

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens", or "strengthened by God". This book records his experiences in Babylon. He belonged to a priestly family who served in the temple. He, though, had to wait until he reached the age when he was allowed to become a priest, which was thirty years old.

He is one of a number of prophets who gave specific details concerning dates, - therefore they must be important ... On the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month he began his ministry, - that is when he turned thirty years old (1:1 cf. Num. 4 ¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, ² Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers, ³ From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation ... ²¹ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²² Take also the sum of the sons of Gershon, throughout the houses of their fathers, by their families; ²³ From thirty years old and upward until fifty years old shalt thou number them; all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.) ... He had his thirtieth birthday in Babylon, - five years after he had been taken captive from Jerusalem (v.2). ... Since the date of his exile was 597 BC, - when he was taken along with King Jehoiachin and ten thousand of 'the cream' of Jewish society (II Kings 24:11-18, ¹⁴ And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. ¹⁵ And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. ¹⁶ And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.) ... he was 25 years of age (597 BC), so five years later, - when he was thirty, - means he became a priest in 592 BC.

... Calculating backwards, that means he was born in 622 BC. ... During that period in Israel's history, there was a grave spiritual decline throughout the land and God was warning His people through the prophets that judgment was inevitable. Sadly, they would not heed the warnings ... and Ezekiel, - as a young person, - would have been living in Jerusalem through this time of apostasy, - rejection of the truth.

From a worldly perspective, these were progressive and wealthy times. Jerusalem's population and influence were respected by their neighbours, over whom it can be said they enjoyed a certain degree of dominance. At the

same time, though, Assyria was the major power, but Jerusalem managed to live very comfortably under their rule. However, Assyria was beginning to decline, and this opened up a struggle between Egypt and Babylon to become the major power. Inevitably though, - and it was obvious, - it was going to be Babylon, especially after Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) was destroyed in 612 BC. ... Those were the kind of volatile times in which Ezekiel was brought up, prior to be taken off into captivity to Babylon in 597 BC. ... He had witnessed the destruction of his city, - socially and religiously, - as recorded in **II Kings 25:1** And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about. **2** And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. **3** And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. **4** And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. **5** And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. **6** So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. **7** And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon. **8** And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: **9** And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. **10** And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

This, then, was 'real life' for Ezekiel prior to being taken to Babylon. After becoming a priest in Babylon, - five years after he arrived there, in 592 BC, - God also called him to be a prophet. This begins in 1:4, and is highlighted in 3:8, Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. **9** As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. **10** Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. **11** And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

... Now, not all priests were prophets, and not all prophets were priests, but Ezekiel was called to be both, - as was Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1), and Zechariah (Zech. 1:1 with Neh. 12:16). He was a contemporary of Jeremiah, although

Jeremiah had been prophesying for about twenty years. Daniel was around the same age as Jeremiah, and in fact, he mentions Daniel (although there is no record of them having met each other), **Ezek. 14:12** The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, **13** Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: **14** Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God ... **20** Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. ... **28:3** Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee

... Another point to make is that being a prophet was a thankless task because the people did not want to hear what they had to say. Whereas the priests simply continued in their priestly duties, - causing no harm or offence to anyone, - usually the prophets were unwelcome because they often heralded doom and gloom and judgment ... and they often ended up feeling the wrath of the people they were sent to.

Ezekiel was married, - his wife is mentioned in 24:15-27 (**15** Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, **16** Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down). They lived in Tel Abib, **3:15** Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days. This was where many of the Jews had settled into a comfortable lifestyle, - similar to how the Hebrews had previously settled in the land of Goshen during their captivity in Egypt. The river Chebar was a tributary to the south of the River Euphrates. It was in an area with many natural resources (... again, like Goshen). The name 'Chebar' means 'far off' ... but even in a foreign land, the Lord took care of His people. ... By the way, the modern city of *Tel Aviv* was founded in 1909 by Jewish immigrants who settled on the northern outskirts of the ancient port city of Jaffa. Its name was adopted from this same *Tel Abib*, - in ancient Babylon, - for the reason it embraced the idea of a renaissance in the ancient Jewish homeland. ... In the Hebrew language, a 'b' is pronounced as a 'v', and a 'v' is pronounced as a 'b', - they are the same letter, *beth*, the second letter in their alphabet.

Meanwhile, even in captivity in Babylon the false Jewish prophets of Israel promised the people a false hope in a speedy return to Jerusalem, but Ezekiel was commanded to rebuff them, **Ezek. 13:3** Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the

foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! ⁴ O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. ⁵ Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD. ⁶ They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word ... ¹⁶ To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.

Then, exactly one year after the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel received a messenger, **Ezek. 33:24** And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. ²² Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. ²³ Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ²⁴ Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. ²⁵ Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? ²⁶ Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? ²⁷ Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that be in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence. ²⁸ For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. ²⁹ Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed. ³⁰ Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. ³¹ And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. ³² And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. ³³ And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them. ... And those proceedings meant there was no easy solution to their problem. Israel was being judged, - and rightly so, - for abandoning God. Nevertheless, His ancient covenants with Abraham and David remained intact so that, - even in such disastrous times, - He gave Ezekiel prophecies which related to Israel's future restoration to its homeland, and the promise of the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom.

What does Ezekiel prophesy about the future of his nation, Israel? ... By the way, there is an understanding among liberals and many evangelicals that the church has *replaced* Israel, and that God no longer has any special plans for the nation. This is also the doctrine taught by the Church of Rome. Basically, this view teaches the promises in the Old Testament formerly relating to Israel have now been passed over to the Church because of Israel's constant disobedience. God had given Israel all the opportunities but His patience with them had expired and, consequently, their privilege was rescinded. Israel has no longer a special place in God's plan for it now belongs to the 'new' Israel, i.e. the Church. ... All God's promises to them, He now directs towards the Church ... and not Israel.

This doctrine is known by a variety of names, such as 'supersessionism', 'replacement theology', and 'fulfilment theology'. Incidentally, the term, 'New' Israel is not used in Scripture.

Personally, I prefer to understand Scripture literally, unless it is obvious a spiritual exegesis is required or explicitly implied. ... Otherwise, we could begin to use symbols and allegories to set out to prove just about anything!

Will Israel the nation be reborn, and will it know God's special blessing? ... That is the literal reading in the Scriptures. Before we see this in Ezek. 37, let's read, - for the sake of time, - a few verses from the preceding chapter, **Ezek. 36:1** Also *[in the previous chapter (ch. 35) Ezekiel had been prophesying against Seir, i.e. the Edomites]* thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord *[Yahweh]*: ² Thus saith the Lord *[Adonai]* God *[Yahweh]*; Because the enemy hath said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places *[the temple and its environs]* are ours in possession: ³ Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they have made you desolate *[Nebuchadnezzar has already ravaged Jerusalem]*, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers *[gossipers]*, and are an infamy *[slanderers]* of the people: ⁴ Therefore, *ye mountains of Israel*, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; ⁵ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Surely in the fire *[i.e. wrath, anger]* of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea *[Edom, who came from the lineage of Esau]*, which have appointed my land into their possession *[!]* with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. *[God is a jealous God, - He is not willing to share what belongs to Him, and His jealousy has been invoked*

because the heathen pagan idolaters have seduced His people away from Him. Therefore, He is angry with the foreign nations ... *Mal. 1:2* I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, ³ And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness ... *Dt. 7:7* The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: ⁸ But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers] ... *Ezek. 36:6* Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel [this is specific, - it is not allegory], and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy [cf. v.5] and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen [i.e. their invasion]: ⁷ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. ⁸ But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. ⁹ For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: ¹⁰ And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: ¹¹ And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. ¹² Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. ¹³ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; ¹⁴ Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God [i.e. a time of peace and security]. ¹⁵ Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD.

This has yet to happen! ... Lord, how is it going to happen? The Israelites were in bondage in Babylon ... five hundred miles away from Jerusalem? So, the Lord gives Ezekiel *another* vision, *Ezek. 37:1* The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, ² And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. ³ And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? [Can this nation be once again revived? Can they be brought back from such devastation?] And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. ⁴ Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath [ruach, cf. Gen. 1:2] to enter into you, and ye shall live: ⁶ And I will lay sinews [ligaments, tendons] upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath [ruach] in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. God showed Ezekiel how He

was going to breathe life into Israel as a nation again (v.5), and then how He would also breathe *spiritual* life into them so that they would know He is the Lord. That is the promise repeated in Zech. 13, ⁹ they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.

... And Ezekiel continued, ^{37:7} So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. ⁸ And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live [*i.e. the sovereignty of God in salvation*]. ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet [*previously they had been lying in tatters*], an exceeding great army. ¹¹ Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are *the whole house of Israel*: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts [*we're finished!*]. ¹² Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, ¹⁴ And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD. [= revival]

This passage addresses the rebirth of Israel ... not simply being returned to their own land, for it has an obvious *future* application, yet to be fulfilled, ²¹ And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, *I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen*, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: ²² And *I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel*; ... and then God introduces something that would get them all excited, for it is such a *great* promise ... *and one king shall be king to them all*: and they shall be no more two nations [*i.e. 'north' and 'south', Judah and Israel*], neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: ²³ Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. ²⁴ And David [*'beloved' ... Mt. 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son*] my servant shall be king [*melek*] over them [*i.e. the Messiah's Kingdom*]; and they all shall have one shepherd [*cf. Jn. 10*]: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them [*Is. 2:3 he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths*]. ²⁵ And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's

children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince [ἄρχων, ruler] for ever.
 26 Moreover [καὶ] I will make ['cut'] a covenant [berith] of peace [shalom] with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place [give to ... the name 'Nathan' means 'giver'] them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary [miqdash] in the midst of them [... as the tabernacle literally was in the wilderness, and the temple in Jerusalem] for evermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. ... Obviously, since the heathen are mentioned, this cannot be the 'new heaven and the new earth ... so it must be the intervening period, following Christ's return to earth. ... Also, we must take note of the word for 'evermore'. It is the word 'owlam which does not necessarily mean 'everlasting', but rather 'a long duration'.

... This is what God says. If we are to take His Word literally, it has the plain and direct meaning we have attributed to it. ... It means what it says, otherwise you travel along a dangerous road ... where the Bible does not lead!

Yes, the promise to the nation of Israel seemed impossible, - she was scattered, deprived from her land, she had no king and no temple, she was divided and dispersed ... and unification and restoration seemed absolutely impossible ... But, is anything too hard for the Lord?! ... Yet, God *promised* they would be restored to their own land. ... The reason they were in captivity was because they had been disobedient to Him and they had ignored His warnings, but because they are His special nation He promised to return them to their own land. ... There is no other way that was possible *apart* from God keeping His promise!

In the vision, God showed Ezekiel the valley hopelessly strewn with dead bones, and he watched and listened as God spoke and the bones came together and perfectly fitted into their sockets, then the flesh was formed, breath entered the bodies, and they stood up as a mighty and formidable army. ... This was the promise to Israel of God's future restoration. Not only would He restore them *nationally* and *physically*, but He also promised to restore them *spiritually*, when He *breathed* into them.

Yes, God returned the Jews to Jerusalem after the seventy years in Babylon ... but it is obvious there was yet to be the future and greater fulfilment of this promise, because the promise says they will have their own King and the Kingdom, - that has not happened yet. The people of Israel have returned to their own land, - as God promised ... And just as He also promised, they *will* turn to Christ, **Zech. 12:10** *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the*

inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him ... **13:1** In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. ... They are dwelling in their own land, but there is not yet the peace God covenanted they *shall* have ... That means there is more yet to be fulfilled! ... The day has not arrived when they, - as a nation, - recognise Jesus as the Messiah ... That *will* happen (Rom. 11) ... when He comes again, for the second time, to rule over all the earth. ... That is the plain and simple and literal reading of these passages.

Leading on ... Does this mean a literal *third* temple will be built? Is that what Ezek. 37:26 refers to? (*I ... will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore*), or, should we take this ‘temple’ spiritually? Some would argue that we should, and they point to **Rev. 21:22** *And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.* ... However, Rev. 21 and 22 clearly refers to the ‘new heaven and the new earth’, which is the eternal state ... and not the period during which Christ will reign on earth. ...

Regarding the temples ... Solomon built the *first* temple during the middle of the 10th century BC. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. The *second* temple was built by Zerubbabel and those who accompanied him after the Babylonian exile. It occupied the same area on Temple Mount from 516 BC to 70 AD when the Roman General Titus destroyed it. No temple has stood there since.

However, the second temple built by Zerubbabel had long-since fallen into a state of disrepair, and Herod the Great, - the local king at the time ... who had been put in that position by the Romans, - saw it as an opportunity to curry favour with the Jewish leaders. Herod was an Idumean, an Edomite ... not a Jew. His family had ‘converted’ to Judaism because they saw great potential in it. In particular, Herod restored Zerubbabel’s temple to court favour with the Jewish authorities. He restored it to even greater architectural glory than when it was first built. In fact, it was his masterpiece! It was known as ‘Herod’s Temple’ (cf. **Jn. 2:20** *Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21* *But he spake of the temple of his body.*) ...

So, is Ezekiel now referring to a *third* literal temple? ... Who will build it? Where will it be built? What will be its purpose? ... Now, obviously, Satan has a desire to sit where God sits, - that was why he was expelled from Heaven, **Is. 14:13** *For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will*

exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ... Nevertheless, even though he failed on that occasion, he has not given up on that ambition.

He has tried to impassion others with the same aspiration. He himself used it again with Jesus, Mt. 4:8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

We read also of one who Satan will inspire with the same eagerness near the end of this present age, II Thess. 2:3 ... that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. A similar picture is presented in Rev. 13:6, And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

... Personally, I would not dismiss the idea of the Jews building some kind of construction on the Temple Mount that could be used in such a scenario. Indeed, it has increasingly become a *fixation* within orthodox Judaism for they believe the Messiah is coming *any day!* In such a construction, *that man of sin could* be revealed, and it would be the perfect place from which he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

This is further strengthened by the commitment of the Jews to their own land, and also by how they intend to remain there. They believe they *must* build the temple and revive the times of the Old Testament and the sacrifices, in anticipation of the Messiah. They also believe the increasing opposition among the nations is a telling sign of His coming, when He shall defend and fulfil their dreams. ... They are presently crying out for such a person!

... Just last Saturday, 24th December, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, - the only remaining part of the Second Temple, and he said, "I did not plan to be here this evening [*i.e. the second night of Chanukah*] but in light of the UN resolution I thought that there was no better place to light the second Chanukah candle than the Western Wall [... *Chanukah celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple, after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes*]. According to the UN resolution, the Maccabees did not liberate Jerusalem, they occupied

Palestinian territory. According to the UN resolution, the villages that they started out from in the Modi'in area, those villages and that area were 'occupied Palestinian territory'. Of course, the Palestinians arrived much later. We were in these places. We will return to these places ... The Western Wall is not occupied. The Jewish Quarter is not occupied. The other places are not occupied either. Therefore, we do not accept, nor can we accept, this resolution. We are certain of our future just as we are certain of our past.”

With such a depth of commitment, the attempt at building some kind of third construction would not at all be beyond possibility, - as far as the orthodox Jews are concerned, it is inevitable. ... But would this, - if it were to take place, - be the same as the temple of which Ezekiel prophesies? ...

Or, there is another possibility. ... Ezekiel's temple is not really an actual temple, but symbolic language for a *spiritual* temple. ... And they would support this view by using Paul's words, when he referred to the Church as the temple, **I Cor. 3:16** Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ... **II Cor. 6:16** ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

... Well, yes, we *are* the *spiritual* temple of the Holy Spirit, symbolically-speaking, - the Church is where the Holy Spirit presently abides today in this world, until Jesus returns ... Also, the people who tell us Ezekiel is referring to a spiritual temple point us to **Rev. 21:22** And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. ... But *that* is referring to the 'new heaven and the new earth'. However, the period concerning the temple in Ezekiel's prophecy refers to neither this present age nor the final age ... but the intervening period when Christ reigns on this earth.

I believe it *is* literal, and its fulfilment is yet future ... When Jesus returns He will require a dwelling-place ... such was the reason for the tabernacle and the temple being built, - they were both ... at separate times ... God's dwelling-place among His people, for example, **Ex. 29:43** And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. **44** And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. **45** And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. ... Special residences are constructed for Presidents and Kings ... Well, since Jesus is the *King* of kings, He deserves to live in even more *exclusive* accommodation!

So, if this temple, - the *true* temple, - is to be built, it must be built to God's specifications ... as, indeed, were both the tabernacle and the previous temples. It will be following the period referred to as the 'many days', **Ezek. 38:8** *After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. ... In his vision, Ezekiel is shown a mountain and a city, **Ezek. 40:1** In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither. ² In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. ³ And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man [*cf. Rev. 5*], whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. ⁴ And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.*

The man who meets him gives a detailed account of the measurements and layout of the temple, and Ezekiel is told to relate what he sees to his people ... and that is the content of chapters 40-42. It speaks of a restoration which would bring about what is prophesied in Is. 2 (² And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ³ And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob) and Micah 4 (¹ But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. ² And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob). ... By this time, the people of Israel will be a converted people for they have come to acknowledge Jesus as the true Messiah (cf. Zech. 12:10f. and Rom.11) ... *and He will be dwelling amongst them... in the house of the LORD. ... Surely, that is the temple!?*

That will be when the Lord reigns from Zion for He promised His people, **Ezek. 36:22** Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. ²³ And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. ²⁴ For

I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. ²⁸ And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. ... ³⁶ Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. ³⁷ Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. ³⁸ As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD. ... And pay attention to the words of v. 27 in the next chapter, **Ezek. 37:27** My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸ And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

We are living in exciting times. ... Keep watching what God is doing with regards to His ancient nation. Watch what He is doing throughout that region. ... He is working! Will the third temple be built, as Ezekiel describes? ... Or is God, in His Word, merely teasing us with symbolism and imagery? ... I believe in the principle that you accept what He says without imposing anything from out of our limited constraints. He has prophesied great things in the past, which others have tried to explain away ... only for God to bring His promises about literally. ... And that is the route I humbly suggest we would be well-advised to follow.

God knows what He is doing, and everything He does is for and will be for His glory ... so, therefore, we ought to be expecting great things from Him!

Finally, what about Gog and Magog? Magog is mentioned five times in Scripture (Gen. 10:2; I Chron. 1:5; Ezek. 38:2; 39:6; Rev. 20:8), and Gog is mentioned in eleven verses (I Chron. 5:4; Ezek. 38:2,3,14,16,18; 39:1,6,11,15 [*Hamongog*, '*multitude of Gog*'], Rev. 20:8). ... Ezekiel describes them as being at the head of a local alliance of coalition forces against the nation of Israel, **Ezek. 38:1** And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ² Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief [*rosh*] prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, ³ And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: ⁴ And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great

company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: ⁵ Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: ⁶ Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. Ezekiel 39 expands on the same theme, **Ezek. 39:1** Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: ² And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel.

So, is this a prediction that Russia is to be at the head of these combined armies? ... That is how some see it. For example, they would see the recent alliance between Russia, Syria and Iran as potentially part of the prophesied ‘axis of evil’. These armies would come to be standing menacingly outside Jerusalem, *the mountains of Israel*.... Is this, then, what we might be building up to at the moment? ... Is “the prince of Meschech” (Ezek. 38:2) referring to the Russian leader [i.e. ‘Meschech’ ... ‘Moscow’ (!)]. Also, the Hebrew word for ‘chief’ referring to the prince in Ezek. 38:2 is *roshe*, and that sounds very like ‘Russia’(!). Incidentally, this view concerning Russia was first proposed during the sixteenth century. Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618) attributed this opinion to Philip Melanchton (1497-1560), and it was also followed later by Jonathan Edwards (1703-58).

Let’s take a look at what the Bible says about these characters ... Magog, Meschech, Tubal, and Gomer were sons of Japheth, the son of Noah (**Gen. 10:1** Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth: and unto them were sons born after the flood. ² The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras). Togarmah was the son of Gomer (Gen. 10:3) ... **Gen. 10:5** By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands [*i.e. how they were populated*]; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations. This included the other sons of Japheth, who were Madai (meaning ‘middle land’, the Medes), Javan (Greece), and Tiras (also within the region of Greece).

Magog was a grandson of Noah, the second son of Japheth, ... These sons of Japheth travelled northwards and initially settled to the north of the land of Israel, in the mountainous region spread across Cappadocia and Media ... Cappadocia was a large area in almost the centre of modern-day Turkey eastwards ... and Media is in what now is a region of eastern Turkey and into north-western Iran, where the Medes settled. ... Magog, in Hebrew, simply means ‘the land of Gog’, and Gog means ‘mountain’, i.e. Magog means ‘the land of the mountain’, a mountainous region.

... Just to 'put some more meat on the bones', it is worthwhile mentioning a few facts about how the region of ancient Cappadocia and Media developed over the centuries and millennia ... Throughout the years, it had benefitted from the great ancient powers of Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Then, at the end of the thirteenth century, it developed its own Ottoman/Turkish empire. Even though it initially had a Christian majority, Sunni Islam was the religion of those who were in authority. It reached the height of its power under the reign of Suleiman [*'peace'; Solomon ... (shalom)*] the Magnificent (1494-1566), - he had a very successful reign over an estimated 20-30 million people.

He did something very interesting in Jerusalem. The gate which looks out to the east of the city, - the Mount of Olives, - is known as the Golden Gate ... and the Mount of Olives is where the Messiah is prophesied to come, **Zech. 14:4** And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.

In Ezekiel's prophecy, - after he was given the information concerning the building of the third temple, - we read, **Ezek. 43:1** Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: **2** And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory [*i.e. the Messiah*]. **3** And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. **4** And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is [*i.e. which faced*] toward the east. **5** So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. **6** And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. **7** And he said unto me, Son of man, 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 for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places.

Now, the walls of Jerusalem had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. When Nehemiah returned from Babylon, he led the rebuilding of the walls (Neh. 3), but they were destroyed, ultimately by the Roman General Titus in 70 AD. However, they had undergone further rebuilding ... and the Golden Gate, - facing the east (Ezek. 43:4), - had been blocked up by the Muslims in 810 AD, reopened in 1102 by the Crusaders, and walled up again by Saladin in 1187 ... The Muslims began worshipping on the site of the Jewish Temple in a small prayer house sometime around 640 AD. It was expanded in 705, but destroyed by an earthquake in 746, then rebuilt in 754 ... and rebuilt again in

780. Another earthquake destroyed most of it in 1033, but was rebuilt two years later in 1035 ... and that is the mosque which stands today ... the third holiest site in Islam, after Mecca and Medina.

Jerusalem, therefore, had become Muslim! The Islamic mosque occupies where Solomon's temple used to stand.

To maintain Islam's authority on the Mount, the Sultan Suleiman further strengthened the walls, and he *blocked* the Golden Gate in 1541, and it has not been reopened since. ... He blocked it because he had been told how the Jews believed all their dead, - lying across the valley on the Mount of Olives, - would be raised back to life when the Messiah returned, and He would lead them through the Golden Gate to recapture Jerusalem ... that is, from the Muslims, **Ezek. 44:1** Then he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and *it was shut.* **2** Then said the LORD unto me; *This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.* **3** *It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.* ...

The prince, - the Messiah, - when *He* comes, *He* will unblock the gate, and it will be reopened for His people also. ... Incidentally, outside the gate today are buried wealthy and influential Muslims who, - at the resurrection, - the Muslims believe will be raised to confront and halt the Jews entering through the Gate. ... So, the Gate was *shut*, - in accordance with prophecy, - by a descendant, the Sultan Suleiman ... **Gen. 10:2** The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.

Therefore, the descendants of Japheth who settled in the northern regions had a major part to play in God's plan, and consequently, their religion of Islam. ... The people of that vast expanse of land they ruled over established Constantinople (previously Byzantium, and latterly Istanbul) as the capital of their Ottoman Empire [*named after the founder of their Empire, Osman I*] It was the major centre between the 'East' (Europe) and the 'West' (Asia), and also across north Africa. It wasn't as large an area as the Roman Empire, but was considerable nonetheless. Their power and influence ensured the Turkish/Ottoman Empire enjoyed a flexible and strong economy, society, and military throughout the 17th and much of the 18th centuries. During the mid-18th century the European Hapsburg and Russian Empires were on the rise, and the Ottoman Empire was slowly on the decline. In the early 20th century, this decline was accelerated by the Ottomans allying themselves with the

German Kaiser Wilhelm during the First World War, who of course lost. After their defeat, the Ottomans had to sign the Treaty of Sevres (1918) which brought to an end more than six centuries of the Ottoman Empire from 1299 to the early 1920's. ... It is interesting, though, how in recent times we can notice how they have not lost their aspiration to again wield their presence, especially in the Middle East. For example, they were indicating how they would like to enter the European Union, and also how they are aligning themselves with the likes of Syria, Iraq, and Iran ... and Russia.

Then Ezekiel also included 'Meschech' and 'Tubal' in his prophecies ... and where you find Meschech in Scripture, you also find Tubal (Gen. 10:2; I Chron. 1:5,17; Ezek. 27:13; 32:26; 38:2,3; 39:1). Both Meschech and Tubal are sons of Japheth and brothers of Magog (Gen. 10:2). This corresponds to a 'family of nations' outside of, and to the north of Israel (cf. **Ezek. 38:14** Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? ¹⁵ And *thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts*, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: ¹⁶ And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land)

In other words, the Bible is written from the perspective of the land promised to Abraham ... and its enemies, - at this particular stage, - come from the northern boundaries, around to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (cf. **Jer. 6:22** Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.) And it is also within *this* area, - on the banks of the Tigris, - *Rosh* has been identified. These nations are prophesied to set themselves against Israel, **Ezek. 38:16** And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land. ... That is the same kind of language, for example, God used when He spoke to Habakkuk concerning the Babylonian/Chaldean invasion (**Hab. 1:6** For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs)

So, coming from regions to the north of Israel, - **Ezek. 38:16** *it shall be in the latter days*, - are prophesied the combined forces from the ancient territories of Cappodica, Media, Assyria, and Babylon. In modern-day terms, these relate to central and eastern Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. ... Combined, they would make a formidable foe ... Let's see who else will be there ... **Ezek. 38:3** Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O *Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal*: ⁴ And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring

thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even *a great company* with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: **5** *Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya* with them; all of them with shield and helmet: **6** Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and *many people* with thee. ... A great number, and we also see in Ezekiel 35 the prophecy concerning ‘*Mount Seir*’, - that is the land of the Edomites, the Idumeans, modern-day Jordan, **Ezek. 35:5** Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity ... **10** Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the LORD was there: **11** Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee. **12** And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel. ... By the way, during the 1948 Israeli War of Independence, Jordan retained control over the Old City, including the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. These areas were prohibited to Jews. Then, in the Six-Day War of June 1967 the Israeli Defence Force conquered the Old City, and were in control of it ... the first time since before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple in 586 BC. The Jews reclaimed the whole area, but under the 1994 peace accord between Israel and Jordan, they gave responsibility for its maintenance and supervision, - including the Al-Aqsa mosque, - to the Jordanian Islamic *Waaaf* (i.e. an Islamic religious council/committee).

However, the uneasy peace will be brought to a conclusion by the countries coming from the north of Israel, and the north-east, and the east, the south-east ... and across the north of Africa, **Ezek. 38:5** *Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya* with them. The inclusion of *and many people with thee* (Ezek. 38:6) also indicates a mercenary element. This also works in with the idea of the revived Roman Empire, highlighted in Daniel, **Dan. 2:39** And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. **40** And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. **41** And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. **42** And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. **43** And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. **44** And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the

kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. ⁴⁵ Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold

Why will God allow this to happen? He will allow it to happen so that His people will realise the error they have lived with for so long, and cry out to Him for salvation, **Ezek. 39:6** And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they [*the children of Israel, the Jews*] shall know that I am the LORD. ⁷ So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

... When will the armies come against Jerusalem? Is it imminent? ... If those hostile countries had *their* way, they would come up against the city *immediately* ... but they will only be allowed to do it when God gives them the opportunity. ... Are we seeing Turkey, Syria, and Iran, - aided by Russia, - preparing for this assault on Israel?

... Let's go back ... Ezekiel 36 reminds the Israelites why God's wrath had come upon them, - i.e. because of their unfaithfulness. Nevertheless, God promised, **Ezek. 36:22** Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. ²³ And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. ²⁴ For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land ... This prophecy began to be fulfilled in earnest in the 1880's, - that is when the Jews began to make their way back to the land, and it is presently taking place in our times ... This is the ongoing period in which we are today, - God is bringing the people of Israel back ... and the surrounding nations 'have Israel in their sights' ... They *are* trying and they *will* try to oust Israel, but they will fail. ... Israel will be a problem the world does not know how to tackle, **Zech. 12:2** Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. ³ And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. ... ⁸ In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. ⁹ And it shall

come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

... And, - in the latter days, - at the end of this great time of turbulence (i.e. **Jer. 30:7** Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it), Christ will return, and God has promised, **Ezek. 36:25** Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ... God will bring salvation to the nation of Israel ... **26** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. **28** And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

This is elaborated upon using the vision of the dry bones gaining flesh and coming to life in Ezek. 37, **12** Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. **13** And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, **14** And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD. ... **22** And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: **23** Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. **24** And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. ... **26** Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. **27** My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **28** And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

... This is the same period Paul prophesied, **Rom. 11:25** For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. **26** And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: **27** For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. ... This will take place in fulfilment of Old Testament passages such as Ezekiel 36 and 37 when Jesus

returns to Jerusalem as Messiah and King ... and His reign is referred to in the one thousand years of Rev. 20:4 ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

And God will use the enemy to achieve His purposes ... and to bring His people back to Himself, prior to the reign of Christ ... **Ezek. 38:2** Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, **3** And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal ... **8** After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou [*Gog and his associates*] shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is *gathered out* [*returned home*] of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is *brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them* [*i.e. this is during a time when Israel will be at peace, - it has stabilized its defences*]. **9** Thou [*Gog and his associates*] shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee [*a great army against Jerusalem*]. **10** Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: **11** And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, **12** To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are *gathered out* of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. ... **14** Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when *my people of Israel* dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? **15** And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: **16** And thou shalt come up against *my people of Israel*, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be *in the latter days*, and I will bring thee against *my land*, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. **17** Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? **18** And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against *the land of Israel*, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. **19** For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in *the land of Israel*; **20** So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. **21** And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. **22** And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. **23** Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify

myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD. ... **39:1** Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: **2** And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: **3** And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. **4** Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. **5** Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. **6** And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. **7** So will I make my holy name known in the midst of *my people Israel*; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

In the meantime, - during the one thousand years of Christ's reign, - what are the heathen doing? They have lost their power and influence because during the time Jesus is reigning from Jerusalem, they have been shut up! ... **Is. 24:21** And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. **22** And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, ... but then they will be loosed, and after many days shall they be visited. ... Now, imagine all the enemies of Christ incarcerated together for such a long time, - shut up in the prison, ... plotting and scheming. They would have their plans prepared and formulated so that if-and-when they would escape or be released, they would be intent on wreaking havoc!

So, in the will and plan of God, - they will be released *after* the thousand years, and they will come onto the scene again ... worse than ever before! By this time, the forces of Gog and Magog have been increased, **Rev. 20:7** And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison [*i.e. he will lead them*], **8** And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, *Gog and Magog*, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea [*previously in Ezek. 38:4, they were described as 'a great company', and in Ezek. 38:6, 'many people'*]. **9** And they went up *on the breadth of the earth*, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. ... This is evidently an even greater number than previously in Ezekiel 38 and 39, which confirms this is a separate event. Previously. Gog and Magog consisted of armies from a more localised area whereas *now*, - after the one thousand year reign, - the term *Gog and Magog* describes the previous localised nations *plus* **Rev. 20:8** ... the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, *Gog and Magog*, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

And they will march against Jerusalem, - the city of God and His people, ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city ... but here is how they will be stopped ... not by the IDF, but by God Himself, and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

In the Book of Revelation, John tells us it will happen *at the end of* the reign of Christ on earth. There will be a great time of conflict before He comes, but there will be an even greater conflict at the end of His reign!

So, Ezekiel 37 tells us the Lord will regather Israel, and He will save them from out of the wicked intentions of their enemies, - as described in Ezekiel 38 and 39, - so that when Jesus returns they will receive Him as Saviour, Messiah, and King. He will establish His Kingdom, and rule from Jerusalem ... and then when His rule is approaching its end, **Rev. 20:7** Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸ And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. - That is when this war to end all wars will take place.

... And it is at the end of 'the latter days', Gog and Magog, will be added to, - under the direction of Satan, - by the military might from out of the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth (Rev. 20:8).

That *will* usher in the end of the devil's wicked attempts. Yes, he will feel confident, - as indeed he was in Heaven before he was expelled, **Rev. 20:7** And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, ⁸ And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city ... He and them reckoned they were going to win, but then, and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. ... And that is the end of him, and his opposition!

There is a lot to be considered, and we have only touched the surface. Be careful though, when you are considering these things to keep only to what the Word of God says, ... otherwise, our minds and thoughts are apt to develop concepts and teachings which are not there. Simply keep to the Word, in its own order, and you will not go wrong.

Why is it important to study such profoundly deep passages as these? Firstly, it is important because it is God's Word, and they are there for our instruction in righteousness, and to be prepared. There are also many other good reasons ... but here is one that helps me greatly ... It sheds light on the fact that our God is in control, and we are living in the times of which He spoke in the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments.

It gives me hope when increasingly I don't see people interested in Him ... for that is what His Word says will also be one of the signs. His Word too teaches there will be a falling away among the professing churches ... and that is happening today on a grand scale. But the aspect that really ought to be emphasised is this ... Watch what God is doing in the Middle East, and in particular in the land of Israel. ... And then, remember what Jesus said, **Lk. 21:28** *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

... Surely that ought to encourage us all when we look into the prophecy of this great and faithful man of God, Ezekiel. Amen.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

I. Prophecies of Jerusalem's Ruin (1:1–24:27)

- A. Preparation and Commission of Ezekiel (1:1–3:27)
 - 1. Divine appearance to Ezekiel (1:1–28)
 - 2. Divine assignment to Ezekiel (2:1–3:27)
- B. Proclamation of Jerusalem's Condemnation (4:1–24:27)
 - 1. Signs of coming judgment (4:1–5:4)
 - 2. Messages concerning judgment (5:5–7:27)
 - 3. Visions concerning abomination in the city and temple (8:1–11:25)
 - 4. Explanations of judgment (12:1–24:27)

II. Prophecies of Retribution to the Nations (25:1–32:32)

- A. Ammon (25:1–7)
- B. Moab (25:8–11)
- C. Edom (25:12–14)
- D. Philistia (25:15–17)
- E. Tyre (26:1–28:19)
- F. Sidon (28:20–24)
 - Excursus: The Restoration of Israel (28:25, 26)
- G. Egypt (29:1–32:32)

III. Provision for Israel’s Repentance (33:1–33)

IV. Prophecies of Israel’s Restoration (34:1–48:35)

- A. Regathering of Israel to the Land (34:1–37:28)
 - 1. Promise of a True Shepherd (34:1–31)
 - 2. Punishment of the nations (35:1–36:7)
 - 3. Purposes of restoration (36:8–38)
 - 4. Pictures of restoration—dry bones and two sticks (37:1–28)
- B. Removal of Israel’s Enemies from the Land (38:1–39:29)
 - 1. Invasion of Gog to plunder Israel (38:1–16)
 - 2. Intervention of God to protect Israel (38:17–39:29)
- C. Reinstatement of True Worship in Israel (40:1–46:24)
 - 1. New temple (40:1–43:12)
 - 2. New worship (43:13–46:24)
- D. Redistribution of the Land in Israel (47:1–48:35)
 - 1. Position of the river (47:1–12)
 - 2. Portions for the tribes (47:13–48:35)