

EZEKIEL

Death & Resurrection

Volume 4

Student Workbook

A BIBLE STUDY BY JOHN N. OSWALT

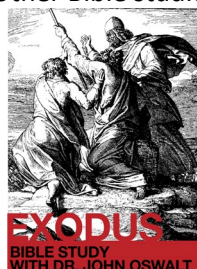


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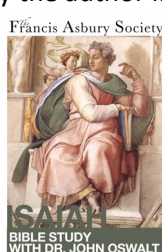
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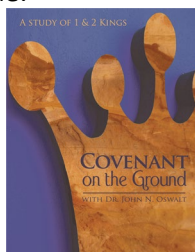
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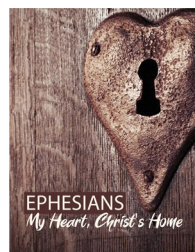
Exodus



Isaiah



*Covenant on the
Ground: 1 & 2 Kings*



*Ephesians: My
Heart, Christ's Home*



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EZEKIEL 33-34

Background:

- As we have noted throughout the study, the focus of the book begins to change with chapter 33. Whereas the focus of chapters 4–24 was on the certain destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, the focus in chapters 33 onward is on the certain restoration of Judah and Jerusalem. A number of the features of the earlier chapters will reappear here, including the watchman, the mountains of Judah, individual responsibility, and, of course, the temple, but now it will be in the context of restoration.
 - The change is not radical but begins to emerge slowly in chapters 33–35, concluding in chapter 35 with the promise that although the Edomites expect to take the territory of Judah for themselves, it will not happen.
 - No nation or people group ever, so far as we know, had returned intact from exile. This is not surprising since the purpose of exile was to amalgamate diverse peoples into one imperial culture. This means that the promise of restoration would have been greeted by many with skepticism. But if the Judeans were to maintain their distinct identity as a people until the opportunity of return arose, they were going to have to listen to the prophet and believe what he was saying.
 - Note that Ezekiel had apparently been mute for the entire time of the siege of Jerusalem plus the five months it took for the news of the fall to arrive in Babylon (January 587–January 585). The exiles would have been begging him for a word, and it had already been given.
1. What is said about the watchman's responsibilities?
 2. Compare what is said here with what was said in 3:16–21. What are the similarities and differences?
 3. Why do you think the watchman's task is being restated here?
 4. Compare verses 10–20 with 18:19–29. What are the similarities and differences?

5. Why do you think the emphasis on individual responsibility is restated here?
6. Why will the people who remain in the land after the defeat not inherit the land (verses 25–26)?
7. Why are the people unlikely to listen to Ezekiel’s call for the faithfulness and self-denial it will take to maintain their identity until the return becomes possible (verses 31–32)?
8. What does Yahweh have to say about the “shepherds” (the Davidic kings) of Judah (34:1–10)?
9. So, what will Yahweh do with the sheep (34:11–16)? Look up John 10:1–16. What is Jesus claiming?
10. Yahweh will not only restore the flock but will do what else (verses 17–22)?
11. Compare what is said in verses 27 and 30 with what had been said earlier. What is the difference?



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EZEKIEL 35–36

Background: Edom, Judah's neighbor to the south, extended from Judah's southern border (a very fluid line extending from the Mediterranean south of what is today "the Gaza Strip" past Beersheba to the south end of the Dead Sea) down across the Rift Valley (in which the Dead Sea lies) and up into the wild and largely barren hills on the east side of the Rift. Historically, the Edomites were descendants of Esau, and there was constant contention between them and the Judeans over the at-least-somewhat arable land at the north end of the Sinai Peninsula. In the Old Testament, Edom is the representation of "the world," that which opposes God and his people and God's plan for the world. The Edomites never returned from their Babylonian captivity. Their land was eventually taken over by an Arab tribe called the Nabateans. It was they who built the famous stone city of Petra.

1. What is to be the fate of Edom (35:4)? Why? What were the Edomites guilty of (verse 5, see Obadiah 10–14)?
2. What did the Edomites expect to do (verse 10)? (Presumably, the "two lands" refers to both Israel and Judah.) Why would that be a problem according to verse 10?
3. How many times is "Then you will know that I am the Lord" repeated in chapter 35? Why do you think the statement is repeated so often?
4. As noted in the previous lesson, several of the themes from the first part of the book are repeated in the second, but with a different perspective. Where are "the mountains of Israel" discussed earlier, and what was said about them there? What is said about them in general here in 36:1–15?
5. How did the captivity of the Judeans "profane Yahweh's name" (36:20–21)? What does that mean for us and our behavior? How may we profane his name?

6. What does Yahweh mean in verse 22? Does he care more for his name than for them? (See 31–32)
7. How will the nations know that God is holy (verse 23)? What does this mean for our behavior?
8. Verses 24–27 specify four things God is going to do for Judah to prove his is holy. What are they?
9. Why would deliverance from captivity (verse 24) and restoration of fruitfulness (verses 29, 33–36) not be enough to demonstrate God's holiness?
10. Notice the repetition of references to cleanness and uncleanness (25, 29, 33). How do verses 26 and 27 relate to this, and what do they say about the nature of salvation?



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EZEKIEL 37

The vivid images contained in this chapter have been popular throughout Christian history as an expression of the reviving power of God. This galvanizing picture of the truth that God has conquered death is truly unforgettable. It begins with the scene of a slaughtered army in which the defeat was so devastating that there was not even a remnant left to bury the dead. The victors have left the corpses behind to decay and rot in the sun. That is Israel's condition.

- There is wordplay at work in verses 5–14. The Hebrew word *ruakh* means “wind, breath, spirit, and Spirit” depending on the context in which it appears.
1. Look up the places in the book where Ezekiel is brought some place or filled “by the Spirit” (2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24). What are your observations and conclusions? What do you think is the significance of these statements in this book?
 2. Why do you think Yahweh asked Ezekiel the question in verse 3? What is the significance of Ezekiel's answer? Look up Rev 7:14. Do you think the repetition is significant? Why?
 3. What meaning does the context give to the term “prophecy” (verse 4) here?
 4. What is the spiritual significance of the bodies being reconstituted, but having no breath in them, and then of having breath come into them? See verse 14 and recall 36:27. What does this say about the importance of Pentecost?
 5. Notice the final sentence of verse 14. What is the importance of predictive prophecy as evidence of the eternal nature of Yahweh?
 6. According to verses 6 and 12–13, what is the climactic evidence that God is indeed Yahweh, I AM?

7. Why do you think so much attention is given to the reunification of Judah and Israel (verses 15–22)? Why is that an important point?
8. What will characterize the behavior of the redeemed people (verses 23–24)? What does this say about the behavior of Christian people?
9. There are five elements describing the condition of the people in verses 24–28. What are they?
10. What is the significance of the last of these (verses 27–28)?



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EZEKIEL 38–39

Background – One of the features of several of the prophets, after they have spoken of Israel's restoration from captivity, is the prediction of the destruction of those nations, which may have been used to discipline Israel, but were themselves wicked. In short, although they may have been used by Yahweh for his redemptive purposes, they will not escape judgment for their wickedness. A form of that kind of prediction is used here but is expanded upon. Here it is all the nations of the world that come against God's people and are violently and climactically defeated.

- The reference to the extreme north (38:15) reflects the fact that Israel's oppressors, even those whose homelands were in the east, came upon Israel from the north (because of the Arabian desert). But there were also the Scythians who came down from the steppes of Central Asia.
 - There is some disagreement about 38:17. Is it referring to some specific prophecies of which we have no record? Or is it referring to the many times when prophets predicted (correctly) the coming of oppressors from the north? In this case, this would be the climactic fulfillment of all of those. Are you the final expression of the world's attempt to destroy the people through whom I am seeking to save the world?
 - Particularly given the use of the material in the Book of Revelation (see chapters 19 and 20), there has been great interest in identifying what kinds of historic incidents might be in view. In general, these have taken a very fanciful turn and seem to me to fall into the realm of "unprofitable speculation." I believe it is more profitable to seek to understand the theological lessons being taught. The following questions are framed with that goal in mind.
1. Notice the final verses (26–28) of chapter 37. What is the theme? Now, look at chapters 40–43. What is their topic? What then is the place of chapters 38 and 39? What does this placement suggest about the meaning and significance of these chapters?
 2. Look at verses 10–15. At whose initiative does all this seem to be happening? But now look at verses 3–8, and 16. What is the real cause of the action? What does this say to us about historical causation?
 3. What is said about Israel's fortifications (verse 11)? What is the point of that, do you think?

4. Compare 36:23 and what follows to 38:16 and what follows. How are they similar to each other and how are they different? What is the key point?
5. The language and expressions of verses 17–22 seem somewhat “over the top.” What is the point being made?
6. Note that 39:1 and 2 are much like 38:1–2. How is 39 different from 38?
7. Look at 39:7. How was Yahweh’s name made to appear unholy (profane) in chapter 36? How is it going to be made holy here? Now, look at verses 21–24. What do they seem to be doing?
8. In one sense the point is made in verses 4–6, and verses 9–20 are over-developing the point. Why?
9. In the context of the two chapters, what is the function of 39:25–29?



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EZEKIEL 40–41

Background: There is a good deal of discussion among commentators about whether what is described in chapters 40–48 was/is intended to be taken literally or not. The fact that the second temple, built under Zerubbabel and Joshua almost certainly did not follow this pattern (Ezra 3:12), and that the third, under Herod, definitely did not, is an important clue. However, John Nelson Darby, the Englishman who is largely responsible for the resurgence of belief in the pre-millennial return of Christ in the 19th c. argued that there would be a temple built during Christ's millennial reign and that Ezekiel's pattern is for that temple. If the plans were meant to be understood literally, they are very difficult, as the variety of attempts to diagram indicates!

- The “very high mountain” with “the city to the south” (40:2) might describe Ramah which is on one of the highest points in Israel overlooking Jerusalem to the south. Hebrew University is presently located on Ramah.
 - It is not quite clear whether the rooms for preparing sacrifices (verse 38) were in (or beside!) all three of the inner gates (NIV), one of the inner gates (NLT), or only the north one (ESV).
 - The functions of the spaces on the outer walls of the temple (42:5–7), those in the outer wall of the inner court (8), and the large building to the west (12) are a mystery.
1. We have talked about Ezekiel thinking of the return from captivity as a new Exodus, a starting over, for the people of Israel. Look at the end of the book of Exodus, and then at this final section of Ezekiel (chaps 40–48). Similarities and differences? What are your thoughts?
 2. Compare what takes place in chapters 40–48 with what took place in chapters 8–11. Particularly note 8:1–2 and 40:1–4. How do the two passages work together? Why the duplication? How does this connect with other duplications we have seen in chapters 33–36?
 3. What is the major difference between the two sections? What is the unique feature of this description? Why is this, do you think?
 4. Notice the dimensions of the wall (verse 5). What do these dimensions suggest to you?

5. Compare the descriptions of the north (verses 20–23) and south gates (verses 24–27) with that of the east gate (verses 6–16)? What are your observations?
6. What do you observe about the gates to the inner court (verses 28–37) in comparison to those of the outer court? What is the significance of these facts?
7. There is much more emphasis on this temple as a place of sacrifice (e.g., verses 38–43) than was the case with Solomon’s temple. What is the significance of that, do you think?
8. Notice carefully the dimensions of the spaces in the temple (41:1–4; NLT has them in feet!). What impresses you about this?
9. Notice that the decorations are largely confined to (two-faced) cherubim and palm trees. The cherubim have human and lion faces. What might be the significance of these? Think of the uses of cherubim in the book and of the structure of the palm.



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EZEKIEL 42–43

Background: For a possible example of “relics of their ancestors” (42:8) see Num 21:8–9 and 2 Kings 18:4.

1. The function of the buildings described in 42:1–12 is given in verses 13–14. What are those functions? What is the significance of each of them?
2. Notice the purpose of the surrounding wall (verse 20). What do you think about this? Isaiah says the whole earth is full of the glory of God (6:3). Doesn't that mean the whole earth is sacred? Look up Leviticus 10:1–11. Does God have a hair-trigger temper or what?
3. What is the significance of the repetitions Ezekiel mentions in verse 3? What do these experiences tell us about Yahweh?
4. What have we said before about the nature of God's glory? What then is the significance of its filling the Temple? Remember what we have said about the symbolic significance of the Temple. What is this passage saying about the nature and purpose of the Christian experience?
5. What are the two sins mentioned in verse 8? Why do you think these are singled out?
6. On “the relics of their ancestors” see the Background above. What is so bad about this?
7. What does the idea of separating idol altars from the holy things with a wall suggest to you? Can you think of ways we are tempted to do similar things?

8. Why would the temple description and specifications move the people to shame (verses 10–11)?
9. What is the relevance of 43:12 for Christian believers?
10. Why is it necessary to “make atonement” for the altar (42:20, 22, 26) and in such an intensive way?



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EZEKIEL 44–45

Background: Ezekiel's visionary experience of the temple extended through 44:8. Up until 43:4 it was the prophet's visionary guide who spoke to him. But beginning in that verse "someone" who is immediately identified as Yahweh ("the LORD") becomes the speaker. Between 44:5 and 46:24, the "Lord Yahweh" (NIV "Sovereign LORD") is giving "the regulations concerning Yahweh's temple" (44:5). These concern who may serve (Levites and Priests, not uncircumcised foreigners 44:7–31); the holy city and temple district (45:1–8); regulations for "the prince" especially concerning his function as patron of the cult (45:9 – 46:18).

- The temple and city territory would be $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles square with the temple and priestly region being the first $3 \frac{1}{2}$ mile wide strip, the Levitical portion a second $3 \frac{1}{2}$ mile wide strip, and the city the remaining $1 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide. The prince's lands would be $8 \frac{1}{3}$ miles wide on either side of the central square, extending to the sea on the west and to the edge of the desert on the east.
1. What do you think is the significance of the fact that the ruler is called "the prince" and not "the king" (44:3)? What is the significance of the prince eating bread in the gate?
 2. According to verses 6–8 why are the gates, the entrances, and the exits of such importance?
 3. Why are the Levites prohibited from performing offerings (verses 9–14)? What is their function?
 4. Why are the priests to wear no wool garments (verse 18)? What is the problem with that?
 5. What would be the problem if an ordinary person happened to contract holiness (verse 19)?

6. How would the behaviors of verses 20–22 help in the teaching function of verse 23?
7. Why does death in one's family require the priest to bring a sin offering (verses 25–27)?
8. What is the danger inherent in the priest's "income" being dependent on sacrifices (verses 28–30)?
9. What is the reason for giving the prince such a large portion of land (45:9–12)? What is the point about fixed weights and measures?
10. What is the point of the prince being responsible for the offerings (verses 13–17, 22–25)?
11. Why does an offering have to be made for sins committed in ignorance (verses 18–20)?



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EZEKIEL 46:1 – 47:12

Background: The regulations spoken by Yahweh concerning the temple (45:9 – 46:18) and particularly those regarding “the prince” are continued here. The visionary experience is then returned to and further narrated in 46:19 – 47:12.

- As mentioned in the previous lesson, the directions for worship differ somewhat from the Torah, suggesting both continuity and discontinuity between the Exodus and the New Exodus.
1. Why is the inner gate closed on the six workdays but opened on the Sabbath and New Moon?
 2. Where does the prince stand and where do the people stand during these celebrations? What is the significance of these regulations?
 3. What is the significance 1) of the people not entering and exiting by the same gateway, and 2) of the prince entering and exiting “with the people” (verse 10)?
 4. What is the point of the restrictions on the prince regarding the giving of land (verses 16–18)?
 5. The final aspects of the visionary experience (46:19 – 47:12) includes two elements. What are they? What relationship might there be among them?
 6. What is the difference between the two places for cooking? Why are some (19–20) in the inner court and some (21–24) in the outer court (on the latter see Deut. 12:17–19)?

7. 47:1–7 (with the interpretation in verses 8–12) is the final element of the vision. What is the significance of this position for it? If the vision is symbolic, what is the lesson we should draw from its conclusion in this way?

8. Look up Isaiah 34:8 – 35:10 and compare that to what is said here. What are your insights?



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EZEKIEL 47:13 – 48:35

1. Remember that this vision is being related to the Judean captives in Babylon. The nation had divided into Israel (10 tribes) and Judah (+ Simeon) in 930 BC after Solomon's death. It is now 570 BC. The division into two nations occurred some 350 years ago. Israel has been gone for 150 years. How many tribes are going to receive territory (verse 13)? What is the significance of this? What is God doing?
2. The territory described in verses 15–20 differs in two particulars from Israel's historic territory. There is a large area in the north that Israel never actually occupied (verses 15–17). And the eastern border is the Jordan (18), whereas the tribes of Rueben, Gad, and half of Manasseh did occupy territory on the east side of the Jordan. Look at Numbers 34:1–12 and compare what is said there to the descriptions here. What is the significance of the similarities?
3. Elsewhere, the gerim, the immigrants who had come into Israel, wanting to adopt Israel's faith and culture, apparently had not received land (Deut. 24:14). But look at verses 22–23. What is the significance of this action? Cf. Deut. 10:18–19.
4. The division of the land is basically without reference to geography, with each tribe receiving an equal portion. Furthermore, some formerly northern tribes are now located south of the holy section and some formerly southern tribes (especially Judah) are placed north. What might be the significance of this?
5. Why do you think there is so little description of the tribal territories and so much description of the holy portion (which was already discussed in 45:1–8)?
6. Why do you think Ezekiel closes with the city (and not, e.g., the temple)? Look up Revelation 21:2 – 22:5. Look especially at 21:3, 22; and 22:1–2. What is this saying? Relate all of this to the final verse of Ezekiel.

7. What are your dominant impressions of the book of Ezekiel? What parts of the book spoke especially to you? What is the most important “takeaway” from the book for you? Summarize the book in two sentences.



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