

Triennial Torah Study – 3rd Year 07/04/2012 _ _ _ _ .

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This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

Lev 23	Ezek 23-25 1		Peter 1-2
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Leviticus 23

The Feasts of the Eternal (Leviticus 23) If the Holy Days you keep are not found in this chapter then you have added to the law. Stop keeping them and keep only those in this book.

This chapter provides the first full listing in Scripture of the feasts of God, which lay out His incredible plan of salvation for mankind. Stressed here is the fact that these are not just the Israelites' feasts but God's feasts, including the weekly Sabbath, as well as the fact that the Holy Days within them are "holy convocations"—commanded assemblies. We must always obey God in observing these feasts—to be in His presence and receive instruction from Him. They are His appointed times to show Him proper appreciation, respect and honor.

The general instructions apply fully to mankind today. The instructions about what offerings to make are included here because the book of Leviticus focuses on the responsibilities of the priests and Levites. Some instructions given here are especially valuable because they are more complete than elsewhere in the Bible, including those about the wave-sheaf, the counting for determining the timing of Pentecost, and staying in booths (tabernacles or tents) — emphasizing temporarily staying in dwellings other than one's home—during the Feast of Tabernacles.

To learn more about God's feasts, request or download our free booklet, God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind. The supplementary readings are found in this publication.

Ezekiel 23-25

Chapter 23 of Ezekiel is a scathing pronouncement upon both Houses of Israel by the Almighty through the prophet Ezekiel. He gives the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom names of Oholah and Oholibah respectively. Oholah means "in her own tent" and would seem to signify that she was not in the tent of her husband Yehovah, but going her own way with her

own covering. Oholibah for Jerusalem or Judah means “woman of the tent” or “the tent is in her” 1) (metaph) Jerusalem as adulterous wife of Yehovah. The indications are the same for both – adulterous women. Yehovah declares that they both whored while they are yet His, Samaria (House of Israel) with Asshur and Jerusalem (House of Judah) with Babylon. The prophet goes into extraordinary graphic detail of how their actions were viewed by Elohim.

Yehovah is so wroth with them both that He declares He is handing them both over to their lovers. They are defiled and disgusting to Him. They will be judged as adulteresses and shall be stoned by the assembly. He is going to put an end to the wickedness by the way of Assyria and Babylon.

Chapter 24

Here are two sermons in this chapter, preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from Mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from Mount Ebal, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon’s laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to show that in the issue of that siege he should be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it. I. By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire are shown the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness (v. 1-14). II. By the sign of Ezekiel’s not mourning for the death of his wife is shown that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair (v. 15-27).

Verses 1-14 We have here, I. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar’s laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it (v. 2): “Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon, who is now abroad with his army, thou knowest not where, set himself against Jerusalem this same day.” It was many miles, it was many days’ journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon. Perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, “This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army has sat down before it.”

Note, As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God and under his view. He tells the prophet, that the prophet might tell the people, that so when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet’s mission, and they might infer that, since he was right in his news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with Heaven.

The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, memorandum, that in the ninth year of Jehoiachin’s captivity (for thence Ezekiel dated, ch. 1:2, which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiachin was carried off), in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2 Ki. 25:1. See how God reveals

things to his servants the prophets, especially those things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith.

Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may sometimes contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture prophecies. Known unto God are all his works. III. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is that this siege of Jerusalem, now begun, will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those that were yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.¹ He must show them this by a sign; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a boiling pot. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and probably was designed to put them in mind of that (Jer. 1:13, I see a seething pot, with the face towards the north; and the explanation of it, v. 15, makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the northern nations); and, as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said ch. 11:3), This city is the caldron and we are the flesh, meaning, "We are as safe here as if we were surrounded with walls of brass." "Well," says God, "it shall be so; you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the flesh in the caldron, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it (v. 4); let it be filled with the flesh of the choice of the flock (v. 5), with the choice pieces (v. 4), and the marrow-bones, and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, either in the pot or under it, the whole beast may be made use of."

A fire of bones, though it be a slow fire (for the siege was to be long), is yet a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the crackling of thorns under a pot, which has noise and blaze, but no intense heat. Those that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety would be sadly disappointed when the siege laid to it would soon make the place too hot for them; and yet there was not getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a woe to the bloody city, v. 6. And again (v. 9), being bloody, let it go to pot, to be boiled; that is the fittest place for it. Let us here see, (1.) What is the course God takes with it. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. [1.] Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them (v. 9): I will make the pile for fire great. Commission is given to the Chaldeans (v. 10) to heap on wood, and kindle the fire, to make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants.

Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impenitent sinners shall never abate, much less go out, for want of fuel. Tophet has fire and much wood, Isa. 30:33. [2.] The meat, as it is boiled, is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "Consume the flesh; let it be thoroughly boiled, boiled to rags. Spice it well, and make it savoury, for those

that will feed sweetly upon it. Let the bones be burnt.” either the bones under the pot (“let them be consumed with the other fuel”) or, as some think, the bones in the pot—“let it boil so furiously that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be by sickness, sword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of misery.” And then (v. 6), “Bring it out piece by piece; let every man be delivered into the enemy’s hand, to be either put to the sword or made a prisoner. Let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man does upon a good dish of meat when it is set before him. Let no lot fall upon it; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out and devoured, first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first.”

It was a very severe military execution when David measured Joab with two lines to put to death and one full line to keep alive, 2 Sa. 8:2 . But here is no line, no lot of mercy, made use of; all goes one way, and that is to destruction. [3.] When all the broth is boiled away the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting of the city on fire, v. 11. The scum of the meat, or (as some translate it) the rust of the meat, has so got into the pot that there is no making it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or, rather, melted in it and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.(2.) What is the quarrel God has with it.

He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with, for, [1.] It is a bloody city (v. 7, v. 8): Her blood is in the midst of her. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; nay, and they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in blood-shed, and so it is in the midst of them. Nay, they commit their murders in the face of the sun, and openly and impudently avow them, in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not pour out the blood she shed upon the ground, to cover it with dust, as being ashamed of the sin or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, proper to be concealed (Deu. 23:13), much less dangerous. Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed upon a rock, where it would not soak in, upon the top of a rock, in despite of divine views and vengeance. They shed innocent blood under colour of justice; so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service, so put it, as it were, on the top of a rock. Or it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they caused fury to come up and take vengeance, v. 8.

It could not be avoided but that God must in anger visit for these things; his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice. And, the crime having been public and notorious, it is fit that the punishment should be so too: I have set her blood on the top of a rock. Jerusalem was to be made an example, and therefore was made a spectacle, to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. It is fit that those who sin before all should be rebuked before all; and that

the reputation of those should not be consulted by the concealment of their punishment who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

It is a filthy city. Great notice is taken, in this explanation of the comparison, of the scum of this pot, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the pot whose scum is therein and has not gone out of it, v. 6. The great scum that went not forth out of her (v. 12), that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was molten in it (v. 11), some of this runs over into the fire (v. 12), inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but it shall all be consumed at last, v. 11.

When the hand of God had gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin, quarreled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last degree against the Chaldeans, snarled at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This as their scum; in their distress they trespassed yet more against the Lord, like that king Ahaz, 2 Chr. 28:22 .

There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better, whose corruptions are excited and exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God which were designed for the suppressing and subduing of them, or of those whose scum boiled up once in convictions, and confessions of sin, as if it would be taken off by reformation, but afterwards returned again, in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again. This was Jerusalem's case: She has wearied with lies, wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, wearied herself with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, v. 12.

Note, Those that follow after lying vanities weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, v. 13, v. 14. Because she is incurably wicked she is abandoned to ruin, without remedy. First, Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain (v. 13): "In thy filthiness is lewdness; thou hast become obstinate and impudent in it; thou hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. In thy filthiness thee is a rooted lewdness; as appears by this, I have purged thee and thou wast not purged. I have given thee medicine, but it has done thee no good. I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual; the intention of them has not been answered."

Note, It is sad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost. Secondly, It is therefore resolved that no more such methods shall be used: Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more. The fire shall no longer be a refining fire, but a consuming fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened, as it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed are justly given up and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Thirdly, Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin: I will cause my fury to rest upon thee. This is the same with what is said of the later Jews, that wrath has come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Th. 2:16 . They deserve it: According to thy

doings they shall judge thee, v. 14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was: "I the Lord have spoken it, who am able to make good what I have spoken; it shall come to pass, nothing shall prevent it, for I will do it myself, I will not go back upon any entreaties; the decree has gone forth, and I will not spare in compassion to them, neither will I repent." He will neither change his mind nor his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to interceded for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it.

Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he has given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false or they must be damned.

Verses 15-27 These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, ch. 33:21 . He had assured them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here, I. The sign by which this was represented to them, and it was a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it¹. He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him (v. 16): Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thy eyes with a stroke.

Note, A married state may very well agree with the prophetic office; it is honourable in all, and therefore not sinful in ministers. Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations. No doubt Ezekiel found a prudent tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity. Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a covering of the eyes (Gen. 20:16), to restrain wandering looks after others; but a desire of the eyes, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the desire of the eyes, which find not any object more grateful.

That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon the desire of our eyes may be removed from us and may become the sorrow of our hearts, which is a good reason why those that have wives should be as though they had none, and those who rejoice in them as though they rejoiced not, 1 Co. 7:29, 1 Co. 7:30 . Death is a stroke which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from. (5.) When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke we must see and own the hand of God in it: I take away the desire of thy eyes. He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleases; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them; and may he not do what he will with his own? (6.) Under afflictions of this kind it is good for us to remember that we are sons of men; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou art a son of Adam, thy wife is a daughter of Eve, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to; and shall the earth be

forsaken for us? According to this prediction, he tells us (v. 18), I spoke unto the people in the morning; for God sent his prophets, rising up early and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe, [1.] Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that.

We may the more easily bear an affliction if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.² He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the natural expressions of sorrow, v. 16. He must not give vent to his passion by weeping, or letting his tears run down, though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and, when the body is sown, it is fit that it should thus be watered.

But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this, though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man and would perhaps be ill thought of by the people if he did it not. Much less might he use the customary formalities of mourners. He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the tire of his head, must put on his shoes, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not cover his lips, not throw a veil over his face (as mourners were wont to do, Lev. 13:45), must not be of a sorrowful countenance, appearing unto men to fast, Mt. 6:18 .

He must not eat the bread of men, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves; but, if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be greatly against the grain to flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but so God commands; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. He appeared in public, in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do, without any signs of mourning.

Here there was something peculiar, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. Though mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had lost our God, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and, of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples.

We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to bless the name of the Lord even when he takes as well as when he gives.

The explication and application of this sign. The people enquired the meaning of it (v. 19): Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us that thou doest so? They knew that Ezekiel was an affectionate husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason and for instruction to them; and perhaps they were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again.

Note, When we are enquiring concerning the things of God our enquiry must be, "What are those things to us? What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort, do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?" Ezekiel gives them an answer verbatim—word for word as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must speak to the house of Israel.

Let them know that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, v. 21. If this was done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God showed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose that Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined: God will take away the desire of your eyes.

Note, The removal of the comforts of others should awaken us to think of parting with ours too; for are we better than they? We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with those that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will take away that which their souls pity, that is, of which they say, What a pity is it that it should be cut off and destroyed! That for which your souls are afraid (so some read it); you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? That which was their public pride, the temple: "I will profane my sanctuary, by giving that into the enemy's hand, to be plundered and burnt."

This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more the desire of our eyes, than any creature-comfort whatsoever. Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be ours too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called the desire of their eyes. Note, Many that are destitute of the power of godliness are yet very fond of the form of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too.

The sanctuary is here called the excellency of their strength; they had many strong-holds and places of defense, but the temple excelled them all. It was the pride of their strength; they prided in it as their strength that they were the temple of the Lord, Jer. 7:4 . Note, The church privileges that men are proud of are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away. That which was their family

pleasure, which they looked upon with delight: “Your sons and your daughters (which are the dearer to you because they are but few left of many, the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans.”

What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures, of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this, was the punishment of sin. Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, You shall do as I have done, v. 22. You shall not mourn nor weep, v. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men shall not lament for the dead nor cut themselves (Jer. 16:6); not that there shall be any such merciful circumstance without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they shall not mourn, for.

Their grief shall be so great that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it; their passions shall stifle them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by giving vent to it. Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be hardened in their sorrows (Job. 6:10) and perfectly stupefied, and moped (as we say), with them. They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs. They shall not have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief: “You will be so entirely taken up with solid substantial grief that you will have no room for the shadow of it.”

Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by covering their lips, and laying aside their ornaments, and going barefoot; for it is well known that everybody is a mourner. There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows: “You shall pine away for your iniquities, with seared consciences and reprobate minds, and you shall mourn, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but one towards another,” murmuring, and fretting, and complaining of God, thus making their burden heavier and their wound more grievous, as impatient people do under their afflictions by mingling their own passions with them. An appeal to the event, for the confirmation of all this (v. 24): “When this comes, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you cannot believe will ever be, then you shall know that I am the Lord God, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign.”

Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are preached will be made to remember them when they are executed. Observe, 1. The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in (v. 25): In that day, that terrible day, when the city shall be broken up, I will take from them, (1.) That which they depended on—their strength, their walls, their treasures, their fortifications, their men of war; none shall stand them instead. (2.) That which they boasted of—the joy of their glory, that which they looked upon as most their glory, and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their God and the palaces of their princes. (3.)

That which they delighted in, which was the desire of their eyes, and on which they set their minds.

Note, Carnal people set their minds upon that on which they can set their eyes; they look at, and dote upon, the things that are seen; and it is their folly to set their minds upon that which they have no assurance of and which may be taken from them in a moment, Prov. 23:5 . Their sons and their daughters were all this—their strength, and joy, and glory; and these shall go into captivity.² The notice that should be brought to the prophet, not be revelation, as the notice of the siege was brought to him (v. 2), but in an ordinary way (v. 26): “He that escapes in that day shall, by a special direction of Providence, come to thee, to bring thee intelligence of it,” which we find was done, ch. 33:21 . The ill-news came slowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow-captives it came too soon.³ The divine impression which he should be under upon receiving that notice, v. 27. Whereas, from this time to that, Ezekiel was thus far dumb that he prophesied no more against the land of Israel, but against the neighbouring nations, as we shall find in the following chapters, then he shall have orders given him to speak again to the children of his people ch. 33:2, ch. 33:22); then his mouth shall be opened.

He was suspended from prophesying against them in the meantime, because, Jerusalem being besieged, his prophecies could not be sent into the city,—because, when God was speaking so loudly by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word,—and because then the accomplishment of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for.

Thus Christ forbade his disciples to preach openly that he was Christ till after his resurrection, because that was to be the full proof of it. “But then thou shalt speak with the greater assurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confusion.” Note, God’s prophets are never silenced but for wise and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again (as he will in due time, for even the witnesses that are slain shall arise) it shall appear to have been for his glory that they were for a while silent, that people may the more certainly and fully know that God is the Lord.

Judgment on Judah’s Neighbors (Ezekiel 25)

It is not known exactly when God gave Ezekiel the prophecies of this chapter, though it is reasonable to assume that they were given prior to the next chronologically dated section of the book. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary says: “The four short oracles against Judah’s immediate neighbors are a continuation of Ezekiel’s dated judgment message that began at 24:1 and concludes at 25:17. This, therefore, was originally a singular series of messages, all delivered at the same time according to Ezekiel’s normal chronological notices. The messages in this series announce judgment on Judah [our previous reading] and then turn to denounce the surrounding nations that had rejoiced over Judah’s downfall and had hoped for personal spoil and gain. God announced judgment on these nations lest their gleeful taunts continue and the exiles question his faithfulness to his promises” (note on verses 1-7).

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

God says to the Ammonites that they will suffer His judgment “because you said, ‘Aha!’ against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity” (verse 3). This might seem to apply to their attitude after the fall of Jerusalem, and certainly God could have foreseen this even before it happened. Indeed, prophecies often portray things that are yet future in the past tense, demonstrating the certainty of their fulfillment. Nevertheless, the statement could just as well describe what had already happened by the early stages of the siege—the period in which we are chronologically placing this section. God’s temple was profaned when, as already mentioned, it was twice stripped of treasure by the Babylonians. In fact, “profaned” seems to go much better with that than with the ultimate razing of the temple—which was much more than defilement. The desolation of the land of Israel could apply to what happened much earlier to the northern kingdom. It could also apply to the last item mentioned in verse 3: the massive deportations Judah had already suffered, including any carrying away of people that happened early in the current invasion.

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

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

Of the Edomites, God said they “greatly offended” by taking vengeance on His people. While Edom did this at the time of Judah’s fall, it had a long history of such action: “The transgressions most characteristic of Edom were its perpetual animosity and repeated,

vindictive acts of violence against Israel. The Hebrew words rendered greatly offended ('be guilty') may indicate continuous or repeated rather than intensive behavior" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 12).

In verse 14 God surprisingly declares, "I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel." This certainly did not happen in Ezekiel's day. The Expositor's Bible Commentary states: "Other passages in the O[l]d T[estament] indicate that...[Edom's] punishment would be executed by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 9:26; 25:21; 27:1-11). Certainly Ezekiel 32:29 and Malachi 1:2-5 assume that Edom's desolation was past. However, God also declared that he would execute his vengeance on Edom in return for its vengeance on Judah and would do so through the instrumentality of Israel. The historical context of Ezekiel's day precluded this event from happening at that time. However, Ezekiel and other prophets declared that Israel would possess Edom in the end time as well (cf. 35:1-36:15; Isa 11:14; Dan 11:41; Amos 9:12; Obad 18)" (note on Ezekiel 25:12-14, emphasis added).

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

In Ezekiel 25, God does not mention the Edomites coming to know Him as the true God. Rather, He simply says, "They shall know My vengeance" (verse 14). In an end-time context, this may be because Edom will apparently be completely destroyed, with no survivors left, when Christ returns (see Obadiah 18). (The Edomites will apparently have to wait for the second resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20:5 to be given their opportunity to turn to God in sincere repentance.)

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

The chapter ends with God declaring vengeance to befall the Philistines (or Cherethites, as the Philistines or a major part of them are also called). "God's great vengeance against the Philistines was a judgment 'in kind' for their revengeful attitude and actions against Judah. His destruction of Philistia would be complete, even consuming the remnant of them that were on

the coast... Though the time of this punishment on Philistia was not stated, the context assumes time in harmony with the three verdicts executed on Ammon, Moab, and Edom by Babylon (cf. Jer 25:20; 47:1-7). The ultimate fruition of this judgment would be realized when Israel possesses Philistia in the end time (cf. Isa 11:14; Joel 3:1-4; Obad 19; Zeph 2:4-7)" (note on Ezekiel 25:15-17). Interestingly, today's Palestinians are actually named after the Philistines—and many Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip on the southern Israeli Mediterranean coastline, the region of ancient Philistia. This land will eventually be returned to the Israelites.

1 Peter 1-2 (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

Chapter 1

The apostle blesses God for his special benefits through Christ. (1-9) Salvation by Christ foretold in ancient prophecy. (10-12) All are exhorted to holy conversation. (13-16) Such as is suitable to their principles, privileges, and obligations. (17-25)

Verses 1-9 This epistle is addressed to believers in general, who are strangers in every city or country where they live, and are scattered through the nations. These are to ascribe their salvation to the electing love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost; and so to give glory to one God in three Persons, into whose name they had been baptized. Hope, in the world's phrase, refers only to an uncertain good, for all worldly hopes are tottering, built upon sand, and the worldling's hopes of heaven are blind and groundless conjectures.

But the hope of the sons of the living God is a living hope; not only as to its object, but as to its effect also. It enlivens and comforts in all distresses, enables to meet and get over all difficulties. Mercy is the spring of all this; yea, great mercy and manifold mercy. And this well-grounded hope of salvation, is an active and living principle of obedience in the soul of the believer. The matter of a Christian's joy, is the remembrance of the happiness laid up for him. It is incorruptible, it cannot come to nothing, it is an estate that cannot be spent. Also undefiled; this signifies its purity and perfection. And it fadeth not; is not sometimes more or less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself. All possessions here are stained with defects and failings; still something is wanting: fair houses have sad cares flying about the gilded and ceiled roofs; soft beds and full tables, are often with sick bodies and uneasy stomachs.

All possessions are stained with sin, either in getting or in using them. How ready we are to turn the things we possess into occasions and instruments of sin, and to think there is no liberty or delight in their use, without abusing them! Worldly possessions are uncertain and soon pass away, like the flowers and plants of the field. That must be of the greatest worth, which is laid up in the highest and best place, in heaven. Happy are those whose hearts the Holy Spirit sets on this inheritance. God not only gives his people grace, but preserves them unto glory.

Every believer has always something wherein he may greatly rejoice; it should show itself in the countenance and conduct. The Lord does not willingly afflict, yet his wise love often appoints sharp trials, to show his people their hearts, and to do them good at the latter end. Gold does not increase by trial in the fire, it becomes less; but faith is made firm, and multiplied, by troubles and afflictions. Gold must perish at last, and can only purchase perishing things, while the trial of faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory. Let this reconcile us to present afflictions. Seek then to believe Christ's excellence in himself, and his love to us; this will kindle such a fire in the heart as will make it rise up in a sacrifice of love to him. And the glory of God and our own happiness are so united, that if we sincerely seek the one now, we shall attain the other when the soul shall no more be subject to evil. The certainty of this hope is as if believers had already received it.

Verses 10-12 Jesus Christ was the main subject of the prophets' studies. Their inquiry into the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow, would lead to a view of the whole gospel, the sum whereof is, That Christ Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. God is pleased to answer our necessities rather than our requests. The doctrine of the prophets, and that of the apostles, exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit; its success depends upon his operation and blessing. Let us then search diligently those Scriptures which contain the doctrines of salvation.

Verses 13-16 As the traveller, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer, gathered in their long and loose garments, that they might be ready in their business, so let Christians do by their minds and affections. Be sober, be watchful against all spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate in all behaviour. Be sober-minded in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves. A strong and perfect trust in the grace of God, is agreeable with best endeavours in our duty. Holiness is the desire and duty of every Christian. It must be in all affairs, in every condition, and towards all people. We must especially watch and pray against the sins to which we are inclined. The written word of God is the surest rule of a Christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to be holy every way. God makes those holy whom he saves.

Verses 17-25 Holy confidence in God as a Father, and awful fear of him as a Judge, agree together; and to regard God always as a Judge, makes him dear to us as a Father. If believers do evil, God will visit them with corrections. Then, let Christians not doubt God's faithfulness to his promises, nor give way to enslaving dread of his wrath, but let them reverence his holiness. The fearless professor is defenceless, and Satan takes him captive at his will; the desponding professor has no heart to avail himself of his advantages, and is easily brought to surrender. The price paid for man's redemption was the precious blood of Christ. Not only openly wicked, but unprofitable conversation is highly dangerous, though it may plead custom.

It is folly to resolve, I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so. God had purposes of special favour toward his people, long before he made manifest such grace unto them. But the clearness of light, the supports of faith, the power of ordinances, are all much

greater since Christ came upon earth, than they were before. The comfort is, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory is an assurance that where he is we shall be also, (John 14:3) . The soul must be purified, before it can give up its own desires and indulgences. And the word of God planted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is a means of spiritual life, stirring up to our duty, working a total change in the dispositions and affections of the soul, till it brings to eternal life. In contrast with the excellence of the renewed spiritual man, as born again, observe the vanity of the natural man. In his life, and in his fall, he is like grass, the flower of grass, which soon withers and dies away.

We should hear, and thus receive and love, the holy, living word, and rather hazard all than lose it; and we must banish all other things from the place due to it. We should lodge it in our hearts as our only treasures here, and the certain pledge of the treasure of glory laid up for believers in heaven.

Chapter 2

A temper suitable to the Christian character as born again, is recommended. (1-10) Holy conversation among the Gentiles directed. (11,12) Subjects exhorted to pay all proper obedience to their civil governors. (13-17) Also servants to their masters, and all to be patient, according to the example of the suffering Saviour. (18-25)

Verses 1-10 Evil-speaking is a sign of malice and guile in the heart; and hinders our profiting by the word of God. A new life needs suitable food. Infants desire milk, and make the best endeavours for it which they are able to do; such must be a Christian's desires after the word of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is very merciful to us miserable sinners; and he has a fulness of grace. But even the best of God's servants, in this life, have only a taste of the consolations of God. Christ is called a Stone, to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built. He is precious in the excellence of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the glory of his services.

All true believers are a holy priesthood; sacred to God, serviceable to others, endowed with heavenly gifts and graces. But the most spiritual sacrifices of the best in prayer and praise are not acceptable, except through Jesus Christ. Christ is the chief Corner-stone, that unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric. Elected, or chosen, for a foundation that is everlasting. Precious beyond compare, by all that can give worth. To be built on Christ means, to believe in him; but in this many deceive themselves, they consider not what it is, nor the necessity of it, to partake of the salvation he has wrought. Though the frame of the world were falling to pieces, that man who is built on this foundation may hear it without fear. He shall not be confounded.

The believing soul makes haste to Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten from him. All true Christians are a chosen generation; they make one family, a people distinct from the world: of another spirit, principle, and practice; which they could never be, if they were not chosen in Christ to be such, and sanctified by his Spirit. Their first state is a state of gross darkness, but

they are called out of darkness into a state of joy, pleasure, and prosperity; that they should show forth the praises of the Lord by their profession of his truth, and their good conduct. How vast their obligations to Him who has made them his people, and has shown mercy to them! To be without this mercy is a woeful state, though a man have all worldly enjoyments. And there is nothing that so kindly works repentance, as right thoughts of the mercy and love of God. Let us not dare to abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean to be saved by it; but let all who would be found among those who obtain mercy, walk as his people.

Verses 11-12 Even the best of men, the chosen generation, the people of God, need to be exhorted to keep from the worst sins. And fleshly lusts are most destructive to man's soul. It is a sore judgment to be given up to them. There is a day of visitation coming, wherein God may call to repentance by his word and his grace; then many will glorify God, and the holy lives of his people will have promoted the happy change.

Verses 13-17 A Christian conversation must be honest; which it cannot be, if there is not a just and careful discharge of all relative duties: the apostle here treats of these distinctly. Regard to those duties is the will of God, consequently, the Christian's duty, and the way to silence the base slanders of ignorant and foolish men. Christians must endeavour, in all relations, to behave aright, that they do not make their liberty a cloak or covering for any wickedness, or for the neglect of duty; but they must remember that they are servants of God.

Verses 18-25 Servants in those days generally were slaves, and had heathen masters, who often used them cruelly; yet the apostle directs them to be subject to the masters placed over them by Providence, with a fear to dishonor or offend God. And not only to those pleased with reasonable service, but to the severe, and those angry without cause. The sinful misconduct of one relation, does not justify sinful behaviour in the other; the servant is bound to do his duty, though the master may be sinfully froward and perverse. But masters should be meek and gentle to their servants and inferiors.

What glory or distinction could it be, for professed Christians to be patient when corrected for their faults? But if when they behaved well they were ill-treated by proud and passionate heathen masters, yet bore it without peevish complaints, or purposes of revenge, and persevered in their duty, this would be acceptable to God as a distinguishing effect of his grace, and would be rewarded by him. Christ's death was designed not only for an example of patience under sufferings, but he bore our sins; he bore the punishment of them, and thereby satisfied Divine justice. Hereby he takes them away from us.

The fruits of Christ's sufferings are the death of sin, and a new holy life of righteousness; for both which we have an example, and powerful motives, and ability to perform also, from the death and resurrection of Christ. And our justification; Christ was bruised and crucified as a sacrifice for our sins, and by his stripes the diseases of our souls are cured. Here is man's sin; he goes astray; it is his own act. His misery; he goes astray from the pasture, from the Shepherd, and from the flock, and so exposes himself to dangers without number. Here is the recovery by conversion; they are now returned as the effect of Divine grace. This return is,

from all their errors and wanderings, to Christ. Sinners, before their conversion, are always going astray; their life is a continued error.