

an essay:

## QUESTONS ON EZEKIEL THEN AND NOW

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This essay will examine three questions related to The Old Testament Book of EZEKIEL and search for its application to The Church today. First, what are the “Four Severe Judgements” of EZEKIEL 14:14 in light of DEUTERONOMY? Second, how do the sections of EZEKIEL dealing with Israel’s cousins and neighbours vindicate JEHOVAH’s justice? Third, what imagery of restoration is there in EZEKIEL? And what may we conclude from all these things, not only as applied to Israel then, but to The Church now, and to The Time when GOD’s Kingdom shall be in full on earth as it is now in Heaven?

## II. THE 1<sup>ST</sup> QUESTION – THE DIVINE JUDGEMENTS OF EZEKIEL 14:14

What are the “Four Severe Judgements” of EZEKIEL 14:14 in light of DEUTERONOMY? EZEKIEL 14:14 declares, “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.”<sup>1</sup> Here GOD is telling us that each man is responsible for his own sins and repentance before GOD. We can not go through life blaming others for our wicked choices, rebellion against GOD and their injurious consequences! Yet this is exactly the complaint of The Jews when GOD brought just punishment upon Jerusalem. They complained GOD was unjustly punishing them for the sins of their fathers.

The surrounding text of EZEKIEL 14 clarifies that Divine punishment is sent against nations for the sins of the people in this life. That punishment may come in the form of famine, the forces of nature, desolation, violence and war, disease and pestilence, expulsion from the land, dispersion over the earth as strangers and wonderers, and death. It is not for nothing that PSALM 33:12 declares, “Blessed is the nation whose GOD is The LORD...”<sup>2</sup> The opposite is just as true!

In DEUTERONOMY 28:58-64 we find what happens when a nation rebels against GOD’s Laws. And though this was inscribed by Moses as warnings for The Jews,

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<sup>1</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 14:14.

<sup>2</sup> 1, KJV, PSALM 33:12.

this applies to all nations in all times. First such people are afflicted with “great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sickness” - they and their children - which take the awful forms of “all the diseases of Egypt.” Second such nations are “left few in number.” Third such peoples are made wanderers, being constantly “plucked from off the land whither thou goest...” Fourth such nations are scattered “among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other,” being forced in subservient oppression to serve the false idols of those lands.<sup>3</sup> Such are the terrible “Severe Judgements” of GOD upon His people when they turn from Him into wickedness, rebellion, idolatry and apostasy!

Even if Israel or any nation should have righteous men like Noah, Daniel and Job in their midst, there comes a point beyond which national judgment from The Hand of GOD must still come. Perhaps this is why the American Founding Father George Mason declared, “As nations cannot be rewarded or punished in the next world, they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence punishes national sins by national calamities!”<sup>4</sup> And if The LORD did not spare the Covenant Nation of ancient Israel from such Divine wrath, He surely does not spare any Gentile nation from the same sure Divine justice.

So we see two points: First, national judgment and punishment from GOD may well be held back by the presence of a certain critical mass of righteous people in its midst, but there comes a time that - when there are no longer enough such people in a nation - Divine justice is no longer held back. Second, all men stand before GOD and are judged by their own righteousness or wickedness, responsible for their own behavior and sin before GOD. The righteousness of one’s family, friends, neighbors or fellow citizens does not cover the unrighteousness of the soul that sins.

Every man’s soul is judged on its own merit before The Almighty. GOD says in EZEKIEL 18:20-22, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die... But if the wicked will turn from

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<sup>3</sup> 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 28:58-64. The four terrible “Severe Judgements” of The Book of The Law of GOD upon His people when they turn from Him in rebellion and apostasy.

<sup>4</sup> 2, Federer, America’s GOD and Country Encyclopedia of Quotations, entry for George Mason, page 423, 3<sup>rd</sup> entry. Mason addressed The American Constitutional Convention on 8/22/1787 AD

all his sins..., he shall surely live... All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness... he shall live.”<sup>5</sup> Keeping The Law of The Old Testament perfectly is not humanely possible. Nor does the ancient Jewish Tabernacle or Temple stand as a place where penitent men may offer animal sacrifices to The LORD in atonement for their sins. There is only One Place where atonement for the sinful soul is offered - The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. And so St. John assures us in I JOHN 1:7-9, “But if we walk in the light... the blood of JESUS CHRIST His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins...”<sup>6</sup> Amen!

### III. THE 2<sup>ND</sup> QUESTION – JEHOVAH’S JUSTICE UPON ISRAEL’S NEIGHBOURS

How do the sections of EZEKIEL dealing with Israel’s cousins and neighbours vindicate JEHOVAH’s justice? GOD’s judgment upon Israel’s sinful neighbors was just as severe as upon apostate sinful Israel. If this were not so, then Divine judgment would not be evenhanded and GOD’s righteousness would be called into question by both Jews and gentiles down through the ages. EZEKIEL records the reason for Divine punishment upon both apostate Israel and her degenerate neighbors - "so that you will know that I am The LORD!" And though the form of affront to GOD differs in the particulars between Israel and her neighbors, the common thread in all cases is that men - both Jew and Gentile - forgot GOD!

First is GOD’s judgment against Israel’s surrounding relatives in EZEKIEL 25 - Ammon, Moab and Edom: Ammon had rejoiced at Israel’s destruction and the desecration of The LORD’s Temple in Jerusalem. GOD declared in EZEKIEL 25:6-7, “...Because thou hast clapped thine hands..., and rejoiced against the land of Israel. ...I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am The LORD.”<sup>7</sup> Moab had likewise not respected GOD nor their relative Israel, having rejected The GOD of Abraham. So GOD declares in EZEKIEL 25:11, “And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall

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on national accountability to GOD.

<sup>5</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 18:20-22.

<sup>6</sup> 1, KJV, I JOHN 1:7-9.

<sup>7</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 25:6-7.

know that I am The LORD.”<sup>8</sup> Edom should have been close to Israel, but they also rejected her and JEHOVAH. So GOD says in EZEKIEL 25, 12-14, “...Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance... I will lay My vengeance upon Edom... and they shall know My vengeance, saith The Lord GOD.”

Next is GOD’s judgment against Israel’s neighbors who are not kin in EZEKIEL 25 - Philistia, Tyre and Sidon: The Philistines were mortal enemies and oppressors of Israel. They worshipped the false god Dagon. So GOD declares in EZEKIEL 25:17, “And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am The LORD...” Tyre hoped to profit from Jerusalem’s destruction. She had exalted herself in her earthly prosperity, beauty and glory. And worst of all, she committed the same sin as that of satan, claiming in pride to be as GOD! The Almighty declares He will cast Tyre to the ground, as He did with satan, for He declares in EZEKIEL 25:9, “Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? But thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee.” Sidon was the land of the wicked Jezebel, who corrupted Israel. She questioned God’s sovereignty and even His existence! So GOD declares He will restore Israel to Palestine, but will utterly destroy Sidon. Thus He declares in EZEKIEL 25:22, “...I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am The LORD...”<sup>9</sup>

Lastly GOD’s judgment is against Egypt: She denied The LORD in His creation of all things, becoming a prostitute to a multitude of false gods. She oppressed in slavery GOD’s Chosen People for centuries. And she exalted herself with pride in her accomplishments again with the same vanity as satan. So GOD declares in EZEKIEL 29:3, “...I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.”

EZEKIEL 22 lists the offenses of Jerusalem to GOD that the surrounding Gentile nations also committed: innocent blood was shed; defilement in idolatry with false gods;

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<sup>8</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 25:11.

<sup>9</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 25:22.

disregard for what was holy; sexual immorality; bribes, usury, and extortion for gain over the helpless; oppression of the stranger, widow and orphan; mockery against parents; violence; injustice; lewdness; pride and vanity; breaking of The Ten Commandments; even child sacrifice - forgetting The LORD!

If GOD's holiness and justice is to be upheld, He can not punish His Chosen People for these evils and allow Gentiles to get away with the same sins! This is why Saint Peter declares in ACTS 10:34-36, "...GOD is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him. The Word which GOD sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by JESUS CHRIST, He is Lord of all." Thus does The Almighty show His power, justice, holiness and very existence to sinful men!

#### IV. THE 3<sup>RD</sup> QUESTION – THE IMAGERY OF RESTORATION IN EZEKIEL

What imagery of restoration is there in EZEKIEL? There will come a time when our Lord shall return and set His Kingdom on earth, restoring all of creation to GOD The Father. It will be a time when The Church will rejoice in CHRIST, when Israel will accept The Messiah Whom they crucified, national Israel will be reborn in The Promised Land and all of creation will be restored to JEHOVAH as before The Fall. GOD tells The Jews in EZEKIEL 36:26-28 says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh... And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes... And ye shall dwell in The Land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your GOD."

GOD shows Ezekiel in EZEKIEL 37 a valley of a great host of dry brittle bones, which represents national Israel. The LORD asks Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel humbly answers, "O LORD GOD, Thou knowest!"<sup>10</sup> Before Ezekiel's eyes, this vast host of bones become formed bodies with muscle and skin. But they are not yet brought back to life. This is a picture of the Jewish nation being reborn back in Palestine as a nation in 1948 AD. But national Israel today is far from what GOD intended them to

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<sup>10</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 37:3.

be. She is today mostly unsaved in JESUS CHRIST, corrupted by man's sinful nature, embroiled in endless war and strife, a brutal regime of worldliness, certainly not a testimony of GOD's glory and love! She is a people who are anything but a beacon of righteousness to draw the rest of mankind to GOD's Law and glorify GOD!

In EZEKIEL 37:5 it is written, "Thus saith The Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live!"<sup>11</sup> Just as He did with Adam, in EZEKIEL 37 GOD breathes His - רִיחַ - "RUACH"<sup>12</sup> - His Spirit and breath of life - into the reformed lifeless bodies in Ezekiel's vision, bringing national Israel back to full spiritual life! For it is The Creator's very breath of life which speaks all things into creation as they are, animates all that lives and instills most especially in man both the living soul. It is The LORD's breath which also breathes spiritual life into men and nations, that they may be fit vessels for His Spirit and called by His holy Name!<sup>13</sup> This is the future Israel that CHRIST as Savior, with fully converted hearts and completely restored to GOD! When CHRIST returns and Israel confesses Him as Savior will LUKE 2:32 be completely fulfilled, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel!"<sup>14</sup>

In EZEKIEL 47 GOD shows Ezekiel a new Temple with living waters flowing from the Sanctuary that will feed and heal all of creation and all men! So we read in EZEKIEL 47:9, "And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there;

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<sup>11</sup> KJV, EZEKIEL 37:5.

<sup>12</sup> 3, BHS, EZEKIEL 37:5.

<sup>13</sup> 4, Whitaker's Revised-BDB Hebrew Lexicon, B9235 RUACH - רִיחַ - noun, breath, wind, spirit -- 1. breath of mouth or nostrils: a. breath. b. as mere breath: cf. 2 e. c. as word of command: (1) of God; (2) of Messianic king... (1) of God; (2) of man. e. as sign and symbol of life [RUACH HAYYOM]:- רִיחַ חַיִּים breath of life.... 3. spirit, as breathing quickly in animation... 4. spirit of the living, breathing being, dwelling in ... men... [NEFESH – soul] נֶפֶשׁ : a. gift and creation of God. b. God preserves it. c. it is therefore God's spirit... 9. spirit of God: a. as inspiring ecstatic state of prophecy... (1) of ancient Israel; (2) resting upon Messianic King... e. as energy of life... in cherubic chariot; reviving Israel. ...ancient angel of The Presence and later Shekina. (pg 924).

<sup>14</sup> 1, KJV, LUKE 2:32.



for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes!”<sup>15</sup> To Jeremiah it is revealed that The LORD is Himself the stream of Living Water of His people, for He alone heals and saves His saints! So we find in JEREMIAH 17:13-14, “O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken The LORD, The Fountain of Living Waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise!”<sup>16</sup>

This is likewise revealed in REVELATION 22:1-3, for our Lord JESUS CHRIST Himself is The Living Waters that, when we His saints drink of Him, fills us with His life, His love, His righteousness and the gift of eternal life! So Saint John beheld “...a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of GOD and of The Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of GOD and of The Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him!”<sup>17</sup> Here creation will be restored to its full perfection before sin entered in through the devil in The Garden of Eden. GOD will restore mankind to the same fellowship He had with Adam and Eve in The Garden before it was corrupted! The redeemed in CHRIST - both The Church and Israel - will dwell with The LORD our Maker in unspeakable joy!

## V. IN CONCLUSION

First, though evil and sin abound in a nation in a certain time and place in human history, Divine judgement and punishment – though it must eventually come – may be held back because of GOD’s goodness and longsuffering by the presence of a certain number of righteous and godly men. But when the scales of evil and abomination tip overwhelmingly among a people, the hand of The Almighty must judge and punish for the sake of His holiness and Laws. And though nations are judged in this world by

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<sup>15</sup> 1, KJV, EZEKIEL 47:9.

<sup>16</sup> 1, KJV, JEREMIAH 17:13-14.

Divine Providence, every man individually shall stand before The Judgement Seat of CHRIST on his own Day of Judgement. As Saint Paul writes in ROMANS 14:11-12, "...As I live, saith The Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall onfess to GOD. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to GOD!"<sup>18</sup>

Second, when a people of GOD turn from serving and worshipping Him, casting aside The holy Laws and Decrees of Heaven, The LORD may often employ surrounding peoples and nations to bring about His righteous judgement and punishment upon His own people. The hope is that GOD's people, when they are afflicted by their own sins and by the arm of JEHOVAH, will repent and turn from their wickedness and live. But woe to the people who are used by GOD as a rod of correction upon His own! For if GOD must indeed judge and correct His saints, because He is just, He must also bring judgement and wrath upon the oppressors of His people as well! But thanks be to GOD, as the writer of HEBREWS 4:14-16 proclaims to us, "Seeing then that we have A Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, JESUS The Son of GOD, let us hold fast our profession [in Him!]... Let us therefore come boldly unto The Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need!"<sup>19</sup>

Third, the prophet Ezekiel foresaw what The LORD also showed to the revelator Saint John, that His Kingdom would come upon the entire earth as it is now in Heaven. There will, both The Old and New Testaments declare, come a time when The New Jerusalem will descend from Above and The LORD our loving Creator shall dwell with men again on earth as He did in The Garden of Eden with our First Parents at the dawn of creation! The dry bones of spiritually deceased Biblical Israel shall rise again in great and glorious faith in The Messiah. And The Gentile nations shall gather with renewed Israel to dwell in and about The Divine Presence in The New Jerusalem on earth.

We see this now in part with the continued faith of the Jewish people down through a troubled and painful history and their partial reestablishment as a nation in The

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<sup>17</sup> 1, KJV, REVELATION 22:1-3.

<sup>18</sup> 1, KJV, ROMANS 14:11-12.

Holy Land. We see this now in part with the spreading of righteousness and faith in The Church militant and present to all the corners of the earth. And we shall see these things in full, in that time when the Divinely revealed visions of both Ezekiel and John shall meet on earth as it is in Heaven, in GOD's promised time and place for mankind when, as it is written in REVELATION 21:4-5, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon The Throne said, Behold, I make all things new...!"<sup>20</sup> In the Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and the Holy Ghost. AMEN!

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<sup>19</sup> 1, KJV, HEBREWS 4:14-16.

<sup>20</sup> 1, KJV, REVELATION 21:4-5.

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