

EZEKIEL

Death & Resurrection

Volume 2

Student Workbook

A BIBLE STUDY BY JOHN N. OSWALT

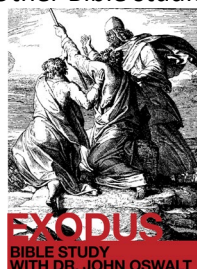


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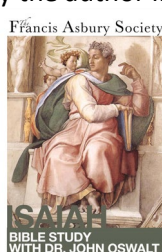
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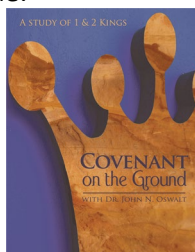
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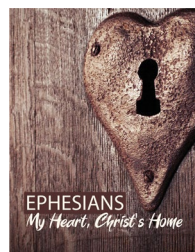
Exodus



Isaiah



*Covenant on the
Ground: 1 & 2 Kings*



*Ephesians: My
Heart, Christ's Home*



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EZEKIEL 12–13

Background: After the introduction in chapters 1–11, the next major division is chapters 12–24: The Certainty of the Destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. These messages were all delivered between August 594 (Ezek. 8:1) and January 587 (Ezek. 24:1). But the only one of them that can be precisely dated is Ezekiel 20:1–44, which was delivered on July 10, 590. The individual messages are marked by the phrase “The Word of the LORD came to me” (Ezek. 12:1, etc.). However, the phrase can appear several times within a single incident or message (so Ezek. 12:8, 16, 21, 26).

- The collection is quite miscellaneous, beginning with a sign-act and ending with the death of Ezekiel’s wife. In between there are allegories, parables, poems, judgment oracles, and logical discourses.
 - Chapters 12 and 13 may be read together as a comment on prophecy. In chapter 12 the true prophet is seen in action, while in chapter 13 false prophets are described and judged. In this sense, the two chapters are introductory to what follows: the true prophet tells of destruction to come, while the false prophets predict that all will be well.
 - Divination (Ezek. 12:24; etc.) was forbidden in the Old Testament. This was an attempt to predict the future based on the position of the stars at a certain time, the action of certain birds, or the shape or action of some other facet of creation. It grows out of the belief that there are magical connections between all the parts of the cosmos.
1. Look up 2 Kings 25:4–8 and compare it to Ezekiel 12:11–14. What are the similarities?
 2. Notice the refrain in verses 15 and 16. What is the relationship of this sign-act (this prediction) to that statement? What is one of the purposes of predictive prophecy? (Note the repetition in verse 20 as well.)
 3. What can we say about a true prophet thus far?
 4. What is the point of the proverb and the rejoinder in verses 21–23. Compare Isaiah 5:19 and 2 Peter 3:4. What is the problem in all these places?

5. On verse 24 compare Ezekiel 13:23, Jeremiah 14:14, and Zechariah 13:2–4. See the Background above.
6. According to Ezekiel 13:2 and 3, how were the false prophets like the true one?
7. What is the problem with the false prophets according to verse 5, and then verses 10 and following?
8. What is the point of the whitewashed wall imagery? Should a prophet do more than predict the future? Are they only wrong because they are predicting peace? If one says destruction and the other says peace, what makes one right and the other wrong?
9. What is the sin of the women condemned in verses 17–23? Why are they doing it (v. 19)? What's the problem with that?
10. What does verse 22 say about the moral state of these women and their relationship to God?



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EZEKIEL 14–15

Background: Ezekiel 14:1–11 continues the prophecies about true and false prophecy that began in Ezekiel 12:21. Then Ezekiel 14:12–23 expresses the inevitability of the exile, while Ezekiel 15:1–8 gives us a parable of why the exile is inevitable.

In his commentary, D. Block refers to the literary structure of Ezekiel 14:12–20 as “paneling,” i.e., repeated use of the same structure. The prophet does the same thing elsewhere in the book.

1. According to Ezekiel 14:1–3 what is the problem with “the elders of Israel”? What do you suppose their reaction was when Ezekiel informed them of their real condition?
2. What do you think is meant by “set up idols in their hearts”? How do we do that?
3. What might “wicked stumbling blocks” refer to? What are some contemporary examples?
4. How will the Lord answer such people (vv. 5, 8)? But *why* will he do that? What is God’s intended last word? What does he want (vv. 5, 6)?
5. As you consider verses 9–11, think about what the elders wanted from Ezekiel. Did they want the truth or a lie? Now look at Psalm 18:26–27. As with the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart, we have to consider who the person was and what he really wanted. Also look up 1 Kings 22:20–23. How are we going to coordinate this with James 1:13?
6. What are the common elements of each of the “panels” in Ezekiel 14:12–20? What is the point of all of them? Why do you think Ezekiel uses this structure? Wouldn’t one have been enough?

7. What is the point of verses 21–23? How does this provide a fitting conclusion to Ezekiel 14:12–20?
8. Israel considered itself a special vine (see Ps 80:8–19). But Ezekiel looks at that image from another perspective. They have only produced bitter grapes (Isa 5:1–7). That being so, what else are they good for (15:1–5)?
9. Think about Ezekiel 15:7. How else might the sentence have concluded (“...set my face against them, then...”)? What does this conclusion suggest? Who might “you” refer to?



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EZEKIEL 16–17

Background: Josiah died in 609 (anti-Egyptian); replaced by his younger son Jehoahaz (apparently also anti-Egyptian, captured and taken to Egypt after only 3 months); replaced by his older brother Jehoiakim in 609 who was initially an Egyptian vassal. In 605 Nebuchadnezzar came through the region demanding submission to Babylon. Jehoiakim did submit, but in 601 he revolted (Nebuchadnezzar had suffered a defeat at the border of Egypt). Unfortunately for Jehoiakim the defeat was temporary, and the Babylonian army besieged Jerusalem. In 598 Jehoiakim died at age 35. He was succeeded by his 18-year-old son, Jehoiachin, who immediately surrendered and was taken captive with the royal family and other leaders (including Ezekiel). The Babylonians took another son of Josiah and put him on the throne as their covenant lackey. He eventually turned away from the Babylonians (as a result of Egyptian promises?) and revolted. Babylon besieged Jerusalem again, and this time destroyed the city.

1. As is obvious, chapter 16 is an extended allegory depicting Yahweh and Judah.
 - a. What is said about their origins (and genetics)?
 - b. What is said about their original condition and Yahweh's behavior toward them?
 - c. How did Yahweh feel about them?
 - d. What did they do with Yahweh's gift?
 - e. Why does Ezekiel make such use of the marriage, adultery, and prostitution language?

- f. What does all this mean for marriage and its theological importance?
 - g. If Judah's behavior was not actually as bad as Samaria's and Sodom's, why might they have still been worthy of the worse punishment? What is the principle?
 - h. What are the lessons we should draw for ourselves?
2. Chapter seventeen is a somewhat more obscure allegory, which Ezekiel apparently realizes since he gives an explanation. See the background above for the political history. Babylon is the first eagle, and Egypt is the second.
- a. What does Ezekiel (and Yahweh) think of Josiah and Jehoiachin (v. 3)?
 - b. What do they think of Zedekiah (v 5, see chapter 15)?
 - c. What did Zedekiah do (vv. 7–8)? How does the rest of the chapter view this (vv. 13–15)?
 - d. Why would breaking a covenant with the Babylonians be seen as breaking one with God? Consider Matthew 25:40 and think of the reverse side of that.



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EZEKIEL 18–19

Background:

- Note that another proverbial saying was corrected in chapter 12, verse 22. The one here was evidently very popular, since it is also referred to in Jeremiah 31:29–30.
 - Chapter 19 is composed of two more allegories detailing the tragic fate of Josiah's sons.
 - A lament is a specific literary genre, marked typically by a unique meter (3 accents, then 2, 3 then 2, etc.), sometimes called a “limping” meter, and specialized vocabulary.
1. What are the people thinking when they repeat the proverb? What is wrong with that according to Ezekiel?
 2. List the qualities and behaviors of the righteous person (and the wicked) in verses 5–17. What are your observations?
 3. On verses 7, 12, 16, compare Exodus 22:26. What is the point?
 4. So what is the overall point being made? See Colossians 3:25. But how shall we square this with Exodus 34:7?
 5. What about salvation by grace? Is this salvation by works? What does this say about “sinning religion”?
 6. What is the real concern that the chapter is addressing? See verses 30–32.

7. Consider these two options: chapter 19 is either a genuine lament, expressing genuine sorrow, or a parody of a lament in which the writer is almost mocking the dead (as is the case in Isaiah 14). A case can be made for either position.
8. Why might Ezekiel have said these things about Judah's royal house?
9. Remember what has been said earlier about the royal house from Josiah to Zedekiah and see how that succession might apply here.



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EZEKIEL 20

Background: The date in verse one was August 14, 591 BC, five years before the fall of Jerusalem. But already by this point Zedekiah was flirting with Egypt and contemplating revolt.

1. What can verse 3 mean? Yahweh, through Ezekiel, is telling them plenty! What sort of questions might they have been asking that Yahweh refused to answer?
2. Look for some repeated words and phrases in chapter 20. What are your observations?
3. List the situations in which Israel sinned against Yahweh? What was Yahweh's initial response in the first several cases, and what was his second response? What does this tell us about Yahweh?
4. What was Yahweh's reasoning for "withdrawing his hand" of punishment (22, but also 9, 14)? What is the meaning of that concept?
5. Notice the importance of Sabbath-keeping here. Why was it so important and why did the people desecrate it? The NT makes relatively little of the Sabbath? Why? What is the concept and what is its importance for Christians?
6. What was Yahweh's final reaction (verse 25)? Compare this to Romans 1:24, 26, 28. What does this say about the nature of judgment? What is it not?

7. We have seen several examples of the statement “Then you will know that I am Yahweh” in the book so far. What kinds of divine actions typically produced that knowledge? What is it here in verse 44? Why would this action produce that knowledge? Think about the issues of free will and determinism in this regard.

8. We have talked a good deal about the Hebrew words that are based on the consonants sh-p-t. In translations, these words are often associated with justice and judgment. But the basic idea is that of an accepted, or expected, pattern of behavior. The idea in verses 35 and 36 is that God is going to make his case. Look at as many different translations as you can and see how they translate the idea.

9. In the Hebrew Bible, 20:45–49 is included in chapter 21, and it is easy to see why. But why might it be included with chapter 20? Think about verses 1–3 and then look at verse 49.



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EZEKIEL 21–22

Background: One of the primary ways leaders in the ancient world attempted to figure out the future was through “divination,” that is, magical means. Here the mention of “arrows...images...liver” (21:21) refers to three of these means. How arrows thrown into the air might fall, how images left out at night might look in the morning, or the shape of the liver of a sacrificial animal might look were all thought to be signs or “omens” of what should be done or what was going to happen. Verse 23 suggests that the omens were to go to Jerusalem and the people could not believe that because of Nebuchadnezzar’s covenant with them. But they had broken that covenant!

Nebuchadnezzar’s army, coming down the international highway from Damascus, could branch off to the left, and take the Kings’ Highway to Ammon, or could stay on the main highway and continue to Jerusalem.

1. Notice that the materials in chapter 21 are united by references to “the sword.” How many do you count?
2. How was Ezekiel to act as he pronounced these words? What does this tell us about the heart of God?
3. In verses 8–17 against whom is the sword primarily directed? Upon whom does Ezekiel place primary responsibility to the coming disaster? (Think about previous things Ezekiel has said. Notice also verses 25–27.)
4. What are verses 28–33 saying about the fate of Ammon?
5. What are the two sins for which Ezekiel is called upon to pronounce judgment on Jerusalem (22:1–5)? How might they be related (cf. 20:31)?

6. How do we sacrifice our children to our idols today?
7. List the sins described in verses 6–12. Do you see any pattern? What is the major emphasis?
8. What does the last statement in verse 12 tell us about the basis of ethical behavior?
9. Compare the picture of Jerusalem in verses 17–22 with that of 11:2–3. How are the two pictures similar and different?
10. What are the sins of each of the groups in verses 23–29 and what is the significance of the pairings?
11. Compare verse 30 with the account in Gen 18:24–33? What are your reflections?



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EZEKIEL 23–24

Background: This is the conclusion of the prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. The siege began on January 15, 588 BC, and concluded on July 18, 586 BC two and a half years later. That the city was able to endure this long is a testimony to its remarkable defensibility. We can also get some sense of how terrible conditions were in the city at the end of two and a half years. Notice that it took six months for the news of the fall to reach Ezekiel (January 8, 585, 33:21).

- Oholah is “her tent” and Oholibah is “my tent is in her.” That Judah is named the latter seems sadly ironic.
 - Possibly as early as the reign of Omri (885–874) Israel had entered into an alliance with the Assyrians. Ahaz (735–715) took Judah into a similar alliance. Then Jehoiakim made an alliance with Babylon (Chaldea) in 605.
 - Although Babylon is east of Judah, even southeast, any attack by them would come from Judah’s north (23:24) because the Arabian desert stood between them.
1. Notice when the prostitution of the two sisters began (23:3, 8, 19, 27). What do you make of this statement?
 2. Why do you think an alliance with another nation was pictured as prostitution? How is the metaphor appropriate?
 3. Thinking of punishment as being forced to drink a cup of vile-tasting, intoxicating liquor, think of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. What is the connection?
 4. Look at 23:37–39. What are the people doing? What is the terrible contradiction in their behavior? How are we sacrificing our children to idols today?
 5. What had the false prophets and priests said of Jerusalem in 11:3–9? Now at the end of the section (chapter 23), what does Ezekiel say? What does the presence of the blood in the meat mean about the meat (see Leviticus 7:14)? What about the pot itself?

6. Notice the pronouns in 24:13–14. Who is destroying Jerusalem? What is the importance of that idea?
7. What is the significance of Ezekiel's actions when his wife dies? Why is it important that he does this? Why is Ezekiel struck dumb (verse 27)?
8. What are our idols today? Is our worship of them really such a bad thing



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