

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

JULY 3-9

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 11-14

“Do You Have a Heart of Flesh?”

(Ezekiel 11:17, 18) “Therefore say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “I will also collect you from the peoples and gather you from the lands to which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. ¹⁸ And they will return there and remove from it all its disgusting things and detestable practices.

w07 7/1 11 ¶4

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

In 612 B.C.E., a vision transports Ezekiel to Jerusalem. What detestable things he sees happening in God's temple! When Jehovah sends his heavenly executorial forces (represented by “six men”) to express his anger at the apostates, only those who have received ‘a mark on the forehead’ will be spared. (Ezekiel 9:2-6) First, though, “coals of fire”—God's fiery message of destruction—must be tossed over the city. (Ezekiel 10:2) While ‘Jehovah will bring upon the head of the wicked their own way,’ he promises to regather the scattered ones of Israel.—Ezekiel 11:17-21.

(Ezekiel 11:19) And I will give them a unified heart, and I will put a new spirit in them; and I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh,

w16.05 15 ¶9

How Do You Make Personal Decisions?

⁹ If we are to make wise decisions, as Jesus did, we must rely on Jehovah for guidance. We need to act in accord with these wise words: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not become wise in your own eyes. Fear Jehovah and turn away from bad.” (Prov. 3:5-7) Getting to know Jehovah's thinking through Bible study can help us to perceive what God would want us to do in a particular situation. The more familiar we are with Jehovah's thoughts, the more our heart will become sensitive to his guidance.—Ezek. 11:19, ftn.

(Ezekiel 11:20) in order that they may walk in my statutes and observe my judgments and obey

them. Then they will be my people, and I will be their God.”

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 12:26-28) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ²⁷ “Son of man, this is what the people of Israel are saying, ‘The vision that he sees is for a long time from now, and he is prophesying about the distant future.’ ²⁸ Therefore say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “None of my words will be delayed; whatever I say will be done,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.””

w07 7/1 13 ¶8

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

12:26-28. Even to those scoffing at his message, Ezekiel was to say: “There will be no postponement anymore as to any words of [Jehovah].” We must do all we can to help others put their confidence in Jehovah before he brings an end to this system of things.

(Ezekiel 14:13, 14) “Son of man, if a land sins against me by acting unfaithfully, I will stretch out my hand against it and destroy its food supply, and I will send famine upon it and cut off man and animal from it.” ¹⁴ “Even if these three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job—were within it, they would be able to save only themselves because of their righteousness,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

w16.05 26 ¶13

Benefit Fully From Jehovah's Provisions

¹³ For example, consider Ezekiel 14:13, 14, where we read: “If a land sins against me by acting unfaithfully, I will stretch out my hand against it and destroy its food supply, and I will send famine upon it and cut off man and animal from it. ‘Even if these three men—Noah, Daniel, and Job—were within it, they would be able to save only themselves because of their righteousness,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.” By doing some research, we learn that this portion of Ezekiel was written in about the year 612 B.C.E. By that time, Noah and Job had been dead for centuries, and their record of faithfulness was in God's memory. But Daniel was still alive. In fact, he may have been in his late teens or early 20's when Jehovah said that he was just as righteous as Noah and Job. The lesson?

Jehovah notices and values the integrity of all his faithful worshippers, including those who are relatively young.—Ps. 148:12-14.

w07 7/1 13 ¶9

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

14:12-23. Gaining salvation is our personal responsibility. No one can do it for us.—Romans 14:12.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 12:1-10) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ² “Son of man, you are living in a rebellious house. They have eyes to see, but they do not see, and ears to hear, but they do not hear, for they are a rebellious house. ³ As for you, son of man, prepare for yourself luggage for going into exile. Then, during the day while they are watching, you must go into exile. Go into exile from your home to another place while they are watching. Perhaps they will take notice, even though they are a rebellious house. ⁴ Bring out your luggage packed for going into exile during the day while they are watching, and then in the evening while they are watching, you should leave like someone being taken into exile. ⁵ “While they are watching, bore a hole in the wall, and carry your belongings out through it. ⁶ While they are watching, put your belongings on your shoulder and carry them out in the darkness. Cover your face so that you cannot see the ground, for I am making you a sign to the house of Israel.” ⁷ I did just as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my luggage as luggage for going into exile, and in the evening I bored a hole through the wall by hand. And when it was dark, I took out my belongings, carrying them on my shoulder right before their eyes. ⁸ In the morning the word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ⁹ “Son of man, did not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, ask you, ‘What are you doing?’ ¹⁰ Tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “This pronouncement concerns the chieftain in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel within the city.”’

JULY 10-16

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | EZEKIEL 15-17

“Do You Keep Your Promises?”

(Ezekiel 17:1-4) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ² “Son of man, tell a riddle

and relate a proverb about the house of Israel. ³ You must say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “The great eagle, with great wings, long pinions, and full, colorful plumage, came to Leb’a-non and took the top of the cedar. ⁴ He plucked off its topmost shoot and brought it to the land of traders and set it down in a city of traders.’

w07 7/1 12 ¶6

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

17:1-24—Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the “tender one” transplanted by Jehovah? The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle, Egypt’s ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off “a tender one,” the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon “a high and lofty mountain,” upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become “a majestic cedar,” a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

(Ezekiel 17:7) ““And there came another great eagle, with great wings and large pinions. This vine then stretched its roots eagerly toward him, away from the garden beds where it was planted, and it sent out its foliage toward him so that he would irrigate it.

(Ezekiel 17:15) But the king finally rebelled against him by sending his messengers to Egypt to obtain horses and a large army from them. Will he succeed? Will the one doing these things escape punishment? Can he break the covenant and still escape?’

w07 7/1 12 ¶6

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

17:1-24—Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the “tender one” transplanted by Jehovah? The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle,

Egypt's ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off "a tender one," the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon "a high and lofty mountain," upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become "a majestic cedar," a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

(Ezekiel 17:18, 19) He has despised an oath and broken a covenant. Even though he gave his promise, he has done all these things, and he will not escape.”¹⁹ “Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “As surely as I am alive, I will bring upon his head the consequences of despising my oath and breaking my covenant.

w12 10/15 30 ¶11

Let Your Yes Mean Yes

¹¹ Why has Jehovah had the above examples recorded for us in his Word? And how serious is the matter of letting our Yes mean Yes? The Bible clearly warns that a person who is “false to agreements” is among those who are “deserving of death.” (Rom. 1:31, 32) Pharaoh of Egypt, Judean King Zedekiah, and Ananias and Sapphira are among the bad examples highlighted in the Bible of individuals whose Yes did not mean Yes. They all fared badly and stand as warning examples for us.—Ex. 9:27, 28, 34, 35; Ezek. 17:13-15, 19, 20; Acts 5:1-10.

w88 9/15 17 ¶8

Jehovah Unsheathes His Sword!

⁸ Next, the rulers of Babylon and Egypt were likened to great eagles. One broke off the top of a cedar tree by removing King Jehoiachin and replacing him with Zedekiah. Although Zedekiah took a loyalty oath to Nebuchadnezzar, he broke it, seeking the military help of Egypt's ruler, the other great eagle. If Zedekiah invoked God's name in taking his oath, breaking it brought reproach on Jehovah. The very thought of bringing reproach on God should restrain us from ever proving false to our word. Privileged we are indeed to bear the divine name as Jehovah's Witnesses!—Ezekiel 17:1-21.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 16:60) But I myself will remember the covenant that I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you a permanent covenant.

w88 9/15 17 ¶7

Jehovah Unsheathes His Sword!

⁷ Because of her unfaithful inhabitants, Judah was

likened to a wild vine without good fruit and fit only for the fire. (Ezekiel 15:1-8) She was also likened to a foundling saved by God from Egypt and nurtured to womanhood. Jehovah took her as his wife, but she turned to false gods and would suffer destruction for her spiritual adultery. Yet, with faithful ones God would ‘establish an indefinitely lasting covenant’—the new covenant with spiritual Israel.—Ezekiel 16:1-63; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 6:16.

(Ezekiel 17:22, 23) “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “I will take a shoot from the top of the lofty cedar and plant it, from the top of its twigs I will pluck a tender shoot, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.”²³ On a high mountain of Israel I will plant it; and its branches will grow, and it will produce fruit and become a majestic cedar. And every kind of bird will live beneath it and reside in the shadow of its foliage.

w07 7/1 12 ¶6

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

17:1-24—Who are the two great eagles, how are the young shoots of a cedar plucked off, and who is the “tender one” transplanted by Jehovah?

The two eagles represent the rulers of Babylon and Egypt. The first eagle comes to the treetop of the cedar, that is, to the ruler of the government in the royal line of David. This eagle plucks off the top of the young shoots by replacing King Jehoiachin of Judah with Zedekiah. Despite having taken a loyalty oath, Zedekiah seeks the help of the other eagle, Egypt's ruler, but to no avail. He is to be taken captive and is to die in Babylon. Jehovah also plucks off “a tender one,” the Messianic King. This One is transplanted upon “a high and lofty mountain,” upon heavenly Mount Zion, where he will become “a majestic cedar,” a source of real blessings for the earth.—Revelation 14:1.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 16:28-42) “Because you could not be satisfied, you then prostituted yourself to the sons of As-syr'i-a, but after prostituting yourself to them, you still did not find satisfaction.”²⁹ So you increased your prostitution toward the land of traders and toward the Chal-de'ans, but even then you did not find satisfaction.”³⁰ How sick your heart was,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, ‘when you did all these things, behaving like a brazen prostitute!’³¹ But when you built

your mound at the most prominent place of every street and made your high place in every public square, you were not like a prostitute, because you refused any payment. ³² You are an adulterous wife who takes strangers instead of her own husband! ³³ People give all prostitutes a gift, but you are the one who has given gifts to all those lusting after you, and you bribe them to come to you from all around to commit prostitution. ³⁴ You are the opposite of other women who engage in prostitution. No one commits prostitution your way! You pay others, and they do not pay you. Your way is the opposite.’ ³⁵ “Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of Jehovah. ³⁶ This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘Because your lust has been poured out and your nakedness has been exposed during your prostitution with your lovers and all your detestable, disgusting idols to which you even sacrificed the blood of your sons, ³⁷ therefore I am collecting together all the lovers you have given pleasure to, all those you loved together with all those you hated. I will collect them together against you from all around and expose your nakedness to them, and they will see you completely naked. ³⁸ “And I will punish you with the judgments that adulteresses and women shedding blood deserve, and your blood will be shed in rage and jealousy. ³⁹ I will give you into their hand, and they will tear down your mounds, and your high places will be pulled down; and they will strip you of your garments and take your beautiful jewelry and leave you naked and exposed. ⁴⁰ They will bring against you a crowd, and they will stone you and will slaughter you with their swords. ⁴¹ They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgment on you before the eyes of many women; and I will bring an end to your prostitution, and you will stop giving payment. ⁴² I will satisfy my rage against you, and my indignation will turn away from you; and I will be calm and no longer feel offended.’

JULY 17-23

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | EZEKIEL 18-20

“When Jehovah Forgives, Does He Forget?”

(Ezekiel 18:19, 20) “But you will say: “Why does the son not bear guilt because of his father’s error?” Since the son has done what is just and

righteous, has kept all my statutes and has observed them, he will surely keep living. ²⁰ The soul who sins is the one who will die. A son will bear no guilt because of the error of his father, and a father will bear no guilt because of the error of his son. The righteousness of the righteous one will be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked one will be accounted to him alone.

w12 7/1 18 ¶2

When God Forgives, Does He Forget?

Using the prophet Ezekiel as a spokesman, Jehovah proclaimed judgment against unfaithful Judah and Jerusalem. The nation as a whole had abandoned Jehovah’s worship and filled the land with violence. Jehovah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. But in the midst of the judgment, Jehovah provided a message of hope. Each individual had a choice; each one was responsible for his own course of action.—Verses 19, 20.

(Ezekiel 18:21, 22) “Now if someone wicked turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps my statutes and does what is just and righteous, he will surely keep living. He will not die. ²² None of the transgressions that he has committed will be held against him. He will keep living for doing what is righteous.’

w12 7/1 18 ¶3-7

When God Forgives, Does He Forget?

What, then, if someone changed from doing bad to doing good? Jehovah said: “As regards someone wicked, in case he should turn back from all his sins that he has committed and he should actually keep all my statutes and execute justice and righteousness, he will positively keep living. He will not die.” (Verse 21) Yes, Jehovah was “ready to forgive” a sinner who turned back from his wayward course, manifesting true repentance.—Psalm 86:5.

What about the sins he had committed? “All his transgressions that he has committed—they will not be remembered against him,” Jehovah explained. (Verse 22) Notice that the repentant one’s sins would “not be remembered *against him*.” Why is this significant?

In the Bible, the Hebrew word translated “remember” can mean more than just to recall the past. Regarding this word, one reference work says: “Quite often, in fact, [it] implies an action or appears in combination with verbs of action.” Thus, “to remember” can mean “to act.” Hence, when

Jehovah says of a repentant sinner that his sins “will not be remembered against him,” He is saying that He will not thereafter *act against the individual* because of those sins, such as by accusing or punishing him.

The words of Ezekiel 18:21, 22 paint a touching picture of the extent of God’s forgiveness. When Jehovah forgives our sins, he will never hold those sins against us in the future. Instead, he puts the sins of repentant ones behind him. (Isaiah 38:17) It is as if he wipes out the record of those sins.—Acts 3:19.

As imperfect humans, we need God’s mercy. After all, we sin many times. (Romans 3:23) But Jehovah wants us to know that if we are sincerely repentant, he is willing to forgive. And when he forgives, he forgets—that is, he will not rehash our sins in order to accuse or punish us ever again. What a comforting thought! Does God’s mercy move you to want to draw closer to him?

(Ezekiel 18:23) “Do I take any pleasure at all in the death of a wicked person?” declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. ‘Do I not prefer that he turn away from his ways and keep living?’

(Ezekiel 18:32) “I do not take any pleasure in the death of anyone,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. ‘So turn back and live.’”

w08 4/1 8 ¶4

Armageddon—God’s War to End All Wars

Since God is the Judge, we can be sure that in every case the judgments against the wicked will be righteous. “Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?” asked Abraham. The answer, Abraham learned, is that Jehovah is *always* right! (Genesis 18:25) Furthermore, the Bible assures us that Jehovah finds no delight in destroying the wicked; he does so only as a last resort.—Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9.

w06 12/1 27 ¶11

What It Means to Love Our Neighbor

¹¹ In showing love to those who do not serve God, we can do no better than to imitate Jehovah himself. Though he is no lover of wickedness, he shows loving-kindness to all by extending to them the opportunity to turn back from their bad ways and receive everlasting life. (Ezekiel 18:23) Jehovah “desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) It is his will that “all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4) That is why Jesus commissioned his followers to preach and to teach and to “make disciples of

people of all the nations.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) By our participation in this work, we show love for both God and neighbor, yes, including even our enemies!

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 18:29) “But the house of Israel will say: ‘The way of Jehovah is unjust.’ Is it really my ways that are unjust, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are unjust?’

w13 8/15 11 ¶9

Never Become “Enraged Against Jehovah”

⁹ **We do not know all the facts.** Because of not having all the facts, the Israelites in Ezekiel’s day felt that Jehovah’s way was “not adjusted right.” (Ezek. 18:29) It was as if they had set themselves up as judges of God, putting their own standards of justice above Jehovah’s and judging him based on their own limited understanding of events. If we at times do not fully understand a Bible account or the way events develop in our own life, could we perhaps feel in our heart that the way of Jehovah is unfair, “not adjusted right”?—Job 35:2.

(Ezekiel 20:49) And I said: “Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! They are saying about me, ‘Is he not just speaking in riddles?’”

w07 7/1 14 ¶3

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

20:1, 49. The response of the older men of Israel shows that they were skeptical about what Ezekiel had said. May we never develop a doubting attitude toward divine warnings.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 20:1-12) Now in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, some of the elders of Israel came and sat down before me to inquire of Jehovah. ² Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying: ³ “Son of man, speak with the elders of Israel, and tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Are you coming to inquire of me? ‘As surely as I am alive, I will not respond to your inquiry,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”’ ⁴ “Are you ready to judge them? Are you ready to judge them, son of man? Make them know the detestable things that their forefathers did. ⁵ Tell them, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “In the day I chose Israel, I also swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob, and I made myself known to them in the land of Egypt. Yes, I swore to them and said, ‘I am Jehovah your God.’ ⁶ In that day I swore

that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt to a land that I had searched out for them, one flowing with milk and honey. It was the most beautiful of all the lands. ⁷ I then said to them, 'Each of you must throw away the detestable things that are before your eyes; do not defile yourselves with the disgusting idols of Egypt. I am Jehovah your God.' ⁸ "But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. They did not throw away the detestable things that were before them, and they would not abandon the disgusting idols of Egypt. So I promised to pour out my rage on them and to unleash my anger fully against them in the land of Egypt. ⁹ But I acted for the sake of my name so that it would not be profaned before the nations among whom they were living. For I made myself known to them before these nations when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ So I brought them out of the land of Egypt and led them into the wilderness. ¹¹ "I then gave them my statutes and made my judicial decisions known to them, so that the man who follows them may have life by them. ¹² I also gave my sabbaths to them as a sign between me and them, so that they would know that I, Jehovah, am the one sanctifying them.

JULY 24-30

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 21-23

"The Kingship Belongs to the One With the Legal Right"

(Ezekiel 21:25) "But your day has come, O fatally wounded, wicked chieftain of Israel, the time of your final punishment.

w07 7/1 13 ¶11

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

In the seventh year of exile, 611 B.C.E., the elderly ones of Israel come to Ezekiel "to inquire of Jehovah." They hear a long history of Israel's rebellion and a warning that 'Jehovah will bring forth his sword' against them. (Ezekiel 20:1; 21:3) Addressing the chieftain of Israel (Zedekiah), Jehovah says: "Remove the turban, and lift off the crown. This will not be the same. Put on high even what is low, and bring low even the high one. A ruin, a ruin, a ruin I shall make it. As for this also, it will certainly become no one's until he comes who has the legal

right [Jesus Christ], and I must give it to him."—Ezekiel 21:26, 27.

(Ezekiel 21:26) This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Remove the turban, and take off the crown. This will not remain the same. Raise up the low one, and bring low the high one.

w11 8/15 9 ¶6

They Waited for the Messiah

⁶ *The Messiah was to be born of Israel's tribe of Judah.* In his deathbed blessing of his sons, the patriarch Jacob foretold: "The scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him the obedience of the peoples will belong." (Gen. 49:10) Many Jewish scholars of the past associated those words with the Messiah. Starting with the rule of Judean King David, the scepter (royal sovereignty) and the commander's staff (power to command) resided with the tribe of Judah. "Shiloh" signifies "He Whose It Is; He to Whom It Belongs." The regal line of Judah would end in "Shiloh" as the permanent kingly Heir, for God told Zedekiah, the last Judean king, that rulership would be given to one having the legal right to it. (Ezek. 21:26, 27) After Zedekiah, Jesus was the only descendant of David to whom kingship was promised. Before Jesus' birth, the angel Gabriel told Mary: "Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule as king over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom." (Luke 1:32, 33) Shiloh must be Jesus Christ, who was a descendant of Judah and David.—Matt. 1:1-3, 6; Luke 3:23, 31-34.

(Ezekiel 21:27) A ruin, a ruin, a ruin I will make it. And it will not belong to anyone until the one who has the legal right comes, and I will give it to him.'

w14 10/15 10 ¶14

Have Unshakable Faith in the Kingdom

¹⁴ Consider what Jehovah promised King David of ancient Israel by means of the **Davidic covenant**. (**Read 2 Samuel 7:12, 16.**) Jehovah made this covenant with David during David's reign in Jerusalem, promising him that the Messiah would be his descendant. (Luke 1:30-33) Thus, Jehovah further narrowed the line of descent of the offspring and established that an heir of David would have "the legal right" to the throne of the Messianic Kingdom. (Ezek. 21:25-27) Through Jesus, David's kingship "will be firmly established forever." Indeed, David's

offspring “will endure forever; his throne will endure like the sun.” (Ps. 89:34-37) Yes, the Messiah’s rule will never become corrupt, and its accomplishments will last forever!

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 21:3) Say to the land of Israel, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Here I am against you, and I will bring my sword out of its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked.

w07 7/1 14 ¶1

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

21:3—What is the “sword” that Jehovah brings forth out of its sheath? The “sword” that Jehovah uses to execute his judgment upon Jerusalem and Judah proves to be Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar and his army. It could also include the heavenly part of God’s organization consisting of mighty spirit creatures.

(Ezekiel 23:49) They will bring on you the consequences of your obscene conduct and of your sins with your disgusting idols; and you will have to know that I am the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.”

w07 7/1 14 ¶6

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

23:5-49. Making political alliances led Israel and Judah to adopt the false worship of their allies. Let us guard against forming worldly ties that can destroy our faith.—James 4:4.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 21:1-13) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ² “Son of man, turn your face toward Jerusalem, and make a proclamation against the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel. ³ Say to the land of Israel, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Here I am against you, and I will bring my sword out of its sheath and cut off from you both the righteous and the wicked. ⁴ Because I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, my sword will be drawn from its sheath against all flesh, from south to north. ⁵ All people will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have drawn my sword from its sheath. It will not go back again.”’ ⁶ “And you, son of man, sigh while you tremble, yes, sigh bitterly before them. ⁷ And if they say to you, ‘Why are you sighing?’ you will say, ‘Because of a report.’ For it will certainly come, and every heart will melt with fear and every hand will hang limp and every spir-

it will become dejected and every knee will drip with water. ‘Look! It will certainly come—it will take place,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.” ⁸ The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ⁹ “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Say, ‘A sword! A sword is sharpened, and it is polished. ¹⁰ It is sharpened to inflict a great slaughter; it is polished to flash like lightning.’”’” “Should we not rejoice?” “Will it reject the scepter of my own son, as it does every tree? ¹¹ “It is given to be polished and to be wielded with the hand. This sword is sharpened and polished, to be put into the hand of an executioner. ¹² “Cry out and wail, son of man, for it has come against my people; it is against all the chieftains of Israel. These will be victims of the sword along with my people. So strike your thigh in grief. ¹³ For an examination has been made, and what will happen if the sword rejects the scepter? It will cease to exist,’ declares the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

JULY 31–AUGUST 6

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | EZEKIEL 24-27

“A Prophecy Against Tyre Strengthens Confidence in Jehovah’s Word”

(Ezekiel 26:3, 4) therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘Here I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up many nations against you, just as the sea brings up its waves. ⁴ They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her towers, and I will scrape away soil and make her a shining, bare rock.

si 133 ¶4

Bible Book Number 26—Ezekiel

⁴ Further proof of authenticity is to be found in the dramatic fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecies against neighboring nations, such as Tyre, Egypt, and Edom. For example, Ezekiel prophesied that Tyre would be devastated, and this was partly fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar took the city after a siege of 13 years. (Ezek. 26:2-21) This conflict did not mean the complete end for Tyre. However, Jehovah’s judgment was that it should be *totally* destroyed. He had foretold through Ezekiel: “I will scrape her dust away from her and make her a shining, bare surface of a crag. . . . Your stones and your woodwork and your dust they will place in the very midst of the water.” (26:4, 12) This was all fulfilled more than 250 years

later when Alexander the Great moved against the island city of Tyre. Alexander's soldiers scraped up all the debris of the ruined mainland city and threw it into the sea, making a half-mile [800 m] causeway out to the island city. Then, with an intricate siege work, they scaled the 150-foot-high [46 m] walls to take the city in 332 B.C.E. Thousands were killed, and many more were sold into slavery. As Ezekiel had also predicted, Tyre became the 'bare surface of a crag and a drying yard for dragnets.' (26:14) On the other side of the Promised Land, the treacherous Edomites were also annihilated, in fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. (25:12, 13; 35:2-9) And, of course, Ezekiel's prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and Israel's restoration also proved to be accurate.—17:12-21; 36:7-14.

(Ezekiel 26:7-11) "For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Here I am bringing King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon against Tyre from the north; he is a king of kings, with horses, war chariots, cavalrymen, and an army of many soldiers. ⁸ He will destroy your settlements in the countryside with the sword, and he will build a siege wall and throw up a siege rampart against you and raise up a great shield against you. ⁹ He will pound your walls with his battering ram, and with his axes he will pull down your towers. ¹⁰ His horses will be so many that they will cover you with dust, and the sound of the cavalry, the wheels, and the chariots will cause your walls to shake when he enters your gates, like men storming a city with broken walls. ¹¹ The hooves of his horses will trample down all your streets; he will kill your people with the sword, and your mighty pillars will crash to the ground.

ce 216 ¶3

The Bible—Is It Really Inspired by God?

³ Tyre was a prominent seaport of Phoenicia that had dealt treacherously with ancient Israel, her southern neighbor that worshiped Jehovah. Through a prophet named Ezekiel, Jehovah foretold its complete destruction over 250 years before it happened. Jehovah declared: "I will bring up against you many nations . . . And they will certainly bring the walls of Tyre to ruin and tear down her towers, and I will scrape her dust away from her and make her a shining, bare surface of a crag. A drying yard for dragnets is what she will become in the midst of the sea." Ezekiel also named in advance the first nation and its leader to besiege Tyre: "Here I am bringing against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon."—Ezekiel 26:3-5, 7.

(Ezekiel 26:4) They will destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her towers, and I will scrape away soil and make her a shining, bare rock.

(Ezekiel 26:12) They will loot your resources, plunder your merchandise, tear down your walls, and pull down your fine houses; then they will throw your stones and your woodwork and your soil into the water.'

it-1 70

Alexander

Instead of pursuing the fleeing Persians after two decisive victories in Asia Minor (the first at the Granicus River; the second on the Plain of Issus, where a great Persian army estimated at half a million met utter defeat), Alexander turned his attention to the island city of Tyre. Centuries earlier it had been foretold that the walls, towers, houses, and the very dust of Tyre would be pitched into the sea. (Eze 26:4, 12) It is, therefore, quite significant that Alexander took the rubble of the mainland city destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar some years before and built with it an 800-m (0.5 mi) causeway out to the island city. The pounding by his navy and engines of war destroyed that proud mistress of the sea in July 332 B.C.E.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 24:6) "Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: 'Woe to the city of bloodshed, the rusty cooking pot, whose rust has not been removed! Empty it piece by piece; do not cast lots for them.

(Ezekiel 24:12) It is frustrating and exhausting, For the heavy rust will not come off. Throw it into the fire with its rust!'

w07 7/1 14 ¶2

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

24:6-14—What does the rust of the cooking pot represent? Jerusalem under siege is likened to a widemouthed cooking pot. Its rust represents the moral filth of the city—the uncleanness, loose conduct, and bloodshed for which she is responsible. So great is her uncleanness that even standing the pot empty upon its coals and making it very hot fails to remove the rust.

(Ezekiel 24:16, 17) "Son of man, in a single blow I am about to take away your dear one from you. You should not mourn; nor should you weep or shed tears. ¹⁷ Groan in silence, and do not observe mourning rites for the dead. Bind on your

turban, and put on your sandals. You should not cover over the mustache, and do not eat the bread brought to you by others.”

w88 9/15 21 ¶24

Jehovah Unsheathes His Sword!

²⁴ Next, Ezekiel was to act in an unusual way. (*Read Ezekiel 24:15-18.*) Why was the prophet to display no grief when his wife died? To show how stunned the Jews would be at the destruction of Jerusalem, her inhabitants, and the temple. Ezekiel had already said enough about such matters and would not speak God’s message again until Jerusalem’s downfall was reported to him. Similarly, Christendom and her hypocritical religionists will be stunned at the time of their destruction. And after the “great tribulation” begins, what the anointed watchman class had already said about her end will be enough. (Matthew 24:21) But when God’s “sword” descends upon Christendom, such stunned religionists and others ‘will have to know that he is Jehovah.’—Ezekiel 24:19-27.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 25:1-11) The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ² “Son of man, turn your face toward the Am’mo·nites, and prophesy against them. ³ You must say concerning the Am’mo·nites, ‘Hear the word of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: “Because you said ‘Aha!’ against my sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was laid desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into exile, ⁴ therefore I am giving you to the people of the East as a possession. They will set up their encampments within you and pitch their tents among you. They will eat your fruitage, and they will drink your milk. ⁵ I will make Rab’bah a pasture ground for camels, and the land of the Am’mo·nites a resting-place for the flock; and you will have to know that I am Jehovah.”’” ⁶ “For this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘Because you clapped your hands and stamped your feet and you rejoiced over the land of Israel with such utter scorn, ⁷ therefore I will stretch out my hand against you to give you to the nations as something to plunder. I will cut you off from the peoples and destroy you from the lands. I will annihilate you, and you will have to know that I am Jehovah.’” ⁸ “This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah says: ‘Because Mo’ab and

Se’ir have said, “Look! The house of Judah is like all the other nations,” ⁹ I am exposing Mo’ab’s flank at his frontier cities, the beauty of his land, Beth-jesh’i-moth, Ba’al-me’on, and clear to Kir-i-a-tha’im. ¹⁰ I will give it along with the Am’mo·nites as a possession to the people of the East, so that the Am’mo·nites will not be remembered among the nations. ¹¹ And I will execute judgment in Mo’ab, and they will have to know that I am Jehovah.’