

Bible Study # 57  
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Major Prophets Series—Ezekiel 33—48

This evening we **are concluding the book of Ezekiel. We are covering chapters 33—48.**

This set of chapters contains two very key prophetic chapters (chapters 37 and 38) that we want to comment on. These are chapters that are almost totally misunderstood; frankly, if you look at the various commentaries and things, they are basically not understood by anyone.

Ezekiel 37 is a vision of the valley of dry bones. Virtually none of the commentators understand because it is only when you put it together with Romans 11 and Revelation 20 that we can understand the time setting. Ezekiel 37 describes the event, but it doesn't explain *when*. You have to go elsewhere in the Scriptures to understand when it happens. In fact, *when* is not really made plain until you come to the New Testament. It then makes it plain that Ezekiel 37 can only be referring to the period that we call the Great White Throne Judgment period.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 are also misapplied by virtually all of the commentators. This event happens after the Millennium has started, not prior to the beginning of the Millennium. In times past, many of the Fundamentalist preachers who like to comment on prophecy have tried to use Ezekiel 38 and 39 to preach about a war between the United States and Russia. They could identify that the Soviet Union is made reference to and constitutes portions of this prophecy. And that is true.

We are going to see that nations that make up so much of the Soviet Union, China and that area are certainly referred to in Ezekiel 38 and 39. Many of these commentators have made a big deal of the fact that there was going to be a big war between Russia and the United States. You don't hear them emphasizing that quite so much now because of the change in what is going on in the world. One of the reasons we never taught that was because we correctly understood the time element.

In Ezekiel 38, we're going to notice four key verses that make plain the time element. When you understand the time element, then you understand what this prophecy is talking about. When we simply take it at face value, the time setting is very clear.

Ezekiel 40—48 is a section seldom commented on. It presents a problem particularly to many of

the commentators and various ones because there is a clear teaching in Ezekiel 40—48 that there is going to be a functioning Levitical priesthood, a temple and sacrifices during the Millennium. That may seem startling to some, but we are going to see that as we go through.

While some of the details of this section may not be completely understood at this time, it is clear that God is going to deal with the physical nation of Israel at the beginning of the Millennium to orient them physically to the law and to the covenant. The sacrifices will, evidently, serve as a schoolmaster for them (KJV, Galatians 3:24), as it was supposed to do for their forefathers.

It's kind of interesting. Even Jews "scratch their heads" when it comes to Ezekiel 40—48 because of some of the details that are mentioned. The *Jewish Commentary* dates the vision of Ezekiel 40—48 as the Day of Atonement, which began a Jubilee year. Whether that is true or not, the Bible doesn't say, but it certainly would be a very appropriate time for such a vision. The Jews solve their problems with this particular section by saying that only the prophet Elijah (who will usher the ultimate redemption) will elucidate these chapters. That is their comment on it. What they don't understand, they say the prophet Elijah will explain.

The reason they say the prophet Elijah is because of what it says in the end of the book of Malachi.

Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

The Jews anticipate the fact that there will be one who comes fulfilling the role of the prophet Elijah and preparing the way for the Messiah. The issues that they don't understand, they say they will wait until Elijah comes and he will explain it. And then they pass on to something else.

There's quite a bit of what they don't know and have failed to recognize. They failed to recognize Elijah (John the Baptist) when he came and they failed to recognize the Messiah he heralded. They failed to recognize God's Work today that was raised up through Mr. Herbert Armstrong and they won't really grasp it until the time when the Messiah does come the second time.

Zechariah 12:10, we read, "...then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son,

and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.” They will repent. Then it will dawn on them what they did and Who this is who has come to save them from destruction. Then, at that point, things will be resolved.

Let’s pick it up this evening in Ezekiel 33. Ezekiel sets the stage, explaining the responsibility of the watchman. I’ve commented before on the symbolism of the watchman. The watchman is the one who was appointed to watch and to see what was going on. He was to stand up on the wall, to look and observe and sound the warning. Ezekiel was told throughout the book that he was being established as a watchman for the house of Israel.

We’ve already gone through the fact that Ezekiel did not fulfill that role in his day because Ezekiel did not personally go to all these various locations. Ezekiel did not do those things and there is no way he could have. The job of taking Ezekiel’s message to those for whom it was intended was reserved for our time and our day.

He talks about the role of the watchman.

Ezekiel 33:7, “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; ....” I went into quite a bit of that last time and the fact that Ezekiel did not go to the house of Israel in person. But his message has been preserved, and God raised up a work to go to the house of Israel. This was a commission that Mr. Herbert Armstrong very much understood. That’s why God revealed to him very, very early in the beginning of his conversion where the house of Israel was.

This was knowledge that the Sardis Church did not have and did not understand. Even though the leader of the Sardis Church—the Church that we identify as the Sardis era or stage in the progression of God’s Church described in Revelation 3:1-6—acknowledged in a letter to Mr. Herbert Armstrong (a letter that is reproduced in his autobiography) that this information (the identity of Israel) was true. But the leader refused to preach it for fear that everybody wouldn’t go along with it or accept it.

The point is that you can’t take a message to the house of Israel if you don’t know where the house of Israel is. God made plain the identity of the house of Israel. That was one of the things that He revealed to Mr. Herbert Armstrong very early in the very beginning of his conversion. This message began to be taken and proclaimed.

Verses 8-9, God says in terms of the message to the watchman, “When I say to the wicked, “O

wicked man, you shall surely die!” and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

I think it is important for us to realize as individuals and as a Church that we have a responsibility for which God will hold us accountable. There are things that are going to happen to this nation. It is important that we put our hearts into the accomplishment and the fulfillment of the work that God has set before us because we are ultimately responsible for warning. We are not responsible for results because we can’t control someone else’s results. This is important just in terms of the principle of recognizing responsibility.

Some people find themselves perpetually frustrated because they can’t get others to respond in the way they want them to. This can be in their families or in various circumstances of human relations. God makes it plain that we are responsible for doing our part, but we are not responsible for how someone else responds to what we have done. We can’t control that. The watchman is responsible for delivering the message, but he is not responsible for the response.

What was Ezekiel commissioned to do?

Verse 7, Ezekiel was commissioned as a watchman to the house of Israel. He was not sent to the house of Judah but Israel. Historically, Ezekiel never delivered the message to the people for whom it was intended. This was something that began to be done by Mr. Herbert Armstrong in our day, back in the 1930s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and on up into the 80s. It is the work of God that continues right on down until now. The job of taking the message of God to the world is a job for us today because Ezekiel never delivered that message. That message was preserved. It was preserved for a warning for our time, the end time.

People are going to have a certain attitude towards this work.

Verse 30, it is described, “As for you, son of man, the children of your people are talking about you beside the walls and in the doors of the houses; and they speak to one another, everyone saying to his brother, “Please come and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord.””

I am convinced that there are some things that have yet to happen in terms of the impact of this

work. God is going to open the appropriate doors at the appropriate time. What we have to be doing is to make sure that we are doing our part. God is going to accomplish these things. Even if He has to raise up stones to do it, He would (Luke 3:8), but He has given us the opportunity to be His instruments. If we fail to do our part, we're not going to prevent God from accomplishing what He purposed (Isaiah 46:10-11).

Revelation 3:11, we will simply have failed to heed the warning, "...that no one may take your crown." God has called us to do His work. He gives us the opportunity to have a part of it, and if we don't do it, He will get it done. But woe be to us if we don't carry out the responsibility we have.

He speaks of a time when we are going to be the talk of the land. I think there is going to come a time, prior to the on-set of the tribulation, when the message is going to really go forth in greater power, and it's going to be the talk of the land.

Ezekiel 33:31-32, "So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain. Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them."

This has partially been fulfilled. There were a lot of people who listened to Mr. Herbert Armstrong and said, 'Oh boy, I like to hear that old man; I've listened to him for 30 years.' They never did anything he said, but they liked to hear him. They liked to read what he wrote. It's like somebody singing a pleasant song and has a nice voice. They say, 'That's a nice program,' but they don't act on it. They don't do anything with it.

The time is going to come when we are going to be even more talked about. It talks about the fact that everything is going to be "abuzz." We're going to be the subject of a lot of conversation. But, for the most part, people are not really going to be doing anything. They'll be excited about it in certain ways. It will have their interest and attention but not in a way that they are going to act on it.

Verse 33, "And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them."

That is very much the case. The time is going to come when the whole world is going to recognize that Mr. Herbert Armstrong really was

God's true servant. The basic content of the booklets that he wrote, *Who is the Beast?* and *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* were written in the 1930s. Actually, he began writing on the subject even in the 1920s. Some of those were first published in the 1930s. I have seen a copy of a 1935 magazine that had the chart on "Who is the Beast?" It was the exact same chart and layout that's in our booklet today. It was hand drawn on a mimeograph stencil.

I went through and I checked and compared it; there is only one difference. You know what it is? It's where it says the sixth head. If you will look in our modern booklet, Garibaldi's reunification of Italy culminating in Mussolini is dated from 1870 to 1945 with the collapse of Mussolini. In the 1935 magazine, it had all of that except it didn't have the date "1945." That was ten years in the future. It had "1870-19\_\_" because we didn't know the year when the sixth head was going to end. That is the only difference. Ten years later he could fill in the year. That is the only change that's been made in the chart.

The point is that the core information of *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* was published back in the 1930s in some of the very first magazines that came out. It was information that is the heart and core of a lot of what Ezekiel has to say.

"And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them." They are not entirely acknowledging that yet. Though, interestingly enough, as we begin the Feast of Tabernacles after sunset on October 3, that will not only see the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles, it's also going to see the beginning of the new unified Germany. They are uniting October 3. Interesting! It was a year ago at the Feast that the wall began to come down. Remember that? How much has happened in the year!

Remember a year ago they were interviewing all the experts and they were saying, 'This doesn't mean that Germany will reunify; this doesn't mean that at all. And if it does, it is far off—maybe somewhere after the year 2000 if possible—maybe 10, 12, 15, 20 years is the possibility, but most of the experts don't think it will happen at all.' A year later and it's done. Now who were the experts?

I can show you whole magazines of articles Mr. Herbert Armstrong wrote that go way back. Some of you have copies of them. Who were the experts? Well, the time is going to come when

they are going to know that God's message has been proclaimed.

In Ezekiel 34, we have an indictment to the leadership of the land.

Verses 1-10 show that those responsible for overseeing the people of Israel have been motivated by personal greed and have not properly carried out their responsibility. It says, "the shepherds of Israel." We think of that sometimes in the sense of "pastor" because the word for "shepherd" and "pastor" are the same word. But the "shepherds of Israel" can also refer in the national sense as well. Certainly, here "the shepherds of Israel" would refer to the leaders of Israel.

Ezekiel 34:31, Israel is described as the sheep of God's pasture, "'You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; ....'" God says, 'This is My flock, My sheep.'

The shepherds are those who are supposed to attend the sheep. God indicts the leadership of the land.

Verse 2, "... 'Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?'" They have not given help to those who needed it.

Verse 4, "...but with force and cruelty you have ruled them."

Verses 5-6, "'So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.'"

Verse 8, "...because there was no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock'..."

Verses 10-12, God is going to deal with the shepherds. He is going to seek out His sheep.

Verse 13, "'And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.'"

Verses 23-24, "'I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.'"

If you go through the chapter and check the context, it is clear that the main emphasis is national Israel, God's people, nationally—Israel. His sheep, nationally, are scattered among the

nations. God is going to regather His sheep. This time He says, 'You know, the shepherds have not been faithful shepherds, but I know one I can depend on to properly shepherd My sheep because he was a good shepherd.' It's interesting the way God prepared David to be king over all of Israel in Tomorrow's World. What training did God give David before He made him king? He made him a shepherd! That's important to understand because that tells us the concept God has as far as how He wants His government administered.

David learned how to administer God's government by being a shepherd. It taught him many things. The sheep need to be protected. There was a time for action, decisiveness, for boldness. They needed to be nurtured, guided and dealt with. You don't deal with sheep in a harsh cruel way. You don't go around just knocking sheep around. There may be lions and bears that need to be knocked around. David wasn't averse to doing that (1 Samuel 17:34-36). You have to deal with sheep in one way and goats another. There's a difference.

God likens His people to sheep because sheep will follow. Goats don't have the same proclivity; goats tend to want to go their own way. They have to be dealt with a little differently. God compares His people to sheep because they are seeking to follow the Shepherd. If we're not seeking to follow the Shepherd, then there's a question raised as to whether we're God's sheep. Christ said, 'My sheep hear My voice' (John 10:3-4).

Ezekiel 34 indicts the shepherds of Israel, those who were responsible for tending God's flock. He says, 'You haven't done a good job. You haven't been faithful in tending My flock. You've been greedy and selfish and out to take care of yourself. You've allowed My sheep to be scattered. I am going to regather them and I'm going to set a shepherd over them who will take care of them.' King David, resurrected, is going to be king over all of Israel in Tomorrow's World.

Verses 23-24 clearly show who the national leader of Israel is going to be in Tomorrow's World.

Ezekiel 35:2, "'Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it...'"

Verse 15, Mount Seir is a symbol of the Edomites.

Verse 3, "... 'I will stretch out my hand against you, and make you most desolate...'" Mount Seir is going to be made desolate. We find there are reasons for that as it talks about the things

that are going to happen. This describes both events of past history and, I think, events that we are going to see in the time ahead of us.

In Ezekiel 36, we focus in on events in the land of Israel when God regathers Israel.

Ezekiel 36:19, “So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.”

Verse 24, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.” This is after the return of the Messiah.

Verses 25-28, “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people and I will be your God.”

This is a section that has been frequently misunderstood because most of those who claim to preach the word of God do not understand the identity of modern Israel. When they read of “Israel,” they think simply of the nation of the Jews in the Middle East—the nation that calls itself “Israel” today. Many of them focused in on this and said, ‘This prophecy has been fulfilled. God has gathered Israel out of the nations.’

“Gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land.” They claim that the founding of the modern state of Israel was the fulfillment of that. That’s not true. That was not the regathering of the house of Israel. That was the regathering of the house of Judah. The regathering of the house of Judah is prophesied elsewhere. It’s prophesied in Zechariah 8, among other places.

The proof that Ezekiel 36 is not talking about Judah is the fact that in verses 26-28, it tells that when God brings *Israel* out of the nations and brings them back, He is going to convert them. ‘I am going to put a new heart in you and a new spirit. I am going to put My Spirit in you. I will convert you.’ Now the modern nation of the Jews is certainly not a converted nation. They don’t claim to be. Less than half of them are observant Jews; the other half are not even doing that much. We have a description here of conversion. To take these scriptures in Ezekiel 36 and try to apply it to the modern state of

Israel is to take it out of its context. That’s not true.

Verses 33-34, they will pick out certain verses like, “‘...‘ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate.’” They say, ‘That’s what they are doing over in Israel now; they are going in and irrigating some of the desert area.’ They may be doing that, but this isn’t the prophecy of that. This is talking about something else.

Verse 36, “Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, I will do it.”

Verse 38, “Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” This is prophecy of yet future events.

Ezekiel 37:1, “The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.” Here were these dry bones.

Verses 4-7, “Again He said to me. ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’” So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.’”

You’ve heard the song, “the leg bone connected to the hip bone.” Well, bones came together, bone to bone—all the bones. Ezekiel sees this in a vision. He looks down and at first all he sees is like a giant graveyard. He sees all these bones lying out there, and it’s not people. It’s like you would unearth a giant graveyard. He makes a prophecy. All of a sudden, these bones are rattling and shaking; all these bones are coming together bone to bone—everyone connecting up.

Verse 8, then He says, “Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.” All of a sudden, where had been a graveyard, now it looked like a valley of corpses. There’s no breath. Everything’s dead.

Verses 9-10, “Then He said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from

the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.” A great multitude, a gigantic number of people stood up alive.

Verses 11-12, “Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” Therefore prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.’””” Here is a resurrection, but it is a physical resurrection to flesh and blood life. Here are people who are resurrected to physical life. They are brought up out of their graves and brought back to the land of Israel.

Verse 13, after this occurs, “““Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.””” Here is a group of people who were not converted prior to the time of their death. These are not those who were Christ’s at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:23). They are going to know that God is God after He’s opened their graves and brought them up. Here are people who are not going to learn the truth until after the resurrection.

Verse 14, “““I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the Lord.”””

It’s going to be the time when Judah and Israel will be joined together.

Verses 16-17, ““As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.” Then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.””

It’s going to be a time when Judah and Israel will be joined back together. There are those who want to say the ten tribes don’t exist anymore, that they are among the Jews. Well, according to Ezekiel 37:16-17, Judah and Israel are not going to be reunited until after the resurrection. That’s not going to occur until afterwards. Now, if the resurrection has already occurred, then I think it would have made a little bit of a “splash” with all the bones of the whole house of Israel coming together and this gigantic multitude standing up in a great graveyard somewhere. I think that

would have been hard to have happened without somebody hearing it, so I don’t think that’s happened yet.

Verses 16-17 make plain when it’s going to happen.

Verse 24 makes plain that it’s the time when David is going to be king over them.

Verse 24, ““David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.””

Ezekiel makes plain that God will resurrect to a physical life those who have not had their chance for salvation and give them a chance for salvation. The time setting is the White Throne Judgment after the Millennium.

Verses 12-13, it says, “““...I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, ...”””

Hold your place there in Ezekiel and let’s notice Romans 11.

Romans 11:1-2, “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.”

Verses 25-26 (the last part of the verse), “...hardening [KJV, “blindness”] in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, ...” There’s a future day of salvation. There is a time when all Israel will be saved. Right now they are blinded. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew.

Ezekiel 37:11, ““...“Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!”””

‘Our hope is over with. We don’t have any hope.’ Here it describes a people for whom it, seemingly, is all over with. They are dead. They are in the grave. Their hope is lost. God says, ‘No, I am going to open your graves and bring you out of the graves. Then I am going to bring you to the land of Israel. Then I am going to let you know the truth.’

Romans 11:2, “God has not cast away His people that He foreknew.”

Verse 26, “...all Israel will be saved, ...” When you put Romans 11 together with Ezekiel 37, the event of which He is speaking is plain. And when you put that together with Revelation 20, you get the time setting.

Revelation 20:6, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with

Him a thousand years.” Those who are in the first resurrection are blessed and holy. They are going to rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Verse 5, “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.” Those who were Christ’s at His coming are blessed and holy. They are going to be in the first resurrection. They are going to rule and reign with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead doesn’t live until after the thousand years are over. What about the rest of the dead?

Verse 12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.”

Verse 13, we find that whether these people were buried in the sea or whether they were buried in graves, wherever they were, they came up. Nobody is buried somewhere that God can’t find them, even if they may be in an unmarked grave.

I think we have a few here who were on our Washington trip. While we were there, we went to Arlington Cemetery. There was row after row—thousands of graves—and one of the graves that we saw was the tomb of the “Unknown Soldier.” There is an inscription that says, “Here lies the Unknown Soldier, known but to God.” —A nameless young man who died somewhere sometime during the course of World War II or World War I or the various wars in which the nation has been involved. A young man who was unable to be identified is buried there. That’s right, but God does know.

There are millions and billions of graves that have long since been lost on the face of this earth that are known but to God. God does know and God does remember.

Verse 12, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God [Those whose graves have been marked and preserved, for those whom monuments have been erected and their graves have been known for hundreds and maybe thousands of years, and for those whose remains have been lost and whose memory is long since gone—all of them are going to stand before God.], and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” This is the time spoken of in Ezekiel 37.

We could go to Matthew 12:41 where Christ talked about the men of Nineveh rising in the judgment with this generation. There is going to

come a time when all the dead, small and great, are going to be judged.

Acts 10:34, “...God shows no partiality.” KJV, “...God is not a respecter of persons...” Because God tells us He is not a respecter of persons, if He is going to give all Israel a chance to be saved, then He is also going to give all mankind a chance to be saved.

Christ made that plain in Matthew 12:41 when He talked about the men of Nineveh standing in the judgment with this generation. Matthew 10:15, the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and Matthew 12:42, the queen of the South are going to rise up in the judgment with this generation—all the dead small and great. You have to put these things together with Ezekiel 37 to understand the time setting. If we just take it literally for what it says, it makes the time setting that we have very plain.

Ezekiel 38:1-2, “Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ‘Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him.’”

It has been recognized by many commentators that Magog was the ancestor of the Mongol peoples, the Asiatic groupings of people. Recently, a lot of attention has been paid to the fact that the Soviet Union is comprised of many groupings of people. There are actually three branches of Russians: The Great Russians, the Little Russians and the White Russians. There is White Russia or Belorussia, as it is sometimes called. The Ukrainians will sometimes use the term “Little Russia.” Then there are those who are called Great Russia, which is Russia proper. There are actually two branches of the Great Russians: the Moscow branch and the Talalsk branch, which are designated here by Meshech and Tubal. What we have is a reference to a group of people that include many of the Russians and Mongol peoples.

Verses 3-5, “and say, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet...’”

They are allied with them. The KJV and NKJV render it “Persia, Ethiopia and Libya.” Ethiopia and Libya are both interpretations. The names in Hebrew are simply Cush and Put. Cush frequently refers to Ethiopia. The Ethiopians are

descended from Cush. But there are two branches of Cushites: an Eastern branch and a Western branch. The context clearly shows that it refers to the Eastern branch of the Cushites and Putites.

The Eastern Cushites are in the area of Northern India. That is why you find the Hindu Kush Mountain range there. There was quite a bit of traffic between India and Egypt of ancient date. The religion of India, the sacred cow and all of this, derived from the religion of Egypt. The worship of the golden calf and all this sort of thing derived from Egypt. Even the so-called Gypsy people migrated to India from Egypt. The term “Gypsy” comes from “Egyptian.” That went back in antiquity. There were Eastern and Western Cushites. The Western Cushites are in the area of Ethiopia; the Eastern Cushites are in the area of Northern India.

Again, there is an Eastern and Western branch of Put. Most of Central and South Africa trace descent back to Put. Also, the people of Southern India trace descent back to Put. The ruling class in Southern India was called “rajput,” which literally meant “the ruler over Put.”

Persia certainly could refer to the area of Iran as some of the Persian people.

Verse 6, “Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north....” Togarmah would refer to some of the area up in Siberia. Gomer basically refers to the area of Indo-China, perhaps some of the area of Tibet and down into Korea. That area would include Gomer. What we have is clearly a conglomeration of people, basically an Asiatic alliance—a grouping that would be China, India, Indo-China and much of Russia.

We’re not the only ones who can figure out where most of these identifications are. Much of this is historical, and many of the commentators have understood some of this, as to whom some of these peoples are that we are talking about. They looked at that and said, ‘Russia and China and all that area—sounds like the communists are going to take over the whole East and are going to come and invade Israel [which they, of course, identify with the modern Jewish state].’ Then later on it talks about fire being sent on Magog, so they say, ‘There is going to be a great nuclear war and Russia is going to get defeated.’ They have tried to identify this with Armageddon and various things.

This is a great Eastern conglomerate of peoples that would include China, India and much of what is now the Soviet Union. But notice the time setting.

Verses 8-12, “‘After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you.’ Thus says the Lord God: ‘On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, “I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwells safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and have neither bars nor gates”— to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places that are again inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.”’”

This is a time when God’s people will dwell safely. The land of Israel is called the land of unwalled villages. They are dwelling without walls, having neither bars nor gates.

I am going to tell you something; that’s not at all descriptive of modern-day state of Israel. They are certainly not a land of unwalled villages and if there is anybody who is prepared for war, they are. They’re stocked up on all the modern weapons and armaments. They are anything but an unwalled village.

The time setting is very clear. It’s talking about the time after the beginning of the Millennium—a time after Israel has been regathered from the nations and has begun to prosper. It is a time when Israel is dwelling safely and at peace in their unwalled villages. There’s no outward evidence of armaments of protection. There are not even locks on the doors.

Can you imagine not even having to put locks on the doors? No keys! The job of locksmith is going to be phased out in the early part of the Millennium. It’s not a job that can be phased out today. What if no one ever broke the eighth commandment and nobody would steal? If you lived in a society where there’s no stealing, what would you need locks for? You could leave something anywhere you wanted to, and nobody would take it because it didn’t belong to him—unless he thought you lost it and was going to bring it back to you. It is descriptive of a society that is a total contrast to our society.

Some of you grew up, as I did, in some of the rural areas in a time when we were virtually a land of unwalled villages. I remember as a kid



growing up that the lock on our front door didn't work. I don't know when my parents finally got it repaired, but I never remember it working all the time I was growing up. If somebody wanted to walk in, I guess they could have—the lock never worked. We never worried about it, never gave any thought to it. We weren't unique in that. For a lot of you, the most secure lock you had was the little hook and eye on the screen door. That was more to keep the cat and dog out.

It is a situation that is a total contrast to our society today. It is a time when Israel is regathered and the land is prospering and blooming. What we are looking at is a period after the beginning of the Millennium because when Christ comes back, the government of God is not just instantly spread over the whole earth. The first thing He is going to do is regather Israel. You have to start somewhere.

Some of the prophecies we went through back in Isaiah show that, at the very beginning, certain areas (for instance down in East Africa) are going to send up emissaries and are going to want God's government extended to them. It will. But in some of these other areas, it's going to take a little while.

Now, here's a case where some who have gone through the devastation of the events that accompany the return of Christ, two or three years into the Millennium, are going to hear about the prosperity that is beginning to take place. They are going to decide that they are going to come down and take it. They will say, 'Those people are defenseless and we are just going to come down there and get it.' The pendulum swing of human nature!

It's interesting what we have now, particularly in the Soviet Union. There was the attempt toward atheistic communism that has proven to be "the god that failed." There is now the beginning of a swing back and there may very well be some sort of an alliance with Europe. I think it's going to be interesting to view the role of the pope.

Are you aware that for the last several years, Pope John Paul talks weekly with both President Bush and President Gorbachev? He has weekly conversations with them. He talks with Mr. Gorbachev in the Russian language and with President Bush in English because he is multi-lingual. There's no need for translators. It's a one-on-one conversation; it's private phone conversations.

A year ago when all the upheaval was going on in Europe, he was on the phone for hours every day with Gorbachev discussing the situation.

There was an article in *U.S. News & World Report* that went into a little bit of the background on that. The pope played a very important role in calming the situation in Lithuania. When Gorbachev was having all the upheaval, you noticed how everything settled down in Lithuania? Remember back when it looked like Russia was almost at the point of civil war. Things kind of settled down, and you didn't hear anything about Lithuania. You know who settled it down? The pope did. You see, Lithuanians are Catholic. All he had to do was put in a call to the Catholic archbishop of Lithuania and tell him what was going to be done in Lithuania. All of a sudden, things settled down in Lithuania. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes. It was an interesting little article in *U.S. News & World Report* several weeks ago.

The point is that now there is a swing, and I think it's going to be interesting to see the things that are going to happen in the Soviet Union. But you will see there is going to be another pendulum swing because as they come into an orbit more aligned with Western Europe, once again they are going to realize they've "been had."

Read the book of Revelation and find the ten kings who give their power to the beast. When they realize they've "been had," it says they are going to hate the whore and are going to turn on her and make her desolate. You read it in Revelation 17:16. The pendulum swings back and here are people who are embittered about the swing back. This mentality is going to lead to this invasion.

The point is finally going to get across. They are going to come face to face with the true God. The time setting is shown if you just read Ezekiel 38 and take it literally for what it says.

Ezekiel 39:2 KJV, "and I will turn you back, and leave but the sixth part of you, and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel..." It shows that only a sixth part of this army is going to survive the invasion. This small portion will be left to go back and bring the facts back to the "bunch" at home.

The population at the beginning of the Millennium will have been drastically reduced, but that is going to serve its purpose because most of humanity is going to be dealt with after a thousand years of preparation. The population of these various nations at the beginning of the Millennium is going to be very small, just a handful, but that's really the best way to deal

with it. It's best to start with a small nucleus to begin to build; then you have a thousand years to build it the right way and get prepared to handle the greatest population explosion in man's history. You have time to prepare.

You start with a small group. You can educate them and you can build. The families expand. The earth and its resources have time to rest, to rejuvenate and then it comes together. There are lessons that have to be learned and God allows those lessons to be learned. God has a plan and an overview. He is working toward a conclusion and there is logic and simplicity to God's plan.

Verse 12, "'For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land.'" It's going to be a mammoth job. The physical people of Israel are going to be left there trying to clean it up. It's going to take a long time to clean up everything. While they are out tending to all of this, they are going to be reminded of what happens if you rebel against God. It's not a really smart thing, and this will help to impress it on them.

Verses 21-24, the consequence of this, "'I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed, and My hand which I have laid on them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity; because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I have dealt with them, and hidden My face from them.'"

Verses 28-29, "'then they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,'" says the Lord God."

Israel is going to learn this and the nations around are going to learn this. What lesson will the surviving Gentiles learn from all this? They are going to learn that the God of Israel is the true God and that Israel went into captivity because of transgressing God's laws.

Ezekiel 40—48 describe the topography of Israel after Christ returns. The time setting of the city and the temple is described.

Ezekiel 43:5-9, "The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple. Then I heard

Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. And He said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places. When they set their threshold by My threshold, and their doorpost by My doorpost, with a wall between them and Me, they defiled My Holy name by the abominations which they committed; therefore I have consumed them in My anger. Now let them put their harlotry and the carcasses of their kings far away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.'"

It is a time when His throne will be there and 'I will dwell in the midst of the house of Israel forever.' It is a time when they will no more defile God's holy name. What we are looking at is a future time, a time that will only occur after the coming of the Messiah. We see the time setting for these chapters—it is a prophecy.

Let's notice that one of the problems that the commentators have is that the description of the temple in Ezekiel 40—48 differs from Solomon's temple. It is not an exact description of Solomon's temple. It's clear that Solomon's temple was not exactly like the one described here. And the temple of Zerubbabel /Herod were not exactly like this. Some of the commentators really "scratch their heads" and try to figure out which temple Ezekiel was describing. The point is that he wasn't describing any of the above. He was describing the temple that is going to be built after the return of Christ. The reason they don't have one like that is because Christ hasn't returned yet and it hasn't been built. We have to look at it in terms of the time setting.

Now there are similarities. Some of the commentators want to go back and say there are discrepancies in what Ezekiel says and in what we read back in Kings or Chronicles in terms of Solomon's temple. They are not discrepancies. Ezekiel is not describing Solomon's temple. He is describing the temple that the Messiah is going to build after His return. It's a time when, Ezekiel 43:7, the Messiah will dwell in the midst of Israel forever and His throne will be there. Ezekiel is writing at a time when Solomon's temple was on the verge of being destroyed. Ezekiel knew what Solomon's temple looked like. He wasn't trying to describe that. He was talking about something future.

Let's notice that there will be sacrifices offered and a functioning Levitical priesthood during this time.

Ezekiel 40:38-39, "There was a chamber and its entrance by the gateposts of the gateway, where they washed the burnt offering. In the vestibule of the gateway were two tables on this side and two tables on that side, on which to lay the burnt offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering."

Verses 45-46, "Then he said to me, 'This chamber which faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple. The chamber which faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the sons of Zadok, from the sons of Levi, who come near the Lord to minister to Him.'" These verses clearly show that there will be a functioning Levitical priesthood offering sacrifices during the Millennium. One way to understand it is that there will be ceremonies of state. Israel will be both a nation and a Church.

Today God's Church is not a civil nation. We are not a nation in the sense of a civil government. We are citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, but we are residents of many different nation states. We live under the jurisdiction of various human governments. But when the Kingdom of God is established on earth, there will need to be certain protocol, certain ceremonies of state, to orient the whole world toward Jerusalem, toward the functioning of the government. There will be certain protocol, certain pomp and circumstance, certain things that are identified with an identifiable government—the Kingdom of God. There will be certain things to orient the whole world toward the world capital at Jerusalem and the things that go on there.

The role of the Levitical priesthood and what they are going to do is certainly not to atone for sin. Jesus Christ has offered one sacrifice for sin forever. But there are certain ceremonies of state that will be performed that will serve to emphasize certain lessons and certain principles.

Today, various nations have certain ceremonies and certain protocol that is observed. If you go to London, you want to see the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. There's certain ceremonies of state that take place that create a sense of reverence and awe and respect for the nation and for the things that the nation symbolizes. There are certain outward manifestations and ceremonies that take place that keep people oriented in that way.

This will also be in the time when the Kingdom of God will be holding sway because the Kingdom of God will be ruling over physical human beings who need to be oriented toward the one government. People will need to be oriented toward the one-world capital in Jerusalem and toward God's government. There will be a functioning priesthood that is established. There will be a functioning capital there in Jerusalem. A temple will be built that will have in it the throne on which Jesus Christ will sit (the throne of David) from which He will rule the world. There will be various things that take place. It describes certain things that will be carried out by physical human beings. We find emphasis of that.

Ezekiel 40, 41 and 42 describe the temple itself. There is a reference in various places in the book of Ezekiel to the "prince of Israel." When you go through Ezekiel, it talks about the portion that pertains to the prince. It's very clear that this is a human leader who will function under spirit beings.

Ezekiel 44:1-3, "Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the Lord said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. As for the prince [KJV, "It is for the prince"], because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.'" It goes on and talks about the things that are going to take place.

There are more descriptions here. It describes the land around about and how some of it is going to be allocated.

Ezekiel 45:4, "It shall be a holy portion of the land, belonging to the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, who come near to minister to the Lord; it shall be a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary."

Verse 7, "The prince shall have a portion on one side and the other of the holy district...."

Verses 16-17 talk about the prince of Israel and what the prince will do in terms of providing certain things for burnt offerings. Various things are going to be done in that way. You can go through the details of it.

Ezekiel 47 and 48 describe some of the layout of the land. When you go through and read of the portion for the prince and the prince's sons, it's clear that we are talking about a human leader (let's say a human heir to the throne of David), just as the human physical descendants of Levi

will be occupying a position of responsibility there. The continuation of David's physical lineage will be carrying out on a human level certain responsibilities and ceremonies of state and certain things that are allocated out. There is a restoration in the time of the Millennium of things that will enable the world to function. The world will be looking to God's government as a literal functioning government.

There are several things that we might want to note as we conclude. This is important to note.

Ezekiel 41:23-24, "The temple and the sanctuary had two doors. The doors had two panels apiece, two folding panels: two panels for one door and two panels for the other door." What it describes is doors, not the veil that had always been blocking the entrance from the Holy Place into the Holy of Holies.

Remember the veil that was torn at the death of Christ (Matthew 27:51)? The tabernacle and later the temple had a veil that cut off access to the Holy of Holies. In the Millennium, the temple will not have a veil. There's going to be a set of folding doors that are going to slide back and forth, indicating ready and easy access into the presence of God. The future temple won't have the heavy veil blocking entrance to the Holy of Holies and symbolically blocking direct access to God. Rather, there will be doors that open to give easy access. That's why a different symbol is used.

Notice something very mundane; God spells out every detail. A lot of these were regulations that the ancient priesthood operated under.

Ezekiel 44:20 KJV, "Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer [allow] their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads." They weren't to shave their heads like the priests of Egypt. They weren't to allow their hair to grow long, as some of the surrounding nations practiced. They were to poll their heads.

Now, if you look up that word, you find that they were to get what we would think of as simply a normal masculine haircut. The term "poll" refers to the shape of the head. There's a breed of cattle known as "polled" Herefords. The reason they are called that is because they don't have horns. You talk about a poll tax. The term "poll" means head and, in that sense, when you refer to cattle being polled, it means that there is nothing coming out from the head. That is simply the shape of the head and nothing coming out.

When it was used here in the context of the priests, it meant that the priests wore their hair short enough that it was considered polled. In other words, it was clipped. The concept was

that a man's hair was short enough that the shape of the head was evident. A woman's hair, as it describes in 1 Corinthians 11, is given for a covering. There is a more flowing, feminine, softer look to it and certainly room for a variety of styles. But the point is that it's long enough to cover something, and a man's hair is not normally long enough to cover—it's a cropped haircut. According to the Talmud, the Jews understood this to mean that the priests were required to get a haircut every 30 days. This was the specific regulation that the priests operated under. That was the way they understood that.

We live in a time where we see the artwork that shows biblical characters and they have long flowing hair coming down to their shoulders. A lot of us grew up kind of conceiving this is the way that Christ, all the apostles and people a long time ago had long flowing hair. No, it says right here that's not the way God's priesthood was. He didn't want them to look like the Egyptians and have kind of a "Yul Brynner" look; the Egyptian priesthood shaved their heads. Some of the priests of the surrounding nations wore their hair very long. God's priesthood just looked normal. All explanations aside, the bottom line was God said He wanted His priests to look normal.

The duty of the priests is made plain.

Verses 23-24, "And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to My judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths."

The job of God's priesthood, ancient and modern, spiritual and physical, is to teach His people the difference between clean and unclean, holy and profane, what is appropriate. They are to teach the people how to make distinctions between what God approves and what He disapproves. There are various ways you could state it, but it is important if we are going to be kings and priests in Tomorrow's World. We are going to be priests in a spiritual sense. Even in the book of Leviticus, many of the things that were given anciently to the physical priesthood had to do with learning to make proper distinction between what is clean (what is appropriate and holy) and what is not.

Ezekiel 47 describes the river of living water. Christ used that symbolically to refer to the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39).

Verses 1-12 make plain there is going to be a literal river of living water issuing from the throne of Christ. That is going to symbolize the Holy Spirit flowing out from Him to all the nations. You remember when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives, the mountain splits in two (Zechariah 14:4, 8) and a great ripped valley runs east/west and from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean.

Ezekiel 47:1, “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, ....” He saw this water that came out.

Verses 2-4, they go out and he sees this. He measures the water.

Verse 5, “Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed.”

The waters rose and, verses 6-12, there were trees on the bank. The fruit is going to be there for the healing of the nations. It describes all of this and it describes the river as it comes out.

Remember in Revelation 16:3-4, the waters over all the earth—the seas and the rivers—are going to be turned to blood and all the fish are going to die. Notice what happens when Christ comes back and this river begins to spring out.

Ezekiel 47: 8-9, “...‘This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.’”

What is going to happen? You know, people read in Revelation, “all the water turned to blood and the fish die,” and they say, ‘How can life continue?’ Well, the way it is going to continue is a river is going to spring forth. When Christ returns and the Mount of Olives splits in two, this great ripped valley occurs. There’s going to come up a gurgling spring that is going to spread out. As this water flows, anything it touches is going to be healed and the fish are going to live. This doesn’t prove that fish have immortal souls either.

Genesis 1:20, go back and find, “...‘Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures [souls], ....’” The word “creature” for fish means “soul.” It says here that the fish are going to live. It doesn’t mean that the fish have an immortal soul. It just means that there is going to be a healing, a restoration of life on the

planet. Many times God does something outwardly, physically, that people can see. Particularly when He’s dealing with a nation, with a world, He does something outward, physical that they can see to teach a spiritual lesson. Just as life emanates out from the throne of God in a physical way, it is symbolic of a spiritual healing and a spiritual relief that will take place.

There are a lot of things in the book of Ezekiel. It’s a very intriguing book, a very powerful book. It’s a book that has an awful lot for us today. Hopefully, with this series, you have a little bit more of an overview of some of these prophecies.

Next Bible study, we will begin a brand new series; this will be a series on the life and letters of the Apostle Paul.