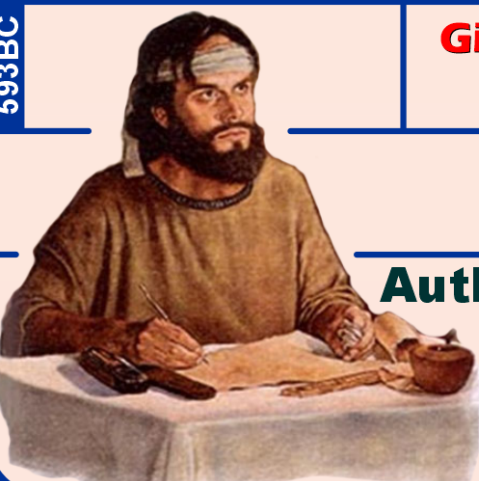


FUTILITY OF FALSE OPTIMISM

EZEKIEL

14

BOOK OF EZEKIEL – OUTLINE

INWARD → Personal		OUTWARD ↻ Peoples		ONWARD → Prophetic													
1 — 3		4 — 24		25 — 32		33 — 48											
Ezekiel's Call to Ministry - Ezekiel Birth (623BC) and Ministry Years (593-571BC) 597BC is the 2nd Deportation; Ezekiel taken at age 25 593BC Ezekiel begins Ministry at age 30		Sinfulness of Israel and Fall of Jerusalem - A Disobedient Nation (4-7) - A Departed Glory (8-11) - A Disciplined Nation (12-24) - The Futility of False Optimism (12-19) - The History of Judah's Corruption (20-24)		Judgment on Nations that Opposed Israel - Ammon (25:1-7) - Moab (25:8-11) - Edom (25:12-14) - Philistia (25:15-17) - Tyre (26:1—28:19) - Babylonia (26) - Sidon (28:20-24) - Egypt (29-32)		Restoration of Israel in the Future - Return of Israel to the land (33-39) - Restoration of Israel in the Kingdom (40-48) - Promised Land; Millennial Temple, and the Glory of God											
593BC		Given BEFORE the siege of Jerusalem		587BC		Given DURING the siege of Jerusalem		586BC		Given AFTER the siege of Jerusalem		571BC					
						The City Destroyed 7 Years Prophesying <u>JUDGMENT</u>						The City Restored 15 Years Prophesying <u>HOPE</u>					
Author: Ezekiel (“God strengthens”) Place: Babylonia Time: About 22 years (593-571BC)																	
Events: 605BC — FIRST Siege upon Israel by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel taken) Ezekiel 17 years old																	
597BC — SECOND assault upon Jerusalem (Ezekiel taken) Ezekiel 25 years old																	
593BC — Ezekiel at age 30 called by God to testify against Israel Ezekiel 30 years old																	
586BC — THIRD assault upon Jerusalem (City & Temple destroyed) Ezekiel 37 years old																	

INTRODUCTION: EZEKIEL 14

- **This prophecy carries on the thought from chapter 13 about false prophets. Those who resorted to false prophets would share their fate, namely, judgment by God.**
- **Idolatry was the standard method of religion in ancient times.**
- **Ancient peoples believed that any depiction of a thing somehow partook of the essence of that thing, no matter how crude or artificial the depiction might be.**
- **Anything offered to a god's statue was offered directly to the god.**



EFFECTS OF FALSE PROPHETS ON ISRAEL'S LEADERS

Ezekiel 14:1-11

**Now some of the elders
of Israel came to me
and sat before me.**

EZEKIEL 14:1



Now some of the elders of Israel came to me and sat before me. (Ek.14:1)

- **Some of the elders of the Jewish community in exile came to visit Ezekiel.**
- **Though he was still confined to his house (Ek.3:24) these exiles recognized him as a prophet (Ek.8:1).**
- **Presumably the elders wanted to receive a message from God about Jerusalem or the length of their exile.**



**And the word of the
LORD came to me,
saying,**

EZEKIEL 14:2



And the word of the LORD came to me, saying, (Ek.14:2)

- **As the elders sat before Ezekiel, God informed him that those men had set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces.**
- **While these men sat with the prophet, a word from the Lord came to him.**
- **Like stumbling blocks, this idolatry would cause the people to fall.**



"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them?"

EZEKIEL 14:3



"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them? (Ek.14:3)

- The idolatry in Jerusalem was openly displayed (Ek.8:1-18), but the idolatry in Babylon was more subtle — it was internal rather than external.**
- God asked Ezekiel, Should I let them inquire of Me at all? God was not obligated to answer them when they refused to acknowledge His sovereignty.**
- Yahweh asked rhetorically whether He should respond to their requests in view of their trust in other gods (Ps.66:18; 1Ki.18:21; Jm.1:8).**



"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put before them that which causes them to stumble into iniquity. Should I let Myself be inquired of at all by them? (Ek.14:3)

- The Lord revealed to His servant that these elders (along with the elders in Jerusalem, Ek.8:7-12) had been nursing idolatry in their hearts.**
- This appears to have included seeking false prophets and prophetesses to obtain guidance.**
- This verse is important for those who come to Scripture seeking guidance. No true direction can be given to those who have erected idols in their hearts.**



**"Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD:
"Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols,**

EZEKIEL 14:4



"Therefore speak to them, and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him who comes, according to the multitude of his idols, (Ek.14:4)

- **These hypocritical elders came to the true God for answers while having another “god” in their hearts.**
- **Ezekiel was to tell these elders a message from the Lord. The Lord promised that any person in Israel, not just these elders, who was an idolater at heart and set a stumbling block in his own path by consulting a false prophet for divine guidance would receive an answer from Yahweh, not from the idol.**
- **That answer would come in the form of divine judgment, not words (Ek.14:7-10).**



**that I may seize the house of
Israel by their heart, because
they are all estranged from Me
by their idols.**

EZEKIEL 14:5



that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols. (Ek.14:5)

- In the Book of Ezekiel Israel's idolatry was seen as the major cause for God's judgment on His people.**
- God informed the elders that when any Israelite came to God while harboring idolatry in his heart, God would deal with the idolatry.**
- God would do this for the ultimate benefit of the nation, to recapture the hearts of the people.**
- The desire of these elders for a word from the Lord was only hypocritical. They wanted to appear pious but were really idolaters at heart.**



**"Therefore say to the house of Israel,
'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Repent,
turn away from your idols, and turn
your faces away from all your
abominations."**

EZEKIEL 14:6



"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.(Ek.14:6)

- **Instead of giving these elders the information they DESIRED, God instructed Ezekiel to give them the information they NEEDED — God's attitude toward their idolatry.**
- **The message Israel needed to hear was not some oracle about Jerusalem or their Captivity.**
- **The urgent message was, Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!**



For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the LORD will answer him by Myself.

EZEKIEL 14:7



For anyone of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who separates himself from Me and sets up his idols in his heart and puts before him what causes him to stumble into iniquity, then comes to a prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I the LORD will answer him by Myself. (Ek.14:7)

- The “alien” was a resident alien in Israel who had accepted Israel’s ways and was responsible to obey God’s Law (Lv.16:29-30; 17:12-16; 18:26; Nu.15:13-16; Is.56:3-8; Ek.47:22-23).**
- If an Israelite or an alien dared to presume on God while harboring idolatry, God would answer in judgment.**
- Anyone in Israel, including immigrants (strangers, resident aliens), who did not repent but continued to do what these elders had done and approached a false prophet for a message would receive judgment from the Lord.**



**I will set My face against that man
and make him a sign and a proverb,
and I will cut him off from the
midst of My people. Then you shall
know that I am the LORD.**

EZEKIEL 14:8



I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. (Ek.14:8)

- **He would be a “proverb” (byword) in the sense that people would know about him and talk about him (Ek.23:10; Jb.17:6; 30:9; Ps.44:14; Je.24:9; Jl.2:17).**
- **God would cut him off from His people. God would respond with actions, not words.**
- **The Lord would oppose all such people making them object lessons to others of what happens when God's people pursue idolatry.**



"And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the LORD have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel.

EZEKIEL 14:9



"And if the prophet is induced to speak anything, I the LORD have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. (Ek.14:9)

- God said He would not respond through His prophet to an inquirer who was harboring idolatry in his heart.**
- The word “induced” carries a negative connotation such as “entice” or “deceive.”**
- The best illustration of Ezekiel’s meaning is the story of God letting false prophets deceive Ahab, to bring him to his death (1Ki.22:19-23).**



**And they shall bear their iniquity;
the punishment of the prophet
shall be the same as the
punishment of the one who
inquired,**

EZEKIEL 14:10



And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired, (Ek.14:10)

- **If a prophet did give an answer, it meant he was a false prophet.**
- **If a false prophet in Ezekiel's day received a word to give an idolater, it would be a deceptive word that would lead to the destruction of both (false prophet and enquirer).**
- **God would hold both individuals responsible for their sin and would punish them accordingly.**



**that the house of Israel may no longer
stray from Me, nor be profaned
anymore with all their transgressions,
but that they may be My people and I
may be their God," says the Lord GOD.**

EZEKIEL 14:11



that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me, nor be profaned anymore with all their transgressions, but that they may be My people and I may be their God," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:11)

- **Then the people would return to Him and no longer defile themselves by their sins.**
- **God would remove the stumbling block of idolatry that had brought the nation to ruin.**
- **God ultimately will restore Israel to her place of fellowship with Him.**



A scenic landscape featuring a large body of water (likely a lake or bay) in the middle ground, surrounded by forested mountains. The foreground is filled with dense, vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange and yellow. The sky is filled with dramatic, white and grey clouds, with some sunlight breaking through. The overall mood is serene yet powerful.

NEED OF PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR DELIVERANCE

Ezekiel 14:12-23

**The word of the LORD came
again to me, saying:**

EZEKIEL 14:12



The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: (Ek.14:12)

- **This phrase is an introduction to a new thought.**
- **Ezekiel again pointed up the inevitability of judgment on Israel.**
- **Ezekiel gave four “hypothetical” cases of judgment.**



**"Son of man, when a land sins against
Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will
stretch out My hand against it; I will
cut off its supply of bread, send
famine on it, and cut off man and
beast from it.**

EZEKIEL 14:13



"Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. (Ek.14:13)

- **The Lord spoke to Ezekiel again. He revealed that Jerusalem's great sins had made deliverance from divine punishment impossible.**
- **God determined to punish the land by a shortage of the needs of life, this judgment is considered to be against the country as a whole.**



Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD.



EZEKIEL 14:14



Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:14)

- If God would spare the wicked city of Sodom for the sake of 10 righteous people (Ge.18:22-33), the Israelites in Ezekiel's day thought that surely He would spare Jerusalem because of its righteous individuals.**
- The righteous few would not prevent God's judgment on Jerusalem.**
- In his four hypothetical cases Ezekiel interjected another element: what if three of the most righteous men who ever lived inhabited this land? God's answer was that it would make no difference.**



Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:14)

- **This attitude is nothing less than using the saints as an insurance policy to cover the sinners.**
- **Surely, they thought, there were enough righteous people in Jerusalem that God would not destroy it.**
- **When sin had gone so far that Yahweh stretched out His hand in severe judgment by famine, even the righteousness of a Noah, a Daniel, and a Job could not save the nation.**



Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:14)

- **NOAH was the only righteous man of his day, but his righteousness did not avert God's judgment on the rest of humanity.**
- **DANIEL was righteous, but his presence in Jerusalem had not precluded the deportation of many Judahites.**
- **JOB'S righteousness could not even prevent judgment that touched his family members and possessions.**



Even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:14)

- **God would have spared Sodom if only 10 righteous people lived there (Ge.18:33), but He would not spare Jerusalem if three of the most righteous people in history lived there.**
- **Jerusalem's guilt was greater than Sodom's.**
- **The point of the passage is that Israel was under a divine judgment that was irreversible in its very nature.**



**If I cause wild beasts to pass
through the land, and they
empty it, and make it so
desolate that no man may
pass through because of the
beasts,**

EZEKIEL 14:15



If I cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they empty it, and make it so desolate that no man may pass through because of the beasts, (Ek.14:15)



I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. (**Lv.26:22**).



They shall be wasted with hunger, Devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, With the poison of serpents of the dust. (**Du.32:24**).



**even though these three men were
in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD,
"they would deliver neither sons
nor daughters; only they would be
delivered, and the land would be
desolate.**

EZEKIEL 14:16



**even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate.
(Ek.14:16)**

- **If God's judgment by wild beasts resulted in the depopulation of the land, including the children (Lv.26:22; Du.32:24), the righteousness of Noah (Ge.6:9), Daniel (Da.6:4-5, 22), and Job (Jb.1:1,8; 2:3) would not deliver even their own family members from divine judgment.**
- **God would spare just these men alone.**



**even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters; only they would be delivered, and the land would be desolate.
(Ek.14:16)**

- **God had spared NOAH'S family for his sake (Ge.6:18).**
- **God had spared DANIEL'S friends for his sake (Da.1:6-20; 2:17-18; Da.3)**
- **God had spared JOB'S friends for his sake (Jb.42:7-10), but he had not spared Job's children.**



**"Or if I bring a sword on that land,
and say, 'Sword, go through the
land,' and I cut off man and beast
from it,**

EZEKIEL 14:17



"Or if I bring a sword on that land, and say, 'Sword, go through the land,' and I cut off man and beast from it, (Ek.14:17)

- **Being just, God could:**
 - (1) Cut off its food supply and send famine (Ek.14:13)**
 - (2) Send wild beasts through that country (Ek.14:15)**
 - (3) Bring a sword (Ek.14:17)**
 - (4) Send a plague (Ek.14:19)**
- **God could use any of these four means to punish the land and kill its people.**
- **How bad it will be when God sends against Jerusalem His four dreadful judgments — sword and famine and wild beasts and plague.**



**even though these three men were
in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD,
"they would deliver neither sons
nor daughters, but only they
themselves would be delivered.**

EZEKIEL 14:18



even though these three men were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only they themselves would be delivered. (Ek.14:18)

- **The presence of these three men would not save the city if the Lord brought an invading army against it.**
- **The Lord confirmed the certainty of each of the last three forms of judgment with His oath (Ek.14:16,18,20).**



**"Or if I send a pestilence into
that land and pour out My fury
on it in blood, and cut off from
it man and beast,**

EZEKIEL 14:19



"Or if I send a pestilence into that land and pour out My fury on it in blood, and cut off from it man and beast, (Ek.14:19)

- **The same would be true if God judged His people with disease, the effect of siege warfare.**
- **Here is a prominent instance of God using pestilence as a punishment (2Sm.24:15).**



So the LORD sent a plague upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time. From Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died. (2Sm.24:15).



**even though Noah, Daniel, and Job
were in it, as I live," says the Lord
GOD, "they would deliver neither
son nor daughter; they would deliver
only themselves by their
righteousness."**

EZEKIEL 14:20



even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."(Ek.14:20)

- **God mentioned Noah, Daniel, and Job because of their similar characteristics. Each was a man of righteousness who overcame adversity.**
 - **Righteous NOAH was able to save only his immediate family from judgment (Ge.6:8-7:1).**
 - **DANIEL was a righteous man in Ezekiel's day whom God used to save his friends from judgment (Da.2:12-24).**
 - **JOB was a righteous man who interceded for his three friends to save them from God's wrath after his own trials (Jb.42:7-9).**



even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, as I live," says the Lord GOD, "they would deliver neither son nor daughter; they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."(Ek.14:20)

- **Even if these three pillars of righteousness prayed together for mercy in a land under judgment, their praying for others in that case would be of no avail.**
- **They could save only themselves.**
- **Noah had “saved” his family and Job’s family was restored after his calamities; but when God’s judgment would come on Israel, they would be able to rescue only themselves.**



For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it?"

EZEKIEL 14:21



For thus says the Lord GOD: "How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it? (Ek.14:21)

- **Having established this general principle (Ek.14:12-20), Ezekiel applied it to Jerusalem.**
- **It would be worse for Jerusalem because she did not have three giants of righteousness to intercede for her.**
- **The Lord promised to send judgment by these four agents against Jerusalem: war, famine, wild animals, and disease (Lv.26:22-26).**



Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, both sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it.

EZEKIEL 14:22



Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, both sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings. Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. (Ek.14:22)

- If those righteous leaders could not save a wicked land, how could Jerusalem hope to escape with her smallness of number of righteous individuals?**
- There would be some survivors — sons and daughters who would be brought out of Jerusalem.**
- That is, some would live through Jerusalem's destruction and be brought to Babylon as captives.**
- As that group of exiles went to Babylon, the existing exiles already there would see their conduct and their actions, and be comforted regarding the disaster on Jerusalem.**



And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it," says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 14:23



And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:23)

- The “ways” and “doings” was probably referring to the wicked ways of the captives.**
- These two words occur together 7 times, and in every occurrence the words convey sinful actions.**
- Those who questioned the severity of God’s judgment would recognize its justice when they observed the evil character of the captives brought from Jerusalem.**



And they will comfort you, when you see their ways and their doings; and you shall know that I have done nothing without cause that I have done in it," says the Lord GOD. (Ek.14:23)

- **They would be forced to admit that these people did deserve to be punished and that God was not unjust.**
- **They would also see that God's preservation of some of them was pure grace.**
- **The presence of godly people living in an ungodly society will not necessarily preclude divine judgment on that society.**
- **There must be repentance by many people in that society for God to withhold judgment.**



FUTILITY OF FALSE OPTIMISM

EZEKIEL

14