

Chapter 14

Date: Between **August 13, 592 BC** (The 5th of Elul, 3,169) &
July 8, 591 BC (The 10th of AB, 3,170)

Historical Setting: The prophet Ezekiel is living among his fellow Jewish captives in the exile community of Tel-abib just outside the capital city of Babylonia, Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar reigns during the entire time period of this chapter. King Zedekiah rules Jerusalem as a “Puppet” King under King Nebuchadnezzar's control. Jerusalem is forced to pay tribute to the Babylonians, which by 588 BC, Zedekiah stopped paying. The events of this chapter occur just prior to, or during, the time period in which Zedekiah made this bold decision. This caused great anger on the part of the Babylonians, most especially King Nebuchadnezzar. King Zedekiah and most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were stiff-necked, prideful, and even outright wicked. During this time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

Preview: The prophet Ezekiel is inquired of by the elders of Israel, who were evidently engaged in different forms of idol worship or at least worshipped idols in their hearts. Even so, they came to inquire of the Lord. The Lord, obviously displeased by the elders' request, calls them unto repentance. He warns of imminent destruction and teaches them about personal responsibility for sin. The destruction of Jerusalem is briefly discussed, and the Lord warns that not even the great prophets Noah, Daniel, and Job could save them.



Verse 1: “Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.”

The prophet Ezekiel opens this chapter by explaining that certain elders of Israel came before him. It should also be noted that they sat before him. The last time Ezekiel recorded that the elders of Israel sat before him, the setting was Ezekiel's home (Ezekiel 8:1). This verse does not specify the location of the meeting, but it leaves one to wonder if they weren't again gathered in his home.

As discussed in chapter eight, the term "elder", or as it is directly translated from Hebrew, "old man", is an official title used among the Jewish community. It was especially used in ancient Israel to signify the Jewish governing council. Even so, there might have also been elders outside of that realm. In either case, elders were usually considered the leaders and wisemen of the community. Even though elders were involved in the government leadership, they retained their status during occupation and exile. Josephus wrote, "When the king of Babylon came, he...planted the people in the country of Babylon, but freed the high priests from his bonds" (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 10, verses 6-7, page 220). The elders were often considered priests and religious leaders. It is evident that the elders that were taken captive into Babylonia retained their leadership status during the Babylonian Exile.

The leaders of Israel that were held captive in Babylon obviously held some reverence for Ezekiel's divine call. It might not have prompted their repentance, but it obviously compelled some of them to seek his council. It might be implied that not all of the elders felt this way about Ezekiel, since only certain elders came before the prophet at this time. This, however, is pretty liberal theorization.

The act of sitting before someone symbolizes friendship, submission, and attentiveness. The elders seemed to have certain respect for the prophet, but what did they want? Did they come to inquire of the prophet? In verse three, it is evident that the elders came to the prophet to seek the word of the Lord on a matter that is not disclosed in the modern translation of the Book of Ezekiel.

Verse 2: "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying."

As a typical marker to the introductions of Ezekiel's revelations, the prophet writes, "And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying". This verse marks the first of two revelations, or sections, contained in this chapter.

From this small verse, we gain that the prophet Ezekiel received a revelation from the Lord Himself. We do not know what form this revelation came in. Did a vision open up to Ezekiel? Did Ezekiel hear a voice? Or did he just receive inspiration through the power of the Spirit? Whatever the form of the revelation, it is apparent that only

Ezekiel could hear the Lord's words. The elders of Israel only received the Lord's word through the prophet's mouth.

Verse 3: “**Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?**”

At this point in Ezekiel's record one might be able to guess how the Lord would address the prophet Ezekiel. In consistent form, the Lord refers to the prophet as “*Son of man*” making reference to the prophets mortality.

After addressing the prophet, the Lord says that these men, or the elders that are sitting before the prophet, have set up their idols in their hearts. The heart is a symbol of one's will, desires, and emotions. The heart is often the symbol of one's true self. The Talmud says that the heart contains all our human desires, both good and evil. The elders of Israel had placed idols and false religion into their desires and thoughts. In the ancient Near East, idol worship played a large role in everyday life. There were idols for almost every activity one could be involved in. People placed faith in these inert idols to guide their every action. Though most of these idols existed in physical forms, their true influence laid in the hearts of their followers. The elders of Israel had not necessarily set up physical idols, but they had placed their faith and trust in them.



Ancient Mesopotamian Idol



Quite often it is difficult for us, in our modern societies, to relate to idol worshipping. How could someone worship a statue of stone or metal and feel that it is in some way associated with some divine power? Unfortunately, the practice of idol worshipping still exists in our modern world. Much of the orient worships a statue they call “*Buddha*”. There are other societies on the earth that worship trees, nature, totem poles, elements, and statues made in the image of earthly creatures.

Even in a Christian society there are those who would pay more tribute to a statue of Mary or Christ than to the Savior and the Father themselves.

Is idol worship limited to the worship of physical idols? Based on the contents of this verse and the evidences that surround us daily, it should be said that idols go far beyond statues and pictures. Modern idols can be things like money, cars, boats, titles, prestige, and any earthly thing that could be placed before God in the priorities of one's life.

After all this discussion about idols being set in one's heart, it would appear that the wording of the verse might be incorrect, with the correct translation carrying a slightly different meaning. An alternate translation for the passage *"these men have set up their idols in their heart"* might be *"have applied or worn idols to their breasts"*. In ancient societies it was common to wear amulets, trinkets, or even tattoos representing idols of false gods. This was done to ward off evil spirits or bring the blessings of that god upon the wearer. To the right is a picture of an ancient trinket that was probably worn on a necklace. The trinket was in fact a small idol of a female Babylonian goddess. The wearing of such an item was common place in the ancient Near East, but was forbidden among the children of Israel.



Whatever the wording of this verse, the elders of Israel were apparently involved in idolatry to the point that it brought great displeasure from the Lord. Whether this idolatry was physical and outward, or only in their hearts and intentions, the Lord was not going to accept their inquiry with open arms. In fact, the elders' inquiry is never recorded. The Lord appears to answer their inquiry with a call of repentance and condemnation.

The close of this verse brings up an interesting question. The elders were wicked and yet they wanted to inquire of the Lord. The Lord asks Ezekiel, *"should I be inquired of at all by them?"* Many years prior to Ezekiel, the wicked king of Israel inquired of Elisha the prophet. Elisha replied, *"What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother..."* (2nd Kings 3:13). Elisha felt that the king had trusted in false prophets, why should the Lord now save them when their false gods have failed them. This sounds somewhat spiteful, but it was a choice that they made willfully. The Lord did not force them to follow corrupt paths. Furthermore, the Lord has said that His Spirit and influence cannot dwell among the corrupt. In a letter written by Paul to the Corinthians, we read, *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what*

communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2nd Corinthians 6:14-16). The simple fact that the idol worshipping elders of Israel were inquiring of God, is at the very least, an insult to God.

Verse 4: “**Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them. Thus saith the LORD GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;**”

Here the Lord commands the prophet Ezekiel to speak to the elders who have come to inquire of the prophet. For the most part, the rest of the chapter contains the words that the Lord will have Ezekiel speak to them.

This verse is almost a qualifier or stipulation as to how the Lord will answer those that inquire of Him. The Lord starts with a phrase that says that every man of the house of Israel, or those that have covenanted with the Lord to be His people, that have set up idols in their heart, will be answered, but according to their sins. In other words, the Lord will answer them with chastisement. This verse is very similar to verse three.

The Lord goes on to speak of the “*stumblingblock of his iniquity*”. The Book of Mormon teaches and warns of the dangers of stumblingblocks. Nephi recorded, “*And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; nevertheless, they put down the power and miracles of God, and preach up unto themselves their own wisdom and their own learning, that they may get gain and grind upon the face of the poor” (2nd Nephi 26:20).* A stumblingblock is literally a block or obstacle that lies in ones path, which would cause one to stumble or trip. In the figurative sense, which is the typical application for the word biblically, it represents any sin, attitude, or such, that would cause one to falter spiritually. Figuratively, a stumblingblock is anything that would cause one to fall on the path back to Father. This verse speaks of Israel’s idols as a stumblingblock. It refers to the idol as though it were alive, saying “*his iniquity*”. The Lord is simply explaining that there is iniquity associated with idol worship.

It is said that idol worshipping is the iniquity before the elder’s face. The face represents one’s self. It symbolizes all that one stands

for and is. This phrase represents the all-encompassing nature of the sin.

Why was it so bad for Israel to be committing the sin of idol worship, when it was so common among the entire Near East? The answer to this question has to do with the fact that where much is given, much is required. In chapter three of Ezekiel, the Lord warns, "...When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die..." (Ezekiel 3:20). The children of Israel, frankly, knew better. They had made certain covenants and promises to the Lord that they would worship Him, and only Him. The rest of the Near East had not covenanted with the Lord and consequently were not obligated to the same laws.

The end of the verse is almost sarcastic. The Lord says, "*I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols*". What does it mean to be answered according to the multitude of one's idols? In all reality, biblical scholars still puzzle over the meaning of this phrase. It's almost an enigma. The most probable answer is that the Lord's judgement or answers will be dictated by the inquirer's idolatry and sin.

Verse 5: "That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols."

The first read through of this verse leaves one somewhat puzzled as to what the Lord is speaking of. The prophet is writing the Lord's words as though the Lord himself was writing them directly, but the confusion lies in the word 'take'. The normal usage of the word take does not find application here. The fact that the Lord says that he will 'take' the house of Israel, carries the idea that He will catch them in some secret act or crime. Given this, the verse takes a somewhat clearer shape. Continuing from verse four, the Lord agrees to speak to the rebellious elders so that He might reveal the heart of the house of Israel. We are to understand that the words that the Lord will speak will be that of the Israel's hidden sins.

When speaking of the 'house of Israel', we need to understand the figurative nature of the phrase. The term house is used symbolically to represent the world we live in, the universe, and the center of the world. It is also used as a figurative expression to represent a group of people belonging to the same family, cult, tribe, religion, or similar cultural unit. The word Israel was derived from the new name given by the Lord to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. This name was given to him after entering into a specific covenant with the



Lord. His posterity, especially those that had entered into that same covenant as Jacob, took upon themselves the name of Israel like Jacob did. The name Israel means “*One who prevails with God*” or “*Let God prevail*”.

To summarize the first part of verse five, we might paraphrase by saying, “*That I, the Lord, might reveal or uncover the intentions and desires of the people who proclaim to be mine*”.

The second part of this verse explains why the Lord makes Himself intent on uncovering the hearts of His children. He says that He will do such “*because they are all estranged from me through their idols*”. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the word “*estranged*” as follows.

Estrange *tr. v.* 1. To make hostile, unsympathetic, or indifferent; alienate 2. To remove from an accustomed place or set of associations (from the Latin *extraneare*, to treat as a stranger, disown, foreign, or strange).

Furthering our understanding of this verse, Moeshe Greenberg uses an alternate translation for the Hebrew word “*estranged*”. From the Hebrew, he translates the term as “*fallen away*” rather than hostile or foreign. In either case, it is apparent that the house of Israel had deviated from the Lord’s will and grace by adopting the practice of idol worship, and in doing so, they brought themselves under God’s condemnation.

Verse 6: “**Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.**”

The prophet Ezekiel is given further warning in which he is instructed to convey to the children of Israel. The message is plain and simple; “*Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols*”. The term repentance, if taken from the Greek translation of the word, means a change of heart. The word repentance denotes a turning of one’s heart, will, and actions towards God. The Lord is instructing Israel to repent of idolatry.

The nation of Israel had struggled with idols since it’s birth. It might be recalled that Father Abraham was brought to the Promised Land of Israel by fleeing the idolatrous country that nearly offered him up as a sacrifice to idols. Despite Abraham’s journey away from Ur, the new lands were full of similar idol worship. As Jacob returned to the land of Canaan after acquiring his sought after wife, Rachel, he was stopped by his father-in-law along the way. It would appear that Laban

was upset because after Jacob and his family left, he found his idols missing. Though Laban never found them, Rachel had smuggled them away with her. The possession of idols was very important to the ancient cultures. Who can forget the children of Israel at the base of mount Sinai? As Moses went to commune with God, they built an idol to offer comfort and support. In almost every book in the Old Testament dealing with Israel's history, idol worship can be found. It was entrenched in their culture.



**Jacob and his Family
return to Canaan**

Picture of two Israelite women Worshipping a Pagan god



Verse 7: “For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself.”

The Lord starts this verse by first identifying a group of people. He basically says that every person in Israel will be included in this group, both those that are of the house of Israel and those that are strangers. The term “*stranger*” carries the idea of a foreigner, or people from a foreign country. This would imply that individuals who are not of the covenant people, but lived among them, would fall into the category. To further classify this group, the Lord narrows it down to those individuals who separate themselves from Him. They separate themselves from God by following after different lifestyles, laws, and statutes. Those that have set up idols in their heart, and placed the stumbling block of wickedness before them, have separated themselves from God. Those individuals, who then come to inquire of the Lord, the Lord says, “*I the LORD will answer him by myself*”. Almost as if the Lord is saying, “*if they have the nerve to ask, they won’t like what they’ll get, but he’ll answer them personally*”. After reading this verse, one might say, “*what is so bad about that?*”; however, the consequences of these wicked individuals inquiring of the Lord lies in verse eight.

Verse 8: “And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.”

This verse starts as a continuation of verse eight. Verse eight is actually the consequences for the wicked men who have the nerve to inquire of the Lord. The Lord starts out by stating that He will set His face against those that turn from Him to Idolatry. The word “*face*” in comes from Hebrew word, “*פנים*”. In Judaism, the face of God represents His favor, glory, grace, and blessings. Despite the fact that most Jews have accepted the concept of an invisible God, the face of God is used to represent His character. “*When God withholds favor from the Jewish people, this is traditionally described as hester panim, hiding the face. When God favors the people, the face is said to shine upon them*” (*The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 52*). The wicked that inquire of the Lord will not find blessings, or favor, from Him.

Furthermore, those that have fallen into the snare of iniquity, and come to receive counsel and blessing from God, will find that He

will make them a sign and a proverb. The term “*proverb*” is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

Proverb *n.* 1. A short, pithy saying in frequent and widespread use that expresses a basic truth or practical precept.

Some modern translators use an alternate translation for the Hebrew words that were used to obtain the English words “*proverb*” and “*reproach*” in the King James Version of the Bible. They translate “*proverb*” as “*byword*”, “*reproach*” or “*insult*”. Though this doesn’t necessarily change the meaning of the verse, it might add some clarity.

Similarly, a sign is usually something that represents or testifies of something else. It can convey an idea, command, or feeling, to one who observes the sign. The Lord is apparently going to make an example of these wicked people so that future generations, and even those of Ezekiel’s time, might be able to learn from their mistakes.

The Lord also promises to cut the wicked off from the midst of His people. Being cut off carries the idea of separation, and judgement. Those that sin against God, and fail to repent, we know will be cut off from His presence. Likewise, those individuals in Israel during Ezekiel’s time who failed to repent of idolatry, and inquire of the Lord, were to be cut off from God’s people.

As a conclusion, the Lord states that “*ye shall know that I am the Lord*”. The question here might be “*who shall know?*”; the wicked, or those that witness the judgements passed on them by God. In either case, we can find application. There could easily be two objectives reached by the Lord’s actions. First, the wicked receive punishment or consequences for their actions. Second, a testimony is erected for others to learn from.

Verse 9: “**And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.**”

This verse seems to lack transition from verse eight. The flow of ideas seems to almost stop and change course. The Lord, through Ezekiel, now seems to take up the topic of false prophets, though the word false is never mentioned. The Lord discusses the deception of prophets. The question is, “*can a true prophet of God be deceived?*”. The answer is of course, no. A true prophet follows the guidance of God and in no way can he then be deceived. Therefore, it is most probable that the Lord is speaking of false prophets in this verse.

The word “*deceive*” might have been better translated as “*misled*”. Even so, the words of this verse are still quite puzzling. The wording would lead one to believe that God might deceive or mislead individuals. The very nature of God would dictate that He cannot deceive man. The Joseph Smith translation really helps clarify this point and this verse. Joseph wrote, “*And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have not deceived that prophet; therefore I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel*” (Joseph Smith Translation of the Holy Bible, Ezekiel 14:9). This verse ends up giving us a safe assurance that if false prophets come among us, the Lord will pass judgement upon them and remove them from among the righteous. We must be cautious that we qualify to be the Lord’s people, so that we can benefit from that promise.

Verse 10: “**And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him:**”

They, the false prophets spoken of in verse eight and nine, will bear the punishment for their sins. The Random House Dictionary defines the term “*punishment*” as follows.

Punishment *n.* 1. The act of subjecting a person to pain, confinement, death, or other discomforts as a penalty for an offense or crime.

Basically, the Lord is promising that we will all reap what we sow. There might have been an attitude among the false prophets of ancient Israel that despite the fact that their words had led the people astray, it was the people that really sinned and not them. Similarly, the people might have easily blamed the false prophets for their actions, saying that their sins were the fault of the wicked prophets. The message contained in this verse is similar to the old adage, who’s the fool, the fool, or the fool that follows the fool? The verse concludes by saying that the consequences of sin will be applied to the false prophets and their followers alike.

One might wonder where mercy and repentance fit into this verse. The verse seems to only find room for justice and judgement. The point that should be made here is that the children of Israel had been called unto repentance for decades, yet they refused to do so. Prophet after prophet came to plead for their repentance, and now the time of repentance was past. In modern times, the prophet Joseph Smith was taught, “*Therefore I command you to repent--repent, lest I*

smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore--how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit--and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink--Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit” (Doctrine & Covenants 19:15-20). The ancient Israelites are a prime example of this scripture.

Verse 11: **“That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.”**

Why does the Lord sometimes pass judgement here on earth? Why not wait until this mortal existence is done and then give each man and woman that which he or she has earned here on earth? This verse gives us a partial answer to these questions. The Lord wants to preserve His people. To do so, he often has to protect them by removing the wickedness that might be among them. The Lord explains in this verse that He will remove Israel’s false prophets and wicked followers, that the house of Israel, or the covenanted people, might not go astray from Him. The Lord is concerned with their polluting His children with their transgressions. The term "*pollute*" carries the idea of making something or someone unclean. In other words, the Lord is concerned that the righteous will be influenced by the wicked acts of the transgressors.

By removing the wicked, the Lord hopes to retain the children of Israel as His people. This same promise was given to Moses at the time of the exodus from Egypt. In the Book of Exodus we read, “*And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exodus 6:7).*

What does it mean to be “*the Lord’s people*”? This topic could easily justify an entire book; however, suffice it to say that it means following His statutes, laws, and direction. It also entails the right to His blessing, protection, and support. Being the Lord’s people, and

being worthy of such a right, transforms one into the richest and most blest people on the face of the earth.

Verse 12: “The word of the LORD came again to me, saying.”

This verse, though short and seeming void of important information, does bring up some important points. First, the fact that the Lord came “*again*” unto the prophet Ezekiel indicates that chapter fourteen is actually two separate revelations. This verse represents the second section of the chapter, and possibly a totally different time period than the first eleven verses of the chapter. The period of time after the revelation contained in the first part of the chapter and the second part is unknown; however, it is commonly believed that they both occurred between August 13, 592 BC (The 5th of Elul, 3,169) and July 8, 591 BC (The 10th of AB, 3,170), a period of only eleven months. Most believe that the two revelations occurred within a very close time frame of each other.

Verse 13: “Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:”

By this point, the reader should be accustomed to the Lord’s title for Ezekiel, “*Son of man*”. After addressing Ezekiel, the Lord speaks of the land that sinned against Him. The term ‘*the land*’ is often symbolic of the people who live therein. It is typically used when referring to all of the people of the area rather than just a group within.

It is evident that the whole land of Israel, or the people thereof, had significantly transgressed the Lord’s laws. As a consequence, the Lord says that he will stretch forth His hand upon Israel. As discussed in previous chapters, the hand of the Lord represents His power and ability to act. The stretching forth of the Lord’s hand can represent the giving or taking away of blessings. It can also represent the passing of judgements and retribution on a person or people. In this case, the latter seems to be the best application.



Part of the Lord’s judgement upon Israel will be His breaking of the “*staff of the bread*”. The Lord defines this seemingly odd term in the Book of Leviticus when he said, “*And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be*”



satisfied” (Leviticus 26:26). The term breaking of the staff of bread has to do with famine. It signifies the breaking of the supply line of food, either by weather conditions, war, or other factors. In this case, the Lord was going to bring this about as a result of Israel’s sins. The fruition of this prophecy was brought about during the eighteen-month siege on Jerusalem by the Babylonians. During this time the Babylonians utterly stopped all traffic in and out of Jerusalem. They basically starved the Israelites as a method of warfare. The Lord explained that during this famine He would cut off man and beast from Jerusalem. Man and beast symbolize all living creatures. Basically, Jerusalem would be separated from the rest of the world.

Verse 14: “**Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.**”

The Lord starts this verse by mentioning three important individuals associated with Israel. The three men are namely Noah, Daniel, and Job. A short summary of each man is listed below.

Noah, as most will already know, was the 9th generation after generation after father Adam. The time period for Noah’s life for Noah’s life can be cause for some debate; however, it would however, it would probably be a good estimate to place his life between 3,017 BC and 2,067 BC. Noah was one of the best known and admired figures in ancient Israel. We know actually very little about the man Noah. We do know that he was a righteous man amidst a very wicked population. In fact, Noah and his family were the only righteous people on the face of the earth during his time. The bible teaches, “*These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence*” (Genesis 6:9-12). As the story continues, the Lord told Noah to call the earth unto repentance. As Noah’s call was ignored, the Lord commanded him to build a large boat or ark. The Lord told Noah that He was going to send a great flood to the earth, and the only survivors would be those that heeded Noah’s call and boarded the ark. Noah, following the Lord’s direction built his ark and filled it with animals of





every kind. As the day of the Lord's flood approached, Noah and his family boarded the animal filled ark. There are those that speculate that Noah's sons were not righteous but earned the honor of entering the ark because of Noah's righteousness. This notion is less than accurate. The choice of entering the ark was obviously one of self-choice. The sons of Noah were obedient to their father and the Lord. The Book of Jasher reads, "...the boys grew up and went the way of the Lord, in all that Methuselah and Noah their father taught them" (*The Book of Jasher, Chapter 5, verse 18, page 11*).

The people of ancient Israel view Noah in much the same light as Father Adam. He was in a sense the father of all mankind in the flesh. His righteousness saved the human race. Even so, his righteousness did not preserve the wicked. The same can be said for the citizens of Jerusalem during Ezekiel's time. Even if Noah were present, his righteousness would have only preserved himself.

Daniel is another predominant figure in ancient Israel. Unlike Israel. Unlike Noah, Daniel was actually alive at the time the the time the Book of Ezekiel was being conveyed to the prophet to the prophet Ezekiel. And unlike Ezekiel, Daniel's captivity in Babylonia took place amid the royal palace, surrounded by comforts and wealth.

Young Daniel speaks to King Nebuchadnezzar



Daniel was considered by the ancient Jews to be one of the wisest prophets to have ever been among them. In fact, when the Lord spoke of Ezekiel's wisdom he even compared him to Daniel, "*Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee*" (Ezekiel 28:3). Using this great wisdom, Daniel managed to become one of the most trusted advisors to King Nebuchadnezzar and according to some accounts, a royal governor in Babylonia. When most of the Jews were either killed or placed as exiled captives in Babylonia, Daniel's righteousness gained him freedom and power.

The scriptures, as they stand today, record very few facts about Daniel's personal life. We don't know if he had sons or daughters. We don't even know if he was married. All we truly know of him is his righteousness and devotion to God.

Job is among one of the most mystical characters in the Bible. His reality is debated by many scholars. Most would suggest that Job was in actuality a fictitious character

fictitious character created to teach specific doctrines to the Jewish people. Ezekiel is the first prophet in the scriptures to mention Job, and more specifically refer to him as a real man. We assume that Job was indeed a living breathing man. Of Job, the Bible says, "*There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that*



**Job with His Three Friends:
Eliphaz, Bildad, & Zophar**

feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). No one is quite sure where Uz is, but most suspect that it lies east of Palestine and north of Edom. As the Bible records, Job was a man of great wealth and many blessings. The Adversary equated Job's righteousness to his lack of trials and affliction. In a seemingly odd exchange, the Adversary and God discuss the cause of Job's perfection. God allows Satan to tempt Job by taking away from him all his worldly wealth. His blessings were taken away one by one as listed below.

1. Job's servants were killed
2. Job's livestock was killed
3. A wind collapses a house and kills all of Job's children
4. Job develops painful boils over his whole body
5. Job's wife tells him to curse God and die

Job's life literally crumbled around him. To make matters worse, Job had three friends who were less than supportive; Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. The three friends continually condemned Job for his continued faith in God despite his trials. In the end, Job withstood the trials placed upon him and earned the favor of God. Due to his perseverance, God blessed Job with much more than he began with. He was blessed with more children, greater wealth, and renewed health. His friends, on the other hand, were required by the Lord to give of their substance to bless Job. Despite Job's righteousness, his friends did not benefit from the whole ordeal.



It is not sure why Ezekiel specifically chose these three prophets for discussion in this verse. There were a couple of things that these men had in common. First, each were prophets of God. They were also considered perfect before God. They also each overcame substantial trials by incredible faith and stalwartness. The prophet Ezekiel was basically using these three men to convey the idea that no matter how righteous a man is, we are all still accountable for our actions.

Jeremiah used a similar line of thinking; however, he used the prophets Moses and Samuel as his examples. Jeremiah wrote, *“Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth”* (Jeremiah 15:1).

Verse 15: **“If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts:”**

This verse begins with discussion of noisome beasts. Such language brings to mind mythical monsters and strange animals. It should be mentioned that the word *“noisome”* could also be translated from the Hebrew as *“wild”* or *“evil”*. The word *“beast”* could likewise have been translated as *“animal”*. Beasts or animals were often used to symbolize foreign powers or opposing forces. The question here might be, *“Did the noisome beasts*



spoken of by Ezekiel really represent the Babylonians?"

The Babylonians did indeed come through the land of Israel just a few years after this prophecy was uttered. They spoiled the land, meaning that they plundered and pillaged Israel. The prophecy states that the land was left desolate. We find recorded that after the Babylonians left Jerusalem, the city was uninhabitable for quite some time. In fact, the temple was destroyed so greatly that some seventy years later, the returning Israelites from Babylonian Captivity had difficulty locating the original foundation.

It is difficult to say that the beasts represents Babylonia with one hundred percent assurity; however, it is the most plausible guess. The land was utterly cut off from the rest of the world because of the beasts, or Babylonians, as we would presume.

Verse 16: **"Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate."**

This verse becomes almost a repeat of verse fourteen. The doctrine of self-accountability is really being taught. One might ask, *"Was Israel confused on this concept?"* It is definitely implied in this chapter that they indeed were. Similarly, we might learn from this sad example. We cannot rely on the testimony of friends of family, their works and their faith, to secure our own exaltation. Our exaltation requires us to act appropriately. This is not to say that the Savior is not required to obtain exaltation, but rather that we must choose to partake of the Savior's gift. The bottom line is, if we chose the wrong path, we cannot rely on someone else's repentance or right choices, to undo that.

Verse 17-18: **"Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves."**

These two verses form an if/then conditional statement. Verse seventeen represents the "if" portion of the statement, while verse eighteen represents the results of the "then" portion. The "if" consists of actions given by the Lord. Basically, if the Lord were to bring the sword upon Israel, and cut off man and beast from Israel, then the conditions of verse eighteen would take effect.



Looking at verse seventeen, the sword symbolizes death, destruction, judgement, and vengeance. Likewise, the term “cut off” means to separate, alienate, or remove from. As verse eighteen dictates, if the Lord were to bring such a fate upon Israel, or us for that matter, we would only be saved through our own righteousness.

Verse 19-20: “Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter: they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.”

Under closer examination, the reader will find that verses nineteen and twenty are but a duplicate of verses seventeen and eighteen with exception of the fact that the Lord replaces the sword and its effects with pestilence and the effects thereof.

Pestilence can also be translated as “*plague*”. A Plague is typically a wide spread epidemic with high mortality. Figuratively, it can be a widespread affliction or evil. The plague represents the Lord’s promise to pour out His fury upon Israel in blood. The term pour is typically used figuratively to represent the passing out of, distribution, or unleashing of something. The Lord will unleash, or distribute His fury among Israel in blood. Blood represents death, destruction, sin, and sometimes repentance. It is also often used to represent the Lord’s judgement and wrath upon the children of man.



For yet a third time, Ezekiel uses the analogy that Israel is so wicked that even the presence of Noah, Daniel, and Job would save them. We should remember that Daniel’s faith and righteousness saved him from a hungry den of lions, a powerful Babylonian King,

Daniel in the Lion's Den



and the judgement of a truly wicked society. Likewise, Job's righteousness saved him from the trials and tribulations that the Adversary placed on him, which could have cost him his exaltation. Finally, there was father Noah, whose faith allowed him to build a boat of such enormous proportion that animals of every kind could be loaded into it and withstand a flood greater than any flood ever seen on earth by mortal man. His righteousness earned him survival through the flood and the preservation of the seed of man. These three men welded the might power of salvation. They each had the power to act in God's name and to bring to pass great and mighty works. Through their own personal righteousness, these three men were able to deliver souls; even so, if they were alive and in Israel during Ezekiel's time, they would be able to deliver no one's soul but their own.

Given the contents of this verse, How then does one then deliver his or her soul? The answer is probably quite clear given the examples of these three men. It is



Job with his three Friends



The Lord instructing Noah to Build the Ark



Noah and his Family Leaving the Ark

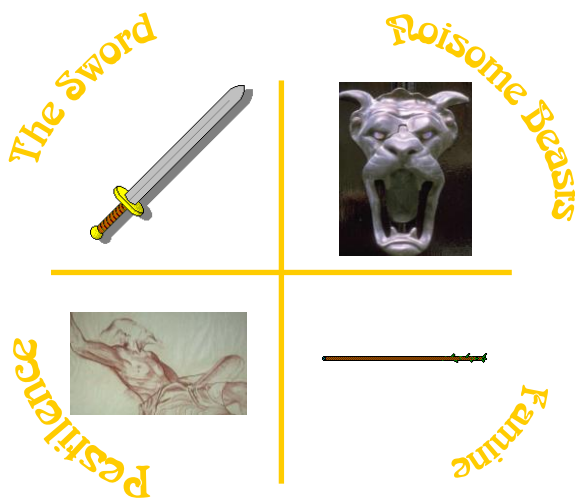
through righteousness and obedience. Perhaps that is why the Lord saw fit to repeat this example three times in this chapter. References were made to Noah, Job, and Daniel in verses fourteen, eighteen, and twenty. As we understand more completely the necessity for personal obedience to God's laws and principles, we will feel the great saving influences of the atonement. We will feel

much like father Noah must have when he exited the Ark after the flood, praising God for His great blessings.

One last comment before leaving this verse would be concerning the passage where the Lord says, “*As I live*”. This statement is given as more of an exclamation, but does have some informational value. It acts as almost a guarantee to the words of the prophecy. “*As the Lord lives*” so shall these words come to pass. What could be more sure than the fact that God lives? The earth might come and go, mortal men might die, our promises might get broken, but the existence of the Lord is a constant in the universe. There is nothing more sure or of a greater guarantee than that.

Verse 21: “**For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgements upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?**”

This verse speaks of four sore judgements that the Lord will send to Israel on account of their transgressions. The term “*sore judgements*” could be translated as “*evil*” or “*severe scourges*”. A scourge is something that criticizes or punishes severely. In addition, the number four carries special symbolic meaning. Four is used to signify completeness, totality and perfection on an earthly or mortal level. The earth is represented with Four Corners symbolizing the whole, entire earth. The prophet Ezekiel is told by the Lord that complete punishment will be issued to the Israelites for their sins. The Lord spells out their punishments in four distinct categories; the sword, noisome beasts, pestilence, and famine.



Each of these punishments has been previously discussed in various chapters prior to chapter fourteen. To avoid repetition they won't be discussed at this point; however, the Lord does ask if this punishment will be enough to sufficiently humble Israel. This might seem silly. To us it might appear like overkill; who wouldn't realize the will of the Lord after such an exercise? Truthfully, many of us have relative yet similar experiences in our lives and still fail to see God's hand or change our habits.

Verse 22: **“Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought 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.”**

It would appear that within the calamity brought upon Israel, the Lord was going to spare the life of a portion or remnant of the House of Israel. This remnant should include sons and daughters, or men and women. The Lord points this out so that it would be understood that the seed of Abraham would continue. The house of Israel would be preserved through this remnant.

Who was the remnant spoken of by the Lord in verse twenty-two? Some students of the Bible theorize that the remnant spoken of by the Lord in chapter fourteen of Ezekiel is in fact the Mulekites of the Book of Mormon. If one were to look for the word “*Mulekites*” in the standard scriptures, one would look in vain. The term Mulekites is one given by modern day readers for a man who settled in the American Continent around the same time as Lehi and his family did. He was the son of King Zedekiah from Jerusalem and was somehow spared by the Lord during the destruction of the great city by the Babylonians. Mulek's life is very vague. We have but three passages of scripture in the Book of Mormon that mention his existence, yet they give no details about how he came to the Americas. Mulek's descendants were indeed a remnant of the house of Israel, from the tribe of Judah. Their addition to the house of Lehi (who was of the tribe of Ephraim) and Ishmael (who was of the tribe of Manassah) made the Nephites a representation of three of the twelve tribes of Israel. Truly, the descendents of Jerusalem that the Lord led to America, and became the history we know as the Book of Mormon, stand as a testimony to us as we “*see their way and their doing*”. Through the destruction of Jerusalem came the Book of Mormon, which came to restore the Church of Christ upon the earth. Through what would appear as utter

helplessness on the part of the House of Israel, came the salvation of the Lord's people in the latter days.

Were the Mulekites the remnant spoken of? Maybe. However, the Lord could have been speaking of the Nephites, or the Exiles in Babylonia who would return to Jerusalem some seventy years after the great invasion of Jerusalem. It might also refer to the few who were left behind which we know were humbled and sought again the God of Heaven. Ludlow said, *"In the end, the scattering (dispersion) of Israel will prove to be a blessing, for they will finally return to the Lord and accept him. The Lord has purpose in everything he does..."* (*A Companion to your Study of the Old Testament*, Daniel H. Ludlow, page 335).

Verse 23: **"And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD."**

The remnant of Israel that the Lord spared was to bring comfort to the rest of the Lord's people. An alternate translation for the word "comforted" might be "consoled". The term console carries the idea of relieving or lessening grief or sorrow. The goodness and repentant hearts that followed the destruction of Israel will stand as evidence to the goodness of the Lord. It was better that the wicked perish than the righteous might live. Isn't it clear that the Lord has a purpose in all that He does? We might not see that purpose all the time, but then it is almost sure that the inhabitants of Jerusalem didn't see the Lord's purpose when the Babylonians laid siege to them.



Chapter

Summary: This chapter is in actuality two separate revelations.

Section #1 – verses 2-11

Section #2 – verses 12-23

The first section starts with a setting involving the leaders of Israel and the prophet Ezekiel. The prophet Ezekiel is in an unknown location, though it could be speculated that he is in his own home. Before him come some of the leaders of the exiled Jewish community. The purpose of their visit was to inquire of the Lord through the prophet Ezekiel. It is uncertain as to what the inquiry consisted of, but the Lord answers with some displeasure. Their answer comes through Ezekiel. The Lord chastises them for their love of idols and the fact that they would inquire of him, given that great sin. The Lord states that He will answer them, despite their unworthiness, that he might point out their sins to them. The elders are informed that their idols will act as stumblingblocks before the Lord. So long as they worship idols, they will not enjoy the graces of God. In fact, their sins will cause them to be cut off from the Lord and His people. The Lord assures them that he will not deceive them by his prophets and that if a false prophet deceives them, then that prophet will pay the price of his sins. All this will be done so that Israel can be clean and worthy of God's presence.

The second section, verses twelve through twenty-three represent another revelation, or maybe a continuation of the revelation contained in the first half of this chapter, only at another point in time. In this section of the chapter, the Lord tells Ezekiel that Israel will face famine because of their great sins. Though many in Israel might feel that the righteousness of the prophets or other individuals might save them, they will find that no man's works will save them except their own. Even if a menacing force were to come through the land, the great men of the country would only have the power to save themselves. Even so, a remnant of the people will be saved, that a testimony of the Lord's wrath, that all might know why the Lord dealt with Israel the way he did.

It is not recorded how the elders, or leaders of Israel, reacted to the Lord's words. We can assume by Ezekiel's diligence that they were delivered, but our modern record gives us no further information.

