

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

JUNE 5-11

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | JEREMIAH 51-52

"Jehovah's Word Comes True in Every Detail"

(Jeremiah 51:11) "Polish the arrows; take up the circular shields. Jehovah has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, Because he intends to bring Babylon to ruin. For this is the vengeance of Jehovah, the vengeance for his temple.

(Jeremiah 51:28) Appoint against her the nations, The kings of Me'di-a, its governors and all its deputy rulers And all the lands they rule over.

it-2 360 ¶2-3

Medes, Media

With Persians defeat Babylon. In the eighth century B.C.E., the prophet Isaiah had foretold that Jehovah would arouse against Babylon "the Medes, who account silver itself as nothing and who, as respects gold, take no delight in it. And their bows will dash even young men to pieces." (Isa 13:17-19; 21:2) The term "Medes" here may well include the Persians, even as the classical Greek historians commonly used the term to embrace both Medes and Persians. Their disdaining silver and gold evidently indicates that in Babylon's case conquest was the prime motive with them rather than spoil, so that no bribe or offer of tribute would buy them off from their determined purpose. The Medes, like the Persians, used the bow as a principal weapon. The wooden bows, though sometimes mounted with bronze or copper (compare Ps 18:34), likely 'dashed the young men of Babylon to pieces' by the hail of arrows, individually polished so as to penetrate even deeper.—Jer 51:11.

It may be noted that Jeremiah (51:11, 28) makes reference to "the *kings* of Media" as among those attacking Babylon, the plural perhaps indicating that even under Cyrus, a subordinate Median king or kings may have continued to exist, a situation by no means incompatible with ancient practice. (Compare also Jer 25:25.) Thus, too, we find that when Babylon was captured by the combined forces of Medes, Persians, Elamites, and other neighboring tribes, it was a Mede named Darius who was "made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans," evidently as an appointee of King Cyrus the Persian.—Da 5:31; 9:1; see DARIUS No. 1.

(Jeremiah 51:30) The warriors of Babylon have quit fighting. They sit in their strongholds. Their strength has failed. They have become like women. Her homes have been set on fire. Her bars have been broken.

it-2 459 ¶4

Nabonidus

Interestingly, the Chronicle says concerning the night of Babylon's fall: "The army of Cyrus entered Babylon without battle." This likely means without a general conflict and agrees with the prophecy of Jeremiah that 'the mighty men of Babylon would cease to fight.'—Jer 51:30.

(Jeremiah 51:37) And Babylon will become piles of stones, A lair of jackals, An object of horror and something to whistle at, Without an inhabitant.

(Jeremiah 51:62) Then say, 'O Jehovah, you have said against this place that it will be destroyed and left without an inhabitant, man or beast, and that she will become desolate forever.'

it-1 237 ¶1

Babylon

From that memorable date, 539 B.C.E., Babylon's glory began to fade as the city declined. Twice it revolted against the Persian emperor Darius I (Hystaspis), and on the second occasion it was dismantled. A partially restored city rebelled against Xerxes I and was plundered. Alexander the Great intended to make Babylon his capital, but he suddenly died in 323 B.C.E. Nicator conquered the city in 312 B.C.E. and transported much of its material to the banks of the Tigris for use in building his new capital of Seleucia. However, the city and a settlement of Jews remained in early Christian times, giving the apostle Peter reason to visit Babylon, as noted in his letter. (1Pe 5:13) Inscriptions found there show that Babylon's temple of Bel existed as late as 75 C.E. By the fourth century C.E. the city was in ruins, and eventually passed out of existence. It became nothing more than "piles of stones."—Jer 51:37.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Jeremiah 51:25) "Here I am against you, O destructive mountain," declares Jehovah, "You

destroyer of the whole earth. I will stretch out my hand against you and roll you down from the crags And make you a burned-out mountain.”

it-2 444 ¶9

Mount, Mountain

Represent governments. In Biblical symbolism mountains can represent kingdoms or ruling governments. (Da 2:35, 44, 45; compare Isa 41:15; Re 17:9-11, 18.) Babylon, by her military conquests, brought other lands to ruin and is, therefore, called a “ruinous mountain.” (Jer 51:24, 25) A psalm relating Jehovah’s activities against warring men depicts him as being “enveloped with light, more majestic than the mountains of prey.” (Ps 76:4) “The mountains of prey” may represent aggressive kingdoms. (Compare Na 2:11-13.) Regarding Jehovah, David said: “You have made my mountain to stand in strength,” probably meaning that Jehovah had exalted David’s kingdom and firmly established it. (Ps 30:7; compare 2Sa 5:12.) The fact that mountains may represent kingdoms aids one in understanding the significance of what is described at Revelation 8:8 as “something like a great mountain burning with fire.” Its resemblance to a burning mountain would suggest that it is associated with a form of rulership having a destructive nature like fire.

(Jeremiah 51:42) The sea has come up over Babylon. By the multitude of its waves she has been covered.

it-2 882 ¶3

Sea

Overflowing armies. Jeremiah described the sound of the attackers of Babylon as being “like the sea that is boisterous.” (Jer 50:42) Hence, when he foretold that “the sea” would come up over Babylon, he evidently meant the flood of conquering troops under the Medes and Persians.—Jer 51:42; compare Da 9:26.

Bible Reading

(Jeremiah 51:1-11) This is what Jehovah says: “Here I am raising up a destructive wind Against Babylon and the inhabitants of Leb-ka’mal. ² I will send winnowers to Babylon, And they will winnow her and make her land empty; They will come against her on all sides in the day of calamity. ³ Let the archer not bend his bow. And let no one stand up in his coat of mail. Show no compassion for her young men. Devote all her army to destruction. ⁴ And they will fall slain in the land of the Chal-de’ans, Pierced through in

her streets. ⁵ For Israel and Judah are not widowed from their God, from Jehovah of armies. But their land is full of guilt from the standpoint of the Holy One of Israel. ⁶ Flee out of the midst of Babylon, And escape for your life. Do not perish because of her error. For it is the time for Jehovah’s vengeance. He is paying her back for what she has done. ⁷ Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of Jehovah; She made all the earth drunk. From her wine the nations have drunk; That is why the nations have gone mad. ⁸ Suddenly Babylon has fallen and is broken. Wail over her! Get balsam for her pain; perhaps she may be healed.” ⁹ “We tried to heal Babylon, but she could not be healed. Leave her and let us go, each to his own land. For her judgment has reached to the heavens; It is as high as the clouds. ¹⁰ Jehovah has brought about justice for us. Come, let us recount in Zion the work of Jehovah our God.” ¹¹ “Polish the arrows; take up the circular shields. Jehovah has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes, Because he intends to bring Babylon to ruin. For this is the vengeance of Jehovah, the vengeance for his temple.

JUNE 12-18

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | LAMENTATIONS 1-5

“A Waiting Attitude Helps Us to Endure”

(Lamentations 3:20, 21) You will surely remember and bow low over me. ²¹ I recall this in my heart; that is why I will show a waiting attitude.

(Lamentations 3:24) “Jehovah is my share,” I have said, “that is why I will show a waiting attitude for him.”

w12 6/1 14 ¶3-4

“Your Soul Will . . . Bow Low Over Me”

Amid the sorrow, Jeremiah is filled with hope. He cries out to Jehovah: “Without fail your soul [Jehovah himself] will remember and bow low over me.” (Verse 20) Jeremiah has no doubt. He knows that Jehovah will not forget him—or repentant ones among His people. What, though, will the almighty God do?—Revelation 15:3.

Jeremiah is certain that Jehovah will “bow low” over those who truly repent. Another translation says: “O remember, and stoop down to me.” Those words evoke a tender mental picture. Jehovah, “the Most High over all the earth,” will stoop down,

so to speak, and lift his worshippers up out of their debased condition and restore them to his favor. (Psalm 83:18) Anchored by this hope, Jeremiah finds true comfort for his wounded heart. The faithful prophet is determined to wait patiently until Jehovah's due time to deliver His repentant people.—Verse 21.

w11 9/15 8 ¶8

Jehovah Is My Share

⁸ The Levites as a *tribe* were to have Jehovah as their share. It is noteworthy, though, that individual Levites used the phrase “Jehovah is my share” to express devotion to God and reliance on him. (Lam. 3:24) One such Levite was a singer and composer. We will refer to him as Asaph, though he could have been a member of the house of Asaph, the Levite who led the singers in the days of King David. (1 Chron. 6:31-43) In Psalm 73 we read that Asaph (or one of his descendants) became perplexed. He envied the wicked who were leading a prosperous life and went to the point of saying: “Surely it is in vain that I have cleansed my heart and that I wash my hands in innocence itself.” He apparently lost sight of his privilege of service; he failed to appreciate that Jehovah was his share. He was spiritually troubled “until [he] proceeded to come into the grand sanctuary of God.”—Ps. 73:2, 3, 12, 13, 17.

(Lamentations 3:26, 27) Good it is to wait in silence for the salvation of Jehovah. ²⁷ Good it is for a man to carry the yoke during his youth.

w07 6/1 11 ¶4-5

Highlights From the Book of Lamentations

3:21-26, 28-33. How can we endure even intense suffering? Jeremiah tells us. We should not forget that Jehovah is abundant in acts of loving-kindness and that many are his mercies. We should also remember that our being alive is reason enough not to give up hope and that we need to be patient and wait silently, without complaining, upon Jehovah for salvation. Moreover, we should “put [our] mouth in the very dust,” that is, humbly submit to trials, recognizing that what God allows to happen is permitted for good reason.

3:27. Facing up to tests of faith during youth may mean enduring hardship and ridicule. But it is ‘good for an able-bodied man to carry the yoke during his youth.’ Why? Because learning to bear a yoke of suffering while young prepares a person to deal with challenges in his later years.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Lamentations 2:17) Jehovah has done what he

intended; he has carried out his saying, What he commanded long ago. He has torn down without compassion. He has let the enemy rejoice over you; he has exalted the strength of your adversaries.

w07 6/1 9 ¶4

Highlights From the Book of Lamentations

2:17—What particular “saying” did Jehovah accomplish in connection with Jerusalem? The reference here is apparently to Leviticus 26:17, which states: “I shall indeed set my face against you, and you will certainly be defeated before your enemies; and those who hate you will just tread down upon you, and you will actually flee when no one is pursuing you.”

(Lamentations 5:7) Our forefathers who sinned are no more, but we must bear their errors.

w07 6/1 11 ¶1

Highlights From the Book of Lamentations

5:7—Does Jehovah hold people accountable for the errors of their forefathers? No, Jehovah does not directly punish people for the sins of their ancestors. “Each of us will render an account for himself to God,” says the Bible. (Romans 14:12) However, consequences of errors can linger on and be experienced by later generations. For example, ancient Israel’s turning to idolatry made it difficult even for the faithful Israelites of later times to adhere to the course of righteousness.—Exodus 20:5.

Bible Reading

(Lamentations 2:20-3:12) See, O Jehovah, and look upon the one with whom you have dealt so harshly. Should women keep eating their own offspring, their own fully formed children, Or should priests and prophets be killed in the sanctuary of Jehovah? ²¹ Young boy and old man are lying dead on the ground in the streets. My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword. You have killed in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered without compassion. ²² As if for a festival day, you summon terrors from every direction. In the day of the wrath of Jehovah, no one escaped or survived; Those whom I gave birth to and reared, my enemy exterminated.

3 I am the man who has seen affliction because of the rod of his fury. ² He has driven me out and makes me walk in darkness, not in light. ³ Indeed, he repeatedly brings his hand against me all day long. ⁴ He has worn away my flesh and

my skin; He has broken my bones. ⁵ He has besieged me; he has surrounded me with bitter poison and hardship. ⁶ He has forced me to sit in dark places, like men who died long ago. ⁷ He has walled me in, so that I cannot escape; He has bound me with heavy copper fetters. ⁸ And when I cry out desperately for help, he rejects my prayer. ⁹ He has blocked up my paths with hewn stones; He has made my roadways crooked. ¹⁰ He waits to ambush me like a bear, like a lion in hiding. ¹¹ He has forced me off the paths and torn me to pieces; He has made me desolate. ¹² He has bent his bow, and he sets me up as the target for the arrow.

JUNE 19-25

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 1-5

"Ezekiel Delighted to Declare God's Message"

(Ezekiel 2:9-3:2) When I looked, I saw a hand stretched out to me, and in it I saw a written scroll. ¹⁰ When he spread it out before me, it had writing on both front and back. Dirges and mourning and wailing were written on it.

3 Then he said to me: "Son of man, eat what is before you. Eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel." ² So I opened my mouth, and he made me eat this scroll.

w08 7/15 8 ¶6-7

Meeting the Challenges of the House-to-House Ministry

⁶ The book of Ezekiel reveals something else that can help us to speak with boldness. In a vision, Jehovah gave Ezekiel a scroll written on both sides with "dirges and moaning and wailing" and told him to eat it, saying: "Son of man, you should cause your own belly to eat, that you may fill your very intestines with this roll that I am giving you." What did this vision mean? Ezekiel was to absorb fully the message he was to deliver. It was to become part of him, as it were, affecting his inmost feelings. The prophet goes on to relate: "I began to eat it, and it came to be in my mouth like honey for sweetness." Declaring God's message in public was a delight—like tasting honey—for Ezekiel. He felt highly privileged to represent Jehovah and to fulfill this God-given assignment, even though that meant delivering a strong message to an unreceptive people.—*Read Ezekiel 2:8–3:4, 7-9.*

⁷ This vision contains a valuable lesson for God's

servants today. We too have a strong message to deliver to people who are not always appreciative of our efforts. For us to continue to view the Christian ministry as a God-given privilege, we must be well-nourished spiritually. Superficial or haphazard study habits will not be sufficient for us to absorb God's Word fully. Could you improve the quality or regularity of your personal Bible reading and Bible study? Could you more often meditate on what you read? —Ps. 1:2, 3.

it-1 1214

Intestines

Physical food is assimilated by the intestines. This fact was metaphorically used to represent mental or spiritual digestion when, in vision, Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll, filling his intestines (Heb., *me'im'*) with it. Ezekiel was to gain spiritual strength by meditating upon and storing in his memory the words written in the scroll. He was thereby nourished spiritually and provided with a message to speak.—Eze 3:1-6; compare Re 10:8-10.

(Ezekiel 3:3) He went on to say to me: "Son of man, eat this scroll that I am giving you, and fill your stomach with it." So I began to eat it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth.

w07 7/1 12 ¶3

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

2:9–3:3—Why did the scroll of dirges and moaning taste sweet to Ezekiel? What made the scroll sweet-tasting to Ezekiel was his attitude toward his commission. Ezekiel was grateful to serve Jehovah as a prophet.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 1:20, 21) They would go where the spirit inclined them to go, wherever the spirit went. The wheels would be lifted up together with them, for the spirit operating on the living creatures was also in the wheels. ²¹ When they moved, these would move; and when they stood still, these would stand still; and when they were lifted up from the earth, the wheels would be lifted up together with them, for the spirit operating on the living creatures was also in the wheels.

(Ezekiel 1:26-28) Above the expanse that was over their heads was what looked like a sapphire stone, and it resembled a throne. Sitting on the throne up above was someone whose appearance resembled that of a human. ²⁷ I saw something glowing like electrum that was like a fire radiating from what appeared to be his waist

and upward; and from his waist down, I saw something that resembled fire. There was a brilliance all around him ²⁸ like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. That was how the surrounding brilliant light appeared. It was like the appearance of the glory of Jehovah. When I saw it, I fell facedown and began to hear the voice of someone speaking.

w07 7/1 11 ¶6

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

1:4-28—What does the celestial chariot picture?

The chariot represents the heavenly part of Jehovah's organization made up of faithful spirit creatures. Its source of power is Jehovah's holy spirit. The Rider of the chariot, who represents Jehovah, is indescribably glorious. His calmness is illustrated by a lovely rainbow.

(Ezekiel 4:1-7) “And you, son of man, take a brick and put it in front of you. Engrave on it a city—Jerusalem. ² Lay siege to it, build a siege wall against it, raise up a siege rampart against it, set up camps against it, and surround it with battering rams. ³ Take an iron griddle and place it as an iron wall between you and the city. Then set your face against it, and it will be under siege; you are to besiege it. This is a sign to the house of Israel. ⁴ “Then you should lie on your left side and lay the guilt of the house of Israel on yourself. You will carry their guilt for the number of days that you lie on your side. ⁵ And I will impose on you 390 days, corresponding to the years of their guilt, and you will carry the guilt of the house of Israel. ⁶ And you must complete them. “Then for a second time you will lie down, on your right side, and you will carry the guilt of the house of Judah for 40 days. A day for a year, a day for a year, is what I have given you. ⁷ And you will turn your face toward the siege of Jerusalem with your arm bared, and you must prophesy against it.

w07 7/1 12 ¶4

Highlights From the Book of Ezekiel—I

4:1-17—Did Ezekiel really act out the scene depicting Jerusalem's upcoming siege? Ezekiel's appeal for the change of cooking fuel and Jehovah's granting him his request indicate that the prophet actually acted out the scene. Lying on the left side was for the 390 years of error of the ten-tribe kingdom—from its beginning in 997 B.C.E. to the de-

struction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. Lying on the right side was for Judah's 40 years of sin, spanning the period from Jeremiah's appointment as a prophet in 647 B.C.E. to 607 B.C.E. During the entire 430-day period, Ezekiel existed on a meager supply of food and water, prophetically indicating that there would be a famine during the siege of Jerusalem.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 1:1-14) In the 30th year, on the fifth day of the fourth month, while I was among the exiled people by the river Che'bar, the heavens were opened and I began to see visions of God. ² On the fifth day of the month—that is, in the fifth year of the exile of King Je-hoi'a·chin— ³ the word of Jehovah came to Ezekiel son of Bu'zi the priest by the river Che'bar in the land of the Chal-de'ans. There the hand of Jehovah came upon him. ⁴ As I was looking, I saw a tempestuous wind coming from the north, and there was a huge cloud and flashing fire surrounded by a bright light, and from the midst of the fire was something that looked like electrum. ⁵ Within it were what looked like four living creatures, and the appearance of each one was like that of a human. ⁶ Each one had four faces and four wings. ⁷ Their feet were straight, and the soles of their feet were like those of a calf, and they were shining like the glow of burnished copper. ⁸ They had human hands under their wings on all four sides, and the four of them had faces and wings. ⁹ Their wings were touching one another. They would not turn when they went; they would each go straight forward. ¹⁰ Their faces had this appearance: Each of the four had a man's face with a lion's face on the right, a bull's face on the left, and each of the four had an eagle's face. ¹¹ That is how their faces were. Their wings were spread out above them. Each had two wings that were touching one another and two wings covering their bodies. ¹² They would each go straight forward, going wherever the spirit would incline them to go. They would not turn as they went. ¹³ And the living creatures had the appearance of burning coals of fire, and something that looked like torches of bright fire was moving back and forth between the living creatures, and lightning was flashing out from the fire. ¹⁴ And when the living creatures would go forth and return, their movement had the appearance of flashes of lightning.

JUNE 26–JULY 2

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | EZEKIEL 6-10

“Will You Be Marked for Survival?”

(Ezekiel 9:1, 2) He then called out in my ears with a loud voice, saying: “Summon those who will bring punishment on the city, each one with his weapon for destruction in his hand!” ² I saw six men coming from the direction of the upper gate that faces north, each with his weapon for smashing in his hand; and there was one man among them clothed in linen, with a secretary’s inkhorn at his waist, and they came in and stood beside the copper altar.

w16.06 16-17

Questions From Readers

Whom do the man with the secretary’s inkhorn and the six men with smashing weapons described in Ezekiel’s vision symbolize?

■ They picture heavenly forces that were involved in the destruction of Jerusalem and that will also be involved in the destruction of Satan’s wicked system at Armageddon. Why is this adjusted understanding reasonable?

After Ezekiel saw the wicked things being done in apostate Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 607 B.C.E., he was given a vision of the events leading up to that destruction. He saw six men with smashing weapons. He also saw a man among them who was “clothed in linen” and had “a secretary’s inkhorn.” (Ezek. 8:6-12; 9:2, 3) This man was told: “Go through the city, . . . and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city.” Then, the men with the smashing weapons were told to kill all those in the city who did not have the mark. (Ezek. 9:4-7) What does this vision teach us, and who is the man with the secretary’s inkhorn?

This prophecy was given in 612 B.C.E., and its initial fulfillment refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonian army—something that was to occur just five years later. Although the pagan Babylonians were allowed to bring about that destruction, they were serving as Jehovah’s executioners. (Jer. 25:9, 15-18) This was because Jehovah used them to punish his apostate people. However, the destruction was not to be indiscriminate. The righteous would not be destroyed along with the wicked. Jehovah lovingly made provision to save those Jews

who did not agree with the detestable things happening in the city.

Ezekiel was not involved in either the marking work or the destruction itself. Instead, the execution of judgment would be directed by the angels. So by means of this prophecy, we are allowed to see behind the scenes, as it were, into the heavenly realm itself. Jehovah had commissioned his angels not only to organize the destruction of the wicked but also to separate the righteous for survival.

In the past, we have explained that in the modern-day fulfillment of this vision, the man with the secretary’s inkhorn represented the anointed remnant. It was thought that those who respond favorably to the message being preached are now marked for survival. In recent years, however, it has become clear that an adjustment needs to be made to this explanation. According to what is stated at Matthew 25:31-33, Jesus is the one who judges people. He makes his final judgment during the time of the great tribulation, separating the sheeplike ones, who will survive, from the goatlike ones, who will be destroyed.

So in light of this adjusted understanding, what lessons do we learn from Ezekiel’s vision? There are at least five:

(1) During the time leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel served as a watchman along with Jeremiah, just as Isaiah had previously done. Today, Jehovah is using a small group of his anointed servants to feed his people and warn others before the outbreak of the great tribulation. In turn, all of Christ’s domestics have a share in sounding the warning.—Matt. 24:45-47.

(2) Ezekiel was not involved with the actual marking of people for survival; neither are God’s servants today. They simply convey Jehovah’s message, which is a part of their preaching work, done under angelic direction.—Rev. 14:6.

(3) In Ezekiel’s day, no one received a literal mark on his forehead. The same is true today. What do people need to do to be symbolically marked for survival? They need to react favorably to the preaching work that is taking place, put on the Christian personality, dedicate themselves to Jehovah, and loyally support Christ’s brothers. (Matt. 25:35-40) Those who do these things will receive the mark of survival during the coming great tribulation.

(4) In the modern-day fulfillment, the man with the secretary’s inkhorn represents Jesus Christ, the one behind the scenes who marks those who will sur-

vive. The great crowd will receive their mark when they are judged as sheep during the great tribulation. This will put them in line to receive everlasting life here on earth.—Matt. 25:34, 46.

(5) In the modern-day fulfillment, the six men with smashing weapons represent Jesus' heavenly armies with Jesus himself at the head. They will soon destroy the nations and all wickedness.—Ezek. 9:2, 6, 7; Rev. 19:11-21.

Understanding these valuable lessons strengthens our confidence that Jehovah does not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. (2 Pet. 2:9; 3:9) We are also reminded of the importance of the preaching work in our day. Everyone needs to hear the warning before the end comes!—Matt. 24:14.

(Ezekiel 9:3, 4) Then the glory of the God of Israel rose from where it had rested above the cherubs and moved to the threshold of the doorway of the house, and he began calling out to the man who was clothed in linen, at whose waist was the secretary's inkhorn. ⁴ Jehovah said to him: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city."

(Ezekiel 9:5-7) And to the others he said in my hearing: "Go through the city after him and strike. Do not let your eye feel sorry, and do not feel any compassion. ⁶ Old man, young man, virgin, little child, and women you should kill off completely. But do not go near to any man on whom there is the mark. You should start from my sanctuary." So they started with the elders who were in front of the house. ⁷ Then he said to them: "Defile the house and fill the courtyards with the slain. Go!" So they went out and struck down people in the city.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Ezekiel 7:19) "They will throw their silver into the streets, and their gold will become abhorrent to them. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them in the day of Jehovah's fury. They will not be satisfied, nor will they fill their stomachs, for it has become a stumbling block causing their error.

w09 9/15 23 ¶10

The Excelling Value of Divine Education

¹⁰ Jehovah is in a unique position to help us prepare for the future because he knows what lies ahead.

He determines what mankind's future will be. (Isa. 46:9, 10) Bible prophecy reveals that "the great day of Jehovah is near." (Zeph. 1:14) Regarding that day, the words of Proverbs 11:4 will prove true: "Valuable things will be of no benefit on the day of fury, but righteousness itself will deliver from death." When the time arrives for Jehovah's judgment to be executed on Satan's world, what will matter is our standing with God. Money will be worthless. In fact, Ezekiel 7:19 says: "Into the streets they will throw their very silver, and an abhorrent thing their own gold will become." That foreknowledge can help us to act wisely now.

(Ezekiel 8:12) He said to me: "Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms where his idols are displayed? For they are saying, 'Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.'"

w11 4/15 26 ¶14

Are You Allowing God's Spirit to Lead You?

¹⁴ Faith means, fundamentally, that Jehovah God is real to us. If God is not real to us, wrong conduct will be just a short step away. Consider what happened among God's people in ancient times. Jehovah revealed to the prophet Ezekiel that detestable things were being done in private, saying: "Have you seen, O son of man, what the elderly ones of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms of his showpiece? For they are saying, 'Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.'" (Ezek. 8:12) Did you notice what contributed to the problem? They did not believe that Jehovah was aware of what they were doing. Jehovah was not real to them.

Bible Reading

(Ezekiel 8:1-12) And in the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, when I was sitting in my house and the elders of Judah were sitting before me, the hand of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah took hold of me there. ² As I watched, I saw a form similar to the appearance of fire; there was fire below what appeared to be his waist, and from his waist upward his appearance was bright, like the glow of electrum. ³ Then he stretched out what appeared to be a hand and took me by a tuft of hair of my head, and a spirit carried me between the earth and the heavens and brought me to Jerusalem by means of the visions from God, to the entrance of the

inner gate that faces north, where the idolatrous symbol of jealousy that incites jealousy stood. ⁴ And look! the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the appearance that I had seen in the valley plain. ⁵ He then said to me: "Son of man, please raise your eyes toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the gate of the altar, was this symbol of jealousy in the entryway. ⁶ And he said to me: "Son of man, do you see what terrible, detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that make me go far away from my sanctuary? But you will see detestable things that are even more terrible." ⁷ Then he brought me to the entrance of the courtyard, and when I looked, I saw a hole in the wall. ⁸ He said to me: "Son of man, please bore through the wall." So I bored through the wall, and I saw an entryway. ⁹ He said to me: "Go in and see the evil, detestable things that they are doing here." ¹⁰ So I went in and looked, and I saw all sorts of images of creeping things and loathsome beasts and all the disgusting idols of the house of Israel; they were carved on the wall all around. ¹¹ And 70 of the elders of the house of Israel were standing before them, with Ja·az·a·ni'ah the son of Sha'phan standing among them. Each one had his censer in his hand, and the perfumed cloud of incense was ascending. ¹² He said to me: "Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each one in the inner rooms where his idols are displayed? For they are saying, 'Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land.'"