

‘I saw visions of God’ Lessons from the prophecies of Ezekiel

General Introduction.

‘While nations have rejected God’s principles, and in this rejection have wrought their own ruin, yet a divine, overruling purpose has manifestly been at work throughout the ages. It was this that the prophet Ezekiel saw in the wonderful representation given him during his exile in the land of the Chaldeans, when before his astonished gaze were portrayed the symbols that revealed an overruling Power that has to do with the affairs of earthly rulers.

‘Upon the banks of the river Chebar, Ezekiel beheld a whirlwind seeming to come from the north, "a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber." A number of wheels intersecting one another were moved by four living beings. High above all these "was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." "And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man’s hand under their wings." Ezekiel 1:4, 26; 10:8. The wheels were so complicated in arrangement that at first sight they appeared to be in confusion; yet they moved in perfect harmony. Heavenly beings, sustained and guided by the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, were impelling those wheels; above them, upon the sapphire throne, was the Eternal One; and round about the throne was a rainbow, the emblem of divine mercy.

‘As the wheel-like complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth.

‘The history of nations speaks to us today. To every nation and to every individual God has assigned a place in His great plan. Today men and nations are being tested by the plummet in the hand of Him who makes no mistake. All are by their own choice deciding their destiny, and God is overruling all for the accomplishment of His purposes.’

Prophets & Kings, pages 535-536.

‘The book of Ezekiel is deeply instructive.’ *Fundamentals of Christian Education, page 394.*

Lesson 1: ‘The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel’

MEMORY VERSE: ‘And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with My words unto them.’ Ezekiel 3:4.

STUDY HELP: *Prophets & Kings, pages 448-464.*

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 1:1-3.

LESSON AIM: To understand the background of Ezekiel’s ministry.

Introduction

God’s people ‘were carried into captivity to Babylon, and there remained for many years. Yet they were not forsaken of the Lord. His prophets were sent to them with reproofs and warnings. The people were awakened to see their guilt; they humbled themselves before God, and returned to him with true repentance. Then the Lord sent them messages of encouragement, declaring that He would deliver them from their captivity, and restore them to His favour.’ *Review & Herald, January 2, 1908.*

‘The hand of the Lord was there upon him’

1. How did Ezekiel describe his call to the prophetic ministry? Ezekiel 1:3.

NOTE: ‘The prophet Ezekiel was raised up from among the captives in Babylon, to warn and to comfort the exiles, and also to confirm the word of the Lord that was being spoken through Jeremiah. During the years that remained of Zedekiah’s reign, Ezekiel made very plain the folly of trusting to the false predictions of those who were causing the captives to hope for an early return to Jerusalem. He was also instructed to foretell, by means of a variety of symbols and solemn messages, the siege and utter destruction of Jerusalem.’ *Prophets & Kings, page 448.*

2. Which men were also ministering as prophets at this time? Jeremiah 1:1-4, Daniel 1:1-6. Compare Ezekiel 14:14.

NOTE: ‘The dark years of destruction and death marking the end of the kingdom of Judah would have brought despair to the stoutest heart had it not been for the encouragements in the prophetic utterances of God’s messengers. Through Jeremiah in Jerusalem, through Daniel in the court of Babylon, through Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar, the Lord in mercy made clear His eternal purpose and gave assurance of His willingness to fulfil to His chosen people the promises recorded in the writings of Moses. That which He had said He would do for those who should prove true to Him, He would surely bring to pass. "The word of God . . . liveth and abideth forever." 1 Peter 1:23.’ *Prophets & Kings, page 464.*

'He prophesies for about twenty-two years contemporaneously with Jeremiah and Daniel. Jeremiah's ministry, however, began thirty-four years before that of Ezekiel and continued for six years after its commencement.' A. C. Vine, in *The Glory of God*, page 14.

'Among the captives'

3. Where was Ezekiel when he was called to be a prophet? Ezekiel 1:1. Compare Jeremiah 29:1.

NOTE: 'The location was a slave-labour encampment... The river Chebar, where Ezekiel said he saw these visions, is not today known at all. It was very probably a man-made canal, adjacent to a huge irrigation scheme that was under way in that whole area. Today we could probably recognise it only as a slight undulation in the arid desert plain. But Ezekiel most certainly saw the thing as a ghastly, heart-breaking, endless experience of mud and digging and backache and sweat and heat. For he was one of the slaves.' John Hercus: *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 141.

4. What does the Bible reveal about the attitude of mind of the captives? Psalm 137.

NOTE: 'Israel's minstrels were silent in the land of exile, when they were tauntingly bidden to display their skill for the amusement of their captors. How could they sing Jehovah's songs in a heathen land, how forget Jerusalem? Perish the enemies that wrought her ruin and rejoiced at her fall! The tender pathos of the opening verses enlists our sympathy; the crash of bitter denunciation in the closing stanza shocks and repels.' Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, page 779.

'It came to pass in the thirtieth year'

5. In what year did Ezekiel's first vision take place? Ezekiel 1:1.

NOTE: Although Ezekiel explains that this vision took place in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity (verse 2), for Ezekiel, there was a more important way for him to identify the year when this momentous event took place. For, as verse 3 explains, Ezekiel was a priest. What greater calamity could there be for a man who was born to be a priest than that he should be a captive in a strange land? From his earliest days, he had been brought up to know that his life work was to minister in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. Yet in his thirtieth year, here was he far away 'among the captives by the river of Chebar.' And at a time and place in which Ezekiel the priest must have felt that there was not the slightest chance that he could enter upon his life work, the Lord revealed Himself to Ezekiel in a vision.

6. What was the significance of his thirtieth year to Ezekiel? Consider Numbers 4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47.

NOTE: 'The priest Ezekiel. The man whose thirtieth birthday meant so much. For at thirty a priest began his active ministry. That was the age at which he assumed the responsibility of spiritual leadership.' John Hercus: *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 144.

'King Jehioachin's captivity'

7. When did Ezekiel reach his thirtieth year? Ezekiel 1:2.

NOTE: 'Jehoiachin [also known as Jeconiah, and Coniah], the son of Jehoiakim, occupied the throne only three months and ten days, when he surrendered to the Chaldean armies which, because of the rebellion of Judah's ruler, were once more besieging the fated city. On this occasion Nebuchadnezzar "carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land," several thousand in number, together with "craftsmen and smiths a thousand." With these the king of Babylon took "all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house." 2 Kings 24:15, 16, 13.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 438.

8. What kind of king was Jehoiachin and why was he taken into captivity? 2 Kings 24:8-15.

NOTE: 'Jehoiachin was the miserable son of his miserable father Jehoiakim, the man who had built the cedar palace and whose dead body had been dumped outside Jerusalem like a dead dog, when he died. Jehoiachin had been installed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, but he had lasted there only three months. The Babylonian king didn't approve of him, and had had him deported to Babylon. His uncle Zedekiah had been put on the throne in his stead. Fortunately the experts can work all this out and they tell us that it was in 592 BC, in Nebuchadnezzar's thirteenth year as king. And Jehoiachin had been five years in Babylonian exile.' John Hercus: *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 143.

'The desire of thine eyes'

9. Was Ezekiel a married man? Ezekiel 24:18.

NOTE: 'God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. "Marriage is honourable" (Hebrews 13:4); it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the Fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.' *Conflict & Courage*, page 14.

10. How is Ezekiel's wife described? Ezekiel 24:16.

NOTE: 'Ezekiel speaks of her in only a single phrase, but what a lovely phrase it is. He simply refers to her as the desire of his eyes. Surely, if in marriage a man sees less than that in his wife, he may well be pitied. But Ezekiel was rich in marriage, married to the desire of his eyes.' John Hercus: *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 177.

'The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men'

11. What important lesson did the Lord wish to teach? Isaiah 13:19, Isaiah 14:23.

NOTE: 'This lesson is taught in a wonderful symbolic representation given to the prophet Ezekiel during his exile in the land of the Chaldeans. The vision was given at a time when Ezekiel was weighed down with sorrowful memories and troubled forebodings. The land of his fathers was desolate. Jerusalem was depopulated. The prophet himself was a stranger in a land where ambition and cruelty reigned supreme. As on every hand he beheld tyranny and wrong, his soul was distressed, and he mourned day and night. But the symbols presented to him revealed a power above that of earthly rulers.' *Education*, page 177.

12. What is the meaning of Ezekiel's name? Compare Daniel 2:20-21, Daniel 4:17.

NOTE: 'Ezekiel's name means 'God is strong' or 'God controls.' A. C. Vine, in *The Glory of God*, page 14.

Lesson 2: 'I saw visions of God'

MEMORY VERSE: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine. . . . In Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.' 1 Chronicles 29:11, 12.

STUDY HELP: *Testimonies*, volume 5, pages 751-754.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 1:4-28, Ezekiel 10:1-22.

LESSON AIM: To understand the significance of Ezekiel's vision.

Introduction

'This vision was given to Ezekiel at a time when his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings. He saw the land of his fathers lying desolate. The city that was once full of people was no longer inhabited. The voice of mirth and the song of praise were no more heard within her walls. The prophet himself was a stranger in a strange land, where boundless ambition and savage cruelty reigned supreme. That which he saw and heard of human tyranny and wrong distressed his soul, and he mourned bitterly day and night. But the wonderful symbols presented before him beside the river Chebar revealed an overruling power mightier than that of earthly rulers. Above the proud and cruel monarchs of Assyria and Babylon the God of mercy and truth was enthroned.' *Testimonies*, volume 5, page 752.

'A whirlwind came out of the north'

1. What did Ezekiel first see in his vision? Ezekiel 1:4. Compare Nahum 1:3 & Job 38:1.

NOTE: The whirlwind comes out of the north and it was 'in the sides of the north' that Lucifer wished to exalt his throne [Isaiah 14:13-14.] Psalm 48:2 speaks of Mount Zion, the city of the great King, being on the sides of the north.

'Our heavenly Father does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. He has His purpose in the whirlwind and in the storm, in the fire and in the flood. The Lord permits calamities to come to His people to save them from greater dangers. He desires everyone to examine his own heart closely and carefully, and then draw near to God, that God may draw near to him.' *In Heavenly Places*, page 265.

2. What did Ezekiel see emerging out of the fire? Ezekiel 1:5.

NOTE: 'They had the likeness of a man', that is, they were human in form.

'Ezekiel calls them 'creatures' for he wants it to be very, very clear that they were not divine – they are of the category of creature, not Creator.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 140.

'The living creatures'

3. How did Ezekiel describe these four beings? Ezekiel 1:6-14.

NOTE: 'The "living beings" were the cherubim [compare Ezekiel 10]. Their two outstretched wings represented their obedience and willingness to carry out the will of God. The two wings covering their bodies, from face to feet... indicated their humility and reverence (See *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 348). J. H. Bayliss, in *The Glory of God*, page 19.

'The qualities which would see to be signified by the emblems are strength, perseverance, reason and swiftness, strength of affection, perseverance in carrying out the requirements of duty, reason in comprehending the divine will and swiftness in obeying.' U. Smith, *Daniel & the Revelation*, page 418.

4. How did John describe these four beings? Revelation 4:7-8.

NOTE: It is important not to be misled by the King James translation, 'four beasts.' The Greek word means 'living creatures' and is used sometimes in non-inspired literature for human beings. Like Ezekiel, John was not trying to depict these beings as sub-human, but simply to indicate that they are created beings. He uses an entirely different word when describing the prophetic beasts of Revelation 13.

'Wheels'

5. What did Ezekiel see beside each of the living creatures? Ezekiel 1:15-16.

NOTE: 'Those who know not God cannot comprehend His movements. There is at work a wheel within a wheel. Apparently the complication of machinery is so intricate that man can see only a complete entanglement. But the divine hand, as seen by the prophet Ezekiel [Ezekiel 10:8], is placed upon the wheels, and every part moves in complete harmony, each doing its specified work, yet with individual freedom of action.' *SDA Bible Commentary, volume 4*, page 1161.

'To the prophet the wheel within a wheel, the appearances of living creatures connected with them, all seemed intricate and unexplainable. But the hand of Infinite Wisdom is seen among the wheels, and perfect order is the result of its work. Every wheel works in perfect harmony with every other. I have been shown that human instrumentalities seek after too much power and try to control the work themselves. They leave the Lord God, the Mighty Worker, too much out of their methods and plans, and do not trust everything to Him in regard to the advancement of the work. No one should fancy that he is able to manage these things which belong to the great I AM.' *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 213.

6. How did Ezekiel seek to describe these wheels? Ezekiel 1:17-18.

NOTE: 'The whole entourage was castoring. Ezekiel doesn't use that word, for of course the castoring wheel had not as then been invented. But it was able to move and pivot in any direction through the agency of its wheels.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 140.

'Full of eyes'

7. What did Ezekiel notice especially about the wheels? Ezekiel 1:18, last part. Compare 2 Chronicles 16:9 & Zechariah 4:10.

NOTE: 'The Lord has His eye upon every soul that is seeking Him. He is interested in every soul needing help, and He will not leave one in the darkness of error, but step by step will lead him into the full light of the truth that is shining from every page of the Scriptures. The Lord sees our every act. He knows just what progress we have made in the Christian pathway. How kind, how tender, our Great Shepherd is! With intense interest He looks down from His exalted throne upon the sheep of His pasture, and gives them grace and strength.' *In Heavenly Places*, page 322.

8. How did David speak of what God sees when He looks on mankind? Psalm 14:2-3.

NOTE: 'We should be careful as to what kind of record passes up to heaven concerning our daily life; for God is no respecter of persons, but will render to every man according to his works. The Judge of all the earth will try every man's case. You may deceive human eyes. In the courts of justice on earth, justice is not always done; the innocent often suffer, the guilty are often set free, for lack of proper evidence; but there will be no lack of evidence in the court of heaven. The deeds of men, with every concealed motive, will be revealed. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro over the whole earth. He who has offered salvation to the sinner will one day judge the thoughts and deeds of all who stand before Him. He who died that man might become a partaker of the divine nature, will one day acquit or condemn him before the Father and the holy angels. Gold and silver will not be a sufficient ransom in that day; nothing but the merits of the blood of Christ will suffice to wash out the guilty stains from the hearts of men.' *Review & Herald*, May 13, 1890.

'The likeness of a throne'

9. What did Ezekiel hear as the four living creatures moved? Ezekiel 1:22-25, Ezekiel 43:2-3. Compare Psalm 29:3-9, Psalm 93:4, Revelation 14:2, first part.

NOTE: As the living beings move with the throne of God, they do not move in silence. Ezekiel describes the sound as like that of the deafening roar of a mighty cataract or the tumult of an army, or as the voice of God Himself.

'The sound made by their wings was "of great waters, like the voice of the Almighty." Waters represent humanity, (Revelation 17:15). Thus Jesus is the spokesman of humanity before the Father.' Bayliss, in *The Glory of God*, page 25.

10. What did Ezekiel see above the four living creatures? Ezekiel 1:26, first part. Compare Revelation 4:6.

NOTE: 'Above the back of [the] living beings and supported by them was the "firmament" or crystal platform (sea of glass), upon which the throne of God was supported.' Bayliss, in *The Glory of God*, page 25.

'The appearance of a Man'

11. Who did Ezekiel see sitting on the throne? Ezekiel 1:26, last part-27. Compare Daniel 7:13-14.

NOTE: 'On this throne was the appearance of a man.' A Man is guiding the destinies of men! Comforting thought! The most outstanding characteristic of this Man was His "loins". In Hebrews 7:5-10, 1 Peter 1:13 and many other Scriptures we learn

that “loins” stand for the organs of generation. In the vision of Jesus that Ezekiel saw, he emphasises His life-giving, creative, and re-creative character. Jesus is also surrounded by “fire”, emblematic of purity and purifying.” Bayliss, in *The Glory of God*, page 25.

12. What did Ezekiel see surrounding this Being? Ezekiel 1:28. Compare Revelation 4:3.

NOTE: ‘Around the whole theophany [vision of God] was a rainbow of dazzling glory, fit emblem of Jehovah’s mercy, (see *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 536), and His covenant promises not to destroy but to save penitent, trusting men. (See *Testimonies*, volume 5, page 751.) All this appeared to the prophet as “the glory of God”.’ Bayliss, in *The Glory of God*, page 25.

Lesson 3: ‘Thou shalt speak My words’

MEMORY VERSE: ‘But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.’ Ezekiel 3:27.

STUDY HELP: *Great Controversy*, pages 458-460.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 2-3.

LESSON AIM: To examine the work Ezekiel was called by God to do.

Introduction

‘Christians have a most important work to do. They are commissioned by God to watch for souls as they that must give an account. They are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering. God said to the prophet Ezekiel, “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.”’ *Review & Herald*, October 29, 1901.

‘I do send thee unto them’

1. Who appointed Ezekiel to his work as a prophet? Ezekiel 2:3-4.

NOTE: ‘The position of those who have been called of God to labour in word and doctrine for the upbuilding of His church is one of grave responsibility. In Christ’s stead they are to beseech men and women to be reconciled to God, and they can fulfil their mission only as they receive wisdom and power from above. Christ’s ministers are the spiritual guardians of the people entrusted to their care.’ *Lift Him Up*, page 288.

2. What kind of message was Ezekiel given to proclaim? Ezekiel 2:8-10.

NOTE: ‘Just as long as God has a church, He will have those who will cry aloud and spare not, who will be His instruments to reprove selfishness and sins, and will not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, whether men will hear or forbear. I saw that individuals would rise up against the plain testimonies. It does not suit their natural feelings. They would choose to have smooth things spoken unto them, and have peace cried in their ears. I view the church in a more dangerous condition than they ever have been. Experimental religion is known but by a few. The shaking must soon take place to purify the church.’ *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2, page 284.

3. What exhortation did the Lord give to Ezekiel? Ezekiel 2:6. Compare Jeremiah 1:7-9.

NOTE: ‘When the word of Lord came to Jeremiah, he said, “Ah, Lord God! Behold, I can not speak: for I am a child.” But the Lord said to him: “Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.” The same God who gave His messages to Moses and Jeremiah will give His word to His witnesses in this generation. “For it is not ye that speak,” Christ declares, “but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” This word of the Lord has been verified in all ages, and it will be verified to the close of time in all who hold the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end. The most powerful testimony will be given in defence of the faith once delivered to the saints. The Holy Spirit is close beside those who are called to witness for truth and righteousness.’ *Review & Herald*, May 24, 1898.

‘A rebellious nation’

4. What warning did the Lord give Ezekiel about the sort of people he would be ministering to? Ezekiel 3:4-6.

NOTE: ‘It was not the will of God that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; He desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan and establish them there, a holy, happy people. But “they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Hebrews 3:19. Because of their backsliding and apostasy they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the Promised Land. In like manner, it was not the will of God that the coming of Christ should be so long delayed and His people should

remain so many years in this world of sin and sorrow. But unbelief separated them from God. As they refused to do the work which He had appointed them, others were raised up to proclaim the message. In mercy to the world, Jesus delays His coming, that sinners may have an opportunity to hear the warning and find in Him a shelter before the wrath of God shall be poured out.' *Great Controversy*, page 458.

5. How did the Lord prepare Ezekiel for this task? Ezekiel 3:8-9. Compare Revelation 10:8-11.

NOTE: 'God's word is a message to us to be obeyed, a volume to be perused diligently, and with a spirit willing to take in the truths written for the admonition of those upon whom the ends of the world are come. It must not be neglected for any other book. If we do not eat the word of God, we need converting. If we practise this word, it will exert an elevating influence on our mental, moral, and physical life. Eternal interests are involved in this work; the truth must do something for the receiver. Let us study and eat the word of God, for we are built up from that which we eat. When we open the Bible, let us compare our lives with its requirements, measuring our character by the great moral standard of righteousness, God's holy law.' *The Home Missionary*, November 1, 1897.

'Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear'

6. How would the people receive Ezekiel's message? Ezekiel 3:7.

NOTE: 'Those who are ignorantly deceived are not to remain in this condition. The Lord says to His messengers, Go to them, and declare unto them what I have said, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. "Thou shalt speak My words unto them," God said to the prophet, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house.'" *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, July 1, 1900.

7. What was to be Ezekiel's response to the reception his message received? Ezekiel 2:5, 7; Ezekiel 3:11.

NOTE: 'What is the duty of the messenger of truth? Shall he conclude that the truth ought not to be presented, since often its only effect is to arouse men to evade or resist its claims? No; he has no more reason for withholding the testimony of God's word, because it excites opposition, than had earlier Reformers. The confession of faith made by saints and martyrs was recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations. Those living examples of holiness and steadfast integrity have come down to inspire courage in those who are now called to stand as witnesses for God. They received grace and truth, not for themselves alone, but that, through them, the knowledge of God might enlighten the earth. Has God given light to His servants in this generation? Then they should let it shine forth to the world. Anciently the Lord declared to one who spoke in His name: "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto Me." Nevertheless He said: "Thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Ezekiel 3:7; 2:7. To the servant of God at this time is the command addressed: "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.'" *Great Controversy*, page 459.

8. What confirmation did Ezekiel receive that the Lord was with Him? Ezekiel 3:12-13.

NOTE: 'While nations have rejected God's principles, and in this rejection have wrought their own ruin, yet a divine, overruling purpose has manifestly been at work throughout the ages. It was this that the prophet Ezekiel saw in the wonderful representation given him during his exile in the land of the Chaldeans, when before his astonished gaze were portrayed the symbols that revealed an overruling Power that has to do with the affairs of earthly rulers.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 535.

'I went in bitterness'

9. What was Ezekiel's reaction to the call he had received from the Lord? Ezekiel 3:14.

NOTE: 'Coming through this vision, searing the whole spiritual being of the young priest, was the terrible message: It is all false. There is no hope. The people will not be freed from slavery. They will be here in bondage for all the remaining days of their lives. They will never get away. They will die here. And Ezekiel is to be the one true prophet to tell them this. He is the lone watchman appointed to take the sole responsibility for the spiritual warning of the whole encampment. If they are not warned, if he fails in his task as watchman, then their doom lies fairly and squarely on his shoulders. Young, inexperienced, timid and shy as only such hyper-imaginative people can be, Ezekiel is to stand out in the middle of the slave encampment and tell them this terrible news.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Case-book*, page 146.

10. How long did Ezekiel remain in this state of mind? Ezekiel 3:15. Compare Job 2:12-13, Ezra 9:3-4.

NOTE: 'There was enough in the prophet's circumstances to produce a conflict of feelings in his mind – the sin of Israel, who were yet his own people; the task before which he stood, and his close and awful communications with heaven. The simple feeling of bitterness and indignation which filled his mind when he newly left the presence of God became broken into a tumult of feelings when he saw the face of men. Zeal for God becomes tempered and humanised in actual service.' A. B. Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge Bible series)*, page 22.

'His blood will I require at thine hand'

11. What solemn responsibility did the Lord place upon Ezekiel? Ezekiel 3:16-21.

NOTE: 'Their work [i.e. the work of Christ's ministers] has been likened to that of watchmen. In ancient times sentinels were often stationed on the walls of cities, where, from points of vantage, they could overlook important posts to be guarded, and

give warning of the approach of an enemy. Upon their faithfulness depended the safety of all within. At stated intervals they were required to call to one another, to make sure that all were awake and that no harm had befallen any. The cry of good cheer or of warning was borne from one to another, each repeating the call till it echoed round the city. It is the privilege of the watchmen on the walls of Zion to live so near to God, and to be so susceptible to the impressions of His Spirit, that He can work through them to tell men and women of their peril and point them to the place of safety. Faithfully are they to warn them of the sure result of transgression, and faithfully are they to safeguard the interests of the church. At no time may they relax their vigilance. In trumpet tones their voices are to be lifted, and never are they to sound one wavering, uncertain note.' *Lift Him Up*, page 288.

12. How did God again remind the reluctant prophet of the power and glory that would uphold him? Ezekiel 3:22-23.

NOTE: 'In the vision of the prophet Ezekiel there was the appearance of a hand beneath the wings of the cherubim. This is to teach God's servants that it is divine power that gives success. Those whom God employs as His messengers are not to feel that His work is dependent on them. Finite beings are not left to carry this burden of responsibility. He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations. He guards His children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 176.

'Thou shalt be dumb'

13. What warnings was Ezekiel given about how he would be treated? Ezekiel 3:25. Compare Jeremiah 1:18-19, Matthew 5:11-12.

NOTE: 'With a father's heart, God bore with His people. He pleaded with them by mercies given and mercies withdrawn. Patiently He set their sins before them, and in forbearance waited for their acknowledgment. Prophets and messengers were sent to urge God's claim upon the husbandmen; but instead of being welcomed, they were treated as enemies. The husbandmen persecuted and killed them. God sent still other messengers, but they received the same treatment as the first, only that the husbandmen showed still more determined hatred.' *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 293.

14. In view of Ezekiel's reluctance to accept his mission, what restraint did the Lord place upon his ministry? Ezekiel 3:26-27.

NOTE: 'How can he convey this dreadful message when he is dumb? No John Wesley here. No tiny trace of a Billy Graham, with his dedicated team and his hi-fi P.A. system and TV hook-up and radio network. Oh dear, no. Ezekiel can't even slip down to the jobbing printer and the second corner on the right and order a few thousand handbills to spread the story through the camp. No; he can't even order a single handbill at all, let alone a few thousand... Not that he won't write it down. He will somehow find the time and the material and the sheer endurance necessary to write it all down. But that is likely to take years. But that is not his call as a watchman. A watchman guarding a city isn't there to write a thoughtfully compiled monograph on enemy deployment and assault tactics. No! His duty as a watchman is to alert the city, and that means now!' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Case-book*, page 150.

Lesson 4: Unspoken sermons

MEMORY VERSE: 'Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.' Ezekiel 24:24.

STUDY HELP: *In Heavenly Places*, page 228.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 4:1-17, 5:1-17.

LESSON AIM: To show how God used Ezekiel, even while he was struck dumb, to proclaim His message.

Introduction

'God knows the end from the beginning. He is acquainted with the hearts of all men. He reads every secret of the soul. He knows whether those for whom prayer is offered would or would not be able to endure the trials that would come upon them should they live. He knows whether their lives would be a blessing or a curse to themselves and to the world. This is one reason why, while presenting our petitions with earnestness, we should say, "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done."' *Gospel Workers*, page 218.

'Take thee a tile'

1. Because of Ezekiel's bitterness of heart at the work God had given him, what restriction did God place upon him? Ezekiel 3:26-27.

NOTE: '[God's] providence will meantime be the [best teacher] of the people. The prophet's "dumbness", however, is compatible with much speaking, at least by signs, to those who will hear. He is "dumb" in the sense of the Psalmist, "I was

dumb, not opening my mouth, because thou didst it” (Psalm 39:9).” Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel, (Cambridge Bible series)*, page 27.

2. How did God use Ezekiel to give a message to his fellow-captives? Ezekiel 4:1-3.

NOTE: ‘Four and a half years before it began, Ezekiel set forth the truth of the besieging of Jerusalem by portraying on a tile a walled city exposed to a furious siege from surrounding forts, mounds and battering rams. This method of portraying events was common with the Babylonians. All the details depicted were actually fulfilled.’ C. R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 32.

‘Ezekiel had one of the huge Babylonian bricks... something like forty pounds of clay in it. It was a new brick, still soft and undried. He was modelling away at the clay on the top... His rapid daubing and modelling began to produce a vividly clear picture [of Jerusalem]... He was throwing up siege works against the city. There were the assault ramps. There, too, were the mobile defence walls, behind which the attackers were advancing... And then suddenly he darted away... He had picked up his iron plate, the one and only he possessed, and threw himself right on his stomach on the ground as he stood the plate on edge between himself and the model of the besieged city.’ Hercus, *More Pages From God’s Casebook*, pages 156-157.

‘Each day for a year’

3. How did Ezekiel portray the period of God’s forbearance with His rebellious people? Ezekiel 4:4-6.

NOTE: ‘He was next to indicate the extent of God’s merciful warning and forbearance. He was commanded to lie on his left side for 390 day-years to indicate the length of time God had borne with Israel. We know that Jeroboam began idolatry in 975 BC. Jerusalem fell completely in 585 BC, exactly 390 years later. Ezekiel was then told to lie for 40 day-years on his right side to show the length of the time Judah had rebelled. In the year 625 BC Jeremiah began to prophesy against Judah. For 40 years God bore with them. After that Jerusalem fell.’ C. R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 32.

4. In what other instance did God employ this ‘day-for-a-year’ principle? Numbers 14:32-34. Compare Leviticus 25:1-8.

NOTE: ‘There is a natural appropriateness in the year-day principle being chosen by the Creator, when we remember that there are two great revolutions of the earth, one on its axis occupying twenty-four hours, which gives rise to the day, and the other the earth in its orbit occupying 365 days, which gives rise to the year. It is appropriate indeed that the lesser should be used as a symbol of the greater. Are there any indications in the rest of Scripture that God has ever chosen such symbolism? In Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 we find evidence that such is the case. God has chosen on other occasions to use precisely this symbolism; one of these occasions was during the time of Daniel’s captivity, and its use was in connection with a contemporary prophet.’ Ford, *Daniel*, page 302.

‘Even thus’

5. What was the next ‘sermon’ that Ezekiel taught the people? Ezekiel 4:9-11. Read Ezekiel 4:16-17 and compare Lamentations 5:6, 10.

NOTE: ‘The prophet is commanded to take of all kinds of grain, coarse as well as fine, of everything that will still hunger, and cast them into one vessel... These cakes are to be eaten sparingly in small quantity from time to time, and water drunk with them sparingly. And this use of the cakes so prepared is to continue all the time that the prophet lies on his side... Bread was usually made of wheat; the addition of other coarser materials and their mixture indicate the straits to which men will be reduced in the siege and after the fall of the city... It is not certain that a mixture of various kinds of grain was regarded as a thing unclean, though the Law forbade sowing a field with diverse sorts of seed. Leviticus 19:19. Compare Deuteronomy 22:9.’ Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel, (Cambridge Bible series)*, pages 32-33.

6. What further condition did the Lord lay on Ezekiel for cooking this bread? When Ezekiel protested, what concession did the Lord make? Ezekiel 4:12-15.

NOTE: ‘It was dung. And now the camp began to buzz and twitter and the story began to fly around the whole encampment. Ezekiel, the priest, cooking his food on a dung-fed fire! This was scandalous. This was horrifying. And, what is more disturbing still, Ezekiel himself was shocked and scandalised more than any of them, and yet he kept on doing it. Day after day, week after week, month after month.’ Hercus, *More Pages From God’s Casebook*, page 161.

‘Under symbols of food and water Ezekiel was to demonstrate the horrors of the siege. All food would be severely rationed. All water would be distributed by measure. Coupled with these hardships, in language as vigorous as can be found anywhere in Holy Writ, the prophet indicates the horrors of crude defilement that would have to be borne by all who persisted in rebelling against God. Punishment is always a crude, elemental, revolting thing. This shortage of bread and water, and their “consuming away for their iniquity” would have their final fulfilment and application at the end of the world when there will be a famine, not of bread and water, but of hearing the Word of God. Amos 8:11-14.’ C. R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 34.

‘A few in number’

7. What was Ezekiel’s next powerful silent sermon? Ezekiel 5:1-2.

NOTE: ‘Bending until his head was over the centre of the clean cloth that he had spread on the ground, he slowly and methodically proceeded to shave off every hair on his head. His long back locks, reaching almost to his shoulders; his beard, long enough now to be properly presentable, but as yet with nothing of the coveted length of beard of the venerable elders; his

whiskers, everything. There it lay, the whole crop, in a thoroughly impressive heap in the middle of the cloth. And then he set up his balances, and slowly...he proceeded to weigh out his hair into three equal parts...At last the task was completed. The final few hairs and whiskers had been placed in their allotted bundles, the balances were placed well to one side, and Ezekiel stood up and turned to the brick model of Jerusalem, where the fire had been laid right in the middle of it. And he then set light to the little fire he had laid. And as the flames leaped up, he took one of the three heaps of hair and tossed it into the fire. There was just a sudden blaze of crackling glow as the hair was swept up in the flames. And an odoriferous whiff with the pungency of burning organic matter, drifting down-wind on the hot desert breeze...As the flames were still licking up that fistful of hair, Ezekiel snatched up the second heap and danced madly around the brick "city". And with every step he would drop a little bundle of the hair and then slash savagely at it with the sword which was again in his hand. As every lock of hair fell, he would lunge at it fiercely, and then chop away at it as it lay on the ground... And no sooner was this done than he picked up the third bundle of hair, and now proceeded to toss it high into the air, to be caught away, wisp by wisp, in the drift of the morning breeze. And even this would not do. For as it blew away out flashed his sword again, almost in a frenzy of destruction, lashing out at the disappearing strands.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 170.

8. What was Ezekiel commanded to do with the last remnant of his hair? Ezekiel 5:3-4.

NOTE: 'Even as he hacked away in the air, he would stop for a moment, gather up some of the hair as it fell, moving quickly still, but with an urgent gentleness that was in dramatic contrast to the sheer savagery of the moment before. We could almost feel the tenderness with which he hastily picked up a few strands here, a few there. And as he gathered them, he slipped them into a little pocket he had made in the skirt of his robe as it folded over his leather girdle... All eyes were still fixed on that tiny handful of hair that Ezekiel now held in his tightly clenched right fist; those few wisps that had been recovered from the scattering breeze and the chasing sword. As the silent priest had withdrawn this tiny collection from the fold in the skirt of his robe, they knew all too well that this was truly themselves he was symbolising. And himself, too, never forget...He opened his right hand, slowly, almost reluctantly. There were the few strands of hair which represented this very group on the banks of the Kebar... As he looked now into his open palm, he was no longer seeing a few tangled strands of hair – he was seeing the men themselves, the men who were his friends, his kith and kin, his flesh and blood. And with a sudden movement it was done. With a great sob of uncontrollable grief, he finished the sermon. He simply picked up some of the hair in his right hand and threw it in the fire – and fled sobbing from the scene, the few remaining hairs now clutched to his breast in both fists.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 171-173.

9. What was the Lord teaching this Ezekiel's unspoken sermon? Ezekiel 5:11-15. Read verses 5-17.

NOTE: 'It is only as this remnant is wrapped up in the skirt of the prophet that they will be protected and preserved. The margin for "skirts" is "wings". Thus it is that the remnant, protected by the skirt of the "robe of righteousness" or under "His everlasting wings" will finally be saved. (See Revelation 3:18; Revelation 16:15; 2 Corinthians 5:3.) The white raiment is the righteousness of Christ. After being wrapped in the skirts of the prophet for some time, they are taken out of it. No longer are they to be covered with the pleadings of Christ's righteousness, but they are to stand alone facing the purifying fires of the final hour of trial. "Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. It is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed that the image of God may be perfectly reflected.'" (*Great Controversy*, page 621).' C. R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 34.

'At even my wife died'

10. What was Ezekiel's hardest unspoken sermon? Ezekiel 24:15-16, first part.

NOTE: 'It was the tenth day of the tenth month of their ninth year in exile. And that was the night Ezekiel's wife died... How strange the ways of God who is love appear to men who are so largely just emotion. Of all the cruel hurts to a man already so cruelly hurt this would surely seem to be beyond all limits. For Ezekiel was dumb. And as the man responsible for dashing all their human hopes of escape, he was surely the most lonely figure in all the camp. But in the warm intimacy of Ezekiel's own home, in the understanding that can enable two people to live as one, the language of love will still speak when the tongue is dumb... And she died. Ezekiel speaks of her in only a single phrase, but what a lovely phrase it is. He simply refers to her as the desire of his eyes. And she died. Died "with a stroke", he says. Indeed, it may very well have been with a stroke. Or a coronary. Or from plague. Or from anything you care to name. For to the tragically, bitterly bereaved Ezekiel, the exact diagnosis is not one tiny bit of use. He is alone, he is deserted.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 176-177.

11. How was Ezekiel instructed to react to his great loss? Ezekiel 24:16, last part-17.

NOTE: 'Ezekiel was preaching his last of all such sermons – and this time he was preaching the other half of the story of the wonder of God's way with men...They knew what Ezekiel was saying now. As he sat there with that sunny smile pressed on his face, as every taut nerve in his body was compelled to relax, they knew all right. If Ezekiel, the man of God, could calmly and happily declare in the death of his wife the peace and serenity of being in the will of God, then they, the people of God, were to expect just this same certainty of tranquil security in the destruction of Jerusalem.' Hercus, *More Pages From God's Casebook*, page 180-181.

12. How did Ezekiel respond to God's command? Ezekiel 24:18.

NOTE: 'It was, in very truth, on the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year of their captivity that the siege [of Jerusalem] was laid. The very day Ezekiel's wife died. The very day the prophet of God began to smile and rejoice and express

in a setting of such poignant personal conflict the exultant truth of the purpose of God.’ Hercus, *More Pages From God’s Casebook*, page 182.

‘In that day shall thy mouth be opened’

13. How are we shown the success of this last unspoken sermon? Ezekiel 24:19. Read verses 19-24.

NOTE: Ezekiel became a compelling focal point for those few who had accepted in this great personal tragedy of their lives and hopes the even greater wonder of lives now at peace with God. And dumb though he still was, Ezekiel was for them the one with whom they could most warmly share their concerns and their hopes.’ Hercus, *More Pages From God’s Casebook*, page 183.

14. When did Ezekiel recover the power of speech? Ezekiel 24:25-27.

NOTE: ‘The dumb prophet is no longer dumb! Those long years of silence are over. The words that could be thought, that could be felt, that could be intended, those words that had so long been merely dramatised and acted, those words could now at last be spoken! And what words! There are no words like them in all the Old Testament records. For now the prophet is free to finish the story. Now he can tell his people all the truth. For the tongue that had been silent for over five years is now free to speak. And remember, if you please, how all those five long years were spent in trying to understand and interpret the purpose of God for His people.’ Hercus, *More Pages From God’s Casebook*, page 184.

Lesson 5: ‘Thou shalt see greater abominations’

MEMORY VERSE: ‘But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.’ Hebrews 3:13.

STUDY HELP: *Prophets & Kings*, pages 448-450.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 8:1-18.

LESSON AIM: To show why God permitted the destruction of Jerusalem.

Introduction

‘The words of the prophet Ezekiel are applicable to the people who profess the truth at this time: “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.”’ *Review & Herald*, August 15, 1882.

‘In the visions of God’

1. Whom did Ezekiel see in his next vision? Ezekiel 8:1-2. Compare Ezekiel 1:4. See also Daniel 10:5-6 and Revelation 1:14-15.

NOTE: ‘This description is similar to that given by John when Christ was revealed to him upon the Isle of Patmos. No less a personage than the Son of God appeared to Daniel. Our Lord comes with another heavenly messenger to teach Daniel what would take place in the latter days.’ *The Sanctified Life*, page 49.

‘To strengthen Ezekiel after this terrible recital of the end of sin and sinners [Ezekiel 6-7], God gave to His servant a further vision of His glory. Again he sees represented the creative generative (“loins”) power of Jesus. Again he is strengthened for his task by the Hand that was pierced to redeem mankind.’ C.R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 38.

2. To where was Ezekiel transported in his vision? Ezekiel 8:3-4

NOTE: In vision the prophet is carried back to the city of Jerusalem, to the temple where, had circumstances been different, he would have been serving as a priest. He is not shown the conditions in the city where the people are starving under Nebuchadnezzar’s siege. He is not shown the scenes he had pictured on the tile. Instead he is brought to the heart of Judah’s worship. And He sees the glory of God there, just as he saw it in his first vision beside the Chebar. The Lord is with His people in their hour of need, whether they are suffering the privations of the siege in Jerusalem, or labouring as slaves in Babylon.

‘The image of jealousy’

3. What did Ezekiel see at the gate of the temple courtyard leading to the altar of sacrifice? Ezekiel 8:5.

NOTE: ‘Ezekiel was then shown the “image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy” in the very temple of God... The image of jealousy was barring the way to true confession of sin.’ C.R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 38.

4. What makes God jealous? Exodus 20:4-5. Compare Deuteronomy 32:21.

NOTE: 'Not an image of "jealousy" itself, considered as a deity, but an image which because it provoked to jealousy was named image of jealousy. The "jealousy" of God is a violent emotion or resentment arising from the feeling of being injured. (Deuteronomy 32:21). It is uncertain what this image was... According to 2 Kings 21:7, Manasseh put a graven image of Ashera in the house of the Lord, which Josiah brought out and burnt (2 Kings 23:6, 2 Chronicles 33:7, 15). In earlier times the Ashera ("grove" KJV) was a tree or pole planted beside an altar. It is not quite certain where the pole or stock was a substitute for the evergreen tree, when this could not be had, or whether like the sun an image it was the symbol of a goddess.' Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel, (Cambridge Bible series)* page 54.

'God's character has not changed. He is the same jealous God today as when He gave His law upon Sinai and wrote it with His own finger on the tables of stone. Those who trample upon God's holy law may say, "I am sanctified"; but to be indeed sanctified, and to claim sanctification, are two different things.' *The Sanctified Life*, page 68.

'All the idols of the house of Israel'

5. How was Ezekiel shown that this was not the greatest abomination being committed in the temple? Ezekiel 8:6.

NOTE: 'The distance is widening between Christ and His people, and lessening between them and the world. The marks of distinction between Christ's professed people and the world, have almost disappeared. They follow after the abominations of the nations around them, as did ancient Israel.' *Spiritual Gifts, volume 4b*, page 66.

6. What was Ezekiel shown going on in secret among the elders of the people? Ezekiel 8:7-11.

NOTE: 'In the sixth year of the reign of Zedekiah, the Lord revealed to Ezekiel in vision some of the abominations that were being practised in Jerusalem, and within the gate of the Lord's house, and even in the inner court. The chambers of images, and the pictured idols, "every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel", all these in rapid succession passed before the astonished gaze of the prophet. Ezekiel 8:10. Those who should have been spiritual leaders among the people, "the ancients of the house of Israel," to the number of seventy, were seen offering incense before the idolatrous representations that had been introduced into hidden chambers within the sacred precincts of the temple court.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 448.

7. What was Ezekiel shown concerning the mindset of these idolatrous elders? Ezekiel 8:12.

NOTE: "'The Lord seeth us not," the men of Judah flattered themselves as they engaged in their heathenish practices; "the Lord hath forsaken the earth," they blasphemously declared. Verses 11, 12.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 448.

'Through Jeremiah the Lord had declared of the wicked men who presumptuously dared to stand before the people in His name: "Both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in My house have I found their wickedness." Jeremiah 23:11. In the terrible arraignment of Judah as recorded in the closing narrative of the chronicler of Zedekiah's reign, this charge of violating the sanctity of the temple was repeated. "Moreover," the sacred writer declared, "all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem." 2 Chronicles 36:14.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 449.

'Weeping for Tammuz'

8. What further abomination was Ezekiel shown? Ezekiel 8:13-14.

NOTE: The ancient Babylonian mystery religion derives from Nimrod whose wife was Semiramis. Tammuz was the son of Semiramis and his worship came to the west under the name of Bacchus who was worshipped with drunken orgies. Tammuz was often portrayed as a child in his mother's arms and this image was the basis of the 'Madonna and child' cult in Roman Catholicism. Semiramis was often worshipped as the Mother goddess. She was, for example, 'Diana of the Ephesians'. In other lands, she was known as Rhea or Cybele. Semiramis claimed that the son born to her after the violent death of Nimrod was the reincarnation of her dead husband. This death and reincarnation was celebrated in mid-winter when the sun grows weaker as the days grow shorter until the solstice when it revives and the days grow longer once more. During the shortening days, the sun god was mourned but after the solstice a period of wild rejoicing and celebration followed as the sun god was reborn. The mid-winter festival was 'Christianised' into the twelve days of Christmas by the Roman Church. (Those seeking further information will find Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons* informative.)

9. What previous instance of this form of idolatry had occurred in Israel? Numbers 25:1-9.

NOTE: Baal-peor was the Moabite name for Tammuz.

'The crime that brought the judgments of God upon Israel was that of licentiousness. The forwardness of women to entrap souls did not end at Baal-peor. Notwithstanding the punishment that followed the sinners in Israel, the same crime was repeated many times. Satan was most active in seeking to make Israel's overthrow complete. Balak by the advice of Balaam laid the snare. Israel would have bravely met their enemies in battle, and resisted them, and come off conquerors; but when women invited their attention and sought their company and beguiled them by their charms, they did not resist temptations. They were invited to idolatrous feasts, and their indulgence in wine further beclouded their dazed minds. The power of self control, their allegiance to God's law, was not preserved. Their senses were so beclouded with wine, and their unholy passions had such full sway, overpowering every barrier, that they invited temptation even to the attending of these idolatrous feasts. Those who had never flinched in battle, who were brave men, did not barricade their souls to resist temptation to indulge their basest passions. Idolatry and licentiousness went together. They first defiled their conscience by lewdness, and then departed from God still farther by idolatry, thus showing contempt for the God of Israel.' *Review & Herald*, May 17, 1887.

‘They worshipped the sun towards the east’

10. What still greater abomination was Ezekiel shown? Ezekiel 8:15-16. Compare Jeremiah 44:16-19.

NOTE: This idolatrous practice leaves its traces today. The Roman Catholic worship song (miscalled a negro spiritual) has these words: ‘When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O lord, have mercy on me.’ The ‘lord’ is the sun god, one of whose festivals took place at the spring equinox when day becomes longer than night. It was the custom to stay up all night to await the dawn on this day and worship the sun god in the east. This is the origin of the Roman Catholic all-night Easter vigil. Roman Catholic churches are traditionally orientated so that the worshippers face the east to worship. A great window is placed here so that the sun’s rays shine through upon the worshippers. The altar traditionally has a sun image at its central focus of worship. Both Virgin and Child are traditionally pictured with a sun disk or halo around the head.

‘He saw portrayed the vile heathen gods which were worshipped in place of Jehovah. In an increasing tide of iniquity he is shown that the zenith is reached by the worshipping of the sun on the day of the sun, Sunday. He had been told (Ezekiel 7:26) that the law would perish and is then shown that the Sabbath was disregarded.’ C.R. Bonney, in *The Glory of God*, page 38.

11. What warning had God given against getting involved in sun worship? Deuteronomy 4:19.

NOTE: Nimrod’s apostasy had involved setting aside the Sabbath and instead devoting each day of the week to worship. The first day of the week was devoted to the worship of the sun god, the second to the moon goddess, and the remaining days to the worship of the gods of the five visible planets, Mars (Tuesday), Mercury (Wednesday), Jupiter (Thursday), Venus (Friday) and Saturn (Saturday). Many languages, English included, derive the names they give to the days of the week from this ancient idolatry. The names given to the sun, moon and planets (and their respective gods) vary according to the different languages.

12. Why did God ordain that the period of captivity should be seventy years? 2 Chronicles 36:20-21. Read Ezekiel 20:12-24.

NOTE: ‘Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites were admonished by Moses to “keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it.” Deuteronomy 5:12. The Lord designed that by a faithful observance of the Sabbath command, Israel should continually be reminded of their accountability to Him as their Creator and their Redeemer. While they should keep the Sabbath in the proper spirit, idolatry could not exist; but should the claims of this precept of the Decalogue be set aside as no longer binding, the Creator would be forgotten and men would worship other gods. “I gave them My Sabbaths,” God declared, “to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Yet “they despised My judgments, and walked not in My statutes, but polluted My Sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.” And in His appeal to them to return to Him, He called their attention anew to the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy. “I am the Lord your God,” He said; “walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them; and hallow My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” Ezekiel 20:12, 16, 19, 20. In calling the attention of Judah to the sins that finally brought upon them the Babylonian Captivity, the Lord declared: “Thou hast. . . profaned My Sabbaths.” “Therefore have I poured out Mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads.” Ezekiel 22:8, 31.’ *Prophets & Kings*, pages 181-182.

‘Mine eye will not spare’

13. How did God express His anger to Ezekiel? Ezekiel 8:17.

NOTE: ‘Putting the “branch to their nose.” This is supposed to be part of the ceremonies of their sun worship. It is said that the Persian sun-worshippers held before them a branch or bunch of the date, pomegranate or tamarisk tree, or according to some of the homa tree, probably that their breath might not contaminate the glory of the rising deity.’ Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel*, (Cambridge Bible series) page 59.

‘And now the glorious Being who accompanied Ezekiel throughout this astonishing vision of wickedness in high places in the land of Judah, inquired of the prophet: “Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke Me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.” Verses 17, 18. Through Jeremiah the Lord had declared of the wicked men who presumptuously dared to stand before the people in His name: “Both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in My house have I found their wickedness.” Jeremiah 23:11. In the terrible arraignment of Judah as recorded in the closing narrative of the chronicler of Zedekiah’s reign, this charge of violating the sanctity of the temple was repeated. “Moreover,” the sacred writer declared, “all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem.” 2 Chronicles 36:14. The day of doom for the kingdom of Judah was fast approaching. No longer could the Lord set before them the hope of averting the severest of His judgments. “Should ye be utterly unpunished?” He inquired. “Ye shall not be unpunished.” Jeremiah 25:29.’ *Prophets & Kings*, pages 449-450.

14. Because of the apostasy and idolatry of Jerusalem, how did God propose to treat them? Ezekiel 8:18.

NOTE: ‘Hear me, for Christ’s sake, hear me. The season of God’s mercy will soon be ended. The call for sinners to repent and be converted will soon be heard no more. That God whose invitation you have refused, that Saviour whose Spirit you have grieved and insulted, will soon rise in His anger to punish transgressors. Dare we think what the wrath of the Lamb means? Every day you remain in sin you are grieving God by your impenitence. Will you not remember that the time is just upon you when the last day of mercy will come? Then God will rise up out of His place to punish the world for its iniquity. Then the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. The clouds of wrath which have been gathering will burst

with pitiless fury upon the world. I beg of you who shall read these words to hear for your soul's sake. Venture not one step further in your impenitence.' *Review & Herald*, December 1, 1896.

Lesson 6: 'A new heart and a new spirit'

MEMORY VERSE: 'And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.' Ezekiel 11:19.

STUDY HELP: *Messages to Young People*, pages 70-73.

LESSON SCRIPTURES: Ezekiel 11:19-21, Ezekiel 18:30-32, Ezekiel 36:25-27

LESSON AIM: To study the necessity of being born again.

Introduction

'When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart? A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride.' *God's Amazing Grace*, page 100.

'I will judge you'

1. What warning did God give to His people? Ezekiel 18:30, first part.

NOTE: 'We cannot afford to live with no reference to the day of judgement; for though long delayed, it is now near, even at the door, and hasteth greatly. When you consider solemn things, do you not realise... that you must cease from your selfish, sinful course, cease to do evil, and learn to do good? It is your own course of action that will mould your character for destruction or for the bliss of the ceaseless ages of eternity. Will you heed the injunction, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near?"' *Sons & Daughters of God*, page 343.

2. On what basis does God judge His people? Ezekiel 18:30, first part. Compare Revelation 22:12, Revelation 20:12-13, Ecclesiastes 12:14.

NOTE: 'In the day of judgment many will be found wanting because they have been tested and proved of God and found unworthy of eternal life. God could not trust them in heaven. The decision will be made for eternity; he that is not faithful in that which is least cannot be entrusted with greater responsibilities. They will be judged by their works which have determined their character.' *Publishing Ministry*, page 299.

3. In view of the certainty of God's judgement, what did the Lord call on His people to do? Ezekiel 18:30, last part.

NOTE: 'There are those who listen to the truth, and are convinced that they have been living in opposition to Christ. They are condemned, and they repent of their transgressions. Relying upon the merits of Christ, exercising true faith in Him, they receive pardon for sin. As they cease to do evil and learn to do well, they grow in grace and in the knowledge of God. They see that they must sacrifice in order to separate from the world; and, after counting the cost, they look upon all as loss if they may but win Christ. They have enlisted in Christ's army. The warfare is before them, and they enter it bravely and cheerfully, fighting against their natural inclinations and selfish desires, bringing the will into subjection to the will of Christ. Daily they seek the Lord for grace to obey Him, and they are strengthened and helped. This is true conversion.' *Messages to Young People*, page 73.

'Make you a new heart'

4. What is the remedy for God's backslidden people? Ezekiel 18:31.

NOTE: 'Many have confused ideas in regard to conversion. They have often heard the words repeated from the pulpit, "Ye must be born again." "You must have a new heart." These expressions have perplexed them. They could not comprehend the plan of salvation. Many have stumbled to ruin because of the erroneous doctrines taught by some ministers concerning the change that takes place at conversion. Some have lived in sadness for years, waiting for some marked evidence that they were accepted by God. They have separated themselves in a large measure from the world, and find pleasure in associating with the people of God; yet they dare not profess Christ, because they fear it would be presumption to say that they are children of God. They are waiting for that peculiar change that they have been led to believe is connected with conversion.' *Evangelism*, page 286.

5. How did Jesus emphasise the importance of this experience? John 3:3 & 5.

NOTE: 'There are very many who claim to serve God, but who have no experimental knowledge of Him. Their desire to do His will is based upon their own inclination, not upon the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit. Their conduct is not brought into harmony with the law of God. They profess to accept Christ as their Saviour, but they do not believe that He will give them power to overcome their sins. They have not a personal relation with a living Saviour, and their characters reveal defects both hereditary and cultivated. It is one thing to assent in a general way to the agency of the Holy Spirit, and another thing to accept

His work as a reprover calling to repentance. Many feel a sense of estrangement from God, a realisation of their bondage to self and sin; they make efforts for reform; but they do not crucify self. They do not give themselves entirely into the hands of Christ, seeking for divine power to do His will. They are not willing to be moulded after the divine similitude. In a general way they acknowledge their imperfections, but they do not give up their particular sins. With each wrong act the old selfish nature is gaining strength. The only hope for these souls is to realise in themselves the truth of Christ's words to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 48.

'Cast away from you all your transgressions'

6. What change is seen in those who receive a new heart? Ezekiel 18:31, first part.

NOTE: 'After a time some of these do receive evidence of their acceptance with God, and are then led to identify themselves with His people. And they date their conversion from this time. But I have been shown that they were adopted into the family of God before that time. God accepted them when they became weary of sin, and having lost their desire for worldly pleasures, resolved to seek God earnestly. But, failing to understand the simplicity of the plan of salvation, they lost many privileges and blessings which they might have claimed had they only believed, when they first turned to God, that He had accepted them. Others fall into a more dangerous error. They are governed by impulse. Their sympathies are stirred, and they regard this flight of feeling as an evidence that they are accepted by God and are converted. But the principles of their life are not changed. The evidences of a genuine work of grace on the heart are to be found not in feeling, but in the life. "By their fruits," Christ declared, "ye shall know them."' *Evangelism*, page 286.

7. How did Paul describe the experience of being born again? Romans 12:1-2.

NOTE: 'Angels of God have kept a faithful record of every act, however secret you may have thought you were in its committal. God discerns the purposes of man and all his works. Every man will be rewarded according as his works have been, whether good or evil. That which a man sows will he also reap. There will be no failure in the crop. The harvest is sure and plentiful...If you value your soul's salvation, make thorough work for eternity. You will have to make a clean track behind you by thorough confession. You need a thorough conversion, a transformation of self by the renewing of your mind. Your self-esteem must be overcome. You must learn to esteem others better than yourself. Your exalted opinion of your own acquirements must be given up, and you must obtain a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.' *Testimonies, volume 2*, page 300-301.

'A new spirit will I put within you'

8. How is it possible to have a new heart? Ezekiel 36:25-27.

NOTE: 'Many are inquiring, "How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?" You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can choose to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centred upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.' *Steps to Christ*, page 47.

9. What must be our attitude of mind if we are to receive a new heart? Jeremiah 29:13.

NOTE: 'The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness. By nature we are alienated from God. The Holy Spirit describes our condition in such words as these: "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" "no soundness in it." We are held fast in the snare of Satan, "taken captive by him at his will." Ephesians 2:1; Isaiah 1:5, 6; 2 Timothy 2:26. God desires to heal us, to set us free. But since this requires an entire transformation, a renewing of our whole nature, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him. The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.' *Steps to Christ*, page 43.

'Turn ye from your evil ways'

10. What will be the attitude of the one who is born again to his former life of sin? Ezekiel 36:31.

NOTE: 'Now is the time for us to make sure work for eternity. Christ is pleading in our behalf. Shall we offer ourselves as a free, acceptable sacrifice? Shall we cover up our sins, or shall we confess them, that we may find mercy and grace to help in every time of need? While Christ is pleading in our behalf, shall we not put away and loathe the sins that caused the Son of God such great suffering and death?... Shall we not pour out our souls in repentance and contrition, and receive the promise of a new heart? God says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.'" *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, October 1, 1899.

11. What is God's desire for His people? Ezekiel 33:11.

NOTE: 'Repentance includes sorrow for sin, and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life. There are many who fail to understand the true nature of repentance. Multitudes sorrow that they have sinned, and even make an outward reformation, because they fear that their wrongdoing will bring suffering upon themselves. But this is not repentance in the Bible sense. They lament the suffering, rather than the sin.' *Conflict & Courage*, page 63.

'Create in me a clean heart, O God'

12. Is it possible for a man to cleanse himself of sin? Job 14:4. Compare Jeremiah 13:23.

NOTE: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." By nature the heart is evil, and "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Romans 8:7; Matthew 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.' *Desire of Ages*, page 172.

13. What prayer must be ours each time we fall into sin? Psalm 51:10.

NOTE: 'I have acted as though I could save my own soul, as if I could sin and then reform when I choose to do so; but I find a power holding me in his keeping. Thou alone can save me that my soul shall not be eternally ruined... I am lost and undone. I cannot cleanse this soul from one stain of guilt. No longer will I withhold it from Thee. I dare not trust it with any power but Thine. I bring it sinful and polluted to Thee. I lay it at Thy feet. Thou Lamb of God, wash my soul in the blood of the Lamb; clothe it with Thine own garments of purity and righteousness. Sanctify it through the truth. Put Thy Spirit in my heart, and inspire it with Thy love. Incline my heart to keep Thy commandments. Unite my poor misguided will to Thy will. Make me Thine, blessed Lord. Take not Thine Holy Spirit from me.' *Manuscript Releases, volume 15*, page 101.

Lesson 7: 'Set a mark upon the foreheads'

MEMORY VERSE: 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' 2 Timothy 2:19.

STUDY HELP: *Maranatha*, pages 211-213.

LESSON SCRIPTURES: Ezekiel 9:1-11, Revelation 7:1-17.

LESSON AIM: To examine the significance of the sealing of God's people.

Introduction

'Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads, it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved, just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.' *Maranatha*, page 200.

'The Lord knoweth them that are His'

1. What parallel works of marking people are revealed in Scripture? Revelation 7:1-3 Contrast Revelation 13:16-17.

NOTE: 'In the issue of the great contest two parties are developed, those who "worship the beast and his image," and receive his mark, and those who receive "the seal of the living God," who have the Father's name written in their foreheads. This is not a visible mark. The time has come when all who have an interest in their soul's salvation should earnestly and solemnly inquire, What is the seal of God? and what is the mark of the beast? How can we avoid receiving it?' *Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1899.

2. What function does the seal of God serve? 2 Timothy 2:19, first part.

NOTE: By this mark the Lord identifies those among His professed people who are truly His.

'For forty years did unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion shut out ancient Israel from the land of Canaan. The same sins have delayed the entrance of modern Israel into the heavenly Canaan. In neither case were the promises of God at fault. It is the unbelief, the worldliness, unconsecration, and strife among the Lord's professed people that have kept us in this world of sin and sorrow so many years.' *Last Day Events*, page 38.

'Our lives are pure only when we are under the control of God, and happy only when we hold communion with Him. The lustre possessed by those who have gained the richest experience is but the reflection of the light of the Sun of Righteousness. He who lives nearest to Jesus shines the brightest. And let us thank God that the Master has His hidden ones whose value may not be recognized by the world, but whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The Lord knoweth them that are His.

“They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” *Signs of the Times*, August 16, 1905 .

‘The men that sigh and cry’

3. What was Ezekiel shown about those who receive the Lord’s mark? Ezekiel 9:4.

NOTE: ‘At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church, because its members are doing after the manner of the world. The earnest prayers of this faithful few will not be in vain. When the Lord comes forth as an avenger, He will also come as a protector of all those who have preserved the faith in its purity, and kept themselves unspotted from the world. It is at this time that God has promised to avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. The day of God’s vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those only who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land. Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken, and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry;” but “the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” Psalm 34:15, 16.’ *Christian Experience & Teachings*, pages 186-187.

4. How did David express his sorrow for the abominations among God’s people? Psalm 119:53. Compare Ezra 9:3.

NOTE: ‘Mark this point with care: Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those “that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done” in the church. Their love for purity and the honour and glory of God is such, and they have so clear a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that they are represented as being in an agony, even sighing and crying. Read Ezekiel, chapter nine.’ *Review & Herald*, September 23, 1873.

‘Depart from iniquity’

5. What further qualification are we shown for those who receive the seal of God? 2 Timothy 2:19, last part. Compare Isaiah 8:14-16.

NOTE: ‘God is not deceived by appearances of piety. He makes no mistake in His estimation of character. Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life. The moral worth of every soul weighed in the balance of the heavenly sanctuary. Shall not these solemn thoughts have an influence upon us, that we may cease to do evil and learn to do well? There is nothing gained by a life of sin but hopeless despair. Let faith lay hold on the promises of God. Jesus is mighty to save His people from their sins. Light from Heaven has illumined our pathway. Sin has been revealed to us by the Word and the Spirit of truth, that we may not be found transgressors of the divine precepts, and there is no opportunity to plead the excuse of ignorance. The command is “Depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19).’ *That I May Know Him*, page 255.

6. How will the Lord judge those who profess His name but refuse to depart from iniquity? Matthew 7:21-23. Compare Luke 13:25-27.

NOTE: ‘Those who profess to have light from the Lord, who win the confidence of men, and lead souls to ruin, will bring swift destruction upon themselves. They are represented as that class who “destroy the way of My paths, saith the Lord.” Wearing the insignia of Christ, they serve the Lord’s worst enemy, and heed not the injunction, “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Christ plainly states that this class of teachers are as wolves in sheep’s clothing. They talk of grace, they preach of grace, apparently they pray for grace; but they have not the grace of Christ in their hearts. In the pulpit such ministers may appear to be excellent; but they destroy the force of their words when out of the pulpit by such a course of iniquity that they prove themselves to be ministers of sin, wolves in sheep’s clothing.’ *Signs of the Times*, July 18, 1892.

‘Set a mark upon the foreheads’

7. How is the work of sealing pictured? Ezekiel 9:2-4.

NOTE: ‘The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God’s professed people. This is forcibly set forth by the prophet’s illustration of the last work under the figure of the men each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer’s inkhorn by his side. “And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”’ *Testimonies, volume 3*, page 266.

8. What awaits those who do not receive the Lord’s mark upon their foreheads? Ezekiel 9:5-7.

NOTE: ‘Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God and who murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them and sympathise with those who commit wrong? No, indeed! Unless they repent, and leave the work of

Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work and in holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, they will never receive the mark of God's sealing approval. They will fall in the general destruction of the wicked, represented by the work of the five men bearing slaughter weapons. . . . the general slaughter of all those who do not thus see the wide contrast between sin and righteousness, and do not feel as those do who stand in the counsel of God and receive the mark, is described in the order to the five men with slaughter weapons: "Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." *Testimonies, volume 3, page 267.*

'All whose names are not written in the Book of Life'

9. If a person does not receive the Lord's mark, how will he be marked? Revelation 13:16. Compare Revelation 13:8.

NOTE: 'There can be only two classes. Each party is distinctly stamped, either with the seal of the living God, or with the mark of the beast or his image. In the great conflict between faith and unbelief the whole Christian world will be involved. All will take sides. Some apparently may not engage in the conflict on either side. They may not appear to take sides against the truth, but they will not come out boldly for Christ through fear of losing property or suffering reproach. All such are numbered with the enemies of Christ. As we near the close of time the demarcation between the children of light and the children of darkness will be more and more decided. They will be more and more at variance. This difference is expressed in the words of Christ, "born again", created anew in Christ, dead to the world, and alive unto God. These are the walls of separation that divide the heavenly from the earthly and describe the difference between those who belong to the world and those who are chosen out of it, who are elect, precious in the sight of God.' *Last Day Events, page 215.*

10. In what other ways is this division into two groups explained? Matthew 25:1-12. Compare Matthew 13:30, 47-49.

NOTE: 'While the Lord brings into the church those who are truly converted, Satan at the same time brings persons who are not converted into its fellowship. While Christ is sowing the good seed, Satan is sowing the tares. There are two opposing influences continually exerted on the members of the church. One influence is working for the purification of the church, and the other for the corrupting of the people of God.' *The Faith I Live By, page 305.*

'As trials thicken around us, both separation and unity will be seen in our ranks. Some who are now ready to take up weapons of warfare will in time of real peril make it manifest that they have not built upon the solid rock; they will yield to temptation. Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. Not having received the love of the truth, they will be taken in the delusions of the enemy; they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith.' *Lift Him Up, page 211.*

'Mine eye shall not spare'

11. How was Ezekiel shown the time when mercy for sinners is ended? Ezekiel 9:8-10.

NOTE: 'When Christ ceases His intercession in the sanctuary, the unmingled wrath threatened against those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark, will be poured out. The plagues upon Egypt when God was about to deliver Israel, were similar in character to those more terrible and extensive judgments which are to fall upon the world just before the final deliverance of God's people. Says the revelator, in describing those terrific scourges: "There fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image." The sea "became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea." And "the rivers and fountains of waters . . . became blood." Revelation 16:2-4. Terrible as these inflictions are, God's justice stands fully vindicated. These plagues are not universal, or the inhabitants of the earth would be wholly cut off. Yet they will be the most awful scourges that have ever been known to mortals. All the judgements upon men, prior to the close of probation, have been mingled with mercy. The pleading blood of Christ has shielded the sinner from receiving the full measure of his guilt; but in the final judgment, wrath is poured out unmixed with mercy.' *The Faith I Live By, page 340.*

12. What will make clear to the world the distinction between the two sides? Ezekiel 20:20.

NOTE: Note carefully the words of this verse. It is by hallowing the Lord's Sabbaths that **we (mankind)** may know that the Lord is **our** God. The Lord knows who are His, but the distinction between those who are His and those who are not must be clearly and publicly demonstrated. For this reason, the Lord has chosen His Sabbaths to mark the difference between those who truly serve Him and those who profess to follow Him but will not obey Him.

'The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the false sabbath in compliance with the law of the state, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive the seal of God.' *Great Controversy, page 605.*

Lesson 8: 'The soul that sinneth it shall die'

MEMORY VERSE: 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.' Ezekiel 18:20.

STUDY HELP: *Maranatha*, page 236.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 18:1-32.

LESSON AIM: To examine the principles upon which God deals with mankind.

Introduction

'There are persons professing to be ministers of Christ, who declare with the utmost assurance that no man ever did or ever can keep the law of God. But, according to the Scriptures, Christ "took upon himself our nature," He "was made in fashion as a man." He was man's example, man's representative, and He declares of Himself, "I have kept My Father's commandments." The beloved disciple urges that every follower of Christ "ought himself also so to walk even as He walked."' *Review & Herald* September 27, 1881.

'The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father'

1. What important truth was Ezekiel shown? Ezekiel 18:4.

NOTE: 'Well, you say, it was Adam's sin... Here all these natural tendencies are in me, and I am not to blame if I act out these natural tendencies. Who is to blame? Is God? Why did God let Satan have this power over human nature? These are accusations against the God of heaven, and He will give you an opportunity, if you want it, of finally bringing your accusations against Him. Then He will bring His accusations against you when you are brought into His court of judgment.' *1888 Materials*, page 122.

2. What false teaching was Ezekiel speaking against? Ezekiel 18:2.

NOTE: Many Christians are taught by their church leaders that all men are born sinners, that from the moment of their birth, God holds them guilty for the sin of Adam and therefore they are condemned to die. This teaching, called 'Original Sin', was devised by Augustine of Hippo who, having decided to become a Christian, could not understand why it was that he continued to be tempted to continue his life of debauchery. A logical thinker, Augustine first devised the concept of 'Original Sin,' that man is not really responsible for his sins; that God holds him guilty of the sin of Adam. He then followed by devising the concept of infant christening and then the concept of the divine decrees, that God ordains some to be saved and others to be lost, a decision which has nothing whatever to do with men's actions or choices. This false package of teachings, often called 'Predestination,' was accepted by the Roman church, though it gradually recognised the weaknesses of Augustine's ideas. The Reformed Churches, however, elevated Augustine's ideas to new heights, as a result of the influence of Luther, an Augustinian monk, and Calvin, who attempted to organise the teachings of Luther into a coherent system. Zwingli in Switzerland, Jakob Hermann (Arminius) in Holland and John Wesley in England were the ones who pre-eminently stood against this teaching.

'It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin.' *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 306.

'He is just, he shall surely live'

3. How does Ezekiel teach that we are judged on our own actions, not the actions of Adam or any of our forefathers? Ezekiel 18:19. Read verses 5-18. Compare Deuteronomy 24:16.

NOTE: 'All who justify the sinner in his transgression of God's law belong to that class of whom our Saviour said, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven." They can have no part with Him who came to magnify the law and make it honourable. They are deceiving the people with their sophistry, saying to the sinner, "It shall be well with thee," when God has declared, "The soul that sinneth [transgresseth the law] it shall die." The words of Christ are both explicit and comprehensive. "Whosoever", minister or layman, wise or ignorant, "shall break one of these least commandments", wilfully or presumptuously, as did Adam and Eve, is included in the condemnation. Breaking one of the commandments makes man a commandment-breaker. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." No excuse can avail for him who strictly obeys nine of the precepts of God's law, but ventures to break one because it is for his profit or convenience to do so. God demands implicit obedience to all his requirements.' *Signs of the Times*, September 4, 1884.

4. Did David seek to justify his sin against Uriah and Bathsheba by blaming his parents or Adam? Psalm 51:3-5.

NOTE: Bible translations coming out of the Lutheran and Reformed tradition often translate verse 5 to say: 'I was born in sin.' The word translated 'born' ('shapen' in the King James Bible) refers to the pains of child birth. David undoubtedly had Genesis 3:16 in mind.

'Augustine seized upon this as evidence that the very act of procreating a child is sinful, but Paul writes in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honourable in all and the bed undefiled." And if we take Psalm 51:5 as a statement of original sin, this contradicts

David's words in Psalm 71:5-6. "For Thou art my hope, O Lord God, Thou art my trust from my youth. By Thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels." And in any case... if David were speaking of a personal sin, it was his mother's, not his. So we had best see this verse as a more poetic way of expressing Paul's thought that all have sinned. Then we force no contradictions on Scripture.' Larson, *The Word Was Made Flesh*, pages 337 & 339.

'The soul that sinneth, it shall die'

5. What is clearly stated to be the wages of sin? Ezekiel 18:4, last part, Ezekiel 18:20, first part.

NOTE: 'It was a marvel to me that Satan could succeed so well in making men believe that the words of God, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," mean that the soul that sinneth it shall not die, but live eternally in misery. Said the angel, "Life is life, whether it is in pain or happiness. Death is without pain, without joy, without hatred." Satan told his angels to make a special effort to spread the lie first repeated to Eve in Eden, "Ye shall not surely die." And as the error was received by the people, and they were led to believe that man was immortal, Satan led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery. Then the way was prepared for Satan to work through his representatives and hold up God before the people as a revengeful tyrant, one who plunges all those into hell who do not please Him, and causes them ever to feel His wrath; and while they suffer unutterable anguish, and writhe in the eternal flames, He is represented as looking down upon them with satisfaction. Satan knew that if this error should be received, God would be hated by many, instead of being loved and adored; and that many would be led to believe that the threatenings of God's Word would not be literally fulfilled, for it would be against His character of benevolence and love to plunge into eternal torments the beings whom He had created.' *Early Writings*, page 218.

6. How is this same truth taught elsewhere in the Bible? Genesis 2:17, John 8:24, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, first part, James 1:15.

NOTE: 'While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. The soul that sinneth it shall die an everlasting death, a death that will last forever, from which there will be no hope of a resurrection; and then the wrath of God will be appeased.' *The Faith I Live By*, page 177.

'He shall surely live'

7. In contrast, what prospect is held before those who walk in the way of the Lord? Ezekiel 18:5-9.

NOTE: 'Do you ask, "How am I to abide in Christ?" In the same way as you received Him at first. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Colossians 2:6. "The just shall live by faith." Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; but having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ's sake did all this for you. By faith you became Christ's, and by faith you are to grow up in Him, by giving and taking. You are to give all, your heart, your will, your service, give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must take all, Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper, to give you power to obey.' *The Faith I Live By*, page 125.

8. What prospect is held before the sinner who turns from his life of sin? Ezekiel 18:21.

NOTE: 'Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away. This will be the result of genuine sorrow for sin. The work that we have to do on our part is plainly set before us: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isaiah 1:16, 17. "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die." Ezekiel 33:15. Paul says, speaking of the work of repentance: "Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." 2 Corinthians 7:11.' *Steps to Christ*, page 39.

'When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness'

9. How does Ezekiel show the falsity of the 'once saved, always saved' teaching? Ezekiel 18:26.

NOTE: 'Because men have received great light, because they have, like the princes of Israel, ascended to the mount, and been privileged to have communion with God, and to dwell in the light of His glory, let them not flatter themselves that they can afterward sin with impunity, that because they have been thus honoured, God will not be strict to punish their iniquity. This is a fatal deception. The great light and privileges bestowed require returns of virtue and holiness corresponding to the light given. Anything short of this, God cannot accept. Great blessings or privileges should never lull to security or carelessness. They should never give license to sin or cause the recipients to feel that God will not be exact with them.' *Conflict & Courage*, page 100.

10. If the Christian goes back to his life of sin, will his good deeds weigh against the sins to which he has turned? Ezekiel 18:24.

NOTE: 'We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, "I am saved." When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavour to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the

city of God. Then, with the utmost propriety, we may give glory to God and to the Lamb for eternal deliverance.’ *Maranatha*, page 236.

‘Is not My way equal?’

11. What accusation is made against God’s justice? Ezekiel 18:25, 29.

NOTE: ‘In the day of final judgment, every lost soul will understand the nature of his own rejection of truth. The cross will be presented, and its real bearing will be seen by every mind that has been blinded by transgression. Before the vision of Calvary with its mysterious Victim, sinners will stand condemned. Every lying excuse will be swept away. Human apostasy will appear in its heinous character. Men will see what their choice has been. Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil. It will be demonstrated that the divine decrees are not accessory to sin. There was no defect in God’s government, no cause for disaffection. When the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed, both the loyal and the rebellious will unite in declaring, “Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?... for Thy judgments are made manifest.” Revelation 15:3, 4.’ *Desire of Ages*, page 58.

12. What is the great desire of the Lord’s heart for His people? Ezekiel 18:31-32.

NOTE: ‘Here the Lord has plainly revealed His will concerning the salvation of the sinner. And the attitude which many assume in expressing doubts and unbelief as to whether the Lord will save them is a reflection upon the character of God. Those who complain of His severity are virtually saying: “The way of the Lord is not equal.” But He distinctly throws back the imputation upon the sinner: “Are not your ways unequal?” Can I pardon your transgressions when you do not repent and turn from your sins?” The character of God is fully vindicated in the words of Scripture I have placed before you. The Lord will receive the sinner when he repents and forsakes his sins so that God can work with his efforts in seeking perfection of character. The promises are not yea and nay, but if man complies with the conditions, they are, in Christ, “yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” The whole purpose in giving His Son for the sins of the world is that man may be saved, not in transgression and unrighteousness, but in forsaking sin, washing his robes of character, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. He proposes to remove from man the offensive thing that He hates, but man must co-operate with God in the work. Sin must be given up, hated, and the righteousness of Christ must be accepted by faith. Thus will the divine co-operate with the human.’ *Testimonies, volume 5*, page 631.

Lesson 9: ‘The prince of Tyrus’

MEMORY VERSE: ‘All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.’ Ezekiel 28:19.

STUDY HELP: *The Faith I Live By*, pages 66-70.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 28:1-19.

LESSON AIM: To understand that behind those human agencies that oppose the truth lies the power of Satan himself.

Introduction

‘Satan’s rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan’s rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God’s government and His law, is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its punishment.’ *Paulson Collection*, page 64.

‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel’

1. How had the people of Tyre come into contact with God’s people? 2 Samuel 5:10-11.

NOTE: ‘Hiram, king of the wealthy city of Tyre, on the Mediterranean Sea, now sought an alliance with the king of Israel, and lent his aid to David in the work of erecting a palace at Jerusalem. Ambassadors were sent from Tyre, accompanied by architects and workmen and long trains laden with costly wood, cedar trees, and other valuable material.’ *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 703.

Tyre and Sidon were the two great seaports of Phoenicia, famous for their commerce, craftsmanship and wealth. The Phoenician language closely resembles Hebrew and the Phoenicians depended on Israel for their wheat and oil. The Phoenicians were Canaanites and worshipped Baal and their other gods with gross immorality, their idolatrous worship being a celebration of fertility. Human sacrifices, especially of children, were offered on their altars. Their open-air sanctuaries were called ‘high places.’

2. How were the people of Tyre brought into contact with the worship of the true God? 1 Kings 5:1-10, 2 Chronicles 2:1-16.

NOTE: 'Minute specifications, in writing, regarding every portion of the sacred structure, had been entrusted to the king; and he could have looked to God in faith for consecrated helpers, to whom would have been granted special skill for doing with exactness the work required. But Solomon lost sight of this opportunity to exercise faith in God. He sent to the king of Tyre for a man, "cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue, and that can skill to grave with the cunning men . . . in Judah and in Jerusalem." 2 Chronicles 2:7. The Phoenician king responded by sending Hiram, "the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father was a man of Tyre." Verse 14. Hiram was a descendant, on his mother's side, of Aholiab, to whom, hundreds of years before, God had given special wisdom for the construction of the tabernacle. Thus at the head of Solomon's company of workmen there was placed a man whose efforts were not prompted by an unselfish desire to render service to God. He served the god of this world, mammon. The very fibres of his being were inwrought with the principles of selfishness. Because of his unusual skill, Hiram demanded large wages. Gradually the wrong principles that he cherished came to be accepted by his associates. As they laboured with him day after day, they yielded to the inclination to compare his wages with their own, and they began to lose sight of the holy character of their work. The spirit of self-denial left them, and in its place came the spirit of covetousness. The result was a demand for higher wages, which was granted. The baleful influences thus set in operation permeated all branches of the Lord's service, and extended throughout the kingdom. The high wages demanded and received gave to many an opportunity to indulge in luxury and extravagance. The poor were oppressed by the rich; the spirit of self-sacrifice was well-nigh lost. In the far-reaching effects of these influences may be traced one of the principal causes of the terrible apostasy of him who once was numbered among the wisest of mortals.' *Prophets & Kings*, pages 63-64.

'He went and served Baal'

3. How was the religion of the Phoenicians introduced into Israel? 1 Kings 16:31-33.

NOTE: Ethbaal was king of Sidon and Tyre. (See *SDA Bible Dictionary*, page 343, art. Ethbaal.) A priest of Astarte, the Phoenician fertility goddess (also known as Ashtaroth), he murdered his brother and usurped the throne. 'Taking to wife Jezebel, "the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians" and high priest of Baal, Ahab "served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria." Verses 31, 32. Not only did Ahab introduce Baal worship at the capital city, but under the leadership of Jezebel he erected heathen altars in many "high places," where in the shelter of surrounding groves the priests and others connected with this seductive form of idolatry exerted their baleful influence, until well-nigh all Israel were following after Baal. "There was none like unto Ahab," who "did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel." 1 Kings 21:25, 26.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 114.

4. How did the Lord express His abhorrence of Baal worship? Jeremiah 11:13-14. See Judges 2:13-15 and compare 2 Kings 17:16-18.

NOTE: 'The iniquity prevailing in Israel during the last half century before the Assyrian captivity, was similar to that which prevailed in the days of Noah, and which has prevailed in every age when men have rejected God and given themselves wholly to evil doing. Always the exaltation of nature above the God of nature, the worship of the creature instead of the Creator, has resulted in the grossest evils. When the people of Israel paid to the images of Baal and of Ashtoreth, symbolising the forces of nature, the homage due to God alone, they severed their connection with all that is uplifting and ennobling, and fell an easy prey to temptation. The defences of the soul broken down, the misguided worshipers had no barrier against sin.' *Review & Herald*, January 29, 1914.

'The evils that had overspread the land and permeated all classes of society, had become incurable, and upon Israel was pronounced the dread sentence, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." Hosea 4:17. "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it." Hosea 9:7. "They shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney." Hosea 13:3.' *Review & Herald*, February 5, 1914.

'I am a God'

5. How are we shown that the kings of Tyre did not accept the worship of the true God? Ezekiel 28:1-2. Compare 2 Chronicles 2:11-12.

NOTE: 'The prince of Tyre of the time was probably Ithobaal III. It is not, however, any particular prince that the prophet threatens, but the ruler of Tyre, who is the embodiment of the spirit of that proud commercial city. His wisdom expressed itself and found scope in his commerce and manufactures and in his arts. These produced wealth and splendour, which led to ungodly arrogance; the prince who said, I am God, I dwell in the abode of God.' A. B. Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge Bible series)*, page 202.

6. What are we shown of the character of the prince of Tyre and the use he made of his advantages? Ezekiel 28:3-5.

NOTE: It is interesting to see that, even in Ezekiel's day, Daniel was regarded as a paragon of wisdom. Daniel was probably in his thirties at the time Ezekiel wrote these words.

7. What are we told of the fate which was to befall the prince of Tyre? Ezekiel 28:6-10.

NOTE: 'For this deifying of himself in his own mind, he shall be brought down. Strangers, the most terrible of the nations, shall assail him, and he shall die the death of the uncircumcised, those whose bodies are unburied or unhonoured at their burial.' A. B. Davidson, *The Book of Ezekiel (Cambridge Bible series)*, page 202.

'Thou hast been in Eden'

8. How does the prophet's vision move from the prince of Tyre to the evil one who influenced the idolatry and corruption of Tyre? Ezekiel 28:11-14.

NOTE: The following details show that Ezekiel is no longer referring to any particular human prince of Tyre:

- 'Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God.' Apart from the Lord Himself, Adam and Eve, the only one recorded as being in Eden was the Tempter.

- 'Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth.' Ezekiel has earlier seen in vision the cherubim attending God's throne (who were represented in the tabernacle as overspreading the mercy seat.) Clearly no prince of Tyre was ever one of these exalted angelic beings.

- 'Thou wast on the holy mountain of God.' Again such a description cannot refer to any prince of Tyre.

'Satan does not appear upon the earth in person; he works through agents. It was in the person of wicked men that he sought to destroy Jesus as soon as He was born. Wherever Satan has been able to control a government so fully that it would carry out his designs, that nation became, for the time, Satan's representative. This was the case with all the great heathen nations. For instance, see Ezekiel 28, where Satan is represented as actual king of Tyre. This was because he fully controlled that government.' *Great Controversy, 1888 ed.*, page 679.

9. How did the prophet describe Satan's state when God created him? Ezekiel 28:15.

NOTE: 'It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin, to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is "the transgression of the law;" (1 John 3:4) it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government...Sin appeared in a perfect universe. The reason of its inception or development was never explained and never can be, even at the last great day when the judgment shall sit and the books be opened. At that day it will be evident to all that there is not, and never was, any cause for sin. At the final condemnation of Satan and his angels and of all men who have finally identified themselves with him as transgressors of God's law, every mouth will be stopped. When the hosts of rebellion, from the first great rebel to the last transgressor, are asked why they have broken the law of God, they will be speechless. There will be no answer to give.' *That I May Know Him*, page 15.

'Thine heart was lifted up'

10. How does the prophet describe the origin of sin? Ezekiel 28:17, first part.

NOTE: 'Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honoured above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavour to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone.' *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 35.

11. How did Isaiah describe the self-centredness that developed in the heart of Lucifer? Isaiah 14:13-14.

NOTE: 'Though God had created Lucifer noble and beautiful, and had exalted him to high honour among the angelic host, yet he had not placed him beyond the possibility of evil. It was in Satan's power, did he choose to do so, to pervert these gifts. He might have remained in favour with God, beloved and honoured by all the angelic throng, presiding in his exalted position with generous, unselfish care, exercising his noble powers to bless others and to glorify his Maker. But, little by little, he began to seek his own honour, and to employ his powers to attract attention and win praise to himself. He also gradually led the angels over whom he ruled to do him service, instead of devoting all their powers to the service of their Creator. This course perverted his own imagination, and perverted those who yielded implicitly to his authority.' *Spirit of Prophecy, volume 4*, page 317.

'Never shalt thou be any more'

12. How are we shown that Satan will not live forever? Ezekiel 28:18-19.

NOTE: 'The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch--Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah. Satan's work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God's creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations.' *Great Controversy*, page 673.

13. How does the prophet John picture the final destruction of Satan? Revelation 20:10. Compare Malachi 4:1.

NOTE: 'The phrase "for ever and ever" does not mean endless burning. No fire burns today in Sodom and Gomorrah, although eternal fire was their allotment [see Jude v.7]. "The purpose of fire is to consume, never to preserve." The phrase "for ever and ever" stands for burning which lasts long enough to make the consumption complete, with nothing left to be burned.' Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, page 450.

'Christ conquered Satan in our behalf. He is mightier than Satan, and He will shortly bruise him under our feet. In mercy to the universe God will finally destroy the rejecters of His grace. "Upon the wicked He shall rain quick burning coals, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup." Psalm 11:6 (margin). While life is the inheritance of the righteous, death is the portion of the wicked. Moses declared to Israel, "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." Deuteronomy 30:15. The death referred to in these scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is the "second death" that is placed in contrast with everlasting life. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch, Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah. Satan's work of ruin is forever ended. For six thousand years he has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe, and causing grief throughout the universe. The whole creation has groaned and travailed together in pain. Now God's creatures are forever delivered from his presence and temptations.' *The Faith I Live By*, page 72.

Lesson 10: 'The shepherds of Israel'

MEMORY VERSE: 'And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.' Ezekiel 34:26.

STUDY HELP: *Gospel Workers*, pages 185-186.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 34.

LESSON AIM: To examine the responsibilities of both pastor and flock

Introduction

'If every minister who claims to love Jesus will only be filled with His charms and become assimilated to His image, what an example would he give to his brethren and to the world! The more ministers are in the company of Christ by communing with Him, the more they will be fastened to Christ. Catching His holy looks and copying His holy ways, they will be transformed into His image. They may be truly said to represent Jesus Christ.' *Manuscript Releases, volume 8*, page 183.

'Feed the flocks'

1. How does the Lord explain the work of the shepherds of Israel? Ezekiel 34:1-2. Compare 1 Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28.

NOTE: 'The Lord calls upon His shepherds to feed the flock with pure provender. He would have them present the truth in its simplicity. When this work is faithfully done, many will be convicted and converted by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is need of Bible teachers who will come close to the unconverted, who will search for the lost sheep, who will do personal labour and will give clear, definite instruction. Never utter sentiments of doubt. Christ's teaching was always positive in its nature. With a tone of assurance bear an affirmative message. Lift up the Man of Calvary higher and still higher; there is power in the exaltation of the cross of Christ.' *Counsels to Parents, Teachers & Students*, page 434.

2. What complaint did the Lord bring against His unfaithful shepherds? Ezekiel 34:3-4.

NOTE: 'Let us remember that Jesus knows us individually and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows the wants of each of His creatures and reads the hidden, unspoken grief of every heart. If one of the little ones for whom He died is injured, He sees it and calls the offender to account. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He cares for His feeble, sickly, wandering sheep. He knows them all by name. The distress of every sheep and every lamb of His flock touches His heart of sympathising love, and the cry for aid reaches His ear. One of the greatest sins of the shepherds of Israel is thus pointed out by the prophet: "The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.'" *Testimonies, volume 5*, page 345.

'My flock was scattered'

3. What is the result of the unfaithfulness of the shepherds? Ezekiel 34:5-6.

NOTE: 'What is a shepherd for, unless it be to watch for every danger lest the sheep be harmed and destroyed by wolves? What excuse could a shepherd plead for suffering the flock to stray from the true pasture, and be torn and scattered and devoured by wolves? How would an excuse stand made by the shepherd that the sheep led him astray? They left the true pasture, and led him out of the way? Such a plea would tell with force against that shepherd's ability to watch over the sheep. No more confidence could be placed in him as a faithful shepherd to care for the sheep, and bring them back as they might stray from the right path.' *Testimonies, volume 1*, page 314.

4. Because of their unfaithfulness, what words does the Lord address the unfaithful shepherds? Ezekiel 34:7-10.

NOTE: 'Upon the ministers of God rests a solemn, serious charge. They will be called to a strict account for the manner in which they have discharged their responsibility. If they do not tell the people of the binding claims of God's law, if they do not preach the Word with clearness, but confuse the minds of the people by their own interpretations, they are shepherds who feed themselves, but neglect to feed the flock. They make of none effect the law of Jehovah, and souls perish because of their unfaithfulness. The blood of these souls will be upon their heads. God will call them to account for their unfaithfulness. But this will in no wise excuse those who listened to the sophistry of men, discarding the Word of God.' *SDA Bible Commentary, volume 4, page 1164.*

'I will seek them out'

5. What promise does the Lord make regarding His scattered sheep? Ezekiel 34:11-12, 16. Compare John 10:15-16 & Matthew 18:11-13.

NOTE: 'The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for by the shepherd, for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; he is as helpless as the lost sheep, and unless divine love had come to his rescue he could never find his way to God. The shepherd who discovers that one of his sheep is missing does not look carelessly upon the flock that is safely housed, and say, "I have ninety and nine, and it will cost me too much trouble to go in search of the straying one. Let him come back, and I will open the door of the sheepfold, and let him in." No; no sooner does the sheep go astray than the shepherd is filled with grief and anxiety. He counts and recounts the flock. When he is sure that one sheep is lost, he slumbers not. He leaves the ninety and nine within the fold, and goes in search of the straying sheep. The darker and more tempestuous the night and the more perilous the way, the greater is the shepherd's anxiety and the more earnest his search. He makes every effort to find that one lost sheep. With what relief he hears in the distance its first faint cry. Following the sound, he climbs the steepest heights, he goes to the very edge of the precipice, at the risk of his own life. Thus he searches, while the cry, growing fainter, tells him that his sheep is ready to die. At last his effort is rewarded; the lost is found. Then he does not scold it because it has caused him so much trouble. He does not drive it with a whip. He does not even try to lead it home. In his joy he takes the trembling creature upon his shoulders; if it is bruised and wounded, he gathers it in his arms, pressing it close to his bosom, that the warmth of his own heart may give it life. With gratitude that his search has not been in vain, he bears it back to the fold.' *Christ's Object Lessons, pages 187-188.*

6. How will the Lord make up for the unfaithfulness of the shepherds? Ezekiel 34:14-15.

NOTE: 'The Lord must be given an opportunity to show men their duty and to work upon their minds. No one is to bind himself to serve for a term of years under the direction of one group of men or in one specified branch of the Master's work; for the Lord Himself will call men, as of old He called the humble fishermen, and will Himself give them instruction regarding their field of labour and the methods they should follow. He will call men from the plough and from other occupations to give the last note of warning to perishing souls. There are many ways in which to work for the Master, and the Great Teacher will open the understanding of these workers, enabling them to see wondrous things in His word.' *Testimonies, volume 9, page 170.*

'I judge between cattle and cattle'

7. What work will be done by Lord among His flock? Ezekiel 34:17.

NOTE: 'Those who are not interested in the cause of God on earth can never sing the song of redeeming love above. I saw that the quick work that God was doing on the earth would soon be cut short in righteousness and that the messengers must speed swiftly on their way to search out the scattered flock. An angel said, "Are all messengers?" Another answered, "No, no; God's messengers have a message." ...The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth and to sacrifice for God and His cause.' *Early Writings, page 50.*

8. What charge does the Lord bring against some of His flock? Ezekiel 34:18-19.

NOTE: 'I was shown a company who were howling in agony. On their garments was written in large characters, "Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting." I asked who this company were. The angel said, "These are they who have once kept the Sabbath and have given it up." I heard them cry with a loud voice, "We have believed in Thy coming, and taught it with energy." And while they were speaking, their eyes would fall upon their garments and see the writing, and then they would wail aloud. I saw that they had drunk of the deep waters, and fouled the residue with their feet, trodden the Sabbath underfoot, and that was why they were weighed in the balance and found wanting.' *Early Writings, page 36.*

'Ye have thrust with side and with shoulder'

9. How have some of the flock contributed to the scattering of God's people? Ezekiel 34:21.

NOTE: 'The Holy Spirit does not work with men who love to be sharp and critical. That spirit has been cherished in meeting debaters, and some have formed the habit of squaring for combat. God is dishonoured in this. Keep back the sharp thrusts; do not learn in Satan's school his methods of warfare. The Holy Spirit does not inspire the words of censure. A time of trouble is before us, and every honest soul who has not had the light of truth will then take a stand for Christ. Those who believe the truth are to be newly converted every day. Then they will be vessels unto honour.' *Testimonies to Ministers, page 248.*

10. What plea did Paul make to Christians in his day? Ephesians 4:31-32.

NOTE: "Put away all hardness, all denunciation of your brethren, all criticisms, and lie broken at the feet of your Lord. Let earnestness come into your hearts, and fervent charity among yourselves. If you bite and devour one another, you shall be devoured one of another. Harshness and unkindness is a curse to any home, and it is like a desolating hail in the church. O, that I could speak unto thousands: "Come unto Jesus." Do not wrap your Pharisaical garment about you and say, "I believe the truth. I am righteous." Rather surrender your wills which you have idolised, and let the will of God be done in you perfectly. When you all respond to the will of God, the prayer of Christ "That we may be one as he is one with the Father," will be fulfilled. Press together. Do not make much of slight differences of opinion, and so separate heart from heart; but see how you can love one another, even as Christ has loved you. See how you can forgive those who have trespassed against you, even as you want your heavenly Father to forgive your trespasses. Then you can be definite in your requests to God. You will bear the heavenly credentials which is His own righteousness, and you can say Christ does hear and He does bless, and you can say, "I am His, and He is mine." *Advance*, March 1, 1899.

'I will make them a blessing'

11. What precious promise does the Lord make to His gathered people? Ezekiel 34:25.

NOTE: "Read and study the thirty-fourth chapter of Ezekiel. In it we are given most precious encouragement. "I will save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey," the Lord declares. ". . . And I will make with them a covenant of peace." *God's Amazing Grace*, page 138.

"The most striking feature of the covenant of peace that the Lord has made with human beings is the exceeding richness of the pardoning mercy offered to the sinner if he repents and turns from sin. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," the Lord declares of those who repent, "and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." ...Through disobedience man forfeited holiness, accepting in its place the principles of unrighteousness. But by breaking the yoke that Satan has fastened upon him, and taking the yoke of Christ, learning of Him His meekness and lowliness, man is created anew. Christ has promised to write in the heart of every repentant sinner His law, which is holy, just, and good. He promises to renovate the soul, through the medium of truth. He diffuses His own life through the entire being. Thus the sinner is born again, and henceforth, in a life of loving service, he is to work out the grand, ennobling principles that he can take with him into the heavenly courts. There is placed upon him a new mould of character, which the world knows not, but which all must receive who obtain entrance into the courts above.' *Signs of the Times*, June 28, 1905.

12. How will the Lord enable His gathered people to accomplish their mission? Ezekiel 34:26.

NOTE: "The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel, are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given... Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand. The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. God has a work for His people to do for the world, and if they will work in harmony with one another and with heaven, He will demonstrate His power in their behalf as He did for His first disciples on the day of Pentecost.' *The Faith I Live By*, page 332.

"There shall be showers of blessing." "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." Proverbs 11:25. God could have reached His object in saving sinners without our aid; but in order for us to develop a character like Christ's, we must share in His work. In order to enter into His joy, the joy of seeing souls redeemed by His sacrifice, we must participate in His labours for their redemption.' *Desire of Ages*, page 142.

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvellous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10. Many and wonderful are the promises recorded in the Scriptures regarding the church. "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." Isaiah 56:7. "I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing." "And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, saith the Lord God. And ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God." Ezekiel 34:26, 29-31.' *Acts of the Apostles*, page 9.

Lesson 11: 'Dry bones'

MEMORY VERSE: "And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, Thou knowest." Ezekiel 37:3.

STUDY HELP: *Christian Service*, pages 35-41.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 37.

LESSON AIM: To study the vision given to Ezekiel of revival among God's people

Introduction

'I lay down my pen and lift up my soul in prayer that the Lord would breathe upon His backslidden people, who are as dry bones, that they may live. The end is near, stealing upon us so stealthily, so imperceptibly, so noiselessly, like the muffled tread of the thief in the night, to surprise the sleepers off guard and unready. May the Lord grant to bring His Holy Spirit upon hearts that are now at ease, that they may no longer sleep as do others, but watch and be sober.' *Christian Service*, page 41.

'They were very dry'

1. What graphic picture was Ezekiel shown of the condition of God's people? Ezekiel 37:1-2.

NOTE: 'This class is well represented by the valley of dry bones Ezekiel saw in vision. Those who have had committed to them the treasures of truth, and yet who are dead in trespasses and sin, need to be created anew in Christ Jesus. There is so little real vitality in the church at the present time, that it takes constant labour to give men the appearance of life to the professed people of God.' *Review & Herald*, January 17, 1893.

2. How was this same class of Christians pictured to John? Revelation 3:14-17.

NOTE: 'Not only does this simile of the dry bones apply to the world, but also to those who have been blessed with great light; for they also are like the skeletons of the valley. They have the form of men, the framework of the body; but they have not spiritual life... These bones represent the house of Israel, the church of God.' *Ye Shall Receive Power*, page 45.

'And knowest not...'

3. What major problem was John shown concerning the spiritual state of God's people? Revelation 3:17, last part. Compare Revelation 3:1.

NOTE: 'Ministers and people are unprepared for the time in which they live, and nearly all who profess to believe present truth are unprepared to understand the work of preparation for this time. In their present state of worldly ambition, with their lack of consecration to God, their devotion to self, they are wholly unfitted to receive the latter rain and, having done all, to stand against the wrath of Satan, who by his inventions would cause them to make shipwreck of faith, fastening upon them some pleasing self-deception. They think they are all right when they are all wrong.' *Testimonies Volume 1*, page 466.

4. How had God pictured the response of the people to the prophetic messages of warning He had sent to them? Ezekiel 33:30-32.

NOTE: 'There are persons who believe that they are right, when they are wrong. While claiming Christ as their Lord, and professedly doing great works in His name, they are workers of iniquity. "With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." He who declares God's word is to 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." Ezekiel 33:31, 32. A mere profession of discipleship is of no value.' *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, page 146.

'Hear the word of the Lord'

5. What question was Ezekiel asked about these dry bones? Ezekiel 37:3.

NOTE: 'At one time the prophet Ezekiel was in vision set down in the midst of a large valley. Before him lay a dismal scene. Throughout its whole extent the valley was covered with the bones of the dead. The question was asked, "Son of man, can these bones live?" The prophet replied, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." What could the might and power of man accomplish with these dead bones? The prophet could see no hope of life being imparted to them.... Were the question put to us, "Son of man, can these bones live?" our answer would be only the confession of ignorance, "O Lord, Thou knowest."' *SDA Bible Commentary, volume 4*, page 1165.

6. What was Ezekiel commanded to do and what change did Ezekiel see come over the dry bones? Ezekiel 37:4-8.

NOTE: 'To all appearance there is nothing to lead us to hope for their restoration. Yet nevertheless the word of the prophecy must be spoken even to those who are like the dry bones in the valley. We are in no wise to be deterred from fulfilling our commission by the listlessness, the dullness, the lack of spiritual perception, in those upon whom the Word of God is brought to bear. We are to preach the word of life to those whom we may judge to be as hopeless subjects as though they were in their graves. Though they may seem unwilling to hear or to receive the light of truth, without questioning or wavering we are to do our part. We are to repeat to them the message. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."' *SDA Bible Commentary, volume 4*, page 1165.

7. What message is to be given to God's backslidden people? Revelation 3:18.

NOTE: 'I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work is because of the hardness of their hearts. But God has given the message time to do its work. The heart must be purified from sins which have so long shut out Jesus. This fearful message will do its work. When it was first presented, it led to close examination of heart. Sins were confessed, and the people of God were stirred everywhere. Nearly all believed that this message would end in the loud cry of the third angel. But as they failed to see the powerful work accomplished in a short time, many lost the effect of the message. I saw that this message would not accomplish its work in a

few short months. It is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their backslidings, and to lead to zealous repentance, that they may be favoured with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel. As this message affected the heart, it led to deep humility before God.' *Testimonies, volume 1*, page 186.

'That they may live'

8. What brought life to the dry bones? Ezekiel 37:9-10.

NOTE: 'The Spirit of God, with its vivifying power, must be in every human agent, that every spiritual muscle and sinew may be in exercise. Without the Holy Spirit, without the breath of God, there is torpidity of conscience, loss of spiritual life. Many who are without spiritual life have their names on the church records, but they are not written in the Lamb's book of life. They may be joined to the church, but they are not united to the Lord. They may be diligent in the performance of a certain set of duties, and may be regarded as living men; but many are among those who have "a name that thou livest, and art dead." Unless there is genuine conversion of the soul to God; unless the vital breath of God quickens the soul to spiritual life; unless the professors of truth are actuated by heaven-born principle, they are not born of the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth forever. Unless they trust in the righteousness of Christ as their only security; unless they copy His character, labour in His spirit, they are naked, they have not on the robe of His righteousness. The dead are often made to pass for the living; for those who are working out what they term salvation after their own ideas, have not God working in them to will and to do of His good pleasure. This class is well represented by the valley of dry bones Ezekiel saw in vision.' *SDA Bible Commentary, volume 4*, page 1166.

9. How did Jesus explain the work of the Spirit upon the heart? John 3:3-8.

NOTE: 'When the converting power of God comes upon the people, it will be made manifest by activity. They will become workers, and will esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world. They will have respect unto the crown of life, the immortal inheritance. They will not be dependent upon their ministers for their life and experience, but will realise that Christ is the Chief Shepherd of the flock. They will not think that their ministers are appointed of God to do their work for them. They will understand that they must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.' *Review & Herald*, January 17, 1893.

'A nail in His holy place'

10. How did Ezra express his gratitude for the revival that the Lord had brought to His people? Ezra 9:8. Compare Isaiah 22:23.

NOTE: 'A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganisation, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend.' *Review and Herald*, Feb. 25, 1902.

'Lord, make me a nail upon the wall,
Fastened securely in its place.
Then from this thing so common and so small
Hang a bright picture of Thy face;
That travellers may pause to look
Upon the loveliness depicted there,
And passing on their weary ways,
Each radiant face may bear,
Stamped so that nothing can efface,
The image of Thy glory and Thy grace.
Lord, let not one soul think of me.
Only let me be a nail upon the wall,
Holding Thy picture in its place.' *God's Nail*, Mildred Hill.

11. How does the Bible picture the genuine fruits of revival? Acts 2:1, Philipians 2:2-5. Compare Acts 1:14, Acts 2:46, Acts 4:24,

NOTE: 'Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake. The work that God has begun in the human heart in giving His light and knowledge must be continually going forward. Every individual must realise his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now. Then the human agent had only to ask for the blessing, and wait for the Lord to perfect the work concerning him. It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognise the manifestations of the Holy

Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.' *Testimonies to Ministers*, page 507.

'They shall be one in Mine hand'

12. What symbolism was used to show how the Lord will bring unity among His people? Ezekiel 37:15-19.

NOTE: 'The heart of the Saviour is set upon His followers' fulfilling God's purpose in all its height and depth. They are to be one in Him, even though they are scattered the world over. But God cannot make them one in Christ unless they are willing to give up their own way for His way. When Christ's prayer is fully believed, when its instruction is brought into the daily life of God's people, unity of action will be seen in our ranks. Brother will be bound to brother by the golden bonds of the love of Christ. The Spirit of God alone can bring about this oneness. He who sanctified Himself can sanctify His disciples. United with Him, they will be united with one another in the most holy faith. When we strive for this unity as God desires us to strive for it, it will come to us... When we bring our hearts into unity with Christ, and our lives into harmony with His work, the Spirit that fell on the disciples on the Day of Pentecost will fall on us.' *Testimonies*, volume 8, page 243, 246.

13. What does the Lord promise to those of His people who are willing to come into unity with Him and with each other? Ezekiel 37:26.

NOTE: 'The most striking feature of the covenant of peace that the Lord has made with human beings is the exceeding richness of the pardoning mercy offered to the sinner if he repents and turns from sin. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," the Lord declares of those who repent, "and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Does God turn from justice in showing mercy to the sinner? No; God can never dishonour His law by suffering it to be transgressed with impunity. Under the new covenant, perfect obedience is the condition of life. If the sinner repents, and confesses his sin, he will find pardon. Forgiveness is secured for him by Christ's sacrifice in his behalf. Christ has paid the demands of the law for every repentant, believing sinner. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, . . . full of grace and truth. . . . And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.'" *Signs of the Times*, June 28, 1905.

Lesson 12: 'I will gather you'

MEMORY VERSE: 'As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.' Ezekiel 34:12.

STUDY HELP: *Testimonies*, volume 5, pages 236-248.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 20:33-44.

LESSON AIM: To study the reasons for the scattering of God's people and how the Lord will gather them again.

Introduction

'Satan knows he cannot make us doubt the truth. The arguments of our enemies are powerless and effect nothing against the truth. Satan knows that his only way now is to try to separate very near friends and thereby weaken the children of God. United you'll stand. Divided you'll fall. Oh, press together; grieve not the angels of God who are watching over you. Let them not bear the tidings upward that you are disunited, each one pulling apart. Remember, now is the time that God is gathering His people into the unity of the faith. Will you not be co-workers with God, and press together?' *Manuscript Releases*, volume 17, page 343.

'I scattered them'

1. What caused the scattering of God's people in Ezekiel's day? Ezekiel 36:16-20.

NOTE: 'The eighty-first psalm explains why Israel was scattered; they forgot God, as the churches in our land are forgetting Him today.' *Counsels to Parents, Teachers & Students*, page 457.

2. What further reason did the Lord give for the scattering of His people? Ezekiel 34:2-6.

NOTE: 'The sheep that need to be fed are scattered upon the mountains of Israel; they are starving to death on dry theories. My brethren, you do not feed the flock, you do not have faith, humility, and love. The most sacred responsibility rests upon those who have accepted the position of shepherds to the flock of God. But if the professed ministers of Christ are not endowed with the power from on high, they are not fit for the work of this time. The work calls for men who have spiritual energy, and far-seeing discernment. God sends light to His people that they may live in His light according to their privileges. There are many who feel satisfied with their meagre attainments, and they refuse the light that God sends them, saying by their attitude, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." In so doing they not only rob their own souls of spiritual knowledge, but they rob the souls of others. Those whom they endeavour to help have to suffer loss because the teachers fail to employ their talents in the way that God would have them, and choose to place their own limited, narrow experience before the people, instead of the glorious gospel of Christ. They are like guide posts pointing in the wrong direction. They will forfeit the favour

of God, and come under His displeasure, unless they change their course decidedly and humble their hearts before God.' 1888 *Materials*, page 405.

'Grievous wolves'

3. What will scatter God's people today? John 10:12.

NOTE: 'When ministers thus take advantage of the confidence the people place in them and lead souls to ruin, they make themselves as much more guilty than the common sinner as their profession is higher. In the day of God, when the great Ledger of Heaven is opened, it will be found to contain the names of many ministers who have made pretensions to purity of heart and life and professed to be entrusted with the gospel of Christ, but who have taken advantage of their position to allure souls to transgress the law of God.' *Testimonies*, volume 5, page 143.

4. What did Jesus mean when He talked of wolves? Matthew 7:15. Compare Acts 20:29-30.

NOTE: 'There are multitudes of false teachers in the world. The apostle declares that in the last days men will "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears," because they desire to hear smooth things. Against these Christ has warned us: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." The class of religious teachers here described profess to be Christians. They have the form of godliness and appear to be labouring for the good of souls. They are in conflict with Christ and His teachings, and are destitute of His meek and lowly spirit. The Good Shepherd came to seek and to save that which was lost. He has manifested in His works His love for His sheep. All the shepherds who work under the Chief Shepherd will possess His characteristics; they will be meek and lowly of heart.' *Lift Him Up*, page 213.

5. How did Jesus warn His people against such influences? Matthew 24:24.

NOTE: 'If ever there was a time when we needed faith and spiritual enlightenment, it is now. Those who are watching unto prayer and are searching the Scriptures daily with an earnest desire to know and do the will of God, will not be led astray by any of the deceptions of Satan. We want the truth on every point. We want it unadulterated with error and unpolluted by the maxims, customs, and opinions of the world. We want the truth with all its inconvenience. The acceptance of truth ever involves a cross. But Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for us, and shall we not give Him our best affections, our holiest aspirations, our fullest service?' *In Heavenly Places*, page 350.

'Ye shall be melted'

6. What purpose does the Lord have in the scattering of His people? Ezekiel 22:19-22.

NOTE: 'Through trial and persecution the glory, the character, of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The believers in Christ, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. On earth they walk in narrow paths; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but thus they learn the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ's sufferings, they can look beyond the gloom to the glory, saying, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18.' *Acts of the Apostles*, page 576.

7. How does Malachi picture this process and its outcome? Malachi 3:2-4.

NOTE: 'The refining influence of the grace of God changes the natural disposition of man. Heaven would not be desirable to the carnal-minded; their natural, unsanctified hearts would feel no attraction toward that pure and holy place, and if it were possible for them to enter, they would find there nothing congenial. The propensities that control the natural heart must be subdued by the grace of Christ before fallen man is fitted to enter heaven and enjoy the society of the pure, holy angels. When man dies to sin and is quickened to new life in Christ, divine love fills his heart; his understanding is sanctified; he drinks from an inexhaustible fountain of joy and knowledge, and the light of an eternal day shines upon his path, for with him continually is the Light of life.' *Acts of the Apostles*, page 273.

'Yet will I leave a remnant'

8. What precious promise did the Lord make to His scattered people? Ezekiel 6:8.

NOTE: "'In that day" "the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, . . . shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth." Isaiah 10:20. From "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" there will be some who will gladly respond to the message, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come." They will turn from every idol that binds them to earth, and will "worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." They will free themselves from every entanglement and will stand before the world as monuments of God's mercy. Obedient to the divine requirements, they will be recognized by angels and by men as those that have kept "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:6, 7, 12.' *Prophets & Kings*, page 299.

9. How are the remnant described? Ezekiel 6:9-10. Compare Zephaniah 3:12-13.

NOTE: "'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." The spirit of peace is evidence of their connection with heaven. The sweet savour of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life, the loveliness of the character, reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. "Every one that loveth is born of God." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" but "as many as are led by the

Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” “And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” *Sons & Daughters of God*, page 306.

‘I will take the stony heart out of their flesh’

10. What change will take place in those whom the Lord gathers as His remnant? Ezekiel 11:17-20, Ezekiel 36:24-27.

NOTE: ‘The gospel is not without a sign of its divine origin. Is it not a miracle that we can break from the bondage of Satan? Enmity against Satan is not natural to the human heart; it is implanted by the grace of God. When one who has been controlled by a stubborn, wayward will is set free, and yields himself wholeheartedly to the drawing of God’s heavenly agencies, a miracle is wrought; so also when a man who has been under strong delusion comes to understand moral truth. Every time a soul is converted, and learns to love God and keep His commandments, the promise of God is fulfilled, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Ezekiel 36:26. The change in human hearts, the transformation of human characters, is a miracle that reveals an ever-living Saviour, working to rescue souls. A consistent life in Christ is a great miracle. In the preaching of the word of God, the sign that should be manifest now and always is the presence of the Holy Spirit, to make the word a regenerating power to those that hear. This is God’s witness before the world to the divine mission of His Son.’ *Desire of Ages*, page 407.

11. What will the remnant realise about the way the Lord has dealt with them? Ezekiel 20:43-44. Compare Psalm 103:8-14.

NOTE: ‘Were the Lord to deal with us as we deserve, would we not be punished in many ways as stubborn, ungrateful children? But He is long-suffering; He does not deal with us according to our perversity.’ *Review & Herald*, September 24, 1895.

‘Were God to deal with us as we deserve, we should certainly perish. Were He to reward us according to our individual mistakes and errors, we could not hope for salvation. But through the infinite mercy and justice of God, which meet in Jesus Christ, our faults, errors, and transgressions are forgiven, and instead of punishing us, instead of visiting our transgressions with His wrath, He writes pardon against our name.’ *Manuscript Releases, volume 13*, page 278.

‘A nation bringing forth the fruits thereof’

12. What prevented these precious promises from being fulfilled for the people of Israel? Acts 7:51-52. Compare Matthew 23:29-31.

NOTE: ‘We should know what we must do to be saved. We should not, my brethren and sisters, float along with the popular current. Our present work is to come out from the world and be separate. This is the only way we can walk with God, as did Enoch. Divine influences were constantly working with his human efforts. Like him, we are called upon to have a strong, living, working faith, and this is the only way we can be labourers together with God. We must meet the conditions laid down in the word of God or die in our sins. We must know what moral changes are essential to be made in our characters, through the grace of Christ, in order to be fitted for the mansions above. I tell you in the fear of God: We are in danger of living like the Jews, destitute of the love of God and ignorant of His power, while the blazing light of truth is shining all around us.’ *Testimonies, volume 5*, page 535.

13. What pronouncement did Christ make against the Jewish nation? Matthew 21:43.

NOTE: ‘As Christ was riding into Jerusalem, on the crest of Olivet He broke forth in uncontrollable grief, exclaiming in broken utterances as He looked upon Jerusalem: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.” He wept not for Himself, but for the despisers of His mercy, long-suffering, and forbearance. The course taken by the hardhearted and impenitent inhabitants of the doomed city is similar to the attitude of churches and individuals toward Christ at the present time. They neglect His requirements and despise His forbearance. There is a form of godliness, there is ceremonial worship, there are complimentary prayers, but the real power is wanting. The heart is not softened by grace, but is cold and unimpressible. Many, like the Jews, are blinded by unbelief and know not the time of their visitation. So far as the truth is concerned, they have had every advantage, God has been appealing to them for years in warnings, reproofs, corrections, and instruction in righteousness; but special directions have been given only to be disregarded and placed on a level with common things.’ *Testimonies, volume 5*, page 258.

Lesson 13: ‘They shall be healed’

MEMORY VERSE: ‘And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.’ Revelation 22:17.

STUDY HELP: *Acts of the Apostles*, page 13.

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Ezekiel 47:1-12.

LESSON AIM: To examine the significance of Ezekiel’s vision of the living waters.

Introduction

'The representation given in Ezekiel 47:1-12 is an illustration of the way in which the truth for this time is to go. A large work is to be done by many who have begun in a small way. Many souls will be reached, not through display, not through any devising on the part of man, but through the working of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of human agencies. The Saviour worked in this way. When His methods become the methods of His followers, His blessings will attend their labours.' *Manuscript Releases, volume 20*, page 102.

'Unto the door of the house'

1. What did Ezekiel see flowing from the temple of God? Ezekiel 47:1.

NOTE: 'These waters signify the gospel of Christ which went forth from Jerusalem and spread to all countries. The gifts and power of the Holy Spirit which accompanied the work caused it to yield great results.' *Spalding and Magan Collection*, page 404.

2. What similar picture was John shown? Revelation 22:1.

NOTE: 'In David's song [Christ's] grace is pictured also as the cool, "still waters," amid green pastures, beside which the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock. Again, "Thou shalt make them," he says, "drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life." Psalms 23:2; 36:8, 9. And the wise man declares, "The wellspring of wisdom [is] as a flowing brook." Proverbs 18:4. To Jeremiah, Christ is "the fountain of living waters;" to Zechariah, "a fountain opened . . . for sin and for uncleanness." Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 13:1. Isaiah describes Him as the "rock of ages," and "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Isaiah 26:4 (margin); 32:2. And he records the precious promise, bringing vividly to mind the living stream that flowed for Israel: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." The invitation is given, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Isaiah 41:17; 44:3; 35:6; 55:1. And in the closing pages of the Sacred Word this invitation is echoed. The river of the water of life, "clear as crystal," proceeds from the throne of God and the Lamb; and the gracious call is ringing down through the ages, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17.' *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 413.

'A fountain opened'

3. What is the source of these waters? Zechariah 13:1.

NOTE: 'Christ came as the Great Physician to heal the wounds that sin has made in the human family, and His Spirit, working through His servants, imparts to sin-sick, suffering human beings a mighty healing power that is efficacious for the body and the soul. "In that day," says the Scripture, "there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." Zechariah 13:1. The waters of this fountain contain medicinal properties that will heal both physical and spiritual infirmities. From this fountain flows the mighty river seen in Ezekiel's vision.' *Counsels on Health*, pages 209-210.

4. How did Jesus announce the opening of this fountain? John 7:37-38.

NOTE: 'The condition of the people made this appeal very forcible. They had been engaged in a continued scene of pomp and festivity, their eyes had been dazzled with light and colour, and their ears regaled with the richest music; but there had been nothing in all this round of ceremonies to meet the wants of the spirit, nothing to satisfy the thirst of the soul for that which perishes not. Jesus invited them to come and drink of the fountain of life, of that which would be in them a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ's words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. In smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water. As Jesus thus spoke to the people, their hearts thrilled with a strange awe, and many were ready to exclaim, with the woman of Samaria, "Give me this water, that I thirst not." John 4:15.' *Desire of Ages*, pages 453-454.

5. How is the significance of these living waters explained? John 7:39.

NOTE: "'This," said John, "spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." John 7:37-39. The refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength. Jesus cheers the life and brightens the path of all who truly seek Him. His love, received into the heart, will spring up in good works unto eternal life. And not only does it bless the soul in which it springs, but the living stream will flow out in words and deeds of righteousness, to refresh the thirsting around him. The same figure Christ had employed in His conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14. Christ combines the two types. He is the rock, He is the living water.' *Patriarchs & Prophets*, page 412.

‘A river that could not be passed over’

6. How was Ezekiel shown the growth of the influence of the living waters? Ezekiel 47:3-5.

NOTE: ‘It is not the purpose of God to centralise in this way, bringing all the interests of one branch of the work under the management of a comparatively few men. In His great purpose of advancing the cause of truth in the earth, He designs that every part of His work shall blend with every other part. The workers are to draw together in the spirit of Christ. In their diversity, they are to preserve unity. One institution is not to be brought under the control of another, but all are to exercise their powers harmoniously. The work of direction is to be left with the great Manager, while obedience to the work of the Lord is to be the aim of all His workers. In the different places where the work is established, it will often be small in its beginning. Then it will grow. This is represented by the prophet Ezekiel under the figure of water issuing from under the threshold of the house. [Ezekiel 47:1-2 quoted] These waters signify the gospel of Christ which went forth from Jerusalem and spread to all countries. The gifts and power of the Holy Spirit which accompanied the work caused it to yield great results.’ *Spalding and Magan Collection*, page 404 .

7. How did Jesus explain the development of His work? Acts 1:8.

NOTE: ‘Wherever there is life in a church, there is increase and growth. There is also a constant interchange, taking and giving out, receiving and returning to the Lord His own. To every true believer God imparts light and blessing, and this the believer imparts to others in the work that he does for the Lord. As he gives of that which he receives, his capacity for receiving is increased. Room is made for fresh supplies of grace and truth. Clearer light, increased knowledge, are his. On this giving and receiving depend the life and growth of the church. He who receives, but never gives, soon ceases to receive. If the truth does not flow from him to others, he loses his capacity to receive. We must impart the goods of heaven, if we would receive fresh blessing.’ *Counsels on Stewardship*, page 36.

‘Everything shall live’

8. How was Ezekiel shown the effect of the living waters on the lands it passed through? Ezekiel 47:8-9.

NOTE: ‘From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a fountain of life. Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that whole people was preserved. Through Daniel God saved the life of all the wise men of Babylon. And these deliverances are as object lessons; they illustrate the spiritual blessings offered to the world through connection with the God whom Joseph and Daniel worshiped. Everyone in whose heart Christ abides, everyone who will show forth His love to the world, is a worker together with God for the blessing of humanity. As he receives from the Saviour grace to impart to others, from his whole being flows forth the tide of spiritual life.’ *Acts of the Apostles*, page 13.

9. How did Jesus explain the benefit of the water of life? John 4:14.

NOTE: ‘Christ is not to be hid away in the heart and locked in as a coveted treasure, sacred and sweet, to be enjoyed solely by the possessor. We are to have Christ in our hearts as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, refreshing all who come in contact with us. We must confess Christ openly and bravely, exhibiting in our characters His meekness, humility, and love, till men shall be charmed by the beauty of holiness. It is not the best way to preserve our religion as we bottle perfumes, lest the fragrance should escape.’ *Counsels on Health*, page 400.

‘They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters’

10. What danger are we warned against? Jeremiah 2:13.

NOTE: ‘For years the Lord has been presenting the situation of the church before you. Again and again reproofs and warnings have been given...That God who knows their spiritual condition declares: They have cherished evil and separated from Me. They have gone astray, every one of them. Not one is guiltless. They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and have hewed out to them broken cisterns that can hold no water. Many have corrupted their ways before Me. Envy, hatred of one another, jealousy, evil surmising, emulation, strife, bitterness is the fruit that they bear. And they will not heed the testimony that I send them. They will not see their perverse ways and be converted, that I should heal them. Many are looking with self-complacency upon the long years during which they have advocated the truth. They now feel that they are entitled to a reward for their past trials and obedience. But this genuine experience in the things of God in the past makes them more guilty before Him for not preserving their integrity and going forward to perfection. The faithfulness for the past year will never atone for the neglect of the present year. A man’s truthfulness yesterday will not atone for his falsehood today.’ *Testimonies*, volume 5, page 63.

11. What gracious invitation does the Lord offer to all who recognise their spiritual need? Isaiah 55:1.

NOTE: ‘God has placed in our hands a banner upon which is inscribed: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. This is a distinct, separating message, a message that is to give no uncertain sound. It is to lead the people away from the broken cisterns that contain no water, to the unfailing Fountain of the water of life.’ *Testimonies*, volume 7, page 150.

‘Because their waters they issued from the sanctuary’

12. What similarities are to be found between the river of life seen by Ezekiel and that seen by John? Compare Ezekiel 47:12 and Revelation 22:2.

NOTE: 'We may put the imagination to the highest stretch to grasp the glories which these represent in the paradise of God; and yet the eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those who love Him. We must be preparing for the white robe of character, in order that we may pass within the pearly gates of the city of God to a heaven of bliss. Revelation presents the scene, fountains of living waters, rivers that are as clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, trees of living green growing on either side of this river of life. The foliage gives health and life to those who eat it, as well as the fruit.' *Manuscript Releases, volume 5*, pages 20-21.

'Thank God that He who spilled His blood for us, lives to plead it, lives to make intercession for every soul who receives Him. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. It speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, for Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. We need to keep ever before us the efficacy of the blood of Jesus. That life-cleansing, life-sustaining blood, appropriated by living faith, is our hope. We need to grow in appreciation of its inestimable value, for it speaks for us only as we by faith claim its virtue, keeping the conscience clean and at peace with God. This is represented as the pardoning blood, inseparably connected with the resurrection and life of our Redeemer, illustrated by the ever-flowing stream that proceeds from the throne of God, the water of the river of life.' *Our High Calling*, page 47.

13. What gracious invitation to drink of the water of life is given to all? Revelation 22:17.

NOTE: 'The unselfish labour of Christians in the past should be to us an object lesson and an inspiration. The members of God's church are to be zealous of good works, separating from worldly ambition and walking in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good. With hearts filled with sympathy and compassion, they are to minister to those in need of help, bringing to sinners a knowledge of the Saviour's love. Such work calls for laborious effort, but it brings a rich reward. Those who engage in it with sincerity of purpose will see souls won to the Saviour, for the influence that attends the practical carrying out of the divine commission is irresistible. Not upon the ordained minister only rests the responsibility of going forth to fulfil this commission. Everyone who has received Christ is called to work for the salvation of his fellow men. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." Revelation 22:17. The charge to give this invitation includes the entire church. Everyone who has heard the invitation is to echo the message from hill and valley, saying, "Come." It is fatal mistake to suppose that the work of soul-saving depends alone upon the ministry. The humble, consecrated believer upon whom the Master of the vineyard places a burden for souls is to be given encouragement by the men upon whom the Lord has laid larger responsibilities. Those who stand as leaders in the church of God are to realise that the Saviour's commission is given to all who believe in His name. God will send forth into His vineyard many who have not been dedicated to the ministry by the laying on of hands.' *Acts of the Apostles*, pages 109-110.

Afterwords:

The book of Ezekiel has been neglected by most Christians and few useful books have been written on this subject. In view of the use currently being made of this book by the Dispensationalists, especially its closing chapters, the time is ripe for a thorough, systematic and spiritual book to be devoted to Ezekiel and his prophecies.

Among the books that the compiler of this lesson found useful were:

The Glory of God: Ezekiel's message for the men of today.

This book was the product of a series of workers meetings in 1938 in the South England Conference. The meetings were chaired by Pastor R. S. Joyce, and the presentations were prepared for publication by Pastor Leslie Hardinge. Among the ministers who contributed to this useful anthology of material on Ezekiel were: Pastors A. C. Vine, J. H. Bayliss, H. Humphries, C. R. Bonney, A. J. Mustard, A. G. Tapping, A. K. Armstrong, F. A. Spearing, C. A. Reeves, W. J. Bunting, J. M. Howard, J. Harker, S. Bull, L. E. A. Lane, G. R. Bell, R. T. Bolton, F. C. Bailey and L. G. Hardinge. Each pastor was allocated a section of the book of Ezekiel and thus the entire book was covered in these presentations.

More Pages from God's Case-Book, by Dr John Hercus. London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1965.

Hercus was a medical doctor and also a Christian. This book and its companion were written in the 1960s and, from a doctor's point of view, look at the cases of a number of Bible characters. This book looks at Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Its predecessor looked at Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Saul and Joseph. The book was useful for its vivid retelling of the Bible story, true to its source in its imaginative account of the events of Ezekiel's life.

Hercus' account of Ezekiel concludes with these words:

'Ezekiel. You have told me things I think I should already know. But you have told me of them out of an experience so deeply moving and in words and imagery so captivating that they seem to be almost new entirely. For I came back into your life in the mud and death of Kebar the better to try and understand my own so different world. And what I have learned is not just the amount that fills a book; in the love and the grace of God it may prove enough to fill a life.'

Amen.