

# EZEKIEL

## *Death & Resurrection*

Volume 3

Student Workbook

A BIBLE STUDY BY JOHN N. OSWALT

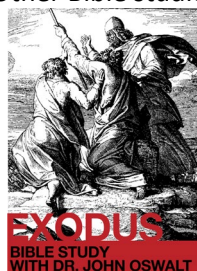


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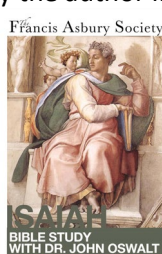
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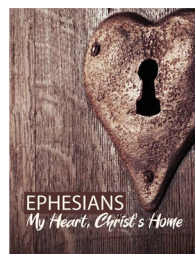
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# EZEKIEL: *Death and Resurrection*

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## EZEKIEL 25–26

Background: The so-called “Oracles Against the Nations” in Ezekiel 25–32 give evidence of careful structuring. As we have said, they seem to have been intentionally placed between the announcement of the beginning of the siege in January of 588 B.C. (Ezekiel 24:2) and the report of the city’s fall, which reached Babylon in January of 585 (33:21). While Ezekiel did receive some of the messages during that time (see 26:1 and 29:1; 30:20; 31:1), some were received later (32:1, 17), and at least one was received many years later (29:17). D. I. Block has observed that seven nations are addressed, with the first six receiving 97 verses (25:1–28:23), and the seventh, Egypt, also receiving 97 verses (29:1–32:32), with a brief promise of Judah’s restoration (28:24–26) providing a bridge between the two sections.

- In chapters 25–28 the prophet starts on Judah’s east with Ammon, then travels clockwise to Moab, Edom, the Philistines, and finally Tyre. After the initial oracle against Tyre (26:1–6) there is an expanded treatment of Tyre and her king (26:7–28:19). This is followed by a brief oracle against Tyre’s northern neighbor Sidon (28:20–23) that seems to function as something of a conclusion to this first section. The end of each of the brief oracles is marked by the so-called “recognition formula” “Then you will know....”
  - It has been suggested that the nations are judged because they either took part in Jerusalem’s destruction or gloated over it. It may also be that Egypt is singled out for such lengthy treatment because Judah trusted in Egypt for deliverance.
  - Part of the reason for Jerusalem’s importance was the fact that trade from the Red Sea port of Elath, as well as from Edom and Moab would go through it on its way out to the coast and on to the West.
  - After the initial oracle (26:1–6) the message against Tyre has four parts: judgment on Tyre (26:7–21); lament over the fall of Tyre (27:1–36); judgment on the king of Tyre (28:1–10); lament over the fall of the king of Tyre (28:11–19).
1. Some scholars think that there are two oracles against Ammon, and not just one. Why might they think that?
  2. Why is gloating over Jerusalem’s destruction such a bad thing?
  3. What is Moab’s sin? Why is that a problem?

4. See 2 Kings 14:7 for a possible reason why the Edomites wanted vengeance (25:12). What is the problem with avenging yourself?
5. How far back in Israel's story does the hostility of the Philistines (25:15) extend?
6. Why was Tyre glad to see Jerusalem's fall (26:2)? (See the background above.)
7. How should we treat the misfortunes of those with whom we have been at odds?
8. Look at the repetitions in 26:3, 5, 7, 14, 19, 21? What is repeated? Why is it repeated? What does this repetition imply?
9. Why will the princes mourn when Tyre is destroyed (26:16)?



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## EZEKIEL 27–28

1. Notice four things about the structure of these chapters: who are the addressees of chapter 27; who is the addressee of chapter 28:1–10, and 11–19; who is the addressee of 28:20–23; who is spoken to in 28:24–26?
2. Notice the repeated phrase in 27:3 and 28:12. What is the significance of the phrase and of its repetition?
3. How is Tyre described in 27:3–9? What is the significance of this?
4. Locate as many of the places mentioned in verses 10–23 on a map. What are your conclusions? What point is being made?
5. Notice the repetition of the sentence in 27:36 and 28:19. What is the significance of the sentence and of its repetition?
6. What are the pretensions of the king of Tyre (28:3–6)? What is it that puts an end to all those pretensions? Reflect on this in view of the Garden of Eden.
7. Although there are those who think that 28:12–19 is describing Satan, it is much more likely that the King of Tyre is here being seen as a representative of humanity. What can we say about humanity in this light?

8. How will Sidon's fall show that Yahweh is holy (28:22–23)?
  
9. How will Judah's return show that Yahweh is holy (28:25)?
  
10. What do verses 24–26 tell us about the function of chaps. 25–32 in the book as a whole?





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## EZEKIEL 29–30

**Background:** The four chapters focused on Egypt (29–32) are composed of seven prophecies (29:1–16; 29:17–21; 30:1–19; 30:20–26; 31:1–18; 32:1–16; 32:17–32)

- All the prophecies except 30:1–18 are dated. But they are not given to us in chronological order. There may be some sense of progress in the content: for instance, in chapter 29 Pharaoh is fallen, and in 32 he goes down to Sheol, the underworld. We will explore this possibility as we proceed through the chapters.
  - Texts for the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign are missing, but it seems likely that he did capture Egypt finally in 568 BC (as per Ezekiel 29:17–20).
  - From 663–525 BC Egypt was ruled by a family from Sais in the Nile delta. Initially, these kings tried to prop up the waning Assyrian empire (probably as a cushion between Egypt and the rising Babylonians). After the last attempt failed and Babylon was supreme, the Egyptian foreign policy was dominated by the concern to keep Babylon at bay. Judah always figured largely in those concerns.
  - In 588 BC the Pharaoh Hophra, fulfilling a pledge to Zedekiah, brought an army to try to break the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. It was unsuccessful and the Babylonians drove him back to Egypt. (See Jeremiah 37:5–8)
  - In 525 BC the Persian Cambyses captured Egypt, and it was never a major player on the world stage again.
1. What is the imagery in 29:3–5? Why does the prophet describe Pharaoh in these ways?
  2. What is the Pharaoh's error in verse 9? Who made the Nile? Why is that a stunning thought?
  3. How does the Biblical doctrine of creation relate to verses 10–12?
  4. Look at verses 13–16 in the light of the background above.

5. 29:17–21 raises a number of issues: 1) it appears that Ezekiel's earlier prophecy about Tyre's fall to Nebuchadnezzar had not come true; what about that? 2) why is Yahweh required to give Nebuchadnezzar a consolation prize? What truths should we draw from this material
  
6. As Judah endured the siege between January 588 and July 586 they constantly looked to Egypt for help. But Egypt will offer no hope. Instead, we have a lament for fallen Egypt. Between verses 13 and 18 many of the Egyptian cities are specifically named. Why is this, do you think?
  
7. As noted above in Background, Pharaoh Hophra's sally would have given the Judeans hope. 30:20–26 is Yahweh's response. In Egyptian iconography, the Pharaoh is often depicted with his arm raised over his head, about to bash down some poor, lowly desert-dweller. What was Pharaoh's error in trying to break the siege of Jerusalem? Look at the repeated refrain in Isaiah 9:8–10:4.



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## 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.





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