

## Chapter 7

**Date:** **Between 593 BC and 592 BC,** (probably closer to 593 BC)

The date of this chapter is most likely the same as chapter six, since it is likely that chapter seven is a continuation of chapter six.

**Historical Setting:** The prophet Ezekiel is living among his fellow Jewish captive's 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 Lord, through the Prophet Ezekiel, further outlines the devastation that will occur in Jerusalem. He explains the reason for the wrath that will be unleashed there, as well as the extent of it. Ultimately, all of the House of Israel shall realize that the Lord is God.



**Verse 1-2:** **“Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel; An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land.”**

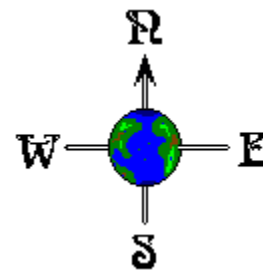
The opening word of the chapter is "*moreover*". According to the American Heritage Dictionary the word *moreover* means "*beyond that what has been stated; besides; also*". Given this, it could easily be

deduced that chapter seven is merely a continuation of chapter six. Though basing this theory solely on the basis of the word "moreover" is not solid evidence, the contents of this chapter follow what would be a logical conclusion to chapter six.

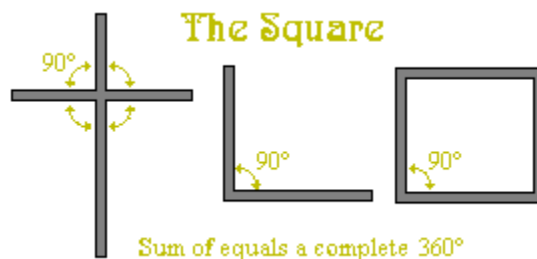
Verses one and two represent the introduction of the chapter. It is evident that the Lord is addressing Ezekiel the prophet. It is not sure how the word of the Lord was delivered. The passage merely states that the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel. It could have been by heavenly visitation, dream, inspiration or other such manifestation. We know that it is Ezekiel that received the message since the passage says it came to the "son of man", which is the title consistently used by the Lord when speaking to Ezekiel. As previously stated, Ezekiel's title makes reference to fact that Ezekiel was the son of a mortal man.

The Lord directs Ezekiel to deliver a specific message to Israel. That message is quite simply, "**An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land**". The term "end" carries the idea of completion, fulfillment, and termination. It is often used to refer to death or destruction. In referring to the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the Old Testament records, "*They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come*" (Lamentations 4:18). The Prophet Amos used the same language when he recorded, "*And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more*" (Amos 8:2).

The message was that an end was to come upon the four corners of the land. The number four carries a number of symbolic meanings. It is commonly used to symbolize wholeness, totality, completion, solidarity, order, and the earth. It is a number that often represents perfection. There are many examples of the number four that convey an idea of totality, perfection and completeness. There are four cardinal directions; north, south, east, and west. There are similarly four winds. In addition there are four seasons that make up a year, four sides to a square, four arms to the cross, four quarters to a moon, and four watches of the day and night.



The term "corner" references the symbol of the square. Four corners make a perfect square. The square has four 90° angles. When added together they make up a 360° combination, which is a complete



circle. The circle has neither beginning nor end and is therefore another symbol for wholeness and perfection. Given this relationship, the square also carries the symbol of perfection. Many suggest that the square represents completeness here on earth, while the circle represents perfection in a heavenly sphere. There is also a theory that the square "□" symbolizes the Law of Moses or the letter of the Law, while the circle "O" symbolizes the Law of Christ or the spirit of the Law.

Taking the symbolic meanings associated with the four corners of the land, it is quite evident that the Lord is conveying the idea that the end spoken of will encompass all of the land of Israel.

**Verse 3:** **“Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.”**

The "end" spoken of in verse two is further discussed in this verse. The Lord clarifies that His anger will be sent upon Israel, and that they will be judged according to their ways or actions. This passage could easily start a discussion between the concept of grace and works. This verse indicates that we will inevitably be judged according to our works or ways. It also indicates that we will be rewarded accordingly. The Lord uses the word recompense, which is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Recompense** *v.* To award compensation for.

The concept of grace, among the Christian world, is often misunderstood. Many would suppose that through the Grace of God, or rather the atonement of Jesus Christ, all men who believe in Him will be saved regardless of their actions and choices. On the other hand, there are those that believe that mankind will be judged strictly by their works; there is no room for the atonement, sinners will go to hell, and saints will go to heaven. The truth lies somewhere in the middle. Men are, of course, judged by their works, intentions, and desires. However, despite ones best efforts and desires, all men will sin and fall far short of God's standard. It is here that the grace comes to play. Having done our best, the atonement allows men the opportunity while in mortality to make right, that which was done in error. Truly, man is saved by grace, for without it no man, save Jesus Christ, would be worthy to return to God. In spite of this, grace does not eliminate the need for man to work and strive towards perfection.


Why was there no discussion of grace in this verse? It is due to the fact that the Israelites had not partaken of it. They were neither

remorseful nor repentant of their sinful ways. Like us, if we refuse to partake of the Lord's gracious gift, Israel received recompense for their abominations.

The whole concept of judgement has brought about intense discussion and debate throughout the centuries. In order to better understand the concept of "**Judgement**", the apostle Paul is a good source to turn to for answers. In a letter to the Hebrews, Paul wrote, "*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*" (Hebrews 10:26). Intentional and willful disobedience to God's laws removes opportunity to partake of the grace of God. In a letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained, "*...the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression*" (Romans 4:15). In other words, we are held accountable to 'the Law', as we know it. "*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20).

It is not sufficient for a man just to believe in Jesus Christ; one must act on that faith. The Apostle James asked the question, "*What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?*" (James 2:14). In answering his own question, James said, "*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works*" (James 2:17-18).

**Verse 4:** **"And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the LORD."**

In this verse, the Lord reiterates part of His counsel from chapter five. Again, He states that His "*eye shall not spare*".  The eye symbolizes the all-seeing deity. It also represents the faculty of intuitive vision, light, enlightenment, knowledge, and the mind. In other words, no man can escape the Lord's knowledge. His judgement is all-encompassing. Modern day revelation reveals, "*...the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man*" (Doctrine & Covenants 1:10).

Further commentary on this verse can be found in the commentary for chapter five, verse eleven.

**Verse 5-6:** “Thus saith the Lord GOD; An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. An end is come, the end is come: it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.”

The term "evil" typically represents the power of darkness, and Satan. It can also be used to symbolize events and conditions that are not desirable, such as pestilence, famine, war, death, and other such conditions. Once one understands the symbolism for the word evil, and the history between Israel and Babylonia, this passage makes perfectly good sense. The Babylonian siege of Jerusalem brought pestilence, famine, war, death, and other atrocities.

**Verse 7:** “The morning is come unto thee. O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains.”

This verse starts with an interesting symbolic phrase; "*the morning is come*". The term "*morning*" is used quite often in scripture. Moses recorded, "*In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning...*" (Deuteronomy 28:67). The Psalmist wrote, "*My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up*" (Psalms 5:3). The great prophet Isaiah wrote, "*Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and*



**Sunrise**

*thine health shall spring forth speedily...*" (Isaiah 58:8). Such are but a few examples of the ways the term morning is used in scripture.

The morning usually carries the idea of change, birth, emergence, renewal, the start of something, and even the coming of Christ. Most people associate the morning with good. The night represents darkness, which is commonly associated with sin and evil. The morning drives away the darkness with light, which represents good and righteousness. Hence, the morning is also associated with good conquering evil. The term morning in this passage most likely carries the idea of the beginning of the fulfillment of the Lord's promises. It represents the Lord in all His goodness, purifying Israel by destroying the evils that existed there. In contrast to the morning, the term sunset, or evening, usually symbolizes the end, finalness, termination, and death. Sunset is the opposite of sunrise or morning.



**Sunset**

The end of the verse concludes with another interesting phrase, "*sounding again of the mountains*". The term sounding has to do with the fact that in ancient mid-eastern culture a trumpet was usually sounded upon notice of danger, such as an invading army. The term sounding often represents a call of warning. The term mountain, as discussed in chapter six, makes reference to leaders, kings, priests, and individuals of high importance. Rephrasing the passage into modern words might read, "*and not just another warning from the prophets*".

The verse in Ezekiel in study alludes to the fact that the Israelites had been warned time and time again by the Lord's prophets that if they did not repent they would be destroyed. They didn't heed the words of the prophets, and now the Lord is announcing that the day of destruction has arrived. He also warns that they should not shrug off this warning as another prophet warning of some future event, but rather this was to be the real thing.

**Verse 8:** **“Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.”**

The contents of this verse do not differ greatly from the words recorded in verse four. The Lord is simply reiterating something that He obviously wants to be understood. The simple message is, "*what a man soweth, so shall he reap*". The children of Israel sowed, or rather committed, sins of all manners and kinds. Consequently, the reaping, or recompense from the Lord, was wrath and fury.

The beginning of the verse introduces another symbol, that of pouring. The symbolism behind pouring is quite straightforward. The verb, to pour, typically indicates the flowing or emptying of liquid or flowable material from a container. It is easy to see the symbolic representation that is implied here. The term pour represents transference, sending forth of, and unleashing. One interesting note that might have application is the fact that the word "*pour*" comes from the Latin "*purare*" meaning to purify. This is especially interesting since the Lord unleashed His wrath on Israel for the purpose of purifying His people. Other examples of the term "*pour*" in scripture are as follows.



*"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:10)."*



*"Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you (Proverbs 1:23)."*

*"And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth (Doctrine & Covenants 115:6)."*



*"Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure-- (Doctrine & Covenants 1:9)"*

**Verse 9:** **"And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth."**

This verse becomes the third reiteration in this chapter alone for the message found in verses four and eight. The Lord is obviously making sure that Israel hears the message contained herein. This verse does, however, add a new element. The Lord points out that in His wrath, the children of Israel will come to the knowledge that it is He who is bringing the great destruction upon Israel. It is important for any of us to understand the reason and purpose associated with events occurring in our lives. Otherwise, how would we learn? The children of Israel needed to realize that the events occurring around them were brought about by the Lord due to their own wickedness.

**Verse 10:** **"Behold the day, behold, it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded."**

The verse starts by making another reference to the morning. The message is simply, the time of the Israel's purification has arrived. There is no turning back, no avoiding the event; the day is come. The morning symbolizes the coming forth of the Lord's commands.

To reiterate the idea that the time of wrath had come, the Lord gives another figurative analogy that actually adds to the message. The term rod is used to represent the actions  of the Israelites, where the morning is used to symbolize the actions of the Lord. The rod symbolizes power, authority, and dignity. It also symbolizes exactness and unwavering  judgement. The blossoming or sprouting rod usually represents the axis of the world, or the world as a whole.

The sprouting rod symbolizes the pride of the world. Sprouting and blossoming can symbolize the outward display of inner self. Israel had been highly blessed of the Lord. They were a great people with many talents and abilities. Unfortunately, their strengths (symbolized by the rod) lead them to boast in their own abilities and fail to acknowledge God. Israel's pride had escalated to the point that the Lord could no longer stay His hand. One example of the extent of Israel's pride is found in the Apocrypha. It reads,

*"So after a year Nabuchodonosor sent and caused him to be brought into Babylon with the holy vessels of the Lord; And made Zedechias king of Judea and Jerusalem, when he was one and twenty years old; and he reigned eleven years: And he did evil also in the sight of the Lord, and cared not for the words that were spoken unto him by the prophet Jeremy from the mouth of the Lord. And after that king Nabuchodonosor had made him swear by the name of the Lord, he forswore himself, and rebelled; and hardening his neck, and his heart, he transgressed the laws of the Lord God of Israel. The governors also of the people and of the priests did many things against the laws, and passed all the populations of all nations, and defiled the temple of the Lord, which was sanctified in Jerusalem" (1<sup>st</sup> Esdras 1:45-49).*

**Verse 11:** **"Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs: neither shall there be wailing for them."**

Verse eleven is actually further clarification of verse ten, and should be read that way. The rod that blossomed into pride soon developed into wickedness and violence. This is often the sad case with man. They receive the blessings of a loving Father in Heaven and soon forget where the blessing originated. With some time passing, it is often habit for man to assume that the blessings given him were actually created by him. They were there because he had made them so. In so doing, the hand of the Lord is not acknowledged and pride is firmly set in one's heart. Having pride in one's heart causes the blessings of the spirit of God to be revoked. Without the guidance of the spirit, man is left to make difficult choices in life without clear direction and understanding. The result of such action leads to sin and wickedness. As sin sets in one's heart, it escalates to such gross sins as violence and immorality. Such was the case in the days of Noah. The Pearl of Great Price records,



*"The earth was corrupt before God, and it was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah: The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence, and behold I will destroy all flesh from off the earth" (Moses 8:28-30).*

As a consequence to their pride, which eventually lead to their gross wickedness, the Lord's wrath was being sent. So severe will His anger be that no man found escape from its effects. The Lord had promised the inhabitants of Jerusalem that so swift will his vengeance be that as men die, no one will have time to mourn their loss. This prophecy was fulfilled in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

**Verse 12-13:** **"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. For the seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, which shall not return: neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life."**

Again, the Lord reinforces the fact that the time of recompense has arrived. Interestingly, the Lord makes a statement about buyers and sellers. This is no doubt directed at the fact that the Israelites had become lovers of money and material wealth. The Lord warns that the buyer, who no doubtedly might feel that his debts would be erased by the destruction of Jerusalem, should not rejoice at the event. Likewise, the seller, who would most likely hold a ledger of money owed from various buyers, should not mourn at the loss of wealth due to the Lord's wrath. Basically, both shall have cause to mourn, not over the loss of wealth, but over the wrath that the Lord will impose upon them. The Prophet Isaiah wrote,

*"Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly*

*emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word" (Isaiah 24:1-3).*

Speaking of the last days, the Apostle John used the symbol of Babylon and similar symbols found in this chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. John wrote,

*"Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and*



## **Wealth Of the World**

*oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. ... Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and*

*cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all...” (Revelation 18:10-24).*

It would appear that a similar fate awaits us in the last days. Those who are lovers of the world will find that the things of this world will be taken from them. Latter day prophesy says, *“But without faith shall not anything be shown forth except desolations upon Babylon, the same which has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Doctrine & Covenants 35:11).*

Verse twelve of this chapter in the Book of Ezekiel alludes to the fact that the Israelites relied on the things of the world for strength and support. It also points out that after the Lord has issued His vengeance, those supposed strengths will be gone. The Jews would find that all they put value on was in all actuality worthless. Is it any wonder that the Apostle John taught *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1<sup>st</sup> John 2:15).* This is a great warning to us. *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (St. Luke 12:34).* Let us all pray that in the day of our recompense, we will not stand as the Hebrews did on the day of theirs, loving the world more than their God.

**Verse 14:** **“They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof.”**

*“They have blown the trumpet”* seems to be a phrase from left field. However, this phrase is quite appropriate at this point in the chapter. The *“they”* spoken of is most likely the prophets. The *“blowing of the trumpet”*, as discussed previously, is an ancient custom used in cities and outposts to inform inhabitants of dangers, such as invading armies. The prophets symbolically represent watchmen, as the lookouts for dangers that could destroy the salvation of their fellow man. As directed by the Lord, the prophets issued cries of repentance which, if heeded, would defend them from the *“fiery darts of hell”*. In this verse, we see that even though the trumpet was symbolically blown by the prophets, no one listened. The verse says that *“none goeth to battle”*. In other words, no one repented and no one did as the Lord commanded. As a result, the verse concludes that all shall face the Lord's wrath.



**Verse 15:** “The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.”

The sword, in this instance, represents recompense, destruction, and justice. It symbolizes the besieging armies of the Babylonians that would surround Jerusalem in military might. It is the Babylonians that Ezekiel refers to when he says that the sword is without. Even the prophet Moses foresaw this day. He wrote,



*"The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs" (Deuteronomy 32:25).*

Outside Jerusalem's walls would lie death by the sword; within Jerusalem's walls awaited death by starvation and disease. Which death was more attractive? Those that did not have the protection of the wall, "he that is in the field", referring to the man who lives in the country, would die by the weapons of the Babylonians. This phrase could also symbolize those that were not prepared, and had not taken shelter behind the great city walls of Jerusalem. Those who were lucky enough to have the walls of Jerusalem for protection would face pestilence and famine as the Babylonians made them prisoners within their own city, cutting off all supplies. The Israelites mourned this horrible event as it unfolded, and recorded their lamentations as follows,

*"Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death" (Lamentations 1:20).*

**Verse 16:** “But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.”

Several times it has been mentioned that none shall escape the Lord's judgement. And yet, it has also been mentioned that a remnant shall escape Jerusalem. Like the contents of this verse, Jeremiah wrote, "Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs" (Jeremiah 44:28). Though a few might escape death in Jerusalem, the question must be asked, did they actually escape the Lord's judgement? The answer is no.

The Lord's judgement cannot be escaped. We will all receive recompense for our actions. Only through the Lord can we receive reprieve from His verdict. Likewise, those that might have left Jerusalem with their life could not and did not escape the Lord's wrath unless they were as Lehi who approached the Lord and humbly followed His counsel. Even so, Lehi and His family faced tremendous hardships that they would have otherwise been spared from if Israel had listened to the counsel they received from the Lord. The simple fact remains that, eventually, we will all receive our just rewards.

Of those that escaped, the Prophet Ezekiel wrote that they were "*on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity*". The dove symbolizes the spirit of life. It is the symbol of the Holy Ghost. The dove also used to symbolize the soul, peace, and gentleness. Furthermore, it is the symbol most commonly used for ancient Israel. The mountain is a high spot while the valley in contrast is a low spot. Apparently, those who escape are like displaced doves, finding themselves in a situation to which they are not accustomed. They will mourn because the reason for their situation will become very clear to them.



Are not we much the same? We all make life choices and consequently have to live with the results of those choices, whether they take us to the mountain or the valley, we must live with the consequences of our actions.

**Verse 17:** “**All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.**”

Continuing the discussion from the previous verse, verse seventeen is referring to the individuals who escaped Jerusalem at the time of the Lord's wrath. It says that those who escaped shall have feeble hands and knees weak as water. The hand symbolizes power, the ability to act, the ability to move, and the ability to bless others. The fact that those who escaped had feeble hands symbolizes their inability to act, bless, move, and function. The knees symbolize generative force. They represent vitality, strength, and movement. Like the hands the knees symbolize power. Again, Ezekiel writes of a positive symbol and describes it with a negative descriptor. Water, having a fluid structure, contains no physical or material strength. This would say that the returning Jews would be left in a state of poverty, lacking military and economic power. They left Jerusalem as rich men with power and authority; they returned as homeless beggars.

**Verse 18:** “They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.”

The returning Jews are prophesied to return girding themselves in sackcloth. The term "gird" means to clothe or wrap around oneself. Sackcloth is a common mid-eastern fabric. The Apostle Bruce R. McConkie said, "A coarse, dark cloth made of hair of camels and goats and used anciently for making sacks and bags was called sackcloth. It was also used for making the rough garments worn by mourners" (*Mormon Doctrine*, Bruce R. McConkie, page 659). As Elder McConkie said, the significance of sackcloth lies in its symbolic meaning. Sackcloth symbolizes mourning, repentance, and humiliation.

The great prophet Isaiah prophesied of this event in Jerusalem when he wrote,

*"For, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable...And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well set **hair baldness**; and instead of a stomacher **a girding of sackcloth**; and burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground" (Isaiah 3:1-26).*

The prophet further wrote,

*"And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth" (Isaiah 22:12).*



In exact fulfillment of the prophet's words, the Jews recorded their lamentations for future generations to read. In them they wrote,

*"The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have **girded themselves with sackcloth**: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground" (Lamentations 2:10).*

Ezekiel goes further to say that horror shall cover the Hebrews. Shame shall cover their faces and baldness shall cover their heads. The face symbolizes the outward personality. In other words, their outward appearance and actions shall show their shame for their actions. The hair symbolizes the life force of man. It symbolizes strength and energy. It's symbolic meaning is probably attributed to the story of Samson and Delilah. The head is regarded, with the heart, as the chief member of the body. It is the seat of life force. Being such, it denotes wisdom, the mind, control, rule, and self-discipline. Loosing the hair of one's head symbolizes the loss of strength, rule, self-discipline, and control. Jewish custom was to shave one's head if and when such events as sadness, loss, or distress occurred. The bald head is obviously figurative in meaning; however, it was quite literal in Jewish tradition.

**Verse 19:** **"They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity."**

This verse makes reference to gold and silver. They are most likely used to represent worldly wealth, "money". Even so, it is interesting to understand other symbolic meanings that accompany these two items. Silver symbolizes chastity, purity, and eloquence. Gold symbolizes worldly wealth, idolatry, incorruptibility, pure light, and the sun. The verse states that the inhabitants shall cast their silver in the streets, indicating that their money was of no use to them in the day of the Lord's wrath. It could also have a secondary meaning. Using the alternative symbolic meaning for silver, it might indicate that the Jews had cast all that was pure and chaste away (figuratively in the streets). Their gold was said to be removed. We know through history that the Babylonians took all the gold and other valuables from the city after it's conquest. Again, we could turn to the alternative symbolic definition for gold and suggest the pure light of God, or rather His influence and guidance had been removed.

The verse says that in the day of the Lord's wrath, the Jews' wealth (gold) would not be able to deliver them. The Jews had placed much faith and trust in material and worldly possessions. The Lord was going to teach them that His power and authority goes beyond the world. The Jews would not be able to satisfy their souls nor their bowels. The soul represents one's eternal self. The bowels symbolize the seat of emotion. The bowels are used to represent compassion and affection while the soul represents one's physical and spiritual needs. Neither the soul nor the bowels will be satisfied in the day of the Babylonian siege. The Jews were cut off spiritually, physically, and emotionally from all support. Their wealth and knowledge were of no help.

There was no help from the Lord for the Jews during the Babylonian siege due to the "*stumbling block*" of their iniquity. The term stumbling block is used several times in scripture. The Prophet Zephaniah wrote,

*"I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and **the stumblingblocks with the wicked**; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD" (Zephaniah 1:3).*

The prophet Nephi used the term stumbling block in a very similar style and manner. He wrote,

*"And it shall come to pass, that if the Gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word, and also in power, in very deed, **unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks**" (1<sup>st</sup> Nephi 14:1).*

The term "*stumbling block*" is defined as any obstacle that causes a person to stumble. While the obstacle may be literal, the term is most often used figuratively of any object, such as wealth or idols, that cause a person to sin (Revell's Bible Dictionary, Fleming H. Revell, page 518). The question can then be asked, "*Why were the Israelites unable to find satisfaction for their souls and bowels?*". Quite simply, their sins disqualified them from the Lord's blessings. Their stumbling block was their own sins.

**Verse 20:** **"As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them."**

Here the Lord speaks of "*the beauty of His ornament*", which He set "*in majesty*". An ornament is typically a decorative article used for personal adornment (Revell's Bible Dictionary, Fleming H. Revell, page 412). The ornament that God saw fit to place in Israel for their spiritual adornment was that of the Lord's temple. We know through the Bible record that only the finest of materials were used when King Solomon was directed by the Lord to build His house. So magnificent was the Lord's house in its completion that people came from many lands to see the splendid house that Solomon erected. Even so, the true beauty and majesty associated with the temple was that it was the house of the Lord. His spirit dwelt there.



Artistic drawing of what  
**Solomon's Temple**  
might have looked like

Despite the fact that Israel had been blessed with the Lord's house, they defiled it. The Prophet Ezekiel recorded that the Israelites made "*images of their abominations and of their detestable things therein*". In simple words, the Israelites made idols and placed them in the Lord's house for the purpose of idol worship. They worshipped the Babylonian goddess of fertility, Ishtar, in the temple as well as the gods Tammuz and Shamash. It was bad enough that the Israelites had adopted idol worship as part of their culture, but that they had such little respect for the God of Israel as to defile His house is beyond comprehension.

The close of the verse says "*therefore have I set it* (presumably the temple) *far from them*". This could be interpreted in several ways. One, we know that the structure called Solomon's Temple was only the Lord's house because he had accepted, and sanctified it. It was the Lord's house because His spirit dwelt there. The Lord had obviously removed His spirit. In a sense, the true house of God was far from

them. Another way to view this statement is that the Babylonians actually destroyed the temple to such an extent that the building stones were broken apart. Finally, most of the survivors of the Babylonian siege were either driven away from Jerusalem or taken captive into Babylon. In a sense, the temple site was far from them. Whichever the case, the Temple of God was lost to Israel due to their own actions.

**Verse 21:** **“And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it.”**

The Lord continues (from verse twenty) to discuss the fate of Solomon's Temple. He states that He will give it into the hands of strangers. We know that He did so by allowing the Babylonian to have their way with the temple. They were allowed to scavenge all that was of any worth out of the temple. The Babylonians took all of the precious artifacts back to Babylon to serve their own idolatrous purposes. What is most interesting is that the Israelites were commanded that the Temple was a sacred place and that strangers were not allowed entrance. Due to the fact that the Israelites had sinned against the Lord's commandments, the Lord was giving the house unto strangers. Strangers were those who knew not the Lord nor had partaken of His covenants. To the Lord, the entrance of strangers into His house polluted the sanctity of the House.

**Verse 22:** **“My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.”**

The great prophet and leader of Israel, Moses, wrote, *"Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen"* (Deuteronomy 27:15). This verse (verse twenty-two of the Book of Ezekiel) is the beginning of the fulfillment of Moses' words. Perhaps before the verse can be further discussed, the term "**secret place**" needs to be discussed.

The Lord's secret place is the holy sanctuary within the Temple of God. The inner happenings of the temple have always been considered secret or mysterious. Bruce R. McConkie said a secret or *"mystery is something which cannot be explained, either because it is beyond human comprehension in general, or because in particular man has not learned enough to understand it"* (Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, page 526). The Lord hides the internal working of His

house so that those that are not prepared for the obligation associated with such knowledge are protected from that accountability until such time as they are properly prepared. It is a gospel principle that "A knowledge of the mysteries of God comes by obedience to Gospel Law" (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, page 526*). The temple houses the mysteries of God; access to temples comes only through obedience and worthiness.

The Israelites had not only polluted the Lord's house by placing idols within its walls, but they also allowed strangers to enter and see the sacred things of God without meeting the qualifications the Lord had set.

The Lord mentions that He will turn His face from the Israelites. Previously, the symbolism behind the term "face" was discussed. The face represents one's person; it represents one's abilities, strengths, and personality. The Lord was basically removing His influence and protection from the Israelites. Consequently, the Babylonians will be allowed to pollute, rob, scavenge, and defile the temple.

**Verse 23:** **"Take a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence."**

The Lord commands Ezekiel to make a chain. Chain symbolizes bondage and slavery. It is also used to symbolize being bound, as to an office, marriage, sins, etc. The symbol is applicable to the Israelites in almost every way. They were bound to the consequences of their sins. They would also be literally taken into slavery into Babylon. The Apocrypha records, "Wherefore against him (King Joachim of Israel), Nabuchodonosor the king of Babylon came up, and bound him with a chain of brass, and carried him into Babylon" (*1<sup>st</sup> Esdras 1:40*).



The verse goes on to say that the land was full of bloody crimes and the city was full of violence. The term "bloody" can represent things such as death, sin, and wickedness. The term violence represents acts of oppression, wickedness, and transgression. The Israelites were in bondage to their sins, like a prisoner is in bondage to a chain.

**Verse 24:** **"Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease; and their holy places shall be defiled."**

Due to the sins of Israel, the Lord promises to bring to Jerusalem the worst of the heathen. A heathen is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Heathen** *n.* One who adheres to the religion of a people or nation that does not acknowledge the God of Judaism.

The Babylonians were the picture-perfect example of heathens. They were so far from following the Laws of God that the term “*worst of the heathens*” is probably the best description for them. These heathens would invade their city and possess their houses. In the process the Lord says that he will cause “*the pomp of the strong to cease*”. The term pomp is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Pomp** *n.* 1. Dignified or magnificent display; splendor  
2. Vain or ostentatious display

The Lord would truly humble His children. Those who were lifted up in their own pride or pomp would be conquered by the heathen, a definite blow to their ego. In addition, the places they esteemed would be defiled.

**Verse 25:** “**Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none.**”

The message to Israel that destruction is coming should start to ring clear. The Lord has reiterated it time and time again. Here He warns that the Israelites will seek peace and refuge from the Babylonians, but there shall be none. All the Israelites will feel the Lord's wrath. Even those who escape death at the hands of the Babylonians will feel the repercussions of the Lord's anger.

**Verse 26:** “**Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour; then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients.**”

Here the Lord says that mischief will come upon mischief for the Israelites. Mischief is probably better translated as misfortune. Jeremiah said something quite similar as he prophesied at Jerusalem during relatively the same time period. He said, “*Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment*” (Jeremiah 4:20).

The phrase “*rumour shall be upon rumour*” is common in biblical accountings of wartimes. It is most common, using similar phrasing, in reference to the prophecies of the last days. It has to do



with the uncertainty of war. Men rumour as to the outcome and God's intents. It is during this time that men, even if they had not previously turned to God, turn to God in attempts to forego pain and suffering.

The Lord warns that during the Babylonian siege, the Israelites will seek the vision or inspiration of a prophet of God. Unfortunately, the Lord will have withdrawn his wisdom, and the priests will not have the inspiration of heaven, nor will the ancients have heavenly counsel to offer. The term “*ancients*” is probably better translated “*elders*”. This refers to the ruling council of the Jewish community. This counsel consisted of approximately seventy men who presided in both civil and religious matters. The Jews relied heavily on them for knowledge and counsel. Obviously, not even these wise men could offer assistance to the fate the Lord had pronounced against them. Malachi, though prophesying years later, wrote,

*"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law" (Malachi 2:1-9).*

**Verse 27:** “The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.”

The Lord warns that from the King to the most average of people in Israel, all shall be worried over the destruction that the Lord will send to them. The Lord quite simply explains that the Israelites shall receive "*after their way*". In other words, they shall reap from the seeds they sowed. He uses the symbol of a desert to illustrate the results of their judgement. In other words, they are desolate of good works, and their recompense shall be void of blessing. Likewise, we should realize that we shall all receive judgement according to our actions. Like Israel, all mankind will eventually come to a clear and explicit knowledge that the Lord is God.



**Chapter  
Summary:**

Summarizing this chapter is pretty straightforward. The Lord is warning Israel that their sins have progressed past the point of no return. The judgement of the Lord has been issued. The Lord is going to send the Babylonians to utterly destroy Jerusalem. This judgement was pronounced due to the extent of Israel's rebelliousness and wickedness. The Lord warns that there shall not be a way for them to escape His wrath. Israel's money and riches won't be able to save them, nor would their knowledge and wisdom. Their pride and riches had caused Israel to not only stray from their God, but it developed into a false sense of security in the arm of flesh, which security was about to be destroyed. The Lord explains that his servants, the prophets, have warned them but they have refused to listen, and now it is too late. The sins of Israel have extended even into the sacred places of the temple of God. With this knowledge, the Lord prophesies that the temple will be taken from Israel. The Babylonians will reap destruction, while the Israelites seek their forgotten God. Though they seek Him, He will not be found. With all of this Israel will come to a new understanding of the simple fact that the Lord is God.

