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## Ezekiel 14.

(2014)

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***Teach it, don't demand it.***

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## Ezekiel 14.

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### Topics.

- Israel's elders have taken idols into their hearts.
- The words the LORD speaks to those devoted to idols.
- The LORD will send a judgment of famine upon Jerusalem.
- The LORD will send a judgment of wild animals upon the land of Israel.
- The LORD will send a judgment of war upon the land of Israel.
- The LORD will send a judgement of pestilence upon the land of Israel.
- Survivors will be left in Jerusalem.
- An overview of Israel's history.

**Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel:** Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the “likeness” of the LORD”. Ezekiel was keenly aware of God’s presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem.

After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God's covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (ch. 37) is a classic picture of God's ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem.

**NOTE:** Ezekiel's message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: “Map Locations and People of the Bible,” and the title: “Bible Dictionary” on Website Menu.

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**INTRODUCTION:** Ezekiel and the men Judah who had influence have been in captivity to Babylon 6 years, in about another 4 years Babylon will destroy Jerusalem.

### Israel's Elders have taken Idols into their Hearts.

Ezekiel 14:1-5 ----- <sup>1</sup>Then certain of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. <sup>2</sup>And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>3</sup>"Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I indeed let myself be consulted by them? Therefore speak to them and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any one of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart and sets the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him as he comes with the multitude of his idols, <sup>5</sup>that I may lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, who are all estranged from me through their idols.

While Ezekiel is sitting with some of Israel's elders in Babylon the LORD shows him that some of their hearts are devoted to idols.

God tells Ezekiel to get the elders idols (blocks of wood) and place them before the elders and then ask, why should he listen to them?. Then tells them even though they have taken idols into their hearts and worshipped before their block of wood (the idol) if they come to Ezekiel the LORD will still speak to them so that God would be the one who takes hold of their hearts and not the idol.

**Notice the expression: -**

- These men have taken their idols into their hearts.
- Who takes his idols into his heart.
- I may lay hold of the hearts.

God by His Spirit and love wants to dwell in the heart of humans; He wants sole possession the supreme place in our lives. This is because when God is dwelling in the human heart all the emotional and spiritual needs of the heart are satisfied.

**The Words the LORD speaks to those Devoted to Idols.**

Ezekiel 14:6-11 ----- <sup>6</sup>Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations. <sup>7</sup>For any one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, *taking his idols into his heart* and putting the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes to a prophet to consult me through him, I the LORD will answer him myself. <sup>8</sup>And I will set my face against that man; I will make him a sign and a byword and cut him off from the midst of my people, and you shall know that I am the LORD. <sup>9</sup>And if the prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. <sup>10</sup>And they shall bear their punishment —the punishment of the prophet and the punishment of the inquirer shall be alike— <sup>11</sup>that the house of Israel may no more go astray from me, nor defile themselves anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be my people and I may be their God, declares the Lord GOD."

God's answer to those who have taken idols into their hearts is to repent and turn away from them. If anyone has taken idols into their heart and worshipped before them goes to a prophet of the LORD to inquire of God, God will answer them, but with His heart set against them until they repent and turn from their wicked ways and from their worship of other gods.

**NOTICE:** the devotion of idols in the heart of a person separates that person from God (v7).

The statement: "The LORD says if a prophet of Israel is deceived, it is God who has deceived him," applies to a person who is prideful, self-willed, loves fame, importance, wealth and riches and claims to be a prophet of the LORD, but refuses to follow God's words and God's way. Though the LORD will still work through them it will be for their harm and not for their good and those who follow them will suffer the same judgment (v9). The LORD'S desire is to be Israel's God and for them to be His people, the LORD desires a human family who from their own free choice choose to make Him the centre of their heart in love and devotion.

**The LORD will send a Judgment of Famine upon Jerusalem.**

Ezekiel 14:12-14 ----- <sup>12</sup>And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>13</sup>"Son of man, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it and break its supply of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast, <sup>14</sup>even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD.

The LORD called, Noah, Daniel, and Job righteous men, because they were all great men of God and showed absolute faithfulness to Him in their own lives. But righteousness in this context does not mean they were men who lived without sin, there has only ever been one man who has ever achieved that standard of

perfection and his name is not Noah, Daniel or Job, but the LORD Jesus Christ. Righteousness in this context means that they lived in faithfulness and with integrity and honesty toward God and treated others with decency, honesty and with respect toward others. The LORD is basically saying no man no matter how righteous or how great a prophet they maybe they cannot save another person to eternal life.

#### **The LORD will send a Judgment of Wild Animals upon the Land of Israel.**

Ezekiel 14:15-16 ----- <sup>15</sup>If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they ravage it, and it be made desolate, so that no one may pass through because of the beasts, <sup>16</sup>even if these three (Noah, Daniel, and Job) (v14) men were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the land would be desolate.

These verses shine a spotlight on the truth that everyone is accountable for their own actions and their own lives. The faithful will be delivered from God's judgment while hypocrites who confess to believe in God will suffer judgment.

#### **The LORD will send a Judgment of War upon the Land of Israel.**

Ezekiel 14:17-18 ----- <sup>17</sup>Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, Let a sword pass through the land, and I cut off from it man and beast, <sup>18</sup>though these three men (Noah, Daniel, and Job) (v14) were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be delivered.

Everyone determines whether they will be rewarded or judged by their own behaviour and actions.

#### **The LORD will send a Judgement of Pestilence upon the Land of Israel.**

Ezekiel 14:19-20 ----- <sup>19</sup>Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off from it man and beast, <sup>20</sup>even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live, declares the Lord GOD, they would deliver neither son nor daughter. They would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness.

The LORD is basically saying the only escape for the people of Israel from God's judgment is to repent, turn to the LORD and away from their gross wickedness.

#### **The LORD will send Four Judgments upon the Land of Israel.**

Ezekiel 14:21 ----- <sup>21</sup>For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild beasts, and pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast!

The four judgments of God are war, famine, wild beasts and pestilence. God is saying if the people of Israel couldn't escape even one of these judgments how do they think they will escape four of them. God used Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his fierce armies to bring these judgments about.

**1<sup>st</sup> Judgment: war:** Babylon entered the city of Jerusalem and slaughtered its inhabitants burned the city and pillaged the Temple of God and took the people captive to Babylon for seventy years.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Judgment: food:** prior to Babylon entering Jerusalem they surrounded the walls of the city for nearly two years so no-one could go in or out to get food, the famine within the walls of Jerusalem became so great parents were eating their own babies for food.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Judgment: wild beasts:** while in captivity for seventy years wild animals multiplied in the land and destroyed crops of their farms and land etc.

**4<sup>th</sup> Judgment: pestilence:** sickness and disease would have multiplied during the famine and when Babylon's armies slaughtered the people many of the bodies would have been left dying and decaying on the surface of the earth for lack of men to bury them.

## **Survivors will be Left in Jerusalem.**

Ezekiel 14:22-23 ----- <sup>22</sup>But behold, some survivors will be left in it (Jerusalem), sons and daughters who will be brought out (into Babylon); behold, when they come out to you (Ezekiel), and you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. <sup>23</sup>They (the survivors) will console you, when you see their ways and their deeds, and you shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it (Jerusalem), declares the Lord GOD."

Some families will survive the four judgments that are about to come upon Jerusalem. The LORD tells Ezekiel when he sees them arrive in Babylon and hears of all the wickedness that was in the city he will know that the LORD had good reason to punish them and in turn will be comforted because He will understand why the LORD had to bring such devastation upon Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

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## **An Overview of Israel's History.**

God used these judgments to turn Judah and Israel from their gross wickedness and to unite them as one faithful nation worshipping only the Lord their God. Following is a brief overview of Israel history during this period of time. The people of Israel set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets they rebelled against the LORD they turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Babylon to bring these four judgments upon them and the curses of the covenant.

Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods.

While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His Shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again)

Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed

Sadly Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when the Lord returns in glory: -

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

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End.