

Ezekiel.

Prophet to the house of Israel

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2009

Yahweh commanded Ezekiel “go speak unto the house of Israel...go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak my words to them (the house of Israel)...for thou art sent to...the house of Israel...go get to them of the captivity (of the house of Israel), unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them (of the house of Israel), thus commanded Yahweh...I have made you a watchman unto the House of Israel...this shall be a sign to the house of Israel. The word of Yahweh also came unto me, saying,...I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel” (Ez.3:1, 4,5, 11, 17; 4:3, 12:6, emphasis and comments added)

Introduction

As the book of Ezekiel opens, we find the thirty year old prophet, Ezekiel, living “among the captives by the river Chebar (Kebbar).” It is here that he has his first vision as “the heavens were opened, and (he) saw the visions of Yahweh. Ezekiel identifies himself as a priest of Israel, and he identifies the Chebar as being “in the land of the Chaldeans.” (1:3)

This opening statement raises several questions that must be answered correctly if we are going to be able to correctly understand Ezekiel. These questions are:

- Where is the river Chebar?
- Who were the Chaldeans?
- Where is the land of the Chaldeans?
- Who were the captives that Ezekiel was among?
- When did they go into their captivity?

Although some maps of this ancient area do not locate the river Chebar, all maps which we have consulted, which do show a location for this river place it in the upper northeastern headwaters of the Euphrates. Therefore, the river Chebar was a tributary of the Euphrates river. On maps detailing the extent of the Assyrian empire this area is identified as the area where the cities of the Medes (2Kings 17:6) were located. During the days of the Babylonian empire this area is identified generally as Media, the land of the Medes (Dan.11:1). In the first century, during the days of the Roman empire, this area was identified as Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia and Bithynia (1Peter 1:1).

In 2Kings 17:6, we are informed that “in the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them...**in the cities of the Medes.**” (emphasis added) From this passage we learn that **Israel** was carried away into the

Assyrian **Diaspora** c. 721 B.C. and some of **the people of Israel** were relocated in the area known as the “**cities of the Medes.**”

From the information provided above we can ascertain that **the Chebar river was located within an area generally identified as “the cities of the Medes,”** and that some of the Israelites of the Assyrian Diaspora were relocated and settled in this area along the river Chebar.

Now let us see if we can identify the Chaldeans.

According to Isaiah, the Chaldeans did not exist as a separate people group until the Assyrians established “it for them that dwell in the wilderness.” The Assyrians “set up the towers,” and “raised up the palaces thereof...” (Is. 23:13). Thus Chaldea came into existence as a city or state (the text is not clear, possibly a group of cities) during the time of the Assyrian empire. The city (or cities) was built to provide places of habitation for “those that dwell in the wilderness:” Due to the Assyrian development, this wilderness area eventually became known as the land of Chaldea. This country consisted of a vast area formed by the deposits of the Euphrates and the Tigris, extending to about 400 miles along the course of these rivers, and about 100 miles in average breadth, and is otherwise known as Mesopotamia. The Chebar River apparently existed in the northeastern portion of this area providing water for the cities of the Medes, and ultimately flowing into the Euphrates river.

The people of the wilderness that dwelt therein became known as the Chaldeans. In time, the ancient city of Babylon became the capital city of a vast area ruled by the Chaldeans. During the time of the prophet Jeremiah, the Chaldeans had become a powerful force in this ancient land. They eventually dominated the Assyrians, and became the rulers of the ancient city of Babylon (Ezra 5:12). It would be a very interesting to attempt to identify the pre-Assyrian origin of these people, but alas that must wait for another time. However, given the propensity of the Assyrians to move conquered people groups around within their empire, there is good probability that these wilderness dwelling people were people that the Assyrians relocated into this area. There is even a possibility that they were Israelites that the Assyrians had deported from their home land and relocated in that general area.

From Ezra we learn that the Chaldean, Nebuchadnezzar, was the king of Babylon (a city, not a country) who destroyed the temple and carried the Judeans into captivity in Babylon. (Ezra 5:12)

All Bible texts dealing with the sixth century subjugation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple inform us that the captives from Judah and Jerusalem were taken to the city of Babylon (Ezra 2:1; Neh.7:6; et al.), not to any area along the Chebar river or any other area within the Chaldean empire controlled from Babylon. After Babylon was conquered by the Median king Cyrus (Dan.5:31,9:1) and became part of the Medo-Persian empire some of the Jewish (house of Judah) exiles were moved to Shushan (Neh.1:1).

After the decree of Cyrus, the first two groups that returned from the captivity came from Babylon: the first group (Ezra 1:1), Ezra's group (Ezra 7:6), whereas Nehemiah's group came from Shushan (Neh.1:1).

On page 11 of the "General Editor's Preface" of the NIV Application Commentary on Ezekiel, the editor states:

SOME THINK THAT EZEKIEL is difficult to interpret...as Iain Duguid points out in his introduction,...at one time or another the church fathers have called the book difficult, early rabbis considered it dangerous, and most of us have despaired of figuring out what God's message is in its pages....as Professor Duguid also points out, Ezekiel's difficulty emerges...from...the fact that Ezekiel was written...when their (Israel's) restoration to their lost land was in view...How should we understand the changing and sometimes irreconcilable passages of Ezekiel...Once that background (of historical circumstance) is in place, some coherence begins to emerge.

Even with all this help, however, a key ingredient is still missing...to fully understand Ezekiel we must fast forward six hundred years to the life of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

We would differ with the editor on the "key ingredient." While it is true that the New Testament gives us, among other things, the record of the fulfillment of much of Ezekiel's prophecy, **the key ingredient for a proper understanding of Ezekiel is the proper identification of the people to whom he was sent! The Old Testament historical record leading up to the events taking place during the ca. 20 years that Ezekiel prophesied, properly understood, identifies Ezekiel's initial audience as the exiles of the house of Israel (northern kingdom) *not the exiles of the house of Judah (southern kingdom Jews) as is assumed by Duguid and most other commentators.***

In reference to "historical background" in his introduction, Dr. Duguid stated:

The Assyrians...finally absorbed it (the northern kingdom of Israel) in 722 B. C. The Israelite population (the house of Israel) was exiled to various parts of the Assyrian empire, and ***were replaced with other people groups*** (comments and emphasis by LD, 2Kings 17, NIVAC p.19)

Also in the introduction to his commentary on Ezekiel Dr. Duguid stated:

The northern kingdom of Israel was dispersed and effectively destroyed. Individual believers presumably remained, keeping hope alive among the Diaspora of a future reunion of the twelve tribes(as we will see in Ezekiel), but as a political entity, the northern was finished...It was one of these groups of exiles living by the Kebar River in Babylonia, which included both faithful and not so faithful, to whom Ezekiel was commissioned to prophecy. (NIVAC p. 23)

Continuing with his introduction Duguid wrote:

When the text is allowed to speak for itself, it conveys a coherent and consistent worldview... (NIVAC p.25, emphasis added)

Based upon the text of Ezekiel and the comments quoted above one would think that Duguid would have completed the above sentence as follows: "...worldview that addresses the situation of those exiled from the house of Israel (northern kingdom) in the eighth century B. C."

However, this is not the way in which Duguid completed the above statement! Let's return to his introduction to see how he completed the above quote. He wrote:

...that addresses the situation of those exiled from **Judah in the sixth century B. C.** (Ibid, emphasis added)

Also in his introduction he wrote:

THE TASK THAT (caps in original) was assigned to Ezekiel was **to prophecy to the exiles of Judah.** (NIVAC p. 35, emphasis added)

This writer submits, for the reader's consideration, that the very thing that contributes most to the difficulty of understanding Ezekiel is the pre-suppositional assumption that "Ezekiel was assigned the task of prophesying to the exiles of Judah."

This writer submits that this is a completely erroneous assumption.

Although Duguid insists the text should be allowed to speak for itself, it seems that he did not allow the text of Ezekiel to speak for itself.

In spite of Duguid's assertion that Ezekiel was assigned the task of prophesying to the house of Judah, the text repeatedly states that Ezekiel was assigned the task of prophesying to the house of Israel (Ez.3:1,4, 5, et al.) and of being a watchman (Ez. 3:7 et al) to the house of Israel. **Is the house of Judah the same entity as the house of Israel?** It would appear that Duguid thinks that they are, or he is not really willing to allow the text to speak for itself. **According to the Bible they are not the same entity.** The Bible clearly establishes that the house of Judah is one entity, the southern kingdom composed of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin and of course including some Levites. The Bible also establishes that after the Yahweh induced division under Rehoboam **the house of Israel is a completely separate entity composed of the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel.**

While this writer has searched and searched, he has not found a single Bible reference that equates the house of Judah with the house of Israel. To the best of his knowledge the Bible never uses the phrase "the house of Israel" as a synonym for "the house of Judah."

It can be easily demonstrated that numerous verses in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua, and especially Ruth 4:11 refer to the 12 tribes of Israel as “the house of Israel.” However, as we approach the waning days of the judges and the days of the kings we begin to see a shift in this reference.

1Samuel states, But all Israel and Judah loved David. The same separation of identities is found in 2Sam.5:5; 11:11; 21:2 24:1; 1Chron.9:1; 27:7; 30:1 & 6; 35:27; 36:8; Jer.30:3; and Ez.9:9.

The phrase “the house of Judah” occurs 37 times in the Old Testament, and 5 of these or 14% are found in Ezekiel. None of these refer to Ezekiel as a prophet to Judah in exile, or otherwise. In addition to the above, the word Judah appears 754 times in the O.T. Fifteen or less than 2% of those occur in the book of Ezekiel. It would seem, to this writer at least, that if Yahweh had sent Ezekiel to “the exiles of Judah” that more mention would have been made of Judah and that at least one reference would state that Yahweh had told Ezekiel to go and speak to (the house of) Judah.

Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah, thus of the southern kingdom and is often used as a synonym for Judah and the house of Judah. Thus in Scripture, Jerusalem is another name often used to designate the house of Judah. This is especially true following the prophecies of 2 Kings 19:30 & 31; 20:6; and the events of 2Kings 19:32-37.

For reasons that we hope will become clear to the more discerning Bible students, the inspired Scripture makes a clear distinction between the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The purpose for this distinction is given in Genesis 48 and 49 (note especially 48:6, 11-20 and 49:8-12). At this point in Israel’s history the blessings prescribed in the Abrahamic covenant were divided between the two families of Jacob, particularly to Ephraim and Judah. Ephraim was designated to realize the fulfillment of the promise of the melo ha goyim (fullness of gentiles) through his descendants while Judah was assigned to bring forth the ruler and be the guardians of the Torah (teachings, commonly called the law) until the gathering (v.10, harvest-Hosea 6:11) of the people in the Messiah would occur. (There is much more that could and should be given here but for now time and space do not permit.)

Following the death of Solomon and the division of the kingdom between the two families of Jacob, the terms “Israel and the house of Israel” became the official Scriptural titles for the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. The phrase the “house of Israel” appears 140 times in the Old Testament. Sixty five (65, or 46%) of these occurrences are found in Ezekiel.

We will stipulate that prior to 1Samuel 18:16 many of the references to the house of Israel refer to all 12 tribes of Israel. However, after 1Samuel 18:16 the dissension between the two families of Jacob become more apparent and the tensions between the two families ebbed and flowed through the succession of the three kings: Saul, David,

and Solomon, and climaxed with a complete division of the mother nation of Israel into two daughter (Ez.23:2) kingdoms as recorded in 1Kings 11 & 12.

Note that in 1Kings 12:24 Yahweh told Rehoboam that He had done “this thing” (the division of Israel into Israel and Judah). From that point forward O.T. Scripture usually, if not exclusively, uses the words Israel, Samaria, house of Israel, Ephraim, etc. to identify the northern kingdom, and Judah, house of Judah, and Jerusalem to identify the southern kingdom.

Given the preponderance of evidence in Scripture that supports this and the absence of evidence to negate it, it seems to this writer that unless the context specifically dictates otherwise, Ezekiel’s use of the word “Israel” and the phrase “the house of Israel” should be considered to be references to the people of the divorced (Jer.3:8), and dispersed northern 10 tribes rather than “the exiles of Judah.” In this context, it is pertinent that Ezekiel **did not** identify himself as an exile from Judah in Ez. 1:2.

The northern 10 tribes (1Kings 11:35) are easily identified as “the rebellious nation” of Ez. 2, 3, et al. Just as Yahweh prognosticated (1Kings 12:24), the 10 tribes rebelled from Rehoboam and continued to live in **continuous, persistent rebellion** unto and beyond their dispersion by the Assyrians.

The tribes of Judah and Benjamin did not rebel, and the southern kingdom, although it often committed harlotry toward Yahweh, did not live in perpetual rebellion, and indeed often experience renewed obedience to Yahweh while the northern kingdom experienced no renewal of obedience while in the land.

Again given the preponderance of evidence for, and very little, if any evidence against, this writer submits that **Ezekiel was indeed a prophet to the people of the dispersed 10 tribes, not the “exiles of Judah.”**

In 3:1 & 4 Ezekiel is told to “go and speak unto the **house of Israel** (emphasis added),” and in verse 5 he is told that he is “sent to...**the house of Israel** (emphasis added), not the house of Judah. That this refers to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom should be evident from 3:5-6. If Ezekiel was sent to the “exiles from Judah,” this statement about language would be completely meaningless. There would be no question about the new exiles from Judah speaking the Hebrew language, but for the second and possibly third generation exiles in the Assyrian Diaspora that could be a legitimate concern.

In 3:11ff Ezekiel records that he was commanded to:

go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto **the children** of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them,...Then the Spirit took me up.. so the Spirit lifted me up, and took me away,...and I came to them of the captivity of Telabib that dwelt by the river Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days. (emphasis added)

As if to confirm the above understanding, Yahweh commanded Ezekiel to “go...unto **the Children** of his people.” If Ezekiel was a Jew and had been sent to the Jews in Babylonian exile, he would have been going to his people not the “**children of his people.**” **This is prima facie evidence that he was sent to the children of those who had been taken into the Assyrian captivity.**

Another very interesting thing about this account is that Ezekiel describes supernatural transportation to the location very similar to the “Spirit” transport of Philip in Acts 8:39-40.

Ezekiel “sat...astonished” among these people of the captivity for seven days, and after the seven days Yahweh told him that He had “made (him) a watchman unto **the house of Israel**, not the house of Judah or Jews.

In chapter 4 Ezekiel records that Yahweh told him to take a tile and draw a picture of the siege of Jerusalem (of the house of Judah) upon it, then Yahweh told him that this “shall be a sign to **the house of Israel**,” not the house of Judah. In the next four verses (4-7) Ezekiel specifically identifies the “house of Israel” and “the house of Judah” as co-existing but entirely different entities. How can it be asserted that “Ezekiel was assigned to prophesy to the exiles of Judah,” when Ezekiel clearly identifies them as separate and different entities, and declares that he was a prophet to and watchman for **the house of Israel**?

In verses 9-13 the “children of Israel...among the gentiles” are clearly equated to “the house of Israel’s...three hundred and ninety days” in verse 5, **not** the “forty days...of the house of Judah” in verse 6. Ezekiel’s prophecy about the house of Israel ends in verse 4 of chapter 5, and his prophecy against Jerusalem (the house of Judah) begins in verse 5 and goes through verse 17.

After Ezekiel was transported to the new location, Telebib, he experienced another vision (3:17-23). At the beginning of this vision “the word of Yahweh came unto (him), saying, Son of man, I have made you a **watchman unto the house of Israel**: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them (the house of Israel) warning from Me. According to Dr. Duguid and many other commentators Yahweh must have been confused; because according to them He must have really meant to say “the house of Judah.”

In this vision Ezekiel was instructed to “Arise, go forth into the plain, and there I will talk with you” (v.22). In response to this command Ezekiel arose “and went forth into the plain”, and there he saw “the glory of Yahweh” standing there, “as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face.” The Spirit “entered into” him, stood him upon his feet and spoke with him (v.24).

The monologue from the Spirit which began in 3:24 continued to 7:27. In this monologue Yahweh specifically identifies “**the house of Judah**” as “Jerusalem”(6-8), an

entity entirely different and separate from “**the house of Israel**” (vs.3-5 & 9-13). Apparently many commentators would have us believe that Yahweh is schizophrenic. He really just meant to identify the house of Judah and send Ezekiel to them in exile when the vast majority had not even been taken into Babylon yet.

After Yahweh finished this oracle, Ezekiel returned to his house and shut himself in just as he had been instructed at the commencement of the vision (v.24d).

Chapter 8 opens a year and 2 months later in Ezekiel’s house. We are not told where Ezekiel house was, but wherever it was “the elders of Judah” (Again Judah is identified as an entity existing apart from the house of Israel) managed to find it and came for a visit. While these elders of Judah were visiting Ezekiel, he had another vision. In this vision he was lifted up and taken “in the visions of Yahweh” to Jerusalem, and was shown a panoramic view of the incredible abominations of Israel: from the time of the “ancients” down through time to the present which is identified by the scribe Shaphan and his son Jaazanih, who lived during the reigns of Josiah, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin (2Kings 22-25).

After Yahweh had shown Ezekiel all the abominations of the past, He told Ezekiel that He would show him the even “greater abominations” (v.15) of the house of Judah (v.17). From 8:17 through 11:13, Ezekiel receives an oracle from Yahweh about the soon to come destruction of Jerusalem. In this oracle the house of Israel and the house of Judah are again identified as entirely different entities (9:9), and the house of Judah is identified as the city, Jerusalem (9:1).

Now note very carefully the following: Jerusalem is still intact. The Jews still have their temple, and most of the house of Judah, the residents of Jerusalem are still living in Jerusalem. The city has not been destroyed, the Jews, except for a couple kings and their entourages, are still in the city, but the impending destruction and captivity has been explained to Ezekiel. In this context, “the word of Yahweh came to” Ezekiel again saying:

Son of man, thy brethren, thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and **all the house of Israel wholly**, [are] they unto whom *the inhabitants of Jerusalem* have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession. 16 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; **Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries**, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. 17 Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. (Eze 11:15-17)

In verse 15, can “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” be anyone other than Judah, i.e. the house of Judah? Doesn’t this passage clearly state that “the house of Israel wholly” had already been “cast...far off among the Gentiles, and...scattered...among the countries?” Can this house of Israel, as defined by the passage, be any but the ten tribed northern kingdom that had been Diaspored in c. 722 B. C.? Doesn’t this passage clearly state that after the house

of Israel (the northern kingdom) had been cast off among the Gentiles that those left in the land at Jerusalem (2Kings 17:18; 19:34; 20:6; etc.) i.e. Judah; “said, get you (10 tribes) far from Yahweh: unto us (Judah) is this land given in possession.” What does this statement mean? We think it means that **Judah gloated over the casting off and scattering of the 10 tribes, usurped their claim to the land, and attempted to establish themselves as the sole recipients of Yahweh’s covenant promises.**

In response to that Yahweh declared “although I have cast them (the 10 tribed house of Israel) far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, **yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come...I will even gather you (the 10 tribes) from the people (Gentiles), and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered,...**”

Dear brothers, why can you not see that here, once again, Yahweh identifies **the house of Israel** and **the house of Judah (Jerusalem)** as two entirely separate entities in two different locations. In this oracle Yahweh clearly states that **the house of Judah** is still in **Jerusalem** and that the house of Israel **has been** (past tense) “**cast...far off among the Gentiles, and...scattered...among the countries.**” In this context it is very clear that the **house of Israel** refers to the ten tribes of the northern kingdom that had been cast out of the promised land of Canaan c. 721 B.C., approximately one hundred and twenty seven (127) years before Ezekiel was given this oracle. **Jerusalem** was not destroyed and the balance of the house of Judah (the Jews) taken into Babylon until seven (7) years later.

At the conclusion of this vision Ezekiel was again transported by the “Spirit of Yahweh into Chaldea, to them of the (house of Israel) captivity. So the vision went up from (him). Then (he) spoke unto them all the things that Yahweh had shown (him)”

Before we move on from this particular passage of Scripture, we must examine the phrase “I will give you the **land of Israel**” in verse 17. What did Yahweh mean when he pronounced this statement before the house of Israel through the lips of Ezekiel (11:25)? Is this a reference to the promised land of Canaan? While most modern students of Ezekiel think that this is a reference to a promise of return to the promised land Canaan, we do not think it is such a promise.

The phrase “the land of Israel” occurs 29 times in the Old Testament, twenty (69%) of those are in Ezekiel. Interestingly, only four (1Sam.13:19; 1Chron.13:2; 22:2, and 2Chron.2:17) of those occur before the kingdom of Israel is rent from Solomon’s son in 1Kings 11, and the nation that David and Solomon ruled over is divided into two kingdoms, Israel (10 tribes), the northern kingdom and Judah (2 tribes) the southern kingdom. Arguably, all other references (25 or 86%) refer to the homeland of the 10 tribed northern kingdom, otherwise it would be called the land of Judah.

The phrase the land of Judah occurs 24 times in the Old Testament. It first occurs in Deut.34:2, once in Ruth, twice in Samuel, twice in 2 Kings, four times in 2Chronicles, and once in Nehemiah. The other 13 appearances are in the prophets.

In light of the above information, there is a very interesting verse in 2Sam.7:10:

Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, (2Sa 7:10)

In context, this verse is a prophecy given to David by the prophet Nathan after he had ruled the nation of Israel, in the promised land for several years, and Yahweh had “cut off all (his) enemies,” given “him rest...from all his enemies” and made him “a great name” equal to or greater than any other man in history.

Now keep this in mind, at the time this prophecy was given the twelve tribes of Israel were a great nation living in the land that had been promised to them by Yahweh. In this context Yahweh stated that He would “appoint a place for my people Israel.” They already have their place in Canaan and yet Yahweh stated “I will appoint...”(future tense). Of this future place Yahweh states, I “will plant them (Israel), that they may dwell in a place of their own,...” Didn’t they already have a place of their own? No they did not, they were surrounded by and interspersed among “the Children of wickedness” and they experienced repeated assault from these people.

Of this future new place, Yahweh described a special purpose. That is that the children of Israel, His people forever (v.24), would “move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more,...”

That Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Old Testament people of faith anticipated this future country is made clear by Hebrews 11 & 12:

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 **For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.** 15 *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.* 16 **But now they desire a better country,** that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13-16, emphasis added)

In the light of the foregoing and much other evidence not included here, we submit that “the land of Israel” to which Ezekiel makes reference in 11:17; 13:9; 20:38; 20:42; 37:12; 38:18-19; and 40:2 is the new land for Israel which is prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:10 and referenced in Hebrews 11 and 12. (This concept has been well documented in other works by this author) **Thus contrary to popular opinion, Ezekiel does not prophesy about any return to the promised land of Canaan, but about the placement into the “new country” i.e. “the kingdom of God” of Hebrews 11-12 through the blood of Jesus Christ.**

Further proof that Ez. 11:15-17 is a reference to the **previously exiled and scattered** northern tribes is found in chapter 12. After telling Ezekiel that he “dwells in the midst of a rebellious house,” Yahweh gives Ezekiel an assignment (v.3-6) and then tells him that He has “set (him) for a sign unto the house of Israel.” According to verse 7 Ezekiel carried out his assignment, “and in the morning the word of Yahweh came unto him, saying, Son of man, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto you, What are you doing? Say unto them, Yahweh says; this burden *concerns* the prince in Jerusalem (Judah), and all the house of Israel that *are* among them (Judah in Jerusalem). Say (unto all the house of Israel in Jerusalem) I (Ezekiel) *am* your (the house of Israel) sign: like as I (Ez.) have done, so shall it be done unto them (Judah in Jerusalem): **They** (Judah in Jerusalem) **shall remove and go into captivity...And they shall know that I am Yahweh, when I shall scatter** (future tense) **them** (of Jerusalem, v.10) **among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.**” (Ez.12:8-11 & 15, emphasis and comments added)

The point is clear, The house of Israel **had been cast off and scattered among the Gentile countries**, and (the house of) Judah **would soon be removed and taken into captivity and eventually scattered among the Gentile countries!**

Many more details could be gleaned from chapters 13-19. However, for the purpose of this document let us fast forward to chapter 20. In chapter 20 Yahweh told Ezekiel:

Wherefore say unto the house of Israel,...33 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: 34 **And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered**, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out...and I will bring you into the bond of the (new) covenant:...40 **For in mine holy mountain** (the kingdom of Yahweh in Jesus Christ), in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, **there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land** (of 2Sam.7:10), **serve me: there will I accept them**, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41 I will accept you with your sweet savour, **when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered**; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

42 And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel (of 2Sam.7:10), into the country (Heb.11:14 & 16 et al.) for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. (Ez.20:30a, 33-35, & 37b, 40-42, emphasis and comments added)

Clearly the house of Israel is given a promise of being re-gathered into the kingdom of Yahweh in Jesus Christ through the new covenant in the blood of Christ. Now fast forward again to chapter 28, 34, and 37:

Thus saith the Lord Yahweh; When **I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered**, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. 26 And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am Yahweh their God. (Ez.28:25-26)

For thus saith the Lord Yahweh; Behold, I, even I, **will both search my sheep, and seek them out.** 12 **As a shepherd seeketh out his flock** in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; **so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.** 13 **And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries**, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14 I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. 16 **I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick:** but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment. 22 Therefore I will save my flock,...23 And I will set up one shepherd over them, my servant David, and shall feed them; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24 And I, Yahweh, shall be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I Yahweh have spoken it, and **I will make them a covenant of peace**,...30 Thus shall they know that Yahweh their God with them, and they, **the house of Israel my people says the Lord Yahweh.** 31 And you my flock, the flock of my pasture, men, I your God says the Lord Yahweh. (Ez. 34:11-16, 22-24, 30-31, emphasis added)

15 ¶ The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee **one stick**, and write upon it, **For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions:** then take **another stick**, and write upon it, **For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:** 17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. 18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? 19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick**, and they shall be one in mine hand. 20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. 21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, **I will take the children of Israel from among the Gentiles**, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22 **And I will make them one nation** in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and **one king shall be king to them all:** and **they shall be no more two nations, neither shall**

they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. 24 And David my servant shall be king over them; and **they all shall have one shepherd:** they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. 26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 And **the Gentiles** (the redeemed house of Israel) **shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel (the redeemed and restored ONE NATION),** when my sanctuary shall be **IN THE MIDST OF THEM FOR EVERMORE.** (Ezekiel 37:15-28, emphasis added)

In response to the above prophecies, the New Testament declares:

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people (of the Jews), and was moved with compassion toward them, because **they were as sheep** not having a **shepherd:** and he began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)

But when he saw the multitudes (of Jews), he was moved with compassion on them, because **they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep** having no **shepherd.** Matthew 9:36

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the **shepherd,** and **the sheep of the flock** (the Apostles) **shall be scattered abroad.** (Matthew 26:31)

And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the **shepherd,** and **the sheep** (the Apostles) **shall be scattered.** (Mark 14:27)

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead **our Lord Jesus, THAT GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP** (the united flock), through the blood of the everlasting covenant, (Hebrews 13:20)

But he that entereth in by the door is **the shepherd of the sheep.** (John 10:2) I am **the good shepherd:** the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. **I am the good shepherd,** and know my sheep, and am known of mine. **And other sheep I have, which**

are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be **one fold, and one shepherd**. (John 10:2-16, emphasis and comments added in all the above)

In the above passage “*this fold*” is a clear reference to the Jews; while the “**other sheep I have**” to which Jesus referred in this same passage is **the house of Israel** which had been scattered into the nations and become Gentiles as a result of their captivity by the Assyrians in the 8th century BC. In Acts 15:14 James refers to these sheep as follows:

Simeon has declared how Yahweh at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take **out of them** a people for His name.

This same flock of sheep is also referred to in the Gospel of John as follows:

Then said the Jews among themselves, whither will He go, that we shall not find Him? Will He go **unto the dispersed among the Gentiles**, and teach the Gentiles? (Only the house of Israel had been dispersed among the Gentiles by Yahweh; John 7:35)

...but that also He (Jesus) should gather together **in one** the children of Yahweh **that were scattered abroad**. (Only the house of Israel had been scattered abroad by Yahweh; John 11:52, emphasis added)

According to Matthew, Jesus stated that He was sent to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 15:24)

And Jesus commanded His Apostles to:

...go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 10:6)

But at the same time He warned them that they would be “as sheep in the midst of wolves.” The wolves, of course, were the apostate Jews who would wage war to the death against the Apostles and other disciples until their opposition was finally destroyed in 70 AD when the power of the Jews was broken, and they, their temple and city were destroyed.

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: (Matthew 10:16)

According to Luke, the disciples were referenced as a “little flock” and they were given the kingdom:

Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32)

The Apostle Peter and other New Testament writers clearly refer to the Gentile converts as the “flock” to which Jesus made reference in John 10:2-16 as follows:

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto **the Shepherd** and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2:25)

Feed *the flock of God* which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to *the flock*. And when **the chief Shepherd** shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. (1 Peter 5:2-4)

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all *the flock*, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves (Apostate Jews) enter in among you, not sparing *the flock*. (Acts 20:29)

Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth *a flock*, and eateth not of the milk of *the flock*? (1 Corinthians 9:7)

In perfect fulfillment of the prophecies in Ezekiel 28, 34, and 37:15-27 Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep gathered the two flocks (sticks); Judah and the house of Israel (Gentiles) into one fold (Christians), gave them their land, and dwells among (within) them for evermore. Having accomplished all the above He truly:

...gathered all Gentiles before Him: and He ...separate[d] them one from another, as **a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats**: (Matthew 25:32)