



EZEKIEL: *Death and Resurrection*

A Bible Study with John Oswalt

EZEKIEL 31–32

Background: The two chapters are to be dated in the summer of 587 (31) and the late winter of 585 (32), thus the year before and the year after Jerusalem's fall.

- In 609 BC the Assyrian empire was “on the ropes.” The great cities of the empire, Nineveh, Asshur, and Kalah had all been captured and sacked by the Medo-Babylonian alliance, and the Assyrian emperor with his army had fled to the west. There at Haran, some 225 miles NE of Damascus they made a stand. Necho, the Egyptian pharaoh, came north to help them probably because he wanted them as a buffer between himself and the Medo-Babylonians. The battle seems to have been something of a standoff, but the Assyrians and the Egyptians needed a victory, and they did not get it. After that, it was really the Egyptians who were propping up the few Assyrian remnants in Northern Syria. That all came to an end in 605 when the new Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, dealt the Egyptians a decisive defeat at Carchemish (40 or 50 miles west of Haran). This is the background to chapter 31: you Egyptians saw the mighty Assyrian empire fall, and you could do nothing to prevent it. Do you think you are any better than them?
 - Particularly in re. 31:13–17, remember that the Assyrian empire shaped its world for some 300 years.
 - In the pagan origin myths, the great god brought the world into existence by defeating the eternally-existent chaos monster who was watery matter and bringing order out of that chaotic stuff.
 - The Egyptians were able to hold off the Babylonians for many years, but there is evidence to believe Nebuchadnezzar finally conquered them about 568 BC.
1. What are your impressions from the poem in 31:1–9? Why does the prophet go to such lengths?
 2. Why do you think he shifts from poetry to prose to describe Assyria's fall (beginning in verse 10)?
 3. According to verses 10 and 11, why did Assyria fall? We have talked about this issue throughout the study; what are your reflections here? Why is it an issue?

4. Note the dating of the two chapters in the background above. What do you think is the possible significance of the two dates?
5. See the background above and notice the language of 32:1–10. How is Ezekiel using the language and altering the ideas of the ancient myth? What does this say about revelation through incarnation?
6. The theme of 32:16–32 might be this: “Death is the great leveler.” Reflect on this as both a negative and positive thought. Think of death also as the necessary result of alienation from Yahweh.