

LESSON 43
“The Shepherds of Israel”
Ezekiel 18; 34; 37

OVERVIEW:

The power of repentance and the restoration of blessings for righteous living.

Ezekiel was a prophet from 592 to 570 BC. Judah was taken captive in 597BC, so Ezekiel was a prophet while in Babylon.

The book is divided into three parts:

Chapters 1-24 discuss the punishments that will come upon Judah.

Chapters 25-39 talk about restoration.

Chapters 40-48 deal with the temple rebuilding and worship. Ezekiel is mentioned in D&C 29: 21: And the great and abominable church, which is the whore of all the earth, shall be cast down by devouring fire, according as it is spoken by the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, who spoke of these things, which have not come to pass but surely must, as I live, for abominations shall not reign.

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET
EZEKIEL
CHAPTER 18

Men shall be punished for their own sins—Sinners shall die, and the righteous shall save their souls—A righteous man who sins shall be damned, and a sinner who repents shall be saved.

1 THE word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,

2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour ^agrapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? (This was a common belief at that time that the children inherited the curses of their parents.) Jeremiah 31: 29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour ^agrape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. 30 But every one shall ^adie for his own ^biniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

3 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel.

4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that ^asinneth, it shall ^bdie.

5 ¶ But if a man be ^ajust, and do that which is lawful and right,

6 And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath ^alifted up his eyes to the ^bidols of the house of Israel, neither hath ^cdefiled his neighbour’s wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous ^dwoman, (Pagan rituals performed during idol worshipping.)

7 And hath not oppressed any, *but* hath restored to the debtor his ^apledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the ^bnaked with a garment; (charity)

8 He *that* hath not given forth upon ^ausury, neither hath taken any increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man,

9 Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live,

saith the Lord GOD.

10 ¶ If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood, and *that* doeth the like to *any* one of these *things*,

11 And that doeth not any of those *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his ^aneighbour's wife,

12 Hath oppressed the ^apoor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination,

13 Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die; his ^ablood shall be upon him. (We will be punished for our own sins.)

14 ¶ Now, lo, *if* he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not ^asuch like, (Heb like them)

15 *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife,

16 Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment,

17 *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live.

18 *As for* his father, because he ^acruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did *that* which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity.

19 ¶ Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

20 The soul that ^asinneth, it shall die. The son shall not ^bbear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the ^crighteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

21 But if the wicked will ^aturn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. (Keeping the commandments of God allows us to stay alive spiritually.)

22 All his ^atransgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

23 Have I any ^apleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live? (God wants all of His children to repent so that they can live with Him.)

24 ¶ But when the ^arighteous ^bturneth away from his ^crighteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his ^dsin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. (A person can't be saved by his prior righteous acts if he turns wicked.)

25 ¶ Yet ye say, The ^away of the Lord is not ^bequal. (Heb right, or just) Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?

26 When a righteous *man* ^aturneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and ^bdieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.

27 Again, when the wicked *man* ^aturneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

28 Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

29 Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not ^aequal. (Heb right or just) O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

30 Therefore I will ^ajudge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your ^btransgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

31 ¶ ^aCast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new ^bheart and a ^cnew spirit: for why will ye ^ddie, O house of Israel?

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD(;)∴ wherefore turn (ye and live) yourselves, and live ye.

CHAPTER 34

The Lord reproves those shepherds who do not feed the flock—In the last days, the Lord will gather the lost sheep of Israel—The Messiah shall be their Shepherd—The Lord will make his gospel covenant with them.

Ezekiel switches from prophesying about the destruction of Jerusalem to prophecies of the last days and the Millennium.

1 AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe *be* to the ^ashepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds ^bfeed the flocks? (Who are the shepherds? Home and visiting teachers, stake presidents, bishops, quorum leaders, fathers in Israel, all who hold the priesthood. President Ezra Taft Benson, Come Unto Christ, p. 65-69)

3 Ye eat the ^afat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: *but* ye feed not the flock.

4 The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was ^asick, neither have ye bound up *that which was* broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with ^bcruelty have ye ruled them.

5 And they were scattered, because *there is* no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered.

6 My ^asheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek *after them*.

7 ¶ Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

8 As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the ^ashepherds ^bfed themselves, and fed not my flock;

9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;

10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against the shepherds; and I will ^arequire my flock at their hand, and cause them to ^bcease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.

11 ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, *even* I, will both ^asearch my sheep, and seek them out.

12 As a ^ashepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are* scattered; so will I ^bseek out my ^csheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been ^dscattered in the ^ecloudy and ^fdark day.

13 And I will ^abring them out from the people, and ^bgather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own ^cland, 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 ^alie 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 ^alost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up *that which was* broken, and will strengthen that which was ^bsick: but I will destroy the ^cfat and the strong; I will feed them with ^djudgment.

17 And *as for* you, O my ^aflock, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I ^bjudge ^cbetween cattle and cattle, (Heb between sheep and sheep ie between one sheep and another) between the rams and the he goats.

18 *Seemeth it* a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must ^afoul the residue with your feet?

19 And *as for* my flock, they eat that which ye have ^atrodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. (The sheep will also be judged)

20 ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them; Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.

21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad;

22 Therefore will I save my ^aflock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle.

23 And I will set up ^aone ^bshepherd over them, (the millennial reign of Christ) and he shall feed them, *even* my servant ^cDavid; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

24 And I ^athe LORD (Heb Jehovah) will be their ^bGod, and my servant ^cDavid a ^dprince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*.

25 And I will make with them a ^acovenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell ^bsafely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the ^ashower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of ^bblessing.

27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the ^aearth shall yield her increase, and they shall be ^bsafe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their ^cyoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that ^dserved themselves of them. (Heb enslaved them)

28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell ^asafely, and none shall make *them* afraid.

29 And I will raise up for them a ^aplant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the ^bshame of the heathen any more.

30 Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them, and *that* they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, saith the Lord GOD.

31 And ye my ^aflock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men, and I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.

(Jehovah was the good Shepherd. John 10: 11 and 14 11 I am the good ^ashepherd: the good ^bshepherd giveth his life for ~~the~~ (his) sheep. (Ezekiel 37:23 & 31 talks about the Messiah being the good shepherd. The Jews understood that saying he was the good shepherd meant that he was the Messiah. 23 And I will set up ^aone ^bshepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant ^cDavid; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 31 And ye my ^aflock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men, and I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.)

12 ~~But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd,~~ (And the shepherd is not as a hireling,) whose own the sheep are not, (who) seeth the wolf coming, and ^aleaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth ~~them~~ (the sheep) and scattereth ~~the sheep~~ (them).

13 ~~The~~ (But he who is a) ^ahireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 (For) I am the good ^ashepherd, and ^bknow my ^csheep, and am known of mine. (Verses 13 & 14 are reversed in the JST.)

15 As the Father knoweth me, *even* so ^aknow I the Father: and I lay down my ^blife for the sheep. (“A natural effect of His immortal origin, as the earth-born Son of an immortal Sire, was that He was immune to death except as He surrendered thereto. The life of Jesus the Christ could not be taken save as He willed and allowed. The power to lay down His life was inherent in Himself, as was the power to take up His slain body in an immortalized state.” Jesus the Christ, p. 389)

16 And ^aother ^bsheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my

voice; and there shall be ^cone fold, *and* one shepherd. (We know that He spoke here of the Nephites and Lamanites on the American continent. 3 Nephi 15: 12 Ye are my ^adisciples; and ye are a ^blight unto this people, who are a remnant of the house of ^cJoseph. 13 And behold, this is the ^aland of your inheritance; and the Father hath given it unto you. 14 And not at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should ^atell it unto your brethren at Jerusalem. 15 Neither at any time hath the Father given me commandment that I should tell unto them concerning the ^aother tribes of the house of Israel, whom the Father hath led away out of the land. 16 This much did the Father ^acommand me, that I should tell unto them: 17 That 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 ^ashepherd. 18 And now, because of ^astiffneckedness and ^bunbelief they ^cunderstood not my word; therefore I was commanded to say no more of the ^dFather concerning this thing unto them. 19 But, verily, I say unto you that the Father hath commanded me, and I tell it unto you, that ye were ^aseparated from among them because of their iniquity; therefore it is because of their iniquity that they know not of you. 20 And verily, I say unto you again that the other tribes hath the Father separated from them; and it is because of their iniquity that they know not of them. 21 And verily I say unto you, that ye are they of whom I said: ^aOther 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 ^bshepherd. 22 And they understood me not, for they supposed it had been the ^aGentiles; for they understood not that the Gentiles should be ^bconverted through their preaching. 23 And they understood me not that I said they shall hear my voice; and they understood me not that the ^aGentiles should not at any time hear my voice—that I should not manifest myself unto them save it were by the ^bHoly Ghost. 24 But behold, ye have both heard ^amy voice, and seen me; and ye are my sheep, and ye are numbered among those whom the Father hath ^bgiven me.)

17 Therefore doth my Father ^alove me, because I ^blay down my life, that I might ^ctake it again.

18 No man ^ataketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have ^bpower to lay it down, and I have ^cpower (Gr authority, full power) to take it again. This commandment have I ^dreceived of my Father.

19 ¶ There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.

20 And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?

21 Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

22 ¶ And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter (around December. An 8 day feast celebrating the dedication of the temple around 163 BC. This is today Chanakuh. Three months after the feast of the Tabernacles.).

23 And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's ^aporch.

24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to ^adoubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. ("He could not well answer their inquiry by a simple unqualified affirmation, for by such He would have been understood as meaning that He claimed to be the Messiah according to their conception, the earthly king and conqueror for whom they professed to be looking. He was no such Christ as they had in mind." Jesus the Christ, p. 454)

25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye ^abelieved not: the ^bworks that I do in my Father's ^cname, they bear witness of me.

26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.

27 My ^asheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they ^bfollow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which ^agave them me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. ("The scriptures indicate that the tendency to accept or reject Christ's voice in premortality carries over into this mortal life, for Christ has said that "whoso cometh not unto me is under the bondage of sin. And whoso receiveth not my voice is not acquainted with my voice, and is not of me." (D&C 84:51-52) Lamar Garrard, Studies in Scriptures, 6:331. Bruce R. McConkie said: "The

concept of a chosen and favored people, a concept scarcely known in the world and but little understood even by the saints of God, is one of the most marvelous systems ever devised for administering salvation to all men in all nations in all ages... This is the doctrine of election. They were true and faithful in the premortal life, and they earned the right to be born as the Lord's people and to have the privilege, on a preferential basis, of believing and obeying the word of truth. Believing blood, the blood of Abraham, flows in their veins. They are the ones of whom Jesus said: 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' (John 10:27-28.)" (*The Millennial Messiah: The Second Coming of the Son of Man* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982], 182.))

30 I and my Father are ^aone. (He again forcefully testifies that he is the Son of God.)

31 Then the Jews took up ^astones again to stone him.

32 Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? (For which of my works/miracles am I worthy of death?)

33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for ^ablasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself ^bGod.

34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are ^agods?

35 If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken;

36 Say ye of him, whom the Father hath ^asanctified, and ^bsent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the ^cSon of God? (Do you not understand the plan of salvation that was revealed to your fathers? Do you not know that all of the children of the Father have power to advance and progress and become like him? Have you never read that those who received your law in olden times had the promise that they could attain godhood and be gods themselves? Why accuse me of blasphemy for testifying that I was sanctified and sent into the world by the Father? Does it offend you to hear me say that I am the Son of God? Do you not know that every righteous person to whom the word of God comes, and who then obeys the fullness of that law, shall become like the Father and be a god himself? MM, 3:220)

37 If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.

38 But if I do, though ye believe not me, ^abelieve the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the ^bFather is in me, and I in him.

39 Therefore they ^asought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand,

40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

41 And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true.

42 And many believed on him there.

Jesus states that He is the Good Shepherd. This was not just a declaration that He was a shepherd, but that He is God. President Kimball said: "Home teachers are to help watch over the flock. Even though they don't counsel as bishops and branch presidents do, home teachers can render much appropriate and preventive help under the direction of the quorum leaders and bishoprics. Stake presidents, bishops, and branch presidents, please take a particular interest in improving the quality of teaching in the Church. The Savior has told us to feed his sheep. I fear that all too often many of our members come to church, sit through a class or meeting, and they then return home having been largely uninformed. It is especially unfortunate when this happens at a time when they may be entering a period of stress, temptation, or crisis. We all need to be touched and nurtured by the Spirit, and effective teaching is one of the most important ways this can happen. We often do vigorous enlistment work to get members to come to church but then do not adequately watch over what they receive when they do come. CR Oct 1980, p. 67)

CHAPTER 37

Israel shall inherit the land in the resurrection—The stick of Judah (Bible) and the stick of Joseph (Book of Mormon) become one in the Lord's hand—Israel shall be gathered and cleansed—The Messiah shall reign over them—They shall receive the everlasting gospel covenant.

Ezekiel gives two prophecies, but they are one in meaning.

1 THE ^ahand of the LORD was upon me, and ^bcarried me out in the ^cspirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, (The valley was the Kidron valley in between the old city of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. The dry bones represent that the ancient body of true religion has died, leaving a skeleton – the sticks of the body. Judasim with its Old Testament is what is left, or the stick of Judah, the skeleton of true religion. In latter-days, the skeleton is clothed with a new body, the Book of Mormon, and breath (the Spirit of the Lord) is given so that the true religion is resurrected. The body is alive again, never to die. The covenant is restored anew, never to die again, the “New and Everlasting Covenant.”)

2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones ^alive? (or resurrect) And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.

4 Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause ^abreath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, ^abone to his bone.

8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them.

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the ^awind, (Heb spirit, breath, or wind) prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four ^bwinds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.

10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the ^abreath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

11 ¶ Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is ^alost: we are cut off for our parts.

12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your ^agraves, and cause you to ^bcome up out of your graves, and ^cbring you into the ^dland of Israel.

13 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

14 And shall put my ^aspirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD. (Israel will be gathered in the last days.)

15 ¶ The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,

16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one ^astick, (Heb wood. Wooden writing tablets were in common use in Babylon in Ezekiel's day) and ^bwrite upon it, For ^cJudah, and for the children of Israel

his companions: then take another stick, and ^dwrite upon it, For ^eJoseph, the ^fstick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: (D&C 27:5 - 5 Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will ^adrink of the fruit of the ^bvine with you on the earth, and with ^cMoroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the ^drecord of the ^estick of ^fEphraim;)

17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become ^aone in thine hand. (Joseph of old prophesied of the book of Joseph: JST Gen 50:31 -31 Wherefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. Elder Boyd K. Packer said: “The stick or record of Judah – the Old and New Testament – and the stick of Ephraim – the Book of Mormon, which is another testament of Jesus Christ – are now woven together in such a way that as you pore over one you are drawn to the other, as you learn from one you are enlightened by the other. They are indeed one in our hands.” CR Oct 1982, p. 75)

18 ¶ And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us ^awhat thou *meanest* by these?

19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of ^aJoseph, 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 ^aheathen, (Heb nations or gentiles) whither they be gone, and will ^bgather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

22 And I will make them ^aone ^bnation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and ^cone king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more ^dtwo nations (The tribes led by Judah and by Ephraim were historically adversaries (after events of 1 Kings 12:16-20). In the latter days this enmity will be healed), neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their ^aidols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will ^bsave them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will ^ccleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

24 And ^aDavid my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one ^bshepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

25 And they shall dwell in the ^aland 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 ^bever: and my servant David *shall be* their ^cprince for ever.

26 Moreover I will make a ^acovenant of peace with them; it shall be an ^beverlasting ^ccovenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my ^dsanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

27 My ^atabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their ^bGod, and they shall be my people.

28 And the ^aheathen shall ^bknow that I the LORD do ^csanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. (President Joseph Fielding Smith said: “Ezekiel predicted the building of a temple in Jerusalem which will be used for ordinance work after the gathering of Israel from the long dispersion and when they are cleansed from their transgressions.” Doctrines of Salvation, 2:244. See Ezekiel 40-47 for a description of the latter day temple in Jerusalem.)

Some Bible scholars say that Hebrew scripture, mainly the Old Testament, contains a minimum of five layers of meaning. The analogy of the sticks has more.

Layer one – It's just a story of two sticks magically turned into one.

Layer two – Combining the sticks is the same as gathering people. Verse 21 is the explanation.

Layer three – Now it's about two nations ruled by two kings. The two sticks are two scepters that become one.

Layer four – The two kings become one king to a unification of the two lands into one.

Layer five – deals with the birthright leadership of the House of Israel. Judah and Ephraim had become the leaders of the split kingdoms. They will be combined into one kingdom.

Layer six – The one king is representative of one God. Idolatry will be gone and they will worship the true God.

Layer seven – If they have only one God, then there is only one religion, the everlasting covenant.

Layer eight – The unified religion will bring unity to two books of scripture, namely the Bible and Book of Mormon.

The meaning of the chapter: The gathering of the dispersed of Israel, their establishment in promised lands, the restoration of Judah and Israel into one nation, the restoration of their status as a worthy covenant people before the Lord, and the restoration of the Lord himself to his rightful position as Israel's divine king.

Judah is the Jews who are scattered in most nations of the earth. Israel is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the vast majority of whose members belong, either by birth or by adoption, to the chief northern tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. The prophesied reunification of Judah and Israel will come when the Jews accept the covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ and join the Lord's Church. The complete fulfillment of this prophecy will not be seen until after the Second Coming.

There is an interesting story of an eyewitness of a resurrection that follows. This is taken from a collection of rare "folk stories" held by the Utah State University Special Collections & Archives. Actual names have been removed to protect the privacy of those persons involved.

February 1976, Provo, Utah: Jennifer is a sixteen year old student at Provo High School. As she was being interviewed she went down to her room and brought up a pink sheet of paper. On the paper was written this related story. Jennifer said that she received this story from her Seminary teacher at school. Her reaction to this story was one of mixed emotion because she wanted to believe it, but at the same time it seemed a little too much. The story was told to "strengthen the testimony of the student" concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I have been requested to relate an experience I had in 1908 or 1909 in San Juan County. I was just making a home in Blanding and the whole country there was covered with trees and sagebrush. I was working to clear the ground to plant a few acres of corn. We had five acres cleared and had started to plant the corn. I would plow around the piece of ground and then he would plant the furrow with corn. Then I would cover it and plow it again. While I was plowing on that piece of ground I discovered there were ancient houses – the remains of them.

As I was plowing around I noticed that my plow had turned out the skeleton of a small child. The skull and the backbone, most of the bones, of course were decayed and gone. Part of the skeleton was there, so I stopped immediately as the plow had passed it a little. I turned and looked back against the bar of the plow between the handles. As I was looking at the little skeleton that I had plowed up wondering, all of a sudden to my surprise I saw the bones wiggle and they began to change position and to take on a different color, and within a minute there lay a beautiful skeleton. It was a perfect little skeleton.

Then I saw the inner parts of the natural body come in – the entrails, etc. I saw the flesh coming on, and I saw skin come on the body when the inner parts of the body were complete. A beautiful head of hair adorned the top of the head and in about a half minute after the hair was on the head, the child raised up on her feet. She was lying a little on her side with her back toward me. Because of this, I wasn't able to discern the sex of the child, but as she raised a beautiful robe come down over her left shoulder, and I saw it must be a girl.

She looked up and I looked at her for a quarter of a minute – we just looked at each other smiling. Then in my desire to get hold of her I said, “Oh you beautiful child!” and I reached as if I would embrace her, and she disappeared.

That was all I saw, and I stood there and wondered. And I thought for a few minutes. My little boy was wondering why I was there, because he was down at the other end of the row, anxious to come plant the corn. Now, I couldn't tell that story to anyone because it was so mysterious to me and such. Why should I have such a miraculous experience! I couldn't feature a human being in such a condition to accidentally plow that little thing up and see it come to life, the body of a child five to seven years old, I'd say.

I couldn't tell the story to anyone until finally one day I met a dear friend of mine, Stake Patriarch Wayne of Blanding. He stopped me on the street and said, “Zeke, you have had an experience on this mesa you won't tell. I want you to tell it to me. Well, I told it to him, then he had me tell it to meeting houses and many socials, fast meetings, and at conference time.

I wondered, and it worried me for years as to why I was allowed to see it, a common man like me, uneducated. Why was I, a common man, allowed to see such a marvelous manifestation of God's power!

One day as I was walking alone with my hoe on my shoulder going to hoe some corn something said, stop under the shade of that tree for a few minutes and rest. This just came to me and I thought I would, so I stopped there and this was given to me.

It was in answer to my prayer. I prayed incessantly for an answer as to why I was privileged to see that resurrection. I was told why. When the child was buried there it is either in a time of war with a different tribe or it was winter time when the ground was frozen and they had no tools to dig deep graves. If it were during time of war they couldn't possibly take time to dig a deep grave, they just planted that little body as deep as they could under the circumstances. When it was done the sorrowing mother knew that it was such a shallow little grave, the first beast that comes along will smell her body and will dig her up and scatter her to the four winds. Her bones will be scattered all over the flats. There just happened to be a man present holding the priesthood (a Nephite or a Jaredite) I don't know which because they had both been in this country. I've been in their houses and knew it.

This man said, sister, calm your sorrow. Whenever the little body is disturbed or uncovered, the Lord will call her up and she will leave, since that time I have taken great comfort, great cheer and consolation, and satisfaction with praise in my hearty soul, until I haven't the words to express it, that it was I that uncovered that little body.

Thank you for listening to me, I just can't tell this without crying.

Zeke, son of Joel. Experience related on November 5, 1954.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.