Oracles Of The Prophet Ezekiel

by Dr. David L. Cooper

(Installment 41)

The Land Of Israel In The Millennium

In our study of the Book of Ezekiel we have come to the last installment, which consists of chapters 47 and 48. In this block of Scripture we shall learn many details concerning the land of Israel that is west of the Jordan—between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. This territory of course does not include all the land of Israel as it will be in the Millennium. The correctness of this position becomes immediately apparent when we remember that God promised Abraham and his seed all the land between the river of Egypt and the great river, the Euphrates. Israel has never possessed all this territory. It is true that during the great and glorious days of Solomon the northeastern boundary of the land was pushed as far as the Euphrates. But it involved only a comparatively small tract of country. By no stretch of the imagination, however, can Israel's short-time possession of this little strip of land from the borders of Egypt to the Euphrates be considered as the fulfillment of the prediction and promise made by the Lord to Abraham. But in the closing chapters of Ezekiel's vision only that portion of the land of Israel which is west of the Jordan and extending to the Mediterranean is in view.

The River Flowing Forth From The Temple

In 47:1-5 we have a description of the river which will flow forth from the eastern threshold of the house (the millennial temple), and which will flow eastward. A thousand cubits east of the outer gate of the temple the prophet passed through the water, which was ankle deep. A thousand cubits from this position eastward the waters were knee-deep. At a point a thousand cubits farther east the waters reached the loins of a man. One thousand cubits farther on the water was so very deep that one could not pass through it.

On both banks of this stream there were very many trees (vs. 7). As verse 12 is so very explicit concerning these trees, let us read it: "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on

this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for good, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail: it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing" (vs. 12). Each tree brings forth new fruit every month of the year, which is for food for the people. The leaf of the trees is for the healing, or rather, the health, of the inhabitants of the land. While the word literally means *healing*, we must understand that it means *health* because when this time arrives the curse will be lifted from the earth. Then there will be no sickness. The leaves of these trees therefore will be simply for the continued health of the people of the land.

The waters of this river, which flows from the threshold, eventually reach the Dead Sea and heal, or purify, its waters (vs. 8). At the present time no life is possible in the Dead Sea or in the lower part of the Jordan before it enters into the sea.

There will be fish in abundance in these waters. This prediction is found in verses 9 and 10. The place where the fishermen will be is "from En-ge-di even unto Ene-glaim." En-ge-di is on the west shores of the Dead Sea about midway its length from north to south. From this point unto Ene-glaim there will be active fishing. There will also be a place for the spreading of nets. In these waters the fish will be "as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many."

As a person studies this prophecy, he naturally thinks of the proposed Lowdermilk plan for irrigation and power in the land of Israel. According to Dr. Walter C. Lowdermilk's proposal the waters of the Sea of Galilee would be run in canals on either side of the Jordan River so as to water all the land of that valley. Should the millions of gallons of water in this way be utilized for irrigation purposes and also for hydro-electric power down through the valley, the water reaching the Dead Sea by the Jordan would be diminished greatly, being only that which flows into it from the east side out of the springs at the base of the mountains of Gilead and what ever surface water flows into it from the west side. It is therefore proposed in this scheme that a canal be digged from Haifa across the Plain of Esdraelon to the Jordan River. Through this artificial means waters from the Mediterranean Sea would flow and, entering the Jordan, would reach the Dead Sea. Only that amount of water necessary to keep the Dead Sea at its present level would be allowed to flow into it. According to this scheme there are to be built great dams in the canyons of the mountains of Southern Judaea. Artesian wells

are also to be sunk in the Negev (south part of the land of Israel). From these two sources there will be plenty of water for irrigation purposes and for consumption by a large civilian population. This scheme is indeed most fascinating and feasible.

But when anyone thinks of it and the results that will follow and compares them with what Ezekiel the prophet is talking about, he sees that the prophetic outlook is as high above the proposal of Dr. Lowdermilk as the heavens are higher than the earth.

This river of water with its healing properties, that will flow forth from the threshold of the millennial temple, with its trees on either side, reminds one of the river of life that is mentioned in the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Revelation. By turning to this passage, one sees that this river, on the banks of which will be the tree of life with its leaves for the health of the people, that will live on the earth of that time, will be of special value to all, in that it is called "the river of the water of life." There is therefore a similarity between these two rivers, but they are not identical. As we have already learned, the river of which Ezekiel is speaking is the one that will flow forth from the temple down to the Dead Sea during the glorious reign of our Lord upon the earth; but that which is described by John in the Book of Revelation is a river that will flow from the throne of God through the street mentioned in this prediction and will meander over the earth of that future era.

According to the prophecy of Revelation 20:11, at the conclusion of the Millennial Age the entire material universe will pass out of existence. This vanishing of the present material order occurs at the time of the judgment of the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). After that epochal event God creates the eternal order, which will consist of the eternal heavens, the eternal earth, and the eternal Jerusalem that comes down out of the heavens of that time and rests upon the new eternal earth. The throne of God will be in that city—the one four-square. From that will flow forth this marvelous river of the water of life. This river, with the tree of life whose leaf is for the health of the nations, will be for the new race of people that will be created, and that will live on that eternal earth. But we who are saved from the present world order and have our spiritual bodies will live in that eternal Jerusalem and will reign with Christ forever and ever.

The Division Of The Land Of Israel

In 48:1-7 and 23-29 we have a description of the division of the land of Israel that will be west of the Jordan. The portion that each of the twelve tribes of Israel will have will be the same as that possessed by the rest of the tribes. Counting from north to south we see that Dan's portion will be in the extreme northern part. Just south of him will be Asher. Next will be Naphtali's portion. Just south of that will be Manasseh's allotment. The next parcel will be given to Ephraim. South of Ephraim will be Reuben's portion. Next in line will be Judah's inheritance. Just south of Judah will be the mountain of Jehovah, the dimensions of which will be fifty miles from north to south and fifty miles from east to west. Immediately south of this mountain of Jehovah, or oblation, is the tract that will belong to Benjamin. South of him will be Simeon. Next will come Issachar. Below him will be Zebulun. And south of Zebulun will be God's portion.

Since each of these twelve portions will be the same, it would appear that it will be necessary for the Lord to change the shoreline and make it run due north and south, instead of obliquely as it does at the present time.

The Mountain Of Jehovah's House

This oblation, which will be a little south of a central position in the land, is known as the mountain of Jehovah's house. Isaiah, in the most glowing and marvelous terms, describes this mountain in the following language: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. 4 And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and

their spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:1-4).

Micah, in 3:9-4:5, describes the same mountain. From his context it is very clear that the subject of discussion is that of the mountain of Jehovah's house, the temple mountain. In two psalms especially is reference made to this mountain. The question is asked, "Who shall ascend into the mountain of Jehovah, And who shall stand in his holy place? Read carefully on this point Psalm 15 and Psalm 24:1-6.

Ezekiel gives us the fullest description of this mountain in 48:8-20. The dimensions of this mountain are given in terms of reeds, five hundred of which, as is generally conceded, constitute our English mile. Since the length is twenty-five thousand reeds and the breadth is the same, we, by simple division, understand that this mountain will be fifty miles in length, from north to south, and fifty miles in breadth, from east to west.

This mountain is divided into three sections, the dividing lines running east and west. The section in the northern portion is fifty miles from east to west but twenty miles deep, from north to south. In the center of this plot will be one square mile, where the temple of God, the house of prayer for all nations, will be located. The priests will occupy this northern section. The middle part is of the same dimensions: fifty by twenty miles. This will be allotted to the Levites, who will assist the priests in their daily ministrations at this house of prayer for all the nations.

The southern section will be fifty miles in breadth, from east to west, and ten miles in depth, from north to south. In the central part of this southern division the city of Jerusalem with its suburbs will be located.

The Millennial Jerusalem

From the prediction we see that the city of Jerusalem proper will be nine miles by nine miles. Thus the total area will be eighty-one square miles, which will be covered by the city. There will be a suburb on all four sides, one-half mile in width. Thus the suburbs on the north and

south sides, being a mile in depth, will, with the depth of the city, which is nine miles, make ten miles from north to south. The same is true with reference to its east and west lines. Thus the city of Jerusalem with its suburbs will cover one hundred square miles.

In 48:30-35 we see that there will be three gates on each side of the city. These will be there so that the people may enter that sacred, holy metropolis.

The name of the city will be called, according to Ezekiel's prediction, *Jehovah-shammah*, which means "Jehovah is there." This Jehovah is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who will be there in person and reign over the earth.

When a person reads of the millennial Jerusalem covering one hundred square miles and thinks of its twelve gates, he immediately thinks of the Jerusalem of which we read in Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. But these are two different cities. The one of which Ezekiel speaks is the city of Jerusalem which will be located in the land of Israel—on this earth. The Jerusalem of which John speaks is an enormous city. It will be fifteen hundred miles in length, breadth, and height. This is the eternal Jerusalem, the home of all the redeemed throughout eternity. The millennial Jerusalem, though it will be the most magnificent city which we can now visualize, will be nothing—so far as size is concerned—in comparison with the eternal Jerusalem that will rest upon the enormous earth of the eternal order.

The study of the land of Israel of the future, together with the world capital, Jerusalem, and our glancing at the eternal earth with its eternal Jerusalem turn our hearts toward the future and make us long for the time to come, when the present chaotic order will have passed away and the kingdom of God, with all its glory and power, will be manifested. In these two cities we shall find our fondest hopes realized and enjoy the blessing of God, not only during the Millennium, but also forever and ever.

May the Lord add His richest blessings to this series of studies in the Book of Ezekiel, and may the teaching stimulate in us a desire to know more of the prophetic word.

End of Series