

Ezekiel

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, . . . the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Book of Ezekiel using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Reading the Prophets*—especially the section on Ezekiel—will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don’t miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church’s criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God’s unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church’s living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit’s guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you’ll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven . . . earth . . . under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God’s g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sel

Prepare

Read the Introduction to Ezekiel, paying particular attention to *The Prophet and His Times*, the *Message of the Prophet*, and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Ezekiel to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Ezekiel, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Ezekiel as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1.** What is the best explanation for how the prophet specifies the date from which he counts? If that is true, when was the prophet born? What was the typical age for priests to begin their ministry? Where is the river Chebar, and what do we know of it from ancient texts?
2. **1:4–28.** What is Ezekiel’s vision about? What is the mobile throne of God borne on four cherubim known as in Judaism? With what are cherubim associated? How many are depicted in the Holy of Holies? What reality represented by the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies does Ezekiel behold? With what other terms and images is this theophany described? As the God who appeared in those places now shows himself to Ezekiel, how is the cherubim-throne unlike the ark in the Temple, and what locations is it able to visit? What has God’s presence come to do?
3. **1:10.** What do the man, the lion, the ox, and the eagle each represent? According to St. Gregory the Great, how do the four creatures denote the four evangelists?
4. **1:15.** What do the wheels on the throne denote? Though they may seem redundant, since cherubim have wings, why does Ezekiel use multiple motifs? What do the wings connote, and what do the wheels connote? Despite what many Israelites thought, where can God’s presence move?
5. **1:22.** What does the rare and archaic Hebrew word *raqia* ‘ recall? What message does the creation story marked by Temple-building motifs communicate? What does the firmament “shining like crystal” resemble? As one of the key reference points for interpreting this vision, to whose legacy does mention of Sinai link Ezekiel?

For application

1. **1:1.** What was the date of your most significant religious experience (e.g., your Baptism, Confirmation, conversion)? Why would it be helpful for you occasionally to bring such dates to mind?
2. **1:5–14.** Ezekiel describes the appearance of the four angels who carry the throne of God. How does their appearance differ from the way you envision an angel? According to the notes for these verses, how does the symbolism of their appearance (to Ezekiel) explain what angels as pure spirits are capable of doing?
3. **1:13.** According to the note for this verse, the fire is a sign of God’s Spirit. Where else in Scripture is the Spirit’s presence indicated by fire?
4. **1:20.** Read the note for this verse. If the spirit of the four living creatures is in the wheels, animating their movement, where might the spirit of a sculptor be? Or the spirit of a writer?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Son of Man (2:1).** How can the Hebrew phrase *ben-’ādām* be translated? Although we are never told the meaning of this title, which appears 93 times in the book, or why the Lord uses it to address Ezekiel, what are two possible explanations for its use? When Jesus calls himself “Son of man”, what does he probably intend to evoke? To whom may he also wish to connect himself? How is Jesus Christ like Ezekiel?
2. **2:2.** To what area of theology does Ezekiel make a substantial contribution? What do we note about Ezekiel and the Spirit? What does this represent about mankind?
3. **2:4.** In what way does the call and mission of Moses lie in the background of this passage?
4. **2:10.** Why were scrolls usually inscribed only on the interior? What does this double-sided inscription recall?

For application

1. **2:2.** How does the Holy Spirit enter the soul of the Christian? What does sanctifying grace do to the soul? What is the Christian’s role in connection with receiving the Spirit?
2. **2:3.** Note that Ezekiel is sent to preach to his own people, not to pagans. To whom have recent popes sent believers in the New Evangelization? What is “new” in the New Evangelization, and why is it necessary?

3. **2:4–5.** When Jesus says that a prophet is “not without honor except in his own country and in his own house” (Mt 13:57), what does he mean? Why should honor be denied him there?
4. **2:6.** When it comes to sharing the gospel with relatives or friends, what most causes you fear? What do you do when such fears arise? If you give way to fear, such as by keeping silent when you feel you should speak out, how do you face the Lord?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:3.** To what is Ezekiel’s eating of the scrolls analogous? What does it signify? What is the intimate contact with God entailed by being the recipient of divine revelation like, even when the message is severe?
2. **3:12.** How does Ezekiel’s call vision conclude? Of what is the sound of the great earthquake that Ezekiel hears reminiscent, and what does it mean?
3. **3:14.** As a key verse for understanding the life and mission of Ezekiel, whose name means “God strengthens”, what can the hand of the Lord being strong on the prophet mean?
4. **3:16–21.** For what is Ezekiel responsible? As long as he does so, what benefit will be his?
5. **3:22–27.** How do these verses further specify Ezekiel’s initial call?

For application

1. **3:1.** For what does the expression “to devour the Word of God” mean? How hungry are you for that Word? What motivates you to consume it?
2. **3:7.** Read the note for this verse. If every true prophet is rejected by his audience, what is the point of speaking to them? If you know ahead of time that your brother will reject anything religious you say to him, why make the effort?
3. **3:10.** How do you approach the reading of Scripture? As you read and meditate on Scripture, what should you do when you encounter passages that are confusing or hard to understand? For example, how do you deal with the “hard sayings” like God’s placement of certain people “under the ban”?
4. **3:17–21.** Who are the watchmen for the Church? What is their responsibility toward the Christian people? As a member of the Body of Christ, how do you participate in that responsibility?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:1—5:17.** What are sign-acts, which Ezekiel performs in these chapters? What arguably are two sign-acts that Jesus performs?
2. **4:4.** Because, in Israel, directions were taken facing east, which direction was north and which was south? Why, apparently, does the prophet lie on his left side, and again on his right? What may be the significance and origins of the numbers 390 and 40? How does the Greek LXX read? Of what can we at least be certain? How does the principle that one day in the life of a man is equivalent to one year in the life of a nation lie behind the 40 days of the Lord’s temptation? If the prophet probably did not lie motionless 24 hours a day, how did he most likely make his point by lying on his side in public?
3. **4:9.** What does the combination of wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt make? What were the taste and texture like? In this sign-act, what is Ezekiel prophesying?
4. **4:16.** What language does this prophecy reuse? Due to sin, what is being triggered, and what are being inverted?

For application

1. **4:1–3.** Before the age of computers, how might soldiers strategize an attack against an enemy? In planning a series of plays for a football game, why does the coach have players watch the movement of symbols on a board? Why perform a sign-act if all the prophet has to do is speak the message?
2. **4:4–5.** In modeling the punishment of Israel since its exile began in 722 B.C., Ezekiel, who prophesied around 130 years later, is probably modeling the Northern Kingdom’s punishment in exile, lying down in public facing north for an extended period, one day representing one year. What message do you think he is trying to communicate to his fellow exiles about Israel?

3. **4:6–7.** In these verses, Ezekiel turns to face south, representing the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (including Ezekiel's own exile and that of his contemporaries), for a shorter period. Again, what message do you think he is trying to communicate?
4. **4:14.** Compare Ezekiel's complaint with that of Peter in Acts 10:14. What are the similarities, and what are the differences? To whose direction are both responding?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:1–17.** In this sign-act, which of the various fates that await the inhabitants of Jerusalem does Ezekiel dramatize in outlandish fashion? What will happen to the very small number who survive?
2. **5:1.** What did the sword symbolize? On whom was shaving sometimes imposed? What does the hair represent?
3. **5:2.** What does "a third part" mean?
4. **5:10.** Where is the idea found that parents will be reduced to eating their children to stay alive in siege conditions? Who is the only one who mentions the idea of children eating their own parents?

For application

1. **5:5–8.** Every parent must discipline children who rebel against parental authority. What is the probable difference in quality between the discipline given a child who submits readily and that given to one who stubbornly resists discipline?
2. **5:13.** Read literally, what picture does this verse draw of God's character? By anthropomorphizing God in this way, what point is Ezekiel trying to make about God's judgment on Jerusalem? What is God's actual regard for Jerusalem?
3. **5:14–17.** By using capital punishment as a deterrent, what message do states hope to send potential offenders? What message should the fate of Jerusalem send to the nations around Judah in these verses?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:3.** In ancient Near Eastern religion, with what were all notable geographic features like mountains and hills associated? What were their deities called upon to do? Here, what creative adaptation of this motif does Ezekiel make?
2. **6:13.** To what is "upon every high hill ... under every green tree" a shorthand reference?
3. **6:14.** What does the expression "from the wilderness to Riblah" mean? To which wilderness area is this a reference? Where is Riblah?

For application

1. **6:3.** In prophesying against the mountain shrines of Israel, why does Ezekiel begin the word of the Lord with "Behold, I, even I, ..."? What is another way of emphasizing the same thing?
2. **6:5.** Read the note for this verse. In the modern era, what act of desecration might make a sacred space unclean and unsuitable for worship? How would a desecrated site be repaired so that the space is once again usable for worship?
3. **6:9.** Ezekiel speaks here of God breaking "wanton hearts" and blinding eyes that stray after idols. What is the Lord's purpose in such breaking and blinding? According to v. 17 of Ps 51, what kind of heart is acceptable to God?

Chapter 7

For understanding

1. **7:1–27.** What is hard to know about the structure of this chapter? Despite that, what is its obvious message?
2. **7:10.** If the literal translation is "the staff has blossomed", to what is it a reference? If the blossoming of Aaron's staff was an omen of blessing, what is the blossoming staff now? What does Ezekiel frequently do with positive images and language from the Pentateuch?
3. **7:13.** What did the Jubilee Year laws of Lev 25:10–55 stipulate? In the coming destruction, what will happen to all the functions of Israelite society?
4. **7:26.** In the face of the failure of leadership in Israel, what were prophets, priests, and elders supposed to do?

For application

1. **7:2.** What does the “four corners of the land” mean? How much of the “four corners” of the United States would a disaster like a pandemic affect?
2. **7:4.** The expression “Then you will know that I am the LORD” appears often in Ezekiel. In what contexts does it usually appear? What seems to be its rhetorical purpose?
3. **7:5–7.** Note how the idea of an end or a doom coming is repeated here and in the following verses. To the hearer of these words, what effect is the repetition supposed to have? Have you ever faced bad situations from which there seemed to be no escape? If so, what were they?
4. **7:10–11.** When a person dabbles in potentially addictive activities, how quickly can they blossom into poisonous fruit? What are some examples? What are some consequences?

Chapter 8

For understanding

1. **8:1.** What is probably the date given in this verse? What does the formal recording of the date signal? In this case, what does it introduce? Despite the predictions that his message would be ignored or rejected, how did Ezekiel’s contemporaries regard him?
2. **8:3.** Though physically in Babylon, where is Ezekiel transported in a visionary state? What is the “image of jealousy”? To what image may it be similar?
3. **8:11.** Of how many elders was it traditional for Israel’s national ruling council to be composed? What is the meaning regarding the entire leadership of Israel? Who is Ja-azaniah the son of Shaphan? Who was Shaphan?
4. **8:16.** What is the importance of the area between the porch and the altar? Why does Ezekiel have a penchant for the number 25? What was the significance of the 25 men having their backs to the Temple of the Lord? Since they were facing east, what did that mean they were doing? What was the importance of the sun to all ancient Near Eastern societies? Though Manasseh had promoted the sun-cult within Israel, where was it explicitly forbidden?

For application

1. **8:3.** In this verse, who is being provoked to jealousy? Why would God be jealous of an idol? If as a committed believer you were to see a statue of a demon in the sanctuary of a cathedral, what word would best describe your reaction?
2. **8:6.** While governments hostile to religion try to drive God from his sanctuary, who is making that effort in this verse? How might certain Christians, either deliberately or in effect, drive God from his churches?
3. **8:12.** Read the note for this verse. Compare this image with that of a Christian home with images of Jesus and Mary together with a statue of Buddha and a yoga mat near stands of burning incense. What conclusions about the owners’ Christian faith might you draw?
4. **8:17.** Read the note for this verse. What are some examples of gestures or physical positions that are intended to convey insult to another person or group? What would cause you to make such a gesture? Why is this so offensive to God?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:2.** Who are the six men in this verse? What is the significance of the number six in the Bible? Alternatively, if the angelic scribe is included with the six, what does the new total of seven indicate? What was the significance of the linen and the writing case? Where is there an association of priests with angels? As ministers of worship, how were the priests of Israel regarded?
2. **9:4.** What letter of the Hebrew alphabet was the man in linen to put on foreheads? In the old Hebrew script used prior to the Babylonian Exile, how was it written? How is it represented in the Latin capital *T* and lowercase *t*? What significance did early Christian commentators see in the cross on the forehead? According to St. Horsiesi, how should we make the sign of the cross?
3. **9:6.** How does this vision resemble the original Passover? Only now, who is it that falls under judgment?

For application

1. **9:2.** The note for this verse says that six is a number “of ill omen” in the Bible. In our culture, what is a number of ill omen? What does it mean for us?
2. **9:4.** Why do Christians make the sign of the cross? When do you sign your forehead with that sign or draw it on the foreheads of others? How often do you make the larger sign of the cross (forehead, chest, one shoulder, other shoulder)? Aside from being a ritual gesture, what does the sign mean to you?
3. **9:6.** Scripture says that judgment begins with the house of God (1 Pet 4:17). Why there? Should such judgment be welcomed or feared?

Chapter 10

For understanding

1. **10:2.** What is assumed that is burning on an altar? How was this represented in the Jerusalem Temple?
2. **10:14.** Curiously, though the description of faces from 1:10 is repeated, with what is only the face of the ox (or bull) replaced here? Though the reason for this is obscure, from v. 10:22, what do we see that the prophet’s intention was?
3. **10:18.** What is Ezekiel witnessing about God’s presence? Of what is this an ominous sign?

For application

1. **10:2.** As in Rev 8:5, where an angel takes live coals from a censer and throws them on the earth, here the man clothed in linen takes coals from the altar of incense and scatters them over the city. What seems to be the purpose in both instances?
2. **10:4.** What does the cloud that filled the house represent? In Catholic churches, what does the burning of a sanctuary lamp represent?
3. **10:18–19.** The note for this verse says that the Lord’s departure from the Temple is an omen of its impending destruction. What were some of the ominous details Jesus gave about the destruction of the Second Temple (Mk 13:5ff.; Mt 24:4ff.)?

Chapter 11

For understanding

1. **11:3.** What is the probable meaning of “the time is not near to build houses”? What does “this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh” mean?
2. **11:7.** How does God change what the wealthy meant as a positive metaphor? Although the wealthy of the city thought they would be as happy in Jerusalem as chunks of meat cozily simmering in a stew, what will happen to them?
3. **11:16.** What is a major theme of Ezekiel about God’s relationship with Israel? Who will repopulate Judah and Jerusalem, and when? From whom does Jesus himself descend?
4. **11:23.** What mountain on the east side of Jerusalem is meant here? What does this vision of Ezekiel help explain about this mountain? From which direction will God reenter the Temple?

For application

1. **11:2–3.** What is an opportunist? According to the note for v. 3, how are the figures of Ja-azaniah and Pelatiah behaving as opportunists? Have you ever felt that someone else’s misfortune was an advantage for you? How did you take advantage of the opportunity?
2. **11:12.** Do the “ordinances of the nations that are round about you” have any good moral quality to them? What are some examples? If that is the case, what is the problem with “walking according to” those ordinances? How do they fall short of the Lord’s ordinances?
3. **11:17–20.** Americans believe in the benefit of “second chances”. Has the Lord ever granted you a “second chance” in life? If so, has it proven to be illusory or beneficial? If the latter, in what way has it improved your life, especially with the Lord?
4. **11:25.** Read this verse carefully. Do you think Ezekiel’s message to the exiles was good or bad news for them? Why do you think so?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:4.** How would men go into exile? In the ancient Near East, why were exiles typically taken away naked? This practice was so common that the Hebrew verb “to exile [someone]” is actually a form of what verb?
2. **12:12.** Who is the prince referred to here? Since many Judeans did not recognize a nephew-to-uncle succession imposed by a foreign conqueror as legitimate, whom did they continue to regard as heads of the royal house?
3. **12:22.** What does the proverb “the days grow long, and every vision comes to nothing” mean? By what was the proverb probably inspired?
4. **12:27.** Since it was not uncommon for prophets to speak of the distant future, how did they speak about the Messiah? But in this instance, when would Ezekiel’s prophecies of doom be fulfilled?

For application

1. **12:2.** Jesus expected his disciples to perceive what they saw and understand what they heard, and he complained when they seemed obtuse (e.g., Mk 8:16–18). When you read a Scripture passage and it comes alive, do you notice how often you have read it before without insight? As you examine your spiritual experience, what patterns of grace seem to be developing in it?
2. **12:3, 7.** If you have ever played the game of charades, how good are you at guessing the meaning of the mime? How good are you at solving riddles? In prayer, how often do you ask for the eyes to see and understand the direction in which the Lord is leading your life?
3. **12:16.** Occasionally, someone confined to prison will admit that his punishment is deserved and even that it may have been the best thing that happened to him. Upon reflection, has a personal setback that changed your circumstances ever proven a benefit for you? Did it in any way change your relationship with the Lord?
4. **12:25.** According to 2 Pet 3:7–10, why does the promised day of final judgment seem to be delayed? When does he say it will happen? What is your expectation for how soon that day is likely to come?

Chapter 13

For understanding

1. **13:3.** Because prophets could exercise great public influence, what type of person was it natural that the role should attract? What type of prophecy was roundly criticized by the biblical prophets?
2. **13:10.** To what does “when the people build a wall, these prophets daub it with whitewash” probably refer? What did the false prophets add to this foolish endeavor?
3. **13:18.** What were the women who sewed magic bands actually doing? Apparently, what kind of practice was it?
4. **13:19.** What does it seem that the women who made the “magic” articles did with them? What is not clear about what happened to persons who used these bands?

For application

1. **13:2.** The charism of prophecy is still active in the Church, though prophetic utterances are considered private revelation. According to St. Paul (1 Cor 14:3–5), what is the purpose of this charism? How would the genuineness of this charism be tested?
2. **13:10.** Why did Jesus pronounce woes on the scribes and Pharisees for being “like whitewashed tombs” (Mt 23:27)? Upon whom would he hurl these maledictions today?
3. **13:18f.** Why does the Church forbid occult activity, such as using magic charms, casting spells, and divination? What are the dangers of even playing with it? How does occult activity draw its practitioner away from the Lord?

Chapter 14

For understanding

1. **14:9.** What does Ezekiel use startlingly direct language to emphasize? What shape does Rom 1:18–32 reveal that God’s “wrath” will take? So what happens to the false prophets, who pursue prophecy as a means to make a living rather than a true calling from God?

2. **14:10.** Who were inquirers? What were both prophet and inquirer seeking? How did they thus end up?
3. **14:12–23.** In this oracle, what does God insist about three great heroes of faith? What is the background here? Although Ezekiel mentions fewer righteous than ten—just three—how do they make up for numbers?
4. **14:14.** For what are Noah, Daniel, and Job renowned? Why cannot even great saints save Israel? While Noah and Job were famous heroes of faith from Israel's hoary past, who was Daniel? What do some commentators argue about a contemporary such as Daniel, and with whom do they seek to identify him? What does it seem unlikely that Ezekiel's readership could have been expected to recognize?

For application

1. **14:3.** As a consultant, would you agree to meet with clients who you knew would reject your advice? If you did agree to meet with them, what would you tell them? How likely is it that the prayer of one with a divided heart will be answered?
2. **14:6.** Why does repentance always call for a turning away from something? If the house of Israel is to turn away from its idols, to what will the turning lead? How does Ezekiel's message to the house of Israel apply to the Church today?
3. **14:12–20.** The Catholic Church has had a succession of saintly popes, including St. John XXIII, St. Paul VI, and St. John Paul II. Why, despite their holiness and their teaching, is the Church still embroiled in crisis after crisis? What will it take for things to change?
4. **14:22–23.** How does the conversion of sinners or the incorporation into the Church of separated Christians comfort those already in the Church? How does the enthusiasm for their new faith encourage the faithful who have never left the Church?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:2.** Where can the metaphor of Israel as a cultivated vine be found in Scripture? How does Ezekiel invert this traditional image?

For application

1. **15:2–3.** Compare these verses with Jesus' parable about salt that has lost its taste (Lk 14:34–35). What point do Ezekiel and Jesus both want their hearers to get?
2. **15:6–8.** By telling the exiles already in Babylon about the final destruction of Jerusalem, what does Ezekiel hope the exiles will come to understand? If you were granted a vision of hell such as visionaries sometimes are, what would you do with it?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1–63.** What does Ezekiel provide in these verses? Because both allegories are so unrelenting and graphic, what did they provoke ancient rabbis to do? Alongside what other texts of Scripture do these passages of Ezekiel take their place, and what theological paradigm do they establish? How do the repercussions continue to be felt in the New Testament?
2. **16:3.** While Jerusalem originally was a city of no consequence to the Israelites, what happened after David conquered it and made it his capital? How quickly was Jerusalem as a Canaanite enclave conquered? Who were the previous inhabitants? What wordplay on a traditional Israelite recitation of faith occurs here? Who were the Arameans? Who were the Amorites? What is Ezekiel again emphasizing? What do some theorize about the Jebusites who inhabited pre-Davidic Jerusalem? To what woman might there be a reference here?
3. **16:46.** Of what did the city of Samaria become the capital? What were smaller villages in the region around a large city considered to be? What was Sodom, and where was it? When was this notoriously wicked city destroyed by divine judgment? With what is its location probably to be identified? While Ezekiel is being very provocative by identifying Jerusalem with Sodom, who else had already done so?
4. **16:60.** If Ezekiel is maintaining a consistent frame of reference, then about which covenant is he talking here? However, if he is shifting the frame and understanding Jerusalem as the whole nation by metonymy, which covenant is perhaps in view? What expression translates the Hebrew *berit 'ôlam*? While Jeremiah describes it as a "new covenant", what terms does Ezekiel prefer?

For application

1. **16:6–14.** According to this parable, what seems to be God’s motivation for choosing to rescue Israel? What benefits did he lavish on it? Of all the people on the earth, what is his motive for choosing you, and how has his choice benefited you?
2. **16:15.** Why is beauty sometimes regarded as a curse? How may beautiful persons be tempted to take advantage of their beauty, as do others who want to exploit it? How can a beautiful man or woman protect personal integrity and retain virtue?
3. **16:20–22.** The note for v. 21 alludes to the modern abortion movement. Ancient child sacrifices were offered to gain favor from the gods. To what gods are our unborn children being sacrificed?
4. **16:60.** All baptized Christians are part of the “everlasting covenant” of which Ezekiel speaks. Over the last 2,000 years, how faithful have Christians been to that covenant? Although God is always faithful to his covenant (2 Tim 2:13) and the gates of hell will not prevail over the Church (Mt 16:18), what is her prognosis in this age of defections from doctrine and discipline?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **17:3.** Who is the “great eagle” in this verse? What did he do?
2. **17:4.** Who are the topmost of the cedar’s young twigs? What is the “land of trade” and the “city of merchants”?
3. **17:11–21.** What events do these verses describe?
4. **17:21.** In the following allegorical messianic prophecy, what will God choose to do and establish? When does Jesus likely allude to this prophecy?

For application

1. **17:1–2.** Why does the Lord speak through his prophets to his people in riddles, allegories, and parables? Why not come out and say directly what he means? From a rhetorical standpoint, what is the advantage for the audience in such an approach?
2. **17:13–14.** In Nebuchadnezzar’s policy of removing the rightful king and all the chief men of Israel to Babylon, what hope did Ezekiel have about what God might have in store for the kingdom of Judah? In humbling our pride through adversity, what good does God have in mind for us?
3. **17:24.** Compare this verse with Mary’s Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55). How does the Lord bring low the high tree and make high the low tree and dry the green tree to make the dry tree flourish? Has he ever done so with you? And if so, in what way?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:2.** What is the meaning of the proverb quoted in this verse? What kind of theological fatalism do Ezekiel’s contemporaries (wrongly) embrace?
2. **18:6.** According to Mosaic Law, when was a woman ritually unclean? Because intercourse during this time was uncomfortable for the wife and unable to result in conception, what was the main reason for engaging in it? Thus, what made intercourse at that time more than a ritual violation?
3. **18:23.** What misconception entertained by many in ancient and modern times does the prophet correct? What does he say, rather, about the punishment of the wicked? As the Guardian of perfect justice, what can God not simply overlook?
4. **18:25.** What principle does Ezekiel uphold and develop? How should the idea that God “[visits] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me” be understood?

For application

1. **18:10–13.** What qualms of conscience can afflict the parent of a criminal or a psychopath, even though the parent has tried to raise the child well? How is the parent likely to be viewed in the community? How might comfort be given to such a parent?
2. **18:14–17.** Adult children of alcoholics often make use of twelve-step groups intended just for them. If they are not alcoholics themselves, what is their need for such groups? What support do they hope to gain?

3. **18:25–29.** Have moderns actually improved over the ancients in their attitudes toward the salvation of the unjust? What would they think of a Hitler or a Stalin who actually made a valid confession of sins before he died? How does Jesus' parable of the Landowner and the Workers in the Vineyard (Mt 20:1ff.) apply here?
4. **18:31.** How does one get himself "a new heart and a new spirit"? While basic repentance in the form of turning from evil is necessary, what else is needed?

Chapter 19

For understanding

1. **19:1.** What is a "lamentation" (Heb., *qinah*)? In this allegorical lamentation, what do the "lioness" and the "young lions" represent?
2. **19:5.** What kind of symbol does this second young lion also seem to be?
3. **19:10.** To what different allegory does the prophet abruptly shift? Where else in Scripture does the image of either Israel or the royal house as a vine or vineyard occur?
4. **19:13.** Of what royal house does Ezekiel speak? What do archaeological records indicate regarding the treatment of Jehoiachin and his sons?

For application

1. **19:2.** Dynasties and nations are often represented by symbolic animals. What is the symbolic animal for the United States? What do the olive branch and the arrows that it holds represent? If Jesus is the Son of David, how is he represented as an animal in the Book of Revelation?
2. **19:3–4, 6.** The expression "young lion" can refer not only to a person but to an attitude he has. What attitude do these verses suggest that the "young lions" had?
3. **19:12.** Scripture contains around 17 references to an east wind, one that blows from east to west, often associated with destruction. What are some destructive winds that plague the United States? What responses do they occasion in people who experience them?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:7.** According to Ezekiel, what did God exhort Israelites to abandon while they were still in Egypt, and how did they respond? While this is not explicitly recorded in the Book of Exodus, what does the Book of Joshua imply that the Israelites did, despite the miracles of the Exodus?
2. **20:25.** What statutes are referred to here? In what sense were the statutes of Deuteronomy "not good"? In what sense were they "ordinances by which they could not have life"?
3. **20:26.** Since the phrase "by fire" is not in the Hebrew, what misunderstanding does its inclusion in the RSV2CE reflect? What first-born are referred to? Prior to the laws of Deuteronomy, what were the Israelites required to offer? How did Deuteronomy relax this requirement? What does Ezekiel, a devout priest sensitive to the meaning of the liturgy, recognize?
4. **Topical Essay: What Laws Were Not Good?** As a difficult passage of Scripture that has long puzzled scholars, what is a literal translation of Ezek 20:25–26? What does contemporary scholarship often infer from these verses, a disturbing interpretation that is not supported by the text? To be sure, while wicked Israelites did sacrifice their children to the Ammonite god Molech, to the Canaanite god Baal, and others as well, what evidence is lacking about first-born children? If, then, Ezek 20:25–26 is not about child sacrifice, what are these verses talking about? How would a careful reading of the Pentateuch explain why Ezekiel describes Deuteronomy in this way?
5. **20:34.** In the original Exodus, when God brought his people out of Egypt into the desert of Sinai, what did his covenant with them involve? In the future, when God will again bring Israel out of the lands where they sojourn, what will he do with them?

For application

1. **20:7.** What are some of the "detestable things your eyes feast on"? What effects do they have on you? What has the Holy Spirit led you to cast away so as to be free to seek him?

2. **20:8–9, 13b–14, 21b–22.** What ideas are repeated here in almost the same words? What is God's motive for sparing his people? How do such stories of repeated rebellion and redemption reflect the experiences of everyday life with the Lord?
3. **20:26.** The note for this verse explains how Deuteronomy relaxed certain requirements of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. How has the Catholic Church relaxed certain disciplinary requirements that were in force a hundred years ago (e.g., fasting and penitential obligations)? Why would rules like these be relaxed in the first place? Why is it not always good to relax disciplinary regulations?
4. **20:43.** What is the "Jesus Prayer"? Why should a person eager to know the Lord recite it?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:10.** What is the rod? How were criminals punished for non-capital crimes? Because Israel has not repented in response to the moderate punishments God has sent, but rather has increased its crimes, what becomes its punishment?
2. **21:19.** To what does the expression "two ways for the sword" refer? Of what was Ammon the center? Which modern capital is built over ancient Ammon?
3. **21:21.** As a form of ancient divination, how were arrows shaken? What were the teraphim? What was inspecting the livers of sacrificed animals called in the classical world? For what were the marked clay models of livers unearthed by archaeologists used?
4. **21:27.** In the proclamation "a ruin, ruin, ruin I will make it", to what does the pronoun "it" refer? What will happen to any visible signs of the royal house of David? Speaking later of "my servant David" who is to come, what does Ezekiel mean, and what does this explain about the Gospels of Matthew and Luke?

For application

1. **21:6–7.** Have you ever joined in public grief over a national disaster? If so, how did you express this grief, and how was it shared publicly? What was the effect on public morale after the disaster? What religious effect, if any, resulted from it?
2. **21:10.** If you are a parent, what is your approach to disciplining your children? How does it change as they grow older? What do you do if an older child refuses to cooperate and more severe punishments do not work?
3. **21:21.** What forms of divination are used in our culture today? How reliable are they? Why do Scripture and the Church forbid using occult means to determine the future?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:7–12.** What violations of the Mosaic Law does this representative list include?
2. **22:12.** As what part of speech does the Hebrew word translated here "extortion" occur in the prohibitions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy? Why is forgetting God the greatest and most fundamental sin?
3. **22:26.** About what two axes of distinction on which the Israelite ritual system was based were priests obliged to teach the people? Where does the Book of Leviticus teach these distinctions?
4. **22:30.** When attacking armies would breach (break down) the defensive walls, how would heroic defenders prevent the enemy from entering the city? Although God is coming against Jerusalem in judgment, whom does he seek, and whom does he find? When did Moses perform this intercessory role?

For application

1. **22:7.** Read the note for vv. 7–12. How many of these offenses are committed in our secular culture today? Which moral offenses now rampant in our culture are not listed there?
2. **22:12.** When do you think that collecting interest on a loan can become sinful (cf. CCC 2443–49)? The note for this verse mentions a violation of the first Great Commandment, love of God (Deut 6:5). What about the second "commandment like it", love of neighbor (Lev 19:18)?
3. **22:13.** When we express disapproval at the behavior of another, what prevents our disapproval from becoming judgmentalism? In other words, what may we judge about another person, and what are we forbidden from judging?

4. **22:26.** In catechesis, when should children begin learning the difference between holy and common things and how to handle holy things with respect? For example, how should one handle a Bible (as opposed to an ordinary book), and what should be done with it when it is no longer usable?

Chapter 23

For understanding

1. **23:1–49.** Of what is this chapter a graphic allegory? How is Ezekiel's mission like that of the Catholic author Flannery O'Connor? How is this chapter closely connected to chap. 16? How might Ezekiel's picture of Samaria and Jerusalem as sisters who commit outrageous sexual sins be influenced by the narrative of the two daughters of Lot?
2. **23:4.** How can the name Oholah be understood, and how does that relate to Samaria? How can the name Oholibah be understood, and to what does it refer?
3. **23:23.** Who were Pekod and Shoa and Koa? To whom do the Assyrians mentioned here probably refer?
4. **23:42.** What is the problem with the Hebrew of this verse? Nonetheless, what is the clear general sense?

For application

1. **23:1–4.** The prophets often speak of rebellion against God in terms of sexual sins like fornication and adultery, but nowhere as explicitly as in this chapter. What does that comparison say about the seriousness of these sexual sins? What does the casual attitude to these sins in our culture say about our attitude toward God?
2. **23:8.** What does this verse suggest about the religious condition of Israel before Moses led the nation out of Egypt? Whose sons were Ephraim and Manasseh, and who was their mother (Gen 41:50–52)?
3. **23:31.** How would you render this verse in plain language? In Ezekiel's mind, what has the Southern Kingdom of Judah learned from the fate of the Northern Kingdom of Israel? What then becomes Judah's fate? How often do nations actually apply the lessons of history to their own destinies?

Chapter 24

For understanding

1. **24:7.** According to Mosaic Law, what was supposed to happen to the blood of animals? How did this apply to the inhabitants of Jerusalem?
2. **24:15.** Who was the delight of Ezekiel's eyes?
3. **24:17.** What did ancient mourning rituals include? What would friends and relatives bring? What is God commanding Ezekiel not to do?
4. **24:27.** What was imposed on Ezekiel at the beginning of his ministry? When will his inability to speak be removed?

For application

1. **24:2.** Of which dates marking disasters do you most readily think? Why do these dates stick in your memory? Why do you think the Lord would want Ezekiel to write down this particular date? What lesson is to be learned from it?
2. **24:7.** According to Lev 17:14, anyone who consumes the blood of slaughtered animals is to be cut off from the people. How does that prohibition explain the reaction of Jesus' disciples at being told to drink his blood (Jn 6:53)?
3. **24:15–18.** In our culture, what is considered appropriate behavior and dress for mourning or grieving? What might be considered inappropriate? What message might a person be sending who dresses and acts inappropriately upon the death of a spouse?
4. **24:27.** Compare Ezekiel's release from dumbness with that of Zechariah's, father of John the Baptist (Lk 1:64). Why was dumbness imposed on each in the first place (Ezek 3:25–27; Lk 1:20), and what lessons were Zechariah and Ezekiel's Israelites to learn from it?

Chapter 25

For understanding

1. **25:1–32.** Between the announcement of the siege of Jerusalem in chap. 24 and the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem in chap. 33, against whom are Ezekiel's oracles directed? When may these oracles have been revealed to Ezekiel, or else why have they been gathered together? How does their development move?

2. **25:2.** What was Ammon, and what were its traditional boundaries? From whom did the Ammonites descend? What was their relationship with Israel like? Who was the Ammonite god, and for what was he infamous?
3. **25:8.** What territory did Ammon's sister nation Moab occupy? From whom were the Moabites descended? What was Moab's relationship with Israel like? Who was their god, and who also worshiped him?
4. **25:9.** What are Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim? According to the famous *Mesha Stele* (also called the Moabite Stone), when did Mesha take them over? For what was the region of these towns desirable?

For application

1. **25:3.** In Scripture, the exclamation "Aha!" is usually intended for ridicule. What exclamations do we use for the same purpose? Toward whom in the Gospels is this exclamation used, and by whom (Mk 15:29)?
2. **25:6.** At a sporting event, what do applause and stamping of feet signify? How do modern nations express rejoicing at the defeat of an enemy? Over whose defeat should Christians rejoice?
3. **25:8.** Why is Moab's judgment about Judah so offensive to God? Against whom is it ultimately an attack? Why is it wrong to allege that Christianity is no different from other world religions?
4. **25:15.** What is the "law of retaliation"? What is its purpose? How does the Philistines' motive for retaliation, as described in this verse, violate the intent of the "law of retaliation"? What attitude toward getting revenge should replace the "law of retaliation" in Christian life?

Chapter 26

For understanding

1. **26:2.** What function did the port city of Tyre on the southern Lebanese coast serve? Though Tyre enjoyed friendly relations with Israel under David and Solomon, how did that relationship change by the time Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.? What does Tyre's name mean, and to what does it refer? Who besieged the city for 13 years, and who captured and destroyed it? What did Tyre probably hope to do?
2. **26:7.** Though Tyre had become a vassal state of Babylon in 604 B.C., what was it constantly attempting to do? What happened when Nebuchadnezzar arrived? Although ancient sources are unclear, how does the siege seem to have ended?

For application

1. **26:2.** What are some ways modern businesses maneuver to eliminate the competition? Why do some governments try to break up monopolies? Why is it difficult for governments to exercise control over international corporations?
2. **26:7.** Why was Nebuchadnezzar called "king of kings"? What does it mean to call Jesus "king of kings"?

Chapter 27

For understanding

1. **27:2.** What pattern does Ezekiel follow in dealing with Tyre? In both cases, what does he do?
2. **27:8.** What was Sidon? Though Sidon was actually the mother city of Tyre, what happened to its wealth and trade? What was Arvad? What was Zemer?
3. **27:9.** For what city was Gebal another name? For what was it famous, and why was the city named with the Greek word for "book"?
4. **27:22.** What was Sheba? Though the location of Raamah is unknown, with what is it always associated?

For application

1. **27:3–24.** Compare the description of Tyre in these verses with that of "Babylon" in Rev 18. How are the descriptions similar? Which modern cities do you think could make the same claims about their beauty and vitality as these two?
2. **27:12–24.** What is Tyre's main role in all this commerce? If there is nothing necessarily wrong with getting rich as a distribution center for merchandise of all kinds, what sins of Tyre does Ezekiel see behind its downfall (see 26:2; 27:3)? Why does the middleman always seem to grow richer than the original producer?
3. **27:25–36.** Now compare the lament over the destruction of Tyre and "Babylon" in terms of their similarities and what their destruction encompasses. If modern cities or corporate enterprises were to be destroyed in a similar fashion, what kind of lament would our culture raise over them?

Chapter 28

For understanding

1. **28:1–10.** For whom is the oracle against Tyre (chap. 26) and the lament for its people (chap. 27) and the following oracle and lament offered? How has the Christian tradition understood and reflected on the blasphemous things the king of Tyre is described as saying and doing?
2. **28:11–19.** How is the king of Tyre described in this lamentation? What has this passage been understood to reflect? Of what is the devil the author and father? According to St. Cyril of Alexandria, how did he go from being a high angel and God's good servant to becoming Satan, meaning "adversary"?
3. **28:13.** If this is one of only two passages in the Bible that discuss Eden explicitly, what is the other? With what are precious gemstones associated? To what are Ezekiel's list of precious gemstones comparable? With what fact may the sanctuary symbolism be connected?
4. **28:24.** Of whose tribal territory was Sidon a part? Where, relative to Sidon, did Israelites dwell, and what was their relationship with Sidon like during the united monarchy? How did it change afterward?

For application

1. **28:4.** What kind of wisdom does the king of Tyre claim to have, and to what is it limited? What is the kind of wisdom that Scripture urges all mankind to acquire? What are some differences between the two kinds?
2. **28:13.** Read the note for this verse. Which precious stones can you think of that our culture prizes but are not mentioned here? For what do we use them? Although stones such as diamonds do not have the religious symbolism of those Ezekiel lists, what value might they add to our worship?
3. **28:14–16.** The note for v. 14 compares the king of Tyre with the fallen angels. How do these verses describe the goodness of the angels and their fall? How does Jesus refer to the nature of the devil (Jn 8:44)? According to Wis 2:24, what sin of the devil brought death into the world?
4. **28:24.** According to Num 33:55, why would Sidon become a thorn in Israel's side? What happens to those who aspire to holiness if they retain any affection for even the slightest sin?

Chapter 29

For understanding

1. **29:3.** Who was the king of Egypt, and when did he reign? An unpopular and unsuccessful Pharaoh, what happened to his kingship? What is the great dragon that lies in streams?
2. **29:6.** What were Nile reeds like? How does that apply to help from Egypt?
3. **29:10.** What does the expression "Migdol to Syene" mean? What does Migdol mean, and what does it probably indicate? Where is Syene? What is Ethiopia called in Hebrew? Known in classical literature as Nubia, what territory did this ancient, powerful African nation occupy?
4. **29:17.** What does the oracle delivered on April 26, 571 B.C., appear to be, and what did it predict? Why is it probably included here rather than immediately after the Tyrian oracles? Although Nebuchadnezzar did besiege the city and apparently the king of Tyre finally submitted to Babylonian rule, how did the outcome match Ezekiel's description? For what would it have to wait?

For application

1. **29:3.** Assuming Pharaoh is not claiming to have created the Nile, what is he claiming by saying "I made it"? In certain modern corporations, who are some executives who turned their corporations from failure to success? What can they claim to have made?
2. **29:6–7.** Has there been a time when you placed your trust in someone whom you regarded as strong, smart, or competent, and that person failed you? If so, what did the failure of support cost you? What was your relation with that person afterward? What, if any, consequence befell that person?
3. **29:10–12.** What are the causes of some of the major nuclear disasters, such as the Fukushima Daiichi meltdown, that have occurred over the last 50 years? What happened to the habitable areas around them? How should Christians regard the role of the divine will in such cases?
4. **29:21.** In Scripture, what does the horn symbolize? What strength for Israel does Ezekiel see springing up for it? What gives strength to Christians?

Chapter 30

For understanding

1. **30:9.** What did the Nubian Pharaohs who ruled during the 25th Pharaonic Dynasty (ca. 744–656 B.C.) accomplish in Egypt? After what event is Ezekiel writing? What association is still fresh in cultural memory?
2. **30:13.** Within 50 years of Ezekiel’s writing, what happened to Egypt? Which dynasties or governors would rule Egypt for the rest of its existence? Who are the majority of the population of modern Egypt? Who are the actual descendants of the ancient Egyptians?
3. **30:15.** Where is Pelusium? Famed for its flax and beer, of what did Pelusium bear the brunt throughout its history? What is its name in Hebrew?
4. **30:20.** Of what does the formal date announcement of April 29, 587 B.C., mark the beginning? Around this time, what did Pharaoh Hophra (Apries) do, and what did the event provoke?

For application

1. **30:3.** What is the “day of the LORD” for us? How near does the New Testament say that is? How soon is “soon”?
2. **30:9.** Look up the word *catastrophe* in a dictionary. What does the word have to do with drama? Is the meaning always negative? What catastrophe awaits your life, assuming you follow the will of God for it?
3. **30:21.** Read the note for this verse. What are some other biblical metaphors for strength? What metaphors do we use to refer to it?
4. **30:24.** According to Ezekiel, how was the balance of power shifting in the ancient Near East, and in whose favor? In modern times, which countries are striving most for the balance of power in the world? How is this balance shifting? Where does the hand of the Lord seem to be in all this?

Chapter 31

For understanding

1. **31:3.** For what were the moist climate and high elevations of mountainous Lebanon famed?
2. **31:8.** What is the garden of God? What are plane trees? To whom does Ezekiel attribute Satanic pride as he did to the king of Tyre? Whom are both described as trying to rival, and what happens to them as a result?
3. **31:18.** How did the Egyptians, like most ancient Near Eastern peoples, regard circumcision, and what did they think of uncircumcision?

For application

1. **31:3–9.** Ezekiel compares the Egyptian Pharaoh to the qualities of a cedar of Lebanon. What tree in our land most represents what the cedar represents? How might the metaphor apply to modern rulers?
2. **31:6.** Compare the description in this verse to Jesus’ parable of the Mustard Seed (Lk 13:19). What point is Ezekiel making? In contrast, what point is Jesus making?
3. **31:12–18.** When a mighty nation such as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics falls, what happens to all the satellite countries that depended on it? How do other world powers take advantage of the situation? What lessons about human nature can be learned from developments such as these?

Chapter 32

For understanding

1. **32:5.** How did some ancient Near Eastern myths describe the world being made? How does this prophecy seem to invert that narrative?
2. **32:17.** What is the most likely date for this prophecy? What does Ezekiel describe Egypt as doing?
3. **32:22.** For what was the Assyrian Empire (911–609 B.C.) notorious? What did it do to the Northern Kingdom of Israel? What eventually happened to the Assyrians themselves?
4. **32:24.** Where was Elam? For what were the Elamites noted?

For application

1. **32:2.** What images of themselves do the major powers of our world have, and how do their enemies view them? What image of yourself do you entertain? Would others agree with it?
2. **32:15.** Consider the desolation that surrounds the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, destroyed in 1986 by a nuclear meltdown. What lessons have we learned from it? How often do these lessons include things of God?
3. **32:18–30.** Although Sheol is not hell as we understand it, what does it mean to Ezekiel? What is Ezekiel's point in cataloging the nations that Egypt will meet there? What lesson can we take from it?
4. **32:31–32.** Since he is in the same state as the nations in Sheol, what comfort can he take from seeing them? Why does misery love company?

Chapter 33

For understanding

1. **33:1.** What does this verse mark? Since Ezekiel's oracles against the nations are complete, to what does his attention shift?
2. **33:22.** What had God imposed on Ezekiel at the beginning of his career? When only could he speak?
3. **33:24.** Of what were the few survivors in Judah who were not taken as captives to Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem convinced?
4. **33:32.** Why did Ezekiel's contemporaries think of him as being like one who sings love songs?

For application

1. **33:7–9.** How would you apply these verses to the current Church situation? Who is in the prophet's position as watchman for the People of God?
2. **33:12–16.** To what extent is an individual responsible for his own actions? How do maturity, ignorance, duress, or psychological and social factors color one's responsibility (CCC 1734–36)?
3. **33:23–27.** What are "squatter's rights", known legally as "adverse possession"? Under the law of our land, how long may someone occupy a property he does not own before it legally becomes his? On what grounds is Ezekiel denying those remaining in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem any right to adverse possession?
4. **33:31.** In your opinion, how well do people take to heart the homilies they hear at Mass? If the homilist warns of the dangers of a political ideology, how many heed the warning or quarrel with his viewpoint? How do you respond to such homilies?

Chapter 34

For understanding

1. **34:1.** What does this verse mark? What do chaps. 34–37 contain, and to what are they comparable? How can many of the prophecies in these chapters be understood? Of what does Ezekiel even predict the coming, although what is his preferred term for it?
2. **34:13.** What biblical theme is very strong in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel? How must the gathering of twelve apostles around Jesus be seen in light of these prophecies?
3. **34:14.** For what event in the Gospels do this and the surrounding verses form the literary backdrop? To what do Mark (Mk 6:39) and John (Jn 6:10) call attention? Who is Jesus shown to be? To what are the "mountain heights of Israel" a poetic reference?
4. **Word Study: Prince (34:24).** Why does Ezekiel prefer the title "prince" over "king" for the coming Davidic Messiah? For what is the term *nāsi'* an ancient and traditional term? For whom is the term *melek*, on the other hand, only used, and what will eventually happen to this "king" whom the Israelites choose? So, what are the connotations of *nāsi'* and of a human *melek* in the books of Moses? For Moses, who is Israel's true king, and what should any human ruler be content to be?
5. **34:25.** What is Ezekiel's preferred term for the reality described by Jeremiah as the "new covenant"? Why does Ezekiel describe it as a *berit shālôm*? How does the Edenic imagery as memories of Eden prior to the Fall continue?

For application

1. **34:1–6.** What are some of the causes behind people leaving the Church and the numerical increase of the “nones” (persons who profess no religion)? Who is responsible for finding ways to bring them back to the faith?
2. **34:11–16.** Compare these verses with Jn 10:11–15. How does Jesus fulfill the role of the “good shepherd”?
3. **34:17–24.** Since the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), how has the flock of the Church shown itself restive, contentious, and inclined to stray? How have the shepherds of the Church, especially the popes, tried to promote unity?
4. **34:25.** Under the covenant of peace, what might the “wild beasts” signify? What kind of security does this covenant provide?

Chapter 35

For understanding

1. **35:2.** To what could Mt. Seir refer? Why does this oracle against Edom (35:1–15) seem oddly placed here? Because the relationship between Israel and Edom was particularly close, what Edomite conduct made it all the more bitter? Why, then, is this oracle included among the oracles of hope for Israel (chaps. 34–37)?
2. **35:5.** What happened to Israelite refugees when the Edomites denied them sanctuary?
3. **35:7.** On whom did the Edomites depend for their economic survival?
4. **35:10.** Which two countries did Edom believe would be theirs? What were they plotting?

For application

1. **35:5.** What is the origin of the word “resent”? Why is it so difficult to let go a grudge? What does the Book of Hebrews say about the effects of a “root of bitterness” on people like Esau (Heb 12:12–17)?
2. **35:11.** Why are anger and envy considered capital sins? To what other sins do they lead?
3. **35:13.** What does God’s condemnation of Edom in this verse say about his relationship with Israel? When Saul of Tarsus persecuted early Christians, what did Jesus tell him he was actually doing (Acts 9:4)?

Chapter 36

For understanding

1. **36:16.** What did the ritual impurity that came with a woman’s menstrual cycle mean for marital relations? What is the sense of this passage?
2. **36:25.** In some rites of the Old Covenant, why was water sprinkled on objects and persons? What do the Dead Sea Scrolls show about how the Essenes of Qumran understood their water washings? How did the Church Fathers understand this passage?
3. **36:27.** What does the “new spirit” promised in 36:26 turn out to be? What does the Spirit bestow the ability to do?
4. **36:28.** What is the “covenant formula”, and what does it state? What bonds could covenants form? What dimension to this declaration, “You shall be my people, and I will be your God”, do the logic and pattern of Hos 2:2, 16–23, lead us to see?

For application

1. **36:20–21.** How does the Exile of Israel and Judah to foreign lands constitute a profanation of God’s holy name? Even though these people are exiled for their own sin, how does their exile reflect on God himself? Although our sin primarily harms us, how does it profane God’s name among those around us?
2. **36:25.** What are the spiritual effects of Baptism (CCC 1263–67)? What are some of the obligations resulting from being baptized (CCC 1269–70)?
3. **36:27.** The note for this verse refers to Rom 8:1–17. What two forces within the person are opposed to each other? What are these two forces concerned with in life (vv. 6–8)? What effort is the Spirit-filled person required to make (v. 13)?
4. **36:31.** About what kind of self-loathing is Ezekiel speaking here? Why is it good to recall your own sinfulness in the face of God’s goodness to you? Why is it not good to engage in self-condemnation (cf. Rom 8:1)?

Chapter 37

For understanding

1. **37:1.** Though chap. 37:1–14 is a distinct oracle, what promise does it take up and develop? In Mosaic ritual law, how did human remains impart uncleanness and contagion? What will the raising of these bones, which brings them from a state of death to new life, do for them?
2. **Word Study: Spirit (37:1).** What does the noun *rûah* (Heb.) translate to mean? In what ways is it a very important term in the OT? That said, why is it not always apparent in English translations when *rûah* appears in the original text, and how is Ezek 37:1–14 a case in point? How is the prophet engaged in wordplay? What does it appear that Ezekiel understood, theologically?
3. **37:12.** How does the statement “I will open your graves” operate on two levels? According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, how did Ezekiel, by the gift of prophecy, transcend space and time?
4. **37:16.** What was Judah? Of what did the majority of this kingdom consist? Where were the tribes of Benjamin and Simeon? In addition, where did the majority of the Levites probably live? After the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C., what happened to the population of southern Judah? What was “Joseph (the stick of Ephraim)”? Who ruled this kingdom, with few exceptions? Into which two half-tribes had the large tribe of Joseph been broken? What does the Book of Genesis lead one to expect about the hopes of Israel? What territory did they receive as their tribal portions?

For application

1. **37:1–10.** In addition to their meaning for national renewal, how do these verses describe what happens during personal conversion? What do theologians mean by “enthusiasm”, and why are they sometimes suspicious of it?
2. **37:11.** Do you recall any time when you felt cut off from the life of faith, when you lost hope or faith? If so, what was the experience like? How did the Holy Spirit alleviate or resolve it?
3. **37:14.** How does an experience of the Holy Spirit transform the way one lives out the Christian life? What happens to one’s experience of ordinary rituals and personal prayer?
4. **37:20–22.** According to St. Paul (Eph 1), what unification did God accomplish through the preaching of the gospel? Rather than an image of two sticks artificially held together, Paul uses the image of grafting (Rom 11:17–24). What does Paul’s image imply that Ezekiel’s does not?

Chapter 38

For understanding

1. **38:2.** Who, probably, is the ruler here called Gog? When did he rule? In the lifetime of Ezekiel, who ruled his kingdom? How may Ezekiel be treating Gog as a dynastic name? Of what is “land of Magog” probably a Hebrew adoption? Where are Meshech and Tubal?
2. **38:6.** Where was the wild tribe called Gomer located, and how was it known to the Greeks?

For application

1. **38:1–6.** Ezekiel describes the mobilization of a huge army that plans to invade Israel, resettled after the Israelites’ return from exile. On a spiritual level, what large armies are arrayed against the Church (e.g., Rev 12:13–17)? What defenses does she have?
2. **38:10.** In ancient times, unwallled villages were virtually defenseless against raiders. Spiritually, how can a vulnerable soul fortify itself against attacks by the evil one and his minions?
3. **38:14–16.** Why does God allow the devil and the world to attack his people? How does he vindicate his holiness in their resistance to these enemies?

Chapter 39

For understanding

1. **39:11.** What might “the Valley of the Travelers” mean? What is the “Valley of Hamon-Gog”, and on what name is it possibly a pun?
2. **39:16.** From what is “a city Hamonah” derived, and to what is it probably a cryptic reference?

For application

1. **39:1–6.** The failure of Gog’s invasion of Israel as described in these verses sounds almost miraculous. According to historians, what spiritual weapons were brought to bear against superior Muslim forces in the Battle of Lepanto? How are they effective in our own day?
2. **39:7.** What response do Church authorities make when a church building is desecrated? Why should acts of restoration be publicized?
3. **39:11–16.** How is the land cleansed by burying corpses of the enemy after battle? According to Num 19:11, what happens to an Israelite who touches a corpse? How is he purified? How is the human heart purified from the aftereffects of sin?
4. **39:25.** What does it mean for God to be “jealous” for his holy name? How is jealousy in this context like the virtue of zeal?

Chapter 40

For understanding

1. **40:1.** What year is the “twenty-fifth year of our exile” counting from whose exile? When is “the beginning of the year”? How does later Jewish tradition identify four “heads of the year”? Although some scholars maintain Ezekiel’s “head of the year” is Nisan, how do we know that Ezekiel probably intends to refer to Tishri? What feast day is on the tenth day of Tishri, and to what tradition does the date of Ezekiel’s vision probably relate? Accordingly, when is Ezekiel probably seeing this vision, and what makes it a spiritual turning point?
2. **40:5.** How long were a cubit and handbreadth together, and therefore how long was the measuring reed? How thick was the wall being measured?
3. **40:35.** Of what is symmetry a sign? How is Ezekiel’s Temple laid out? What sacred numbers recur throughout the description?
4. **40:39.** As the primary offering of the Mosaic liturgy, what did the burnt offering require? What did it express? What are sin offerings and guilt offerings?

For application

1. **40:5.** What is the purpose of a Temple? Assuming the Temple has already been built, why measure it for Ezekiel’s benefit? In Rev 11:1–2, what portion of the Temple was John told to measure, and what did it represent?
2. **40:6–16.** Even if you are not an architect, what do you think the perfect church building should look like? As in styles of architecture such as Gothic and Romanesque, what should the design of church buildings convey to worshippers?
3. **40:35.** The note for this verse stresses the importance of symmetry for Ezekiel’s Temple. What design elements are important for the church building you attend, for example, the arrangement of the narthex, the nave, and any transepts?
4. **40:38–43.** In your church building, what furniture is in the sanctuary area? Why are the altar, the ambo, and other pieces placed where they are? What does their placement signify?

Chapter 41

For understanding

1. **41:4.** What is another name for the “most holy place”? How was it shaped? What did its perfect symmetry express?
2. **41:6.** What did the three stories of the side chambers call to mind?
3. **41:18.** What were the cherubim for, and on what locations were they represented?

For application

1. **41:4.** Although in Roman rite churches the Tabernacle is where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, what is actually the holiest item in the sanctuary? In Eastern churches, why is it located behind an iconostasis?
2. **41:14.** Why does the Temple face east? Toward what direction should church buildings be oriented, if possible? Why?
3. **41:17–20.** What is the function of art in church buildings? What works of art are placed in the church you attend, and what do they represent? Where is the main crucifix located, and why is it there?
4. **41:22.** This verse refers to the altar of incense. In what is incense burned? What is it used for in the liturgy? When is it most likely to be used?

Chapter 42

For understanding

1. **42:20.** How long is 500 cubits? What does the number 500 represent?

For application

1. **42:14.** Why do priests and deacons wear special vestments? What are some of them? Where are these vestments worn?
2. **42:20.** Using the number in the note for this verse, calculate the area of Ezekiel's Temple. Why so large? Why do Christians build churches as large as St. Peter's in Rome or Hagia Sophia in Istanbul?

Chapter 43

For understanding

1. **43:2.** Why does the glory of the Lord come from the east? What sites opened to the east? Where did traditions that the Messiah would come from the east lead the Essenes at Qumran to establish their community?
2. **43:8.** Why does the Lord object to having only a wall between the king's threshold and his own?
3. **43:12.** From this verse and others, what concept arose about the whole city of Jerusalem? In the time of Jesus, what would devout Essenes avoid doing, and why?

For application

1. **43:1–5.** Have you ever had a strong experience of the Lord's presence when entering a church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved? What was it like? If you have never had such an experience, how do you recognize the Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament?
2. **43:8.** Attached to the north wall of the Temple in Jesus' time was the Fortress Antonia, occupied by the Romans. Why was the fortress placed there? Suppose the only thing separating your church from the city administration offices was a wall or partition. What could such a layout imply, and what problems might arise for the church from it?
3. **43:12.** In the Book of Revelation, where is the Temple in the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven (Rev 21:22)? What takes its place?
4. **43:13–17.** What did ancient altars look like, and of what were they made? Of what are modern altars typically made? How are they shaped? Why do they have that shape rather than that of ancient altars?

Chapter 44

For understanding

1. **44:2.** Why was the east gate of the Temple to remain shut? In the Catholic spiritual tradition, of whom is it a commonplace to see the Temple as a type? What is an appropriate analogue to the closed gate of the eschatological Temple? According to Rufinus of Aquileia, why is the preservation of the Virgin's condition evident here?
2. **44:15.** Although Ezekiel uses a phrase characteristic of Deuteronomy, "the Levitical priests", as whom does he identify this group? When did Zadok, a descendant of Phinehas, the zealous grandson of Aaron (Num 25:10–12), serve as high priest? Under Solomon, why was Abiathar dispossessed of the high priesthood? In criticizing the non-Zadokite Levites, what is it unclear that Ezekiel has in mind? What is clear that he believes about the Zadokites? In the New Testament era, which priests led the Jewish Essene movement?
3. **44:17.** Why were priests to wear linen garments and nothing made of wool? Why did the later Essene community make a practice of wearing only linen garments? What does Jesus' garments of linen at his burial suggest about him?
4. **44:23.** What four categories were the basis of the Israelite ritual system? With what was a holy thing imbued, whereas a common thing was not? For what was a clean thing suitable, whereas an unclean thing was not? How does Leviticus detail these regulations?
5. **44:28.** Since priests were not to own farmlands to support themselves, how were they to live? Of what did this become a type? In the Gospels, why are the apostles called to leave everything, including "houses and lands"? What does this hint at regarding their status? What is to be their only "part" or "inheritance"?

For application

1. **44:7.** Why are catechumens allowed to hear the Liturgy of the Word but not permitted to attend the Liturgy of the Eucharist? What sacrament enables them to participate in the Eucharist?
2. **44:10–14.** The *Catechism* describes three degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders (CCC 1554). What are they? What is the role of the deacon, as distinct from that of the priest (CCC 1569–71)?
3. **44:15–16.** In the Christian dispensation, what is the role of the ministerial priest, especially as regards the liturgy (CCC 1562–68)?
4. **44:22.** Read the note for this verse. Why, in the Christian dispensation, is celibacy held in such high regard? In the Latin Church, why is celibacy required (CCC 1579)? In the Eastern churches, what is the practice of priestly celibacy (CCC 1580)?

Chapter 45

For understanding

1. **45:2.** If Ezekiel's long cubit was somewhere between 20 and 22 inches, what are the dimensions of the sanctuary? To what may the multiples of fifty in the layout of the sacred precinct and Temple refer, and what does that suggest?
2. **45:17.** What kind of figure is Ezekiel's "prince", the royal Son of David, and what is his main duty? While it was common for the kings of the ancient Near East to patronize the cult of the gods, and to have many other duties as well, in Ezekiel's vision, what is the king's only duty?
3. **45:18.** When did the Law of Moses institute the Day of Atonement? How important is this holy day in the Jewish liturgical calendar? Here, on what day does Ezekiel receive instructions for a day of atonement for the Temple? How does the ritual compare to the Mosaic Day of Atonement? As what is this day probably intended?
4. **45:21.** Why does Ezekiel modify the observance of Passover (Num 28:16–25) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? How does this once more highlight the main role of the king of Israel in Ezekiel's vision? Seen in this light, of whom is Ezekiel's "prince" a type? How else does Ezekiel change what Moses originally prescribed?

For application

1. **45:4.** Most parishes in the Latin Church are territorial. What does this usually mean for Catholics within the parish boundaries? What is the benefit of having the priest live near the church at which he ministers?
2. **45:10–11.** In our country, who sets the standards for our system of weights and measures? How confident are you that the scales you use to weigh produce at the supermarket (for example) are honest? What would you do if you were sure the scales were "fixed" (i.e., dishonest)?
3. **45:19.** Compare what the priest does in this verse with what the heads of families were to do on the night of the first Passover (Ex 12:22). In Israelite understanding, what does it mean to "remember" the Passover event? At the Last Supper, what does Jesus mean by telling the disciples to "do this in remembrance" of him?

Chapter 46

For understanding

1. **46:1.** While the east-facing outer gate was to remain perpetually shut according to 44:1–3, when could the east-facing inner gate be opened? What did opening this gate allow the prince and the people to do?
2. **46:9.** What do some suggest is the reason for the regulation in this verse? Spiritually, how could there be a reference to personal transformation?
3. **46:13.** What is the importance of the *tāmîd*, or continual burnt offering? Curiously, how many lambs did Moses specify, and when were they offered? Which sacrifice does Ezekiel seem to omit?
4. **46:24.** For what did neither the Solomon Temple nor the Mosaic Tabernacle make explicit provision? Since Ezekiel's visionary Temple has designated locations for these activities, what do they show about God's future Temple?

For application

1. **46:2–3.** During the performance of Catholic liturgies such as the Mass, who may enter the sanctuary area of the church? From where do the other participants follow the liturgy? Why is this distance imposed between the congregation and the sanctuary?

2. **46:9.** When someone enters a Catholic church, why does he customarily bless himself with holy water? As he approaches the altar, why does he genuflect toward the Tabernacle before taking his place? If the Tabernacle is located away from the altar, what does he do rather than genuflect?
3. **46:19–20.** In most churches, what is the room called where the bread and wine offered in the Mass are prepared for the offering? What happens with the sacred vessels (the chalice, ciborium, and other vessels) after the liturgy ends? Why should only an instituted acolyte, deacon, or priest cleanse these vessels?

Chapter 47

For understanding

1. **47:5.** In a spiritual sense, what does the river represent? According to St. Jerome, if the waters of Baptism and the apostles' teaching flow from the Lord's Temple, what can they cause to happen?
2. **Topical Essay: The River of Life Flowing from the Temple.** What deep roots does the idea of a primordial garden-sanctuary at the beginning of human history, from which flowed a life-giving river that watered the whole earth, have in many ancient cultures? Later in Israel's history, how did reverence for the ancient river that flowed from Eden become attached to the spring that supplied water for Jerusalem and its Temple? In the Gospel of John, how is the Body of Jesus revealed as the true Temple of God? Why does the Church read Ezek 47:1–12 every year for the Feast of St. John Lateran?
3. **47:13.** Why does the tribe of Joseph have two portions of land? What is interesting about Ezekiel's designation of Joseph rather than Judah for this privilege? What faith is Ezekiel showing in his division of the land?
4. **47:22.** Unlike Moses, what position does Ezekiel take regarding foreign inhabitants of the land? Rather, how does he solve the problem of non-Israelite residents of the holy land? Of what can this be seen as a type?

For application

1. **47:1.** Compare this stream with that in Rev 22:1. From where does each stream flow? According to Jn 7:38, what flows from Jesus' heart? What name is given to the stream of water in Revelation?
2. **47:3–5.** As a symbol of the Holy Spirit (cf. note for v. 9), what is the significance of the stream getting deeper as it flows, despite having no tributaries feeding into it? How does the "depth" of the Holy Spirit increase in the life of the Christian?
3. **47:7–12.** Compare the trees in these verses to the tree of life in Rev 22:2. What are the similarities and differences? What purpose do the leaves of both trees serve?
4. **47:11.** Read the note for this verse. What makes salt a necessity for life? What does Jesus mean by calling his disciples the "salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13)?

Chapter 48

For understanding

1. **48:1–35.** While this section invites comparison with the division of the Promised Land by tribes in Josh 13–21, what are some of the notable differences?
2. **48:8–22.** In the center of the nation, what does the kind of sacred "federal district" that Ezekiel sees look like? Oddly, although Moses gave no territory to the Levites, in Ezekiel's vision what do they receive, and where is it?
3. **48:30–34.** What do the twelve gates of the city, one for each tribe, indicate? What do the Temple and city, then, become?
4. **48:35.** In what way is the identity of this visionary city an enigma? Though Ezekiel, indeed, sees a city that will fulfill all the functions and significance of the Jerusalem of old, to what is he not committed? What enables the city to be understood in non-geographical terms? What does the NT understand this new holy city to be?

For application

1. **48:8–14.** Ideally, where should the parish church be situated within the boundaries of the parish? Aside from its practical benefits, what does that location indicate for the spiritual life of the parish?

2. **48:14.** What happens to a church building that can no longer be used for divine worship (CIC 1222)? Since the altar remains dedicated for worship even if the church building is no longer used for worship, what should happen to it in that case (CIC 1238)?
3. **48:19.** Using this verse as an axiom, who should ultimately be responsible for the care of the church and its property?
4. **48:35.** Compare this verse with Rev 21:3–4. In St. John's vision, where is the Lord? What does his presence mean for his people?