

Bible Study # 56
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Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 17—32

This evening we **are covering the mid-section of Ezekiel—chapters 17—32**. There are crucial parts in this section **that focus in on the prophecies of the continuity of David's dynasty in spite of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews**. This is something to note because God had made a promise to David at the time David desired to build the temple. He told David, 'You're not going to build a house for Me.' There were reasons for that. God said, 'Instead, what I will do, I will build a house for you. I am going to establish your dynasty.' God said, 'I'm going to establish that forever' (I Chronicles 17:4-14).

God made that promise to David and the dynasty had continued along for, let's say, in the neighborhood of over 400 years. Now, we come to a time of the Babylonian captivity where Jerusalem is going to be destroyed. To all apparent visible signs, the dynasty of David is going to cease to rule. Was God's promise proved to be of no effect? God made a promise to David and even specifically told him, 'If your descendants, who sit upon your throne, sin, I will chasten him, but I won't turn away from him as I did from Saul. I will chasten him, but I will not reject him as I did the family of Saul' (II Samuel 7:13-16). God had made a covenant, a promise, to King David.

The people of God who were alive at that time had understood that promise. At least, they understood there was a promise and they had, as many times is the case, read things in. God made a promise that He was going to preserve the throne of David and, undoubtedly, they had assumed it would be done in Jerusalem over Judah. Therefore, that meant the uninterrupted continuation of the line there in Jerusalem in Judah. That's not what God said. But we can all have a tendency to read things in and to assume things that aren't necessarily there.

This is a lesson for prophecy (and prophecy even for today) to realize there are times we may have assumed things that are not always necessarily what the text says. Many of the Jews had assumed that the promise to David meant the unbroken continuation there in Jerusalem over Judah. That's not what God had in mind. In fact, the dynasty was continued and does continue, but

the throne of David today is located in London. The throne was overturned, overturned, overturned. It was overturned from Jerusalem to Tara, Ireland; from Tara, Ireland, to Scone, Scotland; and from Scone, Scotland, to London, England.

Ezekiel 21:27 (KJV), "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more [overturned], until He comes whose right it is; and I will give it to Him." —In other words, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

This evening we will notice a couple of things relating to that and relating to some of the prophecies of David's dynasty. We **will notice some of the specific indictments of the sins of modern Israel and the ultimate punishment**. We find some of these things outlined here in Ezekiel.

Also, **the origin of Satan is addressed in Ezekiel 28**. This is a section of Scripture Mr. Herbert Armstrong used to go back to many times. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28—we've heard him talk about Lucifer and tie it in with Genesis 1, the two trees. He kept doing that because he felt like people didn't really get the point. I think, sometimes, some who thought they got the point didn't; that has been shown. In Ezekiel 22, there is interesting information that we will bring into focus a little more clearly as we come to it.

Ezekiel 17 is a parable to the house of Israel. Now, understand something. This is a parable to the house of Israel. Remember, as we went through the last Bible study, the house of Israel had already gone into captivity over 125 years before Ezekiel ever wrote this. Ezekiel was with the captives of Judah in the southern Mesopotamian area, which wouldn't be a good place to be in the modern-day Iraq.

He was kind of like some of the captives that are over there now. Saddam Hussein kind of saw himself as a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar. They had already started a construction project. He wanted to rebuild the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon with the hanging gardens. They hadn't gotten around to rebuilding the palace, but they had put up a sign saying, "The palace of Nebuchadnezzar, rebuilt in the era of Saddam Hussein." He really was kind of equating himself with being the great conqueror. He was "riding high in the saddle."

Ezekiel was dealing with his ancient counterpart and he was a hostage of centuries ago. He wasn't any freer to leave Babylon than our hostages are to leave modern-day Iraq. Ezekiel couldn't travel all the way up to the area where the Israelites

were captive, which would be located on the border of modern-day Iran and the Soviet Union. The Israelites weren't in the area where Ezekiel was. They had already been taken captive 125 years earlier. It's kind of late to come in and give them a warning.

One hundred twenty-five years ago from today is 1865. It's kind of like somebody standing up today and prophesying that if the South doesn't repent, it is going to lose the War Between the States. You'd say that it's a little late to address that issue.

This is exactly the time period we're talking about. To come along and tell the house of Israel, 'If you don't repent, you are going to go into captivity,' would be like getting on television today and telling Louisiana, 'If you don't repent, the Union troops are going to come in and you're going to lose the War Between the States.' What does that have to do with anything? That's over with.

The reason I emphasize that is to prove that Ezekiel's message was not for his day. It's not that God forgot to send Israel a warning—then He sent one. Then somebody said, 'That was all over with 125 years ago!' And God said, 'How time flies; I forgot!' God didn't forget. The message Ezekiel was given has implications down through time.

We already saw that Ezekiel makes a clear distinction between the house of Israel and Judah. A very good place to prove that is in Ezekiel 4:5, 'he is to bear the iniquity of the house of Israel for 390 days.'

Verse 6, 'he is to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah for 40 days.'

The book of Ezekiel makes a clear-cut distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Ezekiel 17 is a parable for the house of Israel, not the house of Judah.

In his parable, verses 1-4, he sees a great eagle that came to a big cedar in Lebanon. He cropped off one of the young twigs, carried it into a land of traffic and set it in a city of merchants.

Verses 5-7, he took also of the seed of the land and planted it in a fruitful field, planted it by great waters and it grew into a willow tree. And it grew. Then another eagle with great wings came. What is all this talking about?

In verses 12-13, it talks about how the king of Babylon is going to take Jerusalem and the kings and the princes, lead them to Babylon and take captive of the king's offspring.

Then we come to something else. He is talking about Babylon captivity, but notice as we come down.

Verses 22-24, "Thus says the Lord God: 'I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and I set it out. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish....'"

He was told to take of the highest branch of the high cedar. The high cedar represented Israel. The highest branch would represent the king. He was to go to the family of the king (that's the highest branch of the tree) and from it he was to chop off one of the young twigs. In other words, this would be one of the children of the king, "a tender one." This would be a daughter as opposed to a son.

So one of the king's daughters was to be taken and planted upon a high and prominent mountain. A mountain is used in Bible prophecy to symbolize a nation. We are told in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 how the Lord's house will be established in the top of the mountain and the hills will flow up to it. It talks about the seven mountains in Revelation 17:9. The seven mountains are seven kings. "Mountain" is used as symbolic of a great nation. "Hill" symbolizes a small nation. Here was a great nation that one of the king's daughters was to be taken.

Verses 22-23, she was to be planted elsewhere, in a high mountain, a great nation. It was to take root and it was to be fruitful. In other words, she would marry and have children, descendants; "... it will bring forth boughs and bear fruit...."

So you've taken this young tender twig; you've rooted it elsewhere. Another great tree grows up from there that will ultimately become a great empire that will have worldwide implications.

Verse 23, it is going to be a great tree, "...and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell."

This was symbolic of all the nations that would dwell under it. In other words, you are going to crop off a little tender twig, root it, take it to another mountain, plant it and it's going to become a great tree. It is going to produce and be

fruitful; everything is going to come and dwell there.

Zedekiah was the last king of Judah. He was the last occupant of the throne of David there in Jerusalem. One of his daughters was married to the son of the high king of Ireland. The present day British royal family traces back to that dynasty, the dynasty that was actually transferred by Jeremiah the prophet. We went through that when we covered the book of Jeremiah. You can read some of the background in the booklet, *What's Ahead for America and Britain?* It goes into some of that.

That dynasty ultimately ruled over an empire that came to have worldwide implications. "The sun never set on the British Empire" was the saying because literally there are far-flung British dominions around the world. Even though the British Empire is greatly dissipated and disappeared, it is still that throne—the throne of David—that is the common bond that links people. There's still people all over the world that are linked by allegiance to that common throne, whether in Canada, Australia, New Zealand or even certain areas of the Caribbean, certain Pacific islands, as well as Britain itself. A Canadian coin, stamp or dollar bill has the Queen of England's picture on it. She is not only the Queen of England, but she is also the Queen of Canada. That is a part of the birthright blessings—the throne of David—that God established. There is reference to it right here.

In Ezekiel 18, there are a couple of very clear-cut scriptures that show that there isn't an immortal soul.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 both state, "...the soul who sins shall die." Here are very clear-cut scriptures that show that "soul" does not equate with "immortality."

The context of Ezekiel 18 is that God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (v. 32). God wants people to repent. We will ultimately have to bear the consequences of what we have done. If we repent, God will spare us; if we don't, we will die. The soul that sins, it shall die.

Verse 21, "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die."

Here we have a definition of repentance. Repentance is defined as turning around and going the other way. To receive God's forgiveness and mercy, we have to repent; we have to turn from our sins. That means we have

been going one direction—the way of sin and we have made a "U-turn" in the middle of the road. We turned around and started going the other way. We have turned from our sins and have begun to obey God.

Now, our obedience does not earn forgiveness, but it is the outward demonstration of our repentance. The sacrifice of Christ paid the penalty for our sins. There isn't any amount of law-keeping that is going to earn us forgiveness. But if we're not keeping the law, it is pretty evident that we're not trying to turn away from sin and we're not repentant. Because if I'm repentant, that means I don't want to be like the world. I don't want to be like the devil. I want to be like God. I desire to be like God. I'm trying to turn away from the old and embrace the new.

Verse 23, God has no pleasure that the wicked should die. What God desires is that the wicked will repent, that he will turn from his ways and live. This is important and it reflects the mind of God. God desires and delights to see not the punishment of the wicked but the repentance of the wicked.

Verse 31, "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" This is prophecy of conversion, a new heart. God does not delight in seeing our punishment; He wants us to repent.

We also see in this section that our good past actions or of our parents are not going to get us out of trouble.

Verse 24, "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die."

Matthew 24:13, that's why Jesus said, "...he who endures to the end shall be saved."

We have to keep on keeping on. You can't go along and do what's right for a while and then decide to quit, do wrong and turn away from God. Do you think God will say, 'He did keep the Sabbath for several years before he quit. He kept it for ten years; then he left the Church and broke it for five. So, we forget about these five because he kept it twice as long as he didn't.' That's not the way it works. If we turn away from obedience to God, then we've gotten off the track.

Jesus said, "He who endures to the end shall be saved." We have to hang on. We can't just say, "Way back when I used to do "such and such" or my parents used to do "such and such." We each have to be responsible for what we do.

Ezekiel 20 is an important concept; it makes an interesting point. It talks about God's choosing of Israel.

Ezekiel 20:5, "...Thus says the Lord God: 'On the day when I chose Israel and lifted My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I lifted My hand in an oath to them, saying, "I am the Lord your God."'" He told them, 'I am your God.'

Verses 7-8, "Then I said to them, "Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt" I am the Lord your God. But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt...."

God said, verse 10, I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I brought them into the wilderness.

Verses 11-13, "And I gave them My statutes, showed them My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them. Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me that they might know that I am the Eternal who sanctifies them. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths...."

God shows and what we find here is that Israel did not willingly forsake Egypt. They did not willingly turn its back on and forsake Egypt. God took the people out of Egypt, but taking Egypt out of the people was a different matter.

We have to understand they did not cast away the abominations that were before their eyes. They did not forsake the idols of Egypt. They did not forsake them in their mind. This is the important part of conversion. It is something fundamental. We have to understand; it's not enough to outwardly forsake the idols of Egypt. We have to forsake them in our mind because if we don't forsake them in our mind, when we are provided with the right set of opportunities, we will turn back to them because we never turned loose of them in our mind to begin with.

The Egyptians worshiped the golden calf, the Aphis bull. Israel did not physically take a golden calf with them out of Egypt. Israel did not take one with them, but when Moses was gone six weeks, they made one like they remembered (Exodus 32). They took it with them in their minds, and when they were given the opportunity to do what they wanted to do, that was what they wanted to do. They longingly remembered what they had ceased to do. When they got the opportunity, they went back to it.

If you had the opportunity, to what would you go back? Do you really chafe under not being able to set up a Christmas tree? If you had the chance, boy, you would like to do that. What are you longingly looking back for? Easter eggs? That's the big thing—"Surely wish we could have Easter sunrise service in the Church." What do we want to go back to? Do we want to be involved in this world's politics—trying to get old "honest Joe" elected because he could solve all the problems in the country and the state. He says he will. They all say they will. They've been saying that since anyone ran for office.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebet, ran for king of Israel (I Kings 12). No new taxes! That was his pledge; he was going to reduce the old taxes. That's not any great new thing. That's what got Rehoboam kicked out of office and Jeroboam put in. What did Jeroboam do? Pretty soon he had changed the Feast and done all kinds of things (I Kings 12:32). From that time on, God tells us all the kings of Israel walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He wasn't a good king, but people thought he was going to be "just the man." He was the guy they wanted. He was the people's choice.

We look at it; most of us are not going to go out, physically sit down and carve a great golden calf and start bowing down to it. We think we wouldn't do a thing like that. God uses Egypt as a type of this world. We have to understand there is a principle here. Israel left Egypt reluctantly. They kept rebelling every time they got the opportunity. They kept going back because they didn't leave it in their mind.

When we're in God's Kingdom, is God going to be worried that over in our corner of the universe we're building golden calves? God is off somewhere and as soon as we think nobody is looking over in our solar system (our galaxy or whatever it is), we're manufacturing golden calves for everybody to worship. We're instituting Christmas, Halloween and Easter; we're having people put up Christmas trees and

hide Easter eggs over in our corner of the universe. God's not going to have to be worried that we're going to be trying to bring Egypt in and create little Egypt over there. God not only wants to bring us out of Egypt, He wants to get Egypt out of us. That's what conversion is all about.

Ezekiel 36:26, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...." God says, 'I'll clean you up on the inside.' If we are cleaned up on the inside, the outside will take care of itself.

The problem with the Israelites was they got cleaned up on the outside several different times, but they never got cleaned up on the inside. As soon as they got the opportunity, the inside manifested itself on the outside. God wants more than a veneer of righteousness. He wants a heart and mind that is yielded and surrendered to Him. He wants us to walk in His ways. He wants a new heart. Israel did not willingly forsake Egypt.

Hopefully, we have willingly forsaken Egypt. Sooner or later God will give us all a chance to turn back because He wants to see if we will. He wants to see what's in our heart. That's what He said in Deuteronomy 8. That's why He led them 40 years in the wilderness. He wanted to humble them and to prove what was in their heart.

Sooner or later, God will give you the opportunity to turn back to Egypt. Proverbially or symbolically, Moses will be gone for 40 days. You'll have the opportunity to turn back to Egypt. Will you? God wants to know what's in our hearts. If we're really converted and yielded to God, we don't want Egypt. We saw what it was and we don't want it. We want God's Kingdom. We may not do everything perfectly, but we're striving for it. We want it and our mistakes are not mistakes of intent. Our mistakes are with the weaknesses we're struggling against and the pressures around. But we're striving and our eyes are set on the Kingdom. We want it and we want to be like God. This is fundamental to what conversion is all about.

Ezekiel 20:12, the Sabbath was given as a sign. It's made plain that God's Sabbaths are signs. They identify God. They identify that we serve the Creator God because the Sabbath harks back to the time of creation.

In verses 21-25, it's made plain that Israel did not willingly obey God. They rebelled against Him. Every time they got the opportunity, they rebelled. I've made the point before.

After the Ten Commandments were given, Moses went up into the mountain for 40 days. He wasn't up there 40 days because it took God that

long to write the Ten Commandments with His finger. That wasn't the problem. God could have zapped the Ten Commandments and had Moses back down in 40 minutes instead of 40 days. In fact, He could have saved Moses the trouble and sent an angel to bring down the Ten Commandments to them. If Moses had never left, they would have never built the golden calf because Moses wouldn't have let them, would he? Look what he did to the golden calf when he got back and found it.

God wasn't going to let them stay in the golden-calf business because they were His Church. He was going to work with them. He had a job that spanned hundreds of years—many, many centuries and millennia. God had a purpose He was working out and He was going to use Israel. He wasn't going to just let them go into the golden-calf business and forget all about it.

He brought Moses back, but He also let Moses stay gone long enough for the people to have the opportunity to do what was in their heart if they thought Moses was dead and gone and away from there. God wanted to find out what they would do. 'Oh, for the good old days in Egypt.' Somebody comes up with an idea and here they go.

There is a very important spiritual principle we have to think about because God is working with us and God looks on the heart. He is seeking to work with us in our hearts and minds. If our hearts and minds are really yielded to Him, other things will fall into place. We will do the other things because we are motivated from the heart, as opposed to doing the other things because somebody's standing there ready to zap us if we don't. We find that they didn't willingly obey.

Ezekiel 20:24-25, "because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their father's idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live." Some misunderstand and say, 'See, God's law is bad. God says He gave them statutes that weren't good.'

Some Protestants like to point to this and say, 'The Sabbath is bad; God even says He gave them bad laws. That's why Christ had to come and do away with it. That's why Christ came and nailed the law to the cross because the law was bad. It says so right here, doesn't it? God gave them statutes that weren't good and judgments whereby they couldn't live. Boy, this really proves the Sabbath was done away!' No, that's

not what it proves at all. Let's read it in context. That's always the key.

Verses 24-25, "because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their father's idols. Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live."

Hold your place there, and let's go back to Psalm 81:11-14. This is one you might cross-reference in your Bible. I have it written in the margin in my Bible.

Psalm 81:11-14, "But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels. Oh, that My people would listen to Me, that Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, and turn My hand against their adversaries."

'If they had really yielded to Me, I would have taken care of their problems.'

Verse 12 (KJV), but notice what He says, "so I gave them up to their own heart's lust, and they walked in their own counsel."

Ezekiel 20:25, "...I gave them statutes that weren't good..."

Psalm 81:12, "...I gave them up to their own heart's lusts..." 'I let them pursue things that seemed good to them.'

Acts 7:38-39, "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles [the living law] to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt."

Interesting! This is the New Testament analysis! This is the application that I've just been making in Ezekiel, of treating the principles of the Exodus as a spiritual analogy. That's not some idea that I came up with. That's what Peter and Steven and the others said. They did the same thing. They used it as a spiritual example. It was a literal historical account, but it was also a spiritual type.

Verses 39-43, "whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, "Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven, as it is written in the book of

the Prophets: "Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? Yes, you took up the tabernacle of Moloch..."

The point of Ezekiel 20:24-25 is that when Israel did not value and appreciate God's righteous laws, He gave them over to do things that weren't good. The statutes that weren't good were not statutes that originated with God; they originated with the lusts and desires of the people—and God gave them up to do it. In other words, He allowed them to do it and to get the consequences of it.

Ezekiel 20:30, God is going to deal with them and He is going to say, "Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations?'" Do you do all these things?

Verse 31, "...So shall I be inquired of you, O house of Israel? As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I will not be inquired of by you."

Verses 30-31, we might point out that when it talks about, "...defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers...For when you offer gifts and make your sons pass through the fire..." they sacrificed children to the idols. We think that is horrible and, yet, we see in our nation a generation that has literally been sacrificed on the altar of materialism. Do you think that is less grievous in God's sight? A generation has been sacrificed (been thrown away), been passed through the fires of a decadent, materialistic, selfish, convenience-oriented society of parents who don't want to be bothered. Parents want to go out and pursue their own selfish interests and ambitions and are not centered there in terms of home and family.

We see the consequences. We see the devastation that has taken place. Now, we are into the generation who are the children of the generation sacrificed. We are seeing the spiraling, colossal problems that are just devastating our nation. It goes back to a set of values. We live in a very materialistic, self-centered, convenience-oriented society. People don't want to sacrifice. They don't want to give up anything and focus in on their responsibilities. There are some very strong parallels.

Verses 31-32, "As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I will not be inquired of by you. What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, "We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone."

In other words, we want to be just like everybody else. We are willing to be like all the other nations. This is what Israel of old wanted to do. The attraction of the world around has always been the battle that God's people have had to face. If you go back to the book of Judges, you will find that's why God didn't immediately get rid of all the Canaanites out of the land. He wanted something there, in effect, for the people to have to make a choice.

Christ hasn't taken us out of the world and stuck us off somewhere in a little cave where we are totally isolated and insulated from the influences of the world. We have to daily reject the world and choose God. We're surrounded by this influence and this pull. It's a battle. That's the way we build character. How do you build your muscles? You build muscles by exercise and by pushing them against resistance. That's the way we build our spiritual character. We're resisting the world. God could have isolated us. He could have told His people to do what the Amish do, to create their own little society. Christ didn't tell His disciples to do that. He just simply didn't. That wasn't what God had in mind.

He talks about how they will go into captivity.

Verse 38, "I will purge the rebels from among you..."

Verse 43, "And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed." They will come to repentance.

Ezekiel 21:2, "Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, preach against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel."

Verses 26-27, "thus says the Lord God: 'Remove the turban [KJV, "diadem"], and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the lowly, and abase the exalted. Overthrow, overthrow, I will make it overthrown! [KJV, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it..."] It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him.'" The crown was taken off.

There were two lines that came from Judah—Zarah and Pharez. Judah had twin boys. One started to come out first and the scarlet thread was put around his wrist. But he withdrew his arm and the brother was born first. A breach was created because here was one who started to come out first, but he was not entirely born. He had the scarlet thread to identify him as first-born, but then he wasn't the first-born. The other one, Pharez, came out. Pharez was the one that

actually was totally born first. He was the one who came down through the birthright of the scepter promise. In other words, the birthright of the scepter promise is in the family of Judah, not of Israel. Judah had the scepter promise, the promise of the line of kings.

You might want to be aware of the scripture, one that is good to have written down.

I Chronicles 5:2, "yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's—" Judah had the scepter, the chief ruler; the line of kings came through Judah. But the birthright (material and national promise, wealth, prosperity, power) was Joseph's. That is clearly defined in I Chronicles 5:2. It is a good verse to clearly show that.

The line of Pharez had continued down through King David and through the lines of David. The Zarah line—the descendants of Zarah, the royal family in Ireland—traced their descent back through the Trojan kings.

Now the crown was being taken off the Pharez branch. It was going to exalt the branch that is low (the Zarah branch), the one that had the scarlet thread. The one that was high (Pharez) is being put down; the one that was low is being raised up. But really it is reuniting because the daughter of the Pharez branch was marrying the son of the Zarah branch. This is reuniting it.

Ezekiel 21:26, "...Remove the turban [diadem], take off the crown..." We are going to transfer it from one branch of the tribe of Judah to the other branch of the tribe of Judah.

Verse 27 (KJV), "I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it [Jerusalem to Tara, Tara to Scone, Scone to London] and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it to Him."—In other words, Jesus Christ.

In Ezekiel 22, we find the sins of the people characterized. It talks about violence, oppression of the defenseless, Sabbath breaking, sex sins, greed and extortion—all these various things.

Verses 2-3, the city sheds blood. It talks about the bloody city and all of the violence.

Ezekiel 22:7, "...they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow." Taking advantage of those who are not able to fend for themselves or who are at a disadvantage because of some minority status. Taking advantage of the fatherless and the widow is a very serious matter.

Verse 8, "You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths."

Verse 9, "...in your midst they commit lewdness." It goes on to all sorts of things.

Verses 10-13 even talk about adultery, incest and various problems of this sort. It talks about violence and murder for hire. It talks about greed and things of this sort.

Verses 14-15, God says, 'You think I'm going to put up with this? I am going to scatter you among the nations and you will be dispersed.' The house of Israel is going to be dealt with.

Verses 25-28, "'The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst. Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people and to get dishonest gain. Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them....'"

God indicts the three leadership elements of society. He indicts **the prophets, the priests and the princes**. Now let's identify them in modern parlance.

We've often talked about false prophets. Many times we have limited our concept of false prophets to identifying them with some of the television evangelists and radio preachers. We need to understand that while they are false prophets, they are only a tiny percentage and their impact on society is minimal overall.

The word "**prophet**" in the Hebrew language is "*nabiy*" and it means "one who announces or proclaims a message." It is a word that in our modern terminology **would best reflect the entire scope of the media**. They're the ones who have impact and are a very powerful segment of society. They're the ones accused of daubing with untempered mortar; in other words, doing a whitewash job on what the other two have done. They have not really shown things clearly for what they are. They have not proclaimed the proper message. They kind of stick together and they have their approach. They have their line, so to speak, that they convey and people place credence in. So God indicts the media, those who announce and proclaim to society. This would certainly include the religious media but also the secular false prophets—the whole gamut of media.

Next are the **priests** who **are the leaders of organized religion**. They're indicted for the fact that they haven't done their job. They should have been teaching the people the difference between right and wrong and they haven't done it. They have tried to water down and do away with the law. They say the law is done away. They've hidden their eyes from God's Sabbath. They have so watered down and profaned that they haven't even taught the people the difference in terms of absolute right and wrong. We have major Christian churches in this nation arguing over whether or not they should ordain homosexuals. That's incredible! Here they are claiming to be God's representatives and they're not spending their time indicting some of these things as a sin (for which God is going to send the nation into captivity). They're talking about whether or not they want to ordain them and perform marriages between them. Incredible! Absolutely incredible!

Verse 26, "'Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy... [They haven't taught people the difference between right and wrong.]...they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths....'" God indicts the media, those who announce and proclaim to the nation, those to whom the nation looks. He indicts the religious leadership, the leaders of organized religion who have molded and set the stage in that way.

Then God indicts the **princes**. The princes were those who controlled power and wealth in ancient times and they are the ones who control the power and the wealth today. These **would be the leaders of government and finance, the people who control the money and the governmental power**.

If you're going to look at it, what we have are the segments of society, the opinion molders: the media, the religious leadership and those who control the government (those who have the power) in terms of government and wealth. He indicts each of these—the leadership, the princes, those who control the power and money—for being greedy and doing anything they can just to get dishonest gain. They misuse their power and their wealth. They are like wolves ravaging the prey. They are out for what they can get. We see some very strong indictments on three segments of society into which God divides the leadership. Their contributions are brought out.

In Ezekiel 23, God uses the illustration of whoredom to characterize the sins of Israel.

In verse 19, He describes the nation multiplying her harlotry.

Verse 38, He describes the nation profaning the Sabbath. He defines them in the analogy of harlotry and, verse 40, of arraying themselves in that way.

The point is that physical action typified what Israel did spiritually. Instead of being a faithful wife seeking to please her husband (which is what should have been Israel's relationship to God), Israel began to go out and to seek out illicit relationships with other neighboring kings and other nations. Israel began to involve itself in illicit relationships as opposed to being faithful to the covenant she made with God, which is typified as a marriage covenant. She entered into these various arrangements. Israel is pictured as a harlot. God describes the things that characterize, and people identified with, a physical harlot. They looked down on that. That was not good. God said, 'You've done the same thing spiritually. You haven't been faithful to Me.' We have a view of how God views it and how it looks to God.

Ezekiel 24 deals with the bloody city, which is characteristic of Jerusalem and ultimately of the nation.

Ezekiel 25 is a prophecy against the Ammonites. They are going to be delivered to the men of the East for a possession. It is going to be interesting to see exactly what is going to happen. Ammon and Moab are in the area of Iraq and Jordan. They are ultimately going to be delivered to the men of the East for a possession (v. 4). Amman is the capital of Jordan. It is going to be interesting. We read of armies that are going to mass on the River Euphrates (Revelations 16:12-14), which is right there in modern-day Iraq. At the time of the Day of the Lord, they are going to finally be able to cross that river and they are going to come in. They are going to overflow into, at least, sections of Jordan and Iraq.

Ezekiel 26 deals with prophecies against Tyre.

In Ezekiel 27, the analogy that is drawn is of a great end-time commercial combine headquartered in Europe. If you read Ezekiel 27 and then go back and read Revelation 18, notice a little bit about what it talks about.

Ezekiel 27:29-35, "All who handle the oar, the mariners, all the pilots of the sea will come down from their ships and stand on the shore [land]...they shall cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; they will roll about in ashes...In their wailing for you, they will take up a lamentation, and lament for you...When your wares went out

by sea, you satisfied many people; you enriched the kings of the earth with your many luxury goods and your merchandise. But when you are broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, your merchandise and the entire company will fall in your midst. All the inhabitants of the isles will be astonished at you...."

Revelation 18:2, "And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen....'"

Verse 11, "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore."

Then, verses 12-13 talk about all these various merchandise, all these various traders and all these things that came in.

Verse 15, "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing." The merchants would see these things.

Verse 17, "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing...." Finally, it comes to naught and the city is cast down.

Verse 19, "...For in one hour she is made desolate." If you read Ezekiel 27 and Revelation 18, you will see the parallel.

Tyre was a great commercial city, a great commercial capital located on the Mediterranean coast. It was destroyed by Alexander the Great a number of decades before Ezekiel wrote. The merchants of Tyre covered the whole Mediterranean. In fact, the city of Carthage in North Africa was settled by the people of Tyre. It was a colony of Tyre. Later, Carthage rose to such power as to challenge Rome. Rome and Carthage vied for the control of the Mediterranean world. Rome finally vanquished Carthage.

These were called the Punic Wars (if you remember your ancient history) because the land of Phut (Ezekiel 27:10) in North Africa takes it's name and goes back to the same root word from which "Phoenician" comes. These were the people of Carthage. They were a division of the Canaanites who were originally in Tyre and were later centered at Carthage, a great commercial capital.

The Romans devastated Carthage. When they finally defeated it, they forced the inhabitants either into slavery or pushed them down further into Africa. They plowed salt in the ground in Carthage to prevent it from ever being rebuilt there on the North African coast.

Tyre was a great commercial center. The Phoenicians were famous for all of this, and here

was a great center, a great world market. It was a type of that final Babylon the Great. Much of the analogy in Revelation 18 is derived from Ezekiel 27. If you read the two, you get the same rhythm of scripture. It is clear that there is a relationship there.

In Ezekiel 28, we come to the prince of Tyre. This is talking about the ruler.

Ezekiel 28:12-15, “Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre...[The prince of Tyre was the human ruler. Who is the king? He is the one who is over the prince. What are we told of the king?]. . .you were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God, every precious stone was your covering...you were the anointed cherub who covers; I have established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.”

Certainly, this is not talking about the human ruler of Tyre. This is talking about the one that we know as Satan the devil. He is called Lucifer in Isaiah 14. Here was an anointed cherub, one who had been in Eden, one in whom iniquity was found and was cast out of God’s government. He is the one who was the real ruler of Tyre (and Babylon, and Egypt), the real ruler and god of this world.

What led to his downfall?

Verse 17, “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor....” Vanity! Pride led to his downfall. He was lifted up with pride and iniquity was found in him. It started out with pride, a self-centered attitude of pride and vanity that focused on the self and went on from there.

In Ezekiel 29, we find a prophecy against Egypt; an amazing prophecy.

Ezekiel 29:15, “It shall be the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above the nations, for I will diminish them so that they will not rule over the nations anymore.” Egypt was going to be abased and we find this is what happened.

Here was Egypt, a nation that had been a major power on the world scene for centuries and millennia. Ezekiel was writing in the sixth century B.C. Here we find, in the latter part of the sixth century B.C. (circa 591-569 B.C.), Ezekiel writing a prophecy that Egypt would cease to be a major power. Now consider, by this time, Egypt had been a major empire on the world scene for almost 3,000 years. Egypt had been the

dominant nation of the pre-flood world and the post-flood world. After the debacle at Babel (Genesis 11), Egypt again began to rise. Egypt had been a major power in the post-flood world all the way down until the time Nebuchadnezzar comes on the scene. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and destroyed its power.

Since that time, Egypt never again was ruled by a native prince (Ezekiel 30:13). That’s been 2,500 years. The Babylonians ruled it, then the Persians and then the Greeks. Cleopatra, the ruler of Egypt was Greek. She was a part of the dynasty that was descended from Alexander the Great’s general, Ptolemy. The Greeks ruled Egypt down to Cleopatra.

Then the Romans took over and ruled it as a Roman province, down through the time of the Romans. Then later the Eastern Roman Empire (the Byzantine Empire) ruled all the way down to the seventh century A.D. when finally the Arabs, having been converted to Islam, poured out of the Arabian Peninsula (what is now Saudi Arabia), overran Egypt, and it became part of an Arab Empire ruled from Damascus and later Bagdad.

The Turks conquered it and ruled it as a part of a Turkish Empire up until the late 1800s. The British finally set up Egypt, prior to World War I, as independent, but they were under the rule of the line of kings that weren’t Egyptian. They were Albanian in origin. They ruled up until Nasser overthrew King Farouk in 1953.

Talk about prophecy being a proof of the Bible! Was it a lucky guess? How would Ezekiel make a guess of a nation that had been a dominant player on the world scene for as long as history has been around and say it’s going to be conquered and will never again be a significant force on the world scene? This is one of the prophecies that is a proof of the Bible.

Ezekiel 30:13, ...‘I will also destroy the idols, and cause the images to cease out of Noph [Ancient Memphis]; there shall no longer be princes from the land of Egypt....’” Egypt had always been famous for their idols.

It’s interesting. When the Arabs came in from Saudi Arabia, one of the first things they did was get rid of the graven images. The Arab world (the Islamic religion) does not allow any sort of graven images. In fact, artwork is pretty much limited to geometric designs. They really discourage the use of any kind of statuary things of that sort. How unlikely was it that Egypt was going to cease to be a place where they made images? There was no longer going to be a

prince of Egypt in the land of Egypt, no longer a prince of native Egyptian stock. And it would be a base kingdom.

Verse 23, ““I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the countries.”” Most of the inhabitants of modern-day Egypt are not descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Most people in Egypt are Arab.

Just as a point of Middle Eastern history, the Arabs burst on the Middle Eastern scene and began to dominate the Middle East around 650 A.D. The Arabian Peninsula is the native area of the Arabs. They overran the rest of the Middle East, Egypt, North Africa, all the way across into Spain. They overran areas and migrated far and wide in the spread of Islam. They spread their influence far afield. The Arabs originated in the Arabian Peninsula. They are the descendants of Ishmael.

There were other people in some of these countries before the Arabs came. The people in Egypt today who are of native Egyptian stock are a very small minority. They are called “Copts.” The bulk of the ancient Egyptian stock was scattered. Interestingly enough, we find a group of people scattered throughout much of the world who call themselves Egyptians. We use the modern slang “gypsy,” which is simply derived from “Egyptian.” A slang spelling is what it goes back to.

Actually, if you trace it back, many of them were deported and taken into the area of India. It was from there that they spread out. They were known as gypsies. You basically could trace the gypsy migration back to an area of India, and this is where many of the Egyptians were settled when Nebuchadnezzar depopulated Egypt. He settled them on the eastern bounds of his empire, which stretched to the borders of India. That was where he settled many of this group of people.

It is just kind of an interesting “aside.” They were scattered and some remained. Those who remain are Copts. Interestingly enough, the Copts are not Moslem. They are members of what is called the Coptic Church, which is a branch of the Catholic Church in Egypt.

Ezekiel 32:11, the ultimate invasion of Egypt is brought out, “...the sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you.” Babylon will ultimately invade Egypt. There are many interesting things in that regard.

I'd like to read a little bit of a column. I think it was Patrick Buchanan's column. I don't know how many of you saw it, but it kind of ties in with what's going on in the Middle East. It ties in

with some of this prophecy. I want to conclude here.

It says, “Even the President's critics concede that in winning King Faud's approval for United States forces in marshalling a global embargo and knitting together an Arab-American expeditionary force, George Bush's first diplomat has been superb. We've had all the pleasure of seeing America's best and greatest close an iron ring around Iraq. We find the President's rhetoric has reached war pitch. Before an assembly of pentagon generals and admirals, Saddam Hussein has been called a liar, and we are told that should he achieve his goal of becoming a master of the Gulf, our job, our way of life, our own freedom is threatened...Bush, this past Wednesday, directly compared Iraq to the Third Reich. A half-century ago our nation and the world paid dearly for appeasing an aggressor who should and could have been stopped. We are not going to make that same mistake. By using the Hitler analogy, Bush is virtually ruling out any negotiated settlement, for the modern-man Hitler is evil incarnate. Any leader who cuts a deal with him is guilty of another Munich, a fatal political charge. Is the Hitler analogy valid? Recall, that Hitler, after annexing Austria and establishing a protectorate over Czechoslovakia, overran Poland, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Holland, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, the Baltic States, and drove 1,000 miles into the Soviet Union in two years. And Saddam, so far he's managed to land-grab a tiny defenseless kingdom, not half the size of Denmark. Is Saddam a warlord of Hitlerian dimension or is he a Middle East thief, a Baghdad-bandit who stole Kuwait's oil to sell it to us and get his bankrupt country out of debt?”

It goes on. “If Hitler is on the loose, where are the British, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Japanese troops to stand alongside the Eighty-Second Airborne to stop him? Why is everyone balking at upgrading the United Nation embargo into a blockade? The great men are talking about vacations; Congress hasn't been called back to deal with the crisis that Bush says threatens not only our jobs but our way of life. The implications are clear. Here's the point: if it comes to a shooting war, the United States is going to find itself, again, virtually without allies, except for a few British. And when we begin dropping bombs on Arab towns and Arab troops, how long will our Arab allies stand beside us? It is now almost impossible for Bush to accept a Kuwait that is either a possession or vassal of

Iraq. All this talk about ‘standing up to Hitler’ would be hurled back in his face at the next Democratic convention. If this embargo does not force Saddam to disgorge Kuwait, Bush will confront an alternative. Climb back publicly from the limb on which he has climbed so far out or take his country to war. But how is such a war to end? Who will keep them out after destroying Iraq’s military regime and driving its army out of Kuwait? If the army is United States troops, will not those troops become targets of the same terrorists who picked off our Marines in Lebanon? Before Saddam goes down, he will take others with him. A United States attack could ignite an Arab civil war that could do for the throngs of the Middle East what Europe’s World War I did for the throngs of Europe. Years ago an author called Britain’s attack on the Suez ‘The Lion’s Last Roar.’ Is this ‘The Eagle’s Last Scream?’”

It’s kind of interesting because the situation in the Middle East is very volatile. We know the way the story is going to end. What we don’t understand entirely is how is it going to get from here to there? It is going to culminate with a King of the South, with the Arabs getting their act together for the first time in probably 700 years in terms of uniting behind one individual who is going to push at a King of the North—a revived United States of Europe—the Beast power. The King of the North is going to retaliate by a blitzkrieg attack into the Middle East. The United States will have already “gone down the drain” prior to that time.

How are we going to see what is going to result in an American humiliation and Arab nationalism being stirred up to the fact that the Arabs are finally ready to unite, however briefly, behind one individual and are going to push at Europe. How is this going to trigger an attack on the United States and Britain, the modern state of Israel in the Middle East, and all of these things? Well, some of the details remain to be filled in. The Bible draws the picture as it stands at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. We look on a world scene and we see things today. We see the pictures converging, but there are many things to happen between now and then. We don’t see exactly how all of it is going to converge. We might speculate and guess. Patrick Buchanan has some speculations, which may play a factor. We will have to wait and see.

The next Bible study will end up our series on the book of Ezekiel. I hope that it will have been helpful in getting a little more insight into some

of the prophecies that relate to our time and the time that’s ahead of us.