



# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 14

*Theme: Prophecy against the elders' idolatry;  
vision of the vine; Jerusalem likened to an  
abandoned baby adopted by God*

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**Theme:** Prophecy against the elders' idolatry; vision of the vine; Jerusalem likened to an abandoned baby adopted by God

**Clarke Introduction:** Here God threatens those hypocrites who pretended to worship him, while they loved and practiced idolatry, vv. 1-11. He declares his irreversible purpose of punishing so guilty a nation, in behalf of which no intercession of the people of God shall be of any avail. The gross idolaters of Jerusalem and Judah shall be visited with God's four sore judgments, famine, vv. 12-14; wild beasts, vv. 15, 16; the sword, vv. 17, 18; and pestilence, vv. 19-21. A remnant shall be delivered from the wrath coming upon the whole land, vv. 22, 23.<sup>1</sup>

**McGee Introduction:** Chapter 14 is divided into two major sections: the prophecy against the idolatry of the elders and the certainty of the destruction of Jerusalem. Both sections open with, "The word of the LORD came unto me" (vv. 2, 12). The Lord continues in this chapter to outline why He judged the city of Jerusalem as He did. The principles that are put down here are operative today also. God still judges nations.<sup>2</sup>

**OTS Introduction:** As in 8:1, the elders again came to Ezekiel's home in Babylon and sat before him as his students. God directed the prophet to answer four anticipated objections to his message of judgment. Two of these objections are found in the first oracle in chapter 14, the third is found in the second oracle. The fourth anticipated objection was answered by means of another parable in chapter 15.<sup>3</sup>

In these verses Ezekiel will call the elders of Israel to repent. I have noticed throughout both the Old and New Testaments *repentance* is God's message to His own people, those who profess to belong to Him. "Repent and turn to God"—that will be Ezekiel's message here.

### **Constable: The effect of false prophets on Israel's leaders 14:1-11**

This prophecy carries on the thought of the one in 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. A picture of a tree contained part of the essence of the tree; a statue of a god contained part of the essence of that god. Where that statue was, the god was of necessity at least partly present. Anything offered to a god's statue was offered directly to the god."

This attitude persists even today in some parts of the world as seen, for example, in some people's unwillingness to allow someone else to photograph them. They believe that the image of themselves on the photograph is a part of their essence that the taking of a photo removes from them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

<sup>2</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 13:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 14:1-15:8). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Thomsa Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 Edition

**God, One God**—God deals with idolatry with a call to repent and with judgment against those who do not. God works toward the day when He will truly have a people dedicated wholly to the one God. See note on 6:3-7.

### **Ezekiel 14:1**

**Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.**

**Clarke: Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me**—These probably came to tempt him, or get him to say something that would embroil him with the government. They were bad men, as we shall see in the third verse.

**Elders of Israel;** i.e., elders of the exiles (cf. 8:1; 20:1). These leaders, probably perplexed by Ezekiel’s denunciations of the false prophets, came to inquire further about Jerusalem and its future.<sup>5</sup>

**BKC: 1-6:** Ezekiel’s fourth message was a condemnation of idolatry. Some of the elders of Israel went to see Ezekiel. Though he was still confined to his house (3:24) these exiles recognized him as a prophet and came to him for advice (cf. 8:1). Presumably the elders wanted to receive a message from God about Jerusalem or the length of their exile.

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. The idolatry in Jerusalem was openly displayed (chap. 8), but the idolatry in Babylon was more subtle—it was internal rather than external. Like stumbling blocks, this idolatry would cause the people to fall. Several times Ezekiel spoke of a stumbling block (*mikšōl*) to show the effects of idolatry on the people (cf. 7:19, “stumble”; 14:3-4, 7; 18:30, “downfall”; 44:12, “fall”). In the Book of Ezekiel Israel’s idolatry was seen as the major cause for God’s judgment on His people.

These hypocritical elders came to the true God for answers while having another “god” in their hearts. 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. So 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.

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 message Israel needed to hear was not some oracle about Jerusalem or the Captivity. The urgent message was, Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices!<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 14:1–6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**McGee:** The elders come to Ezekiel, and oh, how pious these fellows are! They pretend they want to listen to the prophet. It is like coming to church with a big Bible under your arm, pretending you want to serve the Lord.

**Chuck Smith 1-3:** Why should I talk to them? Why should I deal with them? These guys that are sitting here in front of you, they've got idols that they have set up in their hearts. Idolatry begins in the heart. There's where you first turn against God. There's where you really turn to God. "Believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead" (Romans 10:9). "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). "Out of the heart proceeds the evil speakings, the murders, the adulteries, the fornications, the lies, the heart" (Matthew 15:19). And here were these men coming to inquire of God, to hear the word of the Lord from the prophet. And God says to Ezekiel, "Hey these guys that are sitting here, Ezekiel, why should I speak to them? Why should I be inquired of by them? Because they all have their little idols all set up in their hearts." Now, usually they would set up an idol on an altar, on a table, or some place in their home, that's bad enough. But it's even worse to set up an idol in your heart, because then you begin to deceive yourself, you say, "Well I don't have... I'm not guilty of idolatry. I don't have any idols. I don't have any little shrines in my home." But you've got it right here in your heart, that's worse.<sup>7</sup>

**ESV: 1–11** False Inquirers. That the theme of false prophecy continues is clear from vv. 9–11, although now the problem is viewed from the side of the recipients rather than the producers of false oracles. A second occasion of being approached by the elders (v. 1) in exile (cf. 8:1; 20:1) sets the context for this oracle against idolaters seeking a word from the Lord. Although the exilic setting is not required to explain the idolatry of these elders, the new cultural setting and dislocation could promote unthinking syncretism. This section turns on God's question in 14:3, which brings three successive responses. Verses 4–5 give an apparent "yes," but what it might mean to lay hold of the hearts (v. 5) is unpacked in the following verses. The second response comes in vv. 6–8: any divine answer to idolatrous inquirers will be tuned to their repentance (v. 6)—which, if not forthcoming, leads to their rejection by God (v. 8). The third response (vv. 9–11) joins inquirer and false prophet, as God asserts responsibility for deceptions that ensure punishment for both partners in delusion (cf. 1 Kings 22:13–28).

Some of the elders of the Jewish community in exile came to visit Ezekiel. While these men sat with the prophet, a word from the Lord came to him.

**BSB:** The sin of the inquirers who came to Ezekiel was not open idolatry, but the setting up of "idols in their hearts." They were influenced by pagan thoughts and practices, and no longer gave primary allegiance to YAHWEH. These "elders of Israel" (v. 1) were largely responsible for the widespread success and acceptance of the false prophets.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Chuck Smith, Pastor / Founder, Sermon Notes, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

<sup>8</sup> Believer's Study Bible Notes.

## **Ezekiel 14:2**

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

[**And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying ...**] this is the 19th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 14:2-11, fulfilled). The next prophecy is in Ezekiel 14:12.

### **Nine Predictions—Fulfilled (Dake):**

1. Every man of Israel that sets up his idols in his heart, puts a stumbling block of iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet, I will answer him according to his idols (Ezekiel 14:4).
2. Every one in Israel who separates from Me, setting up his idols in his heart, puts a stumblingblock of iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet to inquire of him concerning Me, I will answer him by Myself (Ezekiel 14:7).
3. I will set My face against that man (Ezekiel 14:8).
4. I will make him a sign and a proverb.
5. I will cut him off from the midst of My people.
6. They will know that I am Jehovah.
7. I will stretch forth My hand upon the deceived prophet to destroy him from Israel (Ezekiel 14:9).
8. They will bear their punishment for their iniquity (Ezekiel 14:10).
9. The punishment of the prophet will be as the punishment of those who seek after them.<sup>9</sup>

**McGee: 2-3:** In effect the elders say, “Oh, brother Ezekiel, we don’t worship idols!” It was true they had not made idols, but the Lord said, “These men have set up their idols in their heart.”

Samson was also a man who pretended to be God’s man, and the Spirit of God *did* come upon him at times. The Holy Spirit—never his hair—was the secret of his power. But there came a day when he went out and “... he wist it not ...” (Lev. 5:17)—he knew not that the Spirit of God had departed from him. He had kept toying and playing with sin and at the same time wanting to be God’s man. How many people today in the church keep toying and playing with sin and think they are getting by with it? My friend, they are *not* getting by with it. Judgment is inevitable. They may go through the form and ritual of religion, keeping up a false front, but they actually have idols in their hearts.

Ezekiel is told by the Lord that these men are phonies. They pretend they want to hear his message, but they do not hear it at all. When he turns around, they will put a knife in his back.

**Election, Condemnation**—God’s judgment is redemptive. His purpose is to recapture the hearts of the elect who desert Him for idols. God acts in every way possible among His people to lead them to know Him and be His devoted people.

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<sup>9</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

### **Ezekiel 14:3**

**Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?**

Here is another example of God revealing to a prophet the sinful condition of the man who came to him (Ezekiel 14:1,3).

**[should I be enquired of at all by them?]** this is Question 15. The next question is in Ezekiel 14:21.

**Clarke: These men have set up their idols in their heart**—Not only in their houses; in the streets; but they had them in their hearts. These were stumbling-blocks of iniquity; they fell over them, and broke the neck of their souls. And should God be inquired of by such miscreants as these?

**LAN:** God condemned the elders for worshiping idols in their hearts and then daring to come to God’s prophet for advice. On the outside, they appeared to worship God, making regular visits to the temple to offer sacrifices. But they were not sincere. It is easy for us to criticize the Israelites for worshiping idols when they so clearly needed God instead. But we have idols in our hearts when we pursue reputation, acceptance, wealth, or sensual pleasure with the intensity and commitment that should be reserved for serving God.<sup>10</sup>

**LAN 3-5:** For Hebrew writers, important functions of life were assigned to different physical organs. The heart was considered the core of a person’s intellectual and spiritual function. Because all people have someone or something as the object of their heart’s devotion, they have the potential for idolatry within them. God wants to recapture the hearts of his people. We must never let anything captivate our allegiance or imagination in such a way to replace or weaken our devotion to God.

**Have set up their idols in their heart.** Note the frequent mention of idols (*gillûlîm*) in the paragraph. Cf. 6:4, 5. Stumblingblock of their iniquity. Cf. 7:19, 20. They have busied their thoughts with idolatry, which causes them to stumble and fall (cf. v. 6).<sup>11</sup>

#### **First Objection (14:3–8) OTS:**

By sitting at the feet of the prophet the elders appeared to be seeking the Lord’s will. Surely Ezekiel’s warnings did not apply to them. The Lord, however, exposed the hypocrisy of these men. They had “set up idols in their hearts.” They secretly pined for the old pagan ways. They put right before their faces “the stumbling block of their

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<sup>10</sup> Life Application Bible Notes

<sup>11</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:3). Chicago: Moody Press.

iniquity,” i.e., they were constantly thinking about idols. No positive word of encouragement was possible for such hypocrites. God would deal with such men directly and personally, not through a prophetic intermediary like Ezekiel. God’s purpose in these warnings was “lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel.” He desired to recapture the hearts of those who had become estranged from him because of idolatry (14:3–5).

Reconciliation to God can only be effected by repentance. Therefore Ezekiel called upon the elders to “repent and turn away” from their idols and abominations. He repeated the warning that God would personally deal with hypocrites who pretend to seek his will, but who love idolatry. God would set his face against such men, i.e., be their adversary. He would make them “a sign and a proverb” by cutting them off from among their people. The hypocrite would experience such a fate that his name would become a proverbial warning to others. Through that experience of judgment, however, others would come to have the correct understanding of the nature of God (14:6–8).<sup>12</sup>

The sin of the inquirers who came to Ezekiel was not open idolatry, but the setting up of “idols in their hearts.” They were influenced by pagan thoughts and practices, and no longer gave primary allegiance to YAHWEH. These “elders of Israel” (v. 1) were largely responsible for the widespread success and acceptance of the false prophets.

**Constable:** The Lord revealed to His servant that these elders (along with the elders in Jerusalem, cf. 8:7-12) had been nursing idolatry in their hearts. The word translated “idols” in this passage is *gillulim*, Ezekiel’s favorite term for idols. It means pellets of dung literally (cf. 6:4-6, 9, 13; et al.). These elders had put right in front of them the very thing that caused them to stumble in sin. That is, instead of trying to avoid temptation (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22) they cherished the worship of other deities. In view of what follows, this appears to have included seeking false prophets and prophetesses to obtain guidance (vv. 4, 7, 9; cf. ch. 13). In the following verses it becomes clear that the prophets these elders consulted were false prophets (cf. vv. 9-10). Yahweh asked rhetorically whether He should respond to their requests in view of their trust in other gods (cf. Ps. 66:18; 1 Kings 18:21; James 1:8).

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 [cf. Ps. 66:18].

### **Ezekiel 14:4**

**Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;**

**Clarke:** According to the multitude of his idols—I will treat him as an idolater, as a flagrant idolater.

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 14:3–8). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**Every man of the house of Israel.** A legal formula (cf. Lev 17:3, 8, 10, 13; 20:2). The man whose heart was divided in its allegiance to Jehovah would receive no knowledge through a prophet, but would be answered by Jehovah himself in deeds. I will answer him by myself. This translation follows the reading of the Targum and of verse 7 "coming." That I may lay hold of the hearts of ... Israel (RSV). The Lord would call them to account for their idolatry. He cannot tolerate secret faithlessness.<sup>13</sup>

**McGee:** God says He will judge these men. The Lord Jesus called the religious rulers of His day *hypocrites*. He used that frightful, awful word more than anyone. Ezekiel is speaking to the spiritual leaders of the people. How tragic this is! God is going to judge them. God will always judge phony religion. I believe that whenever a church or an individual departs from the truth, God will judge.

**Chuck Smith 4-5:** I'll answer them, "They've all become a stranger to me because of their idols, idolatry, worshipping an idol, a principle, an ideal, a philosophy." Having a master passion governing your life other than God always estranges a person from God.

### **Ezekiel 14:5**

**That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.**

**Constable:** 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 (cf. vv. 7-10). The judgment of God on those who pursued idolatry was allowing them to continue in it until it destroyed them (cf. Lev. 20:3, 5-6; Deut. 28:37; Hos. 4:17; Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Thess. 2:11).

"This happens only to those who willingly take deceit into their hearts." Taylor titled this section "Condemnation of those who are set on idolatry." It is not the *practice* of these idolaters that drew the judgment of God, as bad as that was, but their *commitment* to it that drew the punishment explained here. Yahweh would judge these elders because of the multitude of His people's idols and to bring their hearts back to Himself. 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.

### **Ezekiel 14:6**

**Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your**

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<sup>13</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:4). Chicago: Moody Press.



## **abominations.**

God never misses an occasion to warn men to repent and turn away from sin in order to avert judgment (Ezekiel 14:6-7).

**LAN 6-11:** The people of Judah, though eager to accept the messages of false prophets, considered the presence of a few God-fearing men in the nation an insurance policy against disaster. In a pinch, they could always ask God's prophets for advice. But merely having God's people around doesn't help. We must remember that the relationship our pastor, family, or friends have with God will not protect us from the consequences of our own sins. Each person is responsible for his or her own relationship with God. Is your faith personal and real, or are you resting in what others have done?

Although the prophet had pointed out the self-acting law of divine retribution (v. 4), he here says that God pleads with men to forsake their evil way. 7. Stranger that sojourneth in Israel. Note Ezekiel's care for the resident aliens (22:7, 29; 47:22, 23). The proselyte enjoyed equal rights under the law and faced equal penalty (Lev 17:8, 10, 13; 20:2). Cf. Lev 17:8-10; 20:3, 5, 6. A sign or warning example (cf. Num 26:10; Deut 28:37, 46). And a byword i.e., *a proverb* reading the word in the singular with the Syriac and the Vulgate.<sup>14</sup>

**McGee:** God has laid it on the line that these men are phonies, not genuine, having idols in their hearts, sin in their hearts. Again, someone might say about Samson, "My, isn't that terrible about Samson!" I'd hate to live like that man did and have that judgment come upon *me*." However, I am afraid that there are folk who sit in the church pew and yet would like to live in sin, to taste the fruits of sin. The very thing they condemn outwardly is the thing in their heart they would like to do. This old nature we have is bad, but God says, "Repent. Come to Me." He is gracious to Israel. He is giving them an opportunity to become genuine, but they will not.

**Chuck Smith 6-8:** God says, "I'm going to be fierce in My judgment of that person; I'll cut him off. Come to inquire of Me with idols in your heart? Hey, that's dangerous business." Ananias and Sapphira sought to do so. They came to God, but they had idols in their hearts. Mammon was sitting there. A desire, oh there were other idols too; it was desire to be acknowledged and recognized by the church as generous givers. "Oh my, isn't that marvelous? They sold their property and are turning all their money in. Ooh great, fantastic." But they weren't; they were only pretending to do so. They were holding back part of the profit for themselves. Now, there's nothing wrong with that. They didn't have to sell their house. They didn't have to bring anything in. God didn't require that. But they were making a pretense, it was a hoax, it was a sham. They were coming before God, but there were idols in their hearts. "Why have you conspired in your heart," Peter said, "to do this evil and to sin against God and to lie to the Holy Ghost? You haven't lied unto man; you've lied unto God." And of course, they fell over dead and were carried out. God said, "I will wipe them out from among My people." Be thankful God isn't so severe

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<sup>14</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:4). Chicago: Moody Press.

today as He was in the early church. We wouldn't have a church the size that we do. God's heavy hand.

The Lord called His people to change their minds (repent, Heb. *shub*), turn away from the idols in their hearts, and abandon them.

### **Ezekiel 14:7**

**For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:**

Note that these idols are set up on the mantle place of their heart!

**And cometh to a prophet**—Generally supposed to mean a false prophet.

**Clarke: I the Lord will answer him by myself**—I shall discover to him, by my own true prophet, what shall be the fruit of his ways. So, while their false prophets were assuring them of peace and prosperity, God's prophets were predicting the calamities that afterwards fell upon them. Yet they believed the false prophets in preference to the true. Ahab, about to engage with the Syrians, who had possession of Ramoth-Gilead, asked Micaiah, the prophet of the Lord, concerning the event; who told him he should lose the battle. He then inquired of Zedekiah, a false prophet, who promised him a glorious victory. Ahab believed the latter, marched against the enemy, was routed, and slain in the battle, 1 Kings 22:10, etc.

**BKC 7-8:** Ezekiel then widened the scope of his message. Verse 7 is identical to verse 4b except that in verse 7 the warning applied also to any alien living in Israel. The "alien" (*gēr*) was a resident alien in Israel who had accepted Israel's ways and was responsible to obey God's Law (Lev. 16:29-30; 17:12-16; 18:26; Num. 15:13-16; Isa. 56:3-8; Ezek. 47:22-23).

If an Israelite or an alien dared to presume on God while harboring idolatry, God would answer in judgment. I the LORD will answer him Myself (cf. 14:4) and make him an example and a byword. He would be a "byword" in the sense that people would know about him and talk about him (cf. 23:10; Job 17:6; 30:9; Ps. 44:14; Jer. 24:9; Joel 2:17). God would cut him off from His people. God would respond with actions, not words. He would move against that idolatrous person to kill him. This harsh action would be an example to others.<sup>15</sup>

Ezekiel specifically includes the resident aliens (*immigrants*) in his warning.

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<sup>15</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 14:7-8). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**ESV:** The strangers (Hb. *ger*) and native Israelites were to have one and the same code for life, according to priestly law (cf. Lev. 19:33–34; Num. 15:13–16).

### **Ezekiel 14:8**

**And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.**

**Constable:** Anyone in Israel, including immigrants (Heb. *ger*, sojourners, 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. Note the emphasis on personal responsibility for sin throughout this passage (cf. v. 4). The Lord would oppose all such people making them object lessons to others of what happens when God's people pursue idolatry. He would put them to death (cf. Lev. 17:4, 10, 14; et al.). Then His people would know that He was God.

In the Book of Ezekiel Israel's idolatry was seen as the major cause for God's judgment on His people."

**Revelation, Faithfulness**—People separate themselves from God. In the heart people decide to follow other gods. God threatens to make such persons examples to others of what happens to people who abandon God's plans and will for their lives. People cannot expect to receive God's revelation in time of need when they have dedicated their lives to other gods.

### **Ezekiel 14:9**

**And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel.**

**[when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet] Dake:** The method God uses to deceive a false prophet is to permit an evil spirit to take hold of him (2 Kings 22:19-23), or let the prophet be lifted up in his pride and see visions of his own exalted heart (Ezekiel 13:2-3,17; Jeremiah 23:16,25,31-39). A man or woman who yields to either one of these has rejected God and His way of life, and lived in sin and rebellion to the point of becoming the victim of a wrong spirit. The same principle is stated in Matthew 13:14-15; 2 Thes. 2:8-12. God never deliberately deceives anyone, but when men will not listen to Him He withdraws and permits them to be deceived by demons (Romans 1:18-32).

**[destroy him from the midst of my people Israel] Dake:** The reason God can justly destroy such a man is that he is stubborn and rebellious, having refused to listen to Him or go His way to escape judgment. His destruction is because of his sins and becoming a tool of Satan, which things cause rebellion against God and His will (Romans 1:18-32; 2

Thes. 2:8-12). God's dealings with Israel in the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel only prove His longsuffering in tolerating the rebellion until there could be no other remedy but judgment.

**Clarke: I the Lord have deceived that prophet**—That is, he ran before he was sent; he willingly became the servant of Satan's illusions; and I suffered this to take place, because he and his followers refused to consult and serve me. I have often had occasion to remark that it is common in the Hebrew language to state a thing as done by the Lord which he only suffers or permits to be done; for so absolute and universal is the government of God, that the smallest occurrence cannot take place without his will or permission.

**If the prophet be deceived.** This may result not only from self-delusion (13:3, 6) and from idolatrous inquirers (v. 7), but **I the Lord have deceived that prophet.** In ancient thought, secondary causes were often overlooked, and events attributed directly to the work of the Lord. See Amos 3:6; Isa 45:7. When a man sins against spiritual light, he brings on himself spiritual blindness. This does not relieve him of responsibility, however, for always the principle of "no other gods before me" obtains. Cf. II Kgs 22:15–23:3.<sup>16</sup>

**BKC 9-11:** God said He would not respond through His prophet to an inquirer who was harboring idolatry in his heart. Therefore if a prophet *did* give an answer, it meant he was a false prophet. The clause, I the LORD have persuaded that prophet, is somewhat enigmatic and at first glance seems to indicate that God *did* prompt the prophet to speak. However, "persuaded" (from *pātâh*) is better translated with a negative connotation such as "entice" or "deceive" (cf. Ex. 22:16, "seduces"; 2 Sam. 3:25; Jer. 20:7). The best illustration of Ezekiel's meaning is the story of God's letting false prophets deceive Ahab, to bring him to his death (1 Kings 22:19-23).

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 (the prophet will be as guilty as the one who consults him). God would hold both individuals responsible for their sin and would punish them accordingly.

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. Then, God said, they will be My people and I will be their God (cf. Ezek. 11:20; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Hosea 2:23). God ultimately will restore Israel to her place of fellowship with Him.<sup>17</sup>

He longed to be their God and for them to be His people and that they walk before Him in holiness and in righteousness, not polluted by their transgressions.

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<sup>16</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:9). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>17</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 14:9–11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**ESV: I, the Lord, have deceived that prophet.** One of the forms of God's judgment is allowing people to believe falsehood, or even (as in this verse) *leading* them to believe falsehood. Yet Scripture also consistently affirms the human decision to sin and human responsibility for that decision (note the idolatry [v. 7] that preceded this deception, and the just punishment from God [vv. 9–10]). Moreover, Scripture never says that God himself speaks falsehood (he cannot; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and it never excuses human beings for speaking or believing falsehood.

**Constable:** If the idolater prevailed on the false prophet to speak, it was Yahweh in His sovereignty who allowed that prophet to speak (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 1 Kings 22:23).<sup>234</sup>

Such a statement is only intelligible when we remember that ancient habits of thought [frequently] overlooked secondary causes, and attributed events directly to the action of God.

The Lord would also judge the false prophet with death.

### **Second Objection (14:9–11) OTS:**

A second objection to the harsh rhetoric of Ezekiel might be paraphrased like this: “How can you be so hard on us? We have only been listening to men who claim to be prophets!” Ezekiel responded to this objection decisively. These “prophets” had been “enticed” to speak in God’s name. Ezekiel even went so far as to say that Yahweh was the one who had enticed them! The Old Testament frequently does not distinguish between primary and secondary causation. What God permits to happen, he sometimes is said to have caused to happen. That the enticement of the false prophets was the permissive and not the active will of God is indicated here in the context. God would stretch out his hand against the prophet who had been enticed to speak falsehood in his name. He would destroy that man from among his people. That God would directly entice a prophet to speak falsely, and then punish him for that act would be inconceivable (14:9).

Consulting one who claimed to be a prophet could not be offered as an excuse for not obeying the Lord. Both the “prophet” and the one who inquired of him would bear the punishment of their iniquity. Again Ezekiel stressed that this judgment had a positive purpose. The judgment would cause the house of Israel no longer to stray from the Lord or defile themselves by their transgressions. Once their dalliance with idolatry was over, their former relationship with the Lord could be restored. He would be their God and they would be his people (14:10f.).<sup>18</sup>

**God, Faithfulness**—These difficult verses illustrate the faithfulness and the wrath of God. God’s character is unchanging, and He will not be manipulated by shallow, sinful, conniving people. He not only will not be manipulated or used by them, He will oppose them in His wrath. Vv. 3-4, 7 refer to people who were determined in their idolatry. V. 9 suggests that a responsible prophet would have nothing to do with them in their attempt to give a righteous veneer to their idolatry. If a prophet did pay attention to them, God would deal very seriously with the prophet as well as those who were engaged in idolatry.

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 14:9–11). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

The statement that the Lord has “enticed that prophet” represents absolute monotheistic thought which ascribes everything directly or indirectly to God.

### **Ezekiel 14:10**

**And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him*;**

**Clarke: The punishment of the prophet**—They are both equally guilty; both have left the Lord, and both shall be equally punished.

**Constable:** Both the idolatrous Israelite and the false prophet would bear punishment for their sins, but this would be punishment with a purpose. Then the rest of God's people might learn and not apostatize and defile themselves with transgressions but enjoy an intimate relationship with Yahweh and He with them (cf. 11:20; 37:28; Exod. 19:5-6; Lev. 26:16; Jer. 7:23; 31:33).

**Sin, Responsibility**—Prophecy can be an instrument of God's punishment. God's Word is intended for His faithful people who will follow it. People who try to use God's Word or God's minister for their own sinful purposes will find that Word turned against them. The minister of the Word who is foolish enough to cooperate with the wicked shares their guilt. God Himself will use that prophet as an agent of punishment—bringing punishment on both wicked sinner and foolish prophet. Such sin produces crooked guilt (Isa 1:2-4). Death is the ultimate result.

### **Ezekiel 14:11**

**That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.**

**Missler:** God can use false prophets. There are a few strange examples in Scripture: 1 Kings 22:13-23, the witch of Endor and a few others. God used false prophets to in effect punish them for having already continued in disobedience. When the man did what the false prophet told him to do, why did God punish that man who got hooked? God permits false prophets to deal with situations where someone has continued already in disobedience. Perhaps the most dramatic one is in the New Testament. See 2 Thess 2:8-11.

There is an ultimate lie, a wild, extreme lie that the deceiver will unleash on the world at that time, and God Himself is going to permit this strong delusion in order to deceive, “Those in whom there is not the love of the truth that they might be saved.” (2 Thess 2:10b)

That God Himself will use deception is a strange idea for us to get used to. God uses Satan to bring Himself glory. It was Satan who proclaimed Christ's innocence. Through the voice of Judas, Satan said, “Behold, I have betrayed innocent blood.” God uses

Satan. In all his extremes, Satan ends up inadvertently glorifying God. Ultimately, he is God's instrument.

So when we come across some of these passages in the Old Testament, it is simply God's way of climaxing a path they have already chosen for themselves. And therein lies the danger of choosing the path in the first place. If we choose a path of delusion, the end result of that is a *strong* delusion.<sup>19</sup>

This is the ultimate purpose of God in dealing with men—not only Jews but Gentiles also—in every age. He wants to bring all men to full and eternal reconciliation and righteousness where they will go astray no more, and where they can be His people and He can be their God. This will be eventually realized in the New Earth (Rev. 21:3-7; Rev. 22:3).

This prophecy continues the emphasis on judgment from the previous one and stresses the irrevocability of Jerusalem's destruction (cf. Jer. 7:16; 15:1-4).

### **Ezekiel 14:12**

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

**[The word of the LORD came again to me, saying ...]** This is the 20th prophecy in Ezekiel (Ezekiel 14:12-23, fulfilled). The next prophecy is in Ezekiel 15:1.

#### **Ten Predictions—Fulfilled (Dake):**

1. When the land sins against Me by trespassing grievously, then I will stretch out My hand upon it, and will break the staff of bread thereof, and send famine upon it. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they could not deliver it (Ezekiel 14:13-14).
2. I will cut off man and beast from it.
3. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land and they spoil it so that it be desolate, that no man may pass because of the beasts: though these three men were in it, they could not deliver it (Ezekiel 14:15-16).
4. If I bring a sword through the land so that I cut off man and beast from it: though these three men were in it, they could not deliver it (Ezekiel 14:17-18).
5. If I send pestilence into the land and pour out My fury upon it in blood, to cut off both man and beast: though these three men were in it, they could not deliver it by their own righteousness (Ezekiel 14:19-20).
6. If they could not deliver it from only one of these judgments, how much less could they do so when I send all four judgments to cut off man and beast from the land (Ezekiel 14:21).
7. I will leave a remnant that will be brought forth, both sons and daughters (Ezekiel 14:22).
8. They will come forth to you, and you will see their way and doings.
9. You will be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem.

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<sup>19</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

10. They will comfort you when you see their ways and doings, and you will know that I have done it (Ezekiel 14:23).

**BKC: 12-20:** In the first section of his message Ezekiel gave four “hypothetical” cases of judgment. A particular country sins against God by being unfaithful and He stretches out His hand against it. Being just, God could (a) cut off its food supply and send famine (v. 13), (b) send wild beasts through that country (v. 15), (c) bring a sword (v. 17), and/or (d) send a plague (v. 19). God could use any of these four means to punish the land and kill its people (cf. 5:17). In fact all four will be used during the Tribulation when God pours His judgment on the whole earth for her sin (cf. Rev. 6:8).

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 could save only themselves by their righteousness (cf. Ezek. 14:20). Both Noah and Job are understood by most scholars to refer to the biblical characters with the same names, but there is some question on the identity of Daniel. Ezekiel’s spelling of the name differs slightly from the statesman-prophet who wrote the Book of Daniel. Many scholars feel that Ezekiel was referring to the mythical *Dan’el* in Ugaritic texts who, as a righteous ruler and judge, could not protect his sons from the wrath of the goddess Anat.

But this identification should probably be rejected. The minor difference in spelling could be explained by the common practice of multiple spellings of a given name (cf. “Azariah”=“Uzziah,” 2 Kings 15:1; 2 Chron. 26:1; “Jehoram”=“Joram,” 2 Kings 3:1; 8:16). The Prophet Daniel, well known in Babylon, would have been familiar to Ezekiel and his audience. There is no indication in the Old Testament that the mythical character *Dan’el* was known to the Jews or accepted as a model of righteousness. It was Ezekiel’s purpose (Ezek. 14:1-11) to lambast idolatry. Would he use an idolatrous myth as a model of righteousness? By contrast, the biblical Daniel is the perfect example of a man who refused to compromise his beliefs.

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 (Gen. 6:8-7:1). Daniel was a righteous man in Ezekiel’s day whom God used to save his friends from judgment (Dan. 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 (Job 42:7-9).

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. (Cf. Jeremiah’s words about the ineffectiveness of Moses’ and Samuel’s praying, Jer. 15:1.) This was made even more poignant when God declared, they could not save their own sons or daughters. They alone would be saved (Ezek. 14:18; cf. v. 20). 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.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 14:12–20). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.



**McGee: 12-13:** The false prophets were still running around saying, “God will spare Jerusalem. It is His city—He loves it. He says His eye is there.” They could quote an abundance of Scripture about it. It is possible to quote an isolated Scripture or two to support false doctrine today. However, you cannot take a verse here and there; you must look at the whole picture presented in Scripture. When you do, you will not be able to support false theories. These prophets were wrong, and God is saying very explicitly that Jerusalem is to be judged.

God says to Ezekiel, “The city is a rebellious city which has continuously rebelled against Me. I have given them opportunity to return to Me, and they will not.”

God is very definite, and He means what He says. Judgment is unavoidable. Listen to just how serious He is:

**Constable 12-14:** The Lord spoke to Ezekiel again. He revealed that Jerusalem's great sins had made deliverance from divine punishment impossible. Evidently some of the exiled Jews were remembering God's promise to Abraham that He would deliver Sodom if there were enough righteous people in it (Gen. 18:22-33). Surely, they thought, there were enough righteous people in Jerusalem that God would not destroy it.

This attitude is nothing less than using the saints as an insurance policy to cover the sinners. It has been a human failing in every generation. A community is a trifle embarrassed to have a saint among its number, but it derives a sense of security from his presence, rather like the possession of a religious lucky charm. A family with no pretensions to spirituality is often glad to have a minister of religion in one of its branches, however far removed.

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. 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. All three men were righteous men who lived amidst unrighteousness—Noah, a pre-Israelite, Daniel, an Israelite now living in Gentile Babylon, and Job, a non-Israelite. Some scholars believed the Daniel in view was not the Daniel of the Book of Daniel, Ezekiel's contemporary, but a character in a Canaanite epic.<sup>237</sup> Most conservative commentators have rejected this view.<sup>238</sup> If these three men lived in Jerusalem, the Lord would deliver them for their own righteousness, but He would deliver no others for their sake. God had, in fact, delivered Daniel from the coming destruction of Jerusalem by removing him safely to Babylon. God would have spared Sodom if only 10 righteous people lived there (Gen. 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.

Noah, Job, and Daniel—each one of them faces a distinct challenge that demands a profound level of faith. The issues that confronted them: faith in the word of God amid prevailing scientific skepticism, faith in God in spite of acute suffering; faith in God displayed in a situation of sophisticated pluralism, choosing to accept death rather than dishonor God.

All of them were tested and proved faithful, Noah by the Flood, Daniel in the lions' den, and Job by painful trials from Satan.

The Lord said that this principle of judgment applied to "a country" (v. 13), any country that acted treacherously against the Lord. "It probably is sufficient simply to note that the hypothetical situation has both a general character (note that Noah, Daniel, and Job are all associated with non-Israelite contexts) and a specific application to Israel. The point of the passage is that Israel was under a divine judgment that was irreversible in its very nature.

### **Third Objection (14:12–23) ) OTS:**

The third anticipated objection to Ezekiel's message of judgment was that some righteous men were still living in the midst of the nation. How could God destroy those righteous ones along with the wicked? Ezekiel answered this objection by affirming that even the presence of Noah, Daniel and Job could not spare an unfaithful land once the wheels of judgment were set in motion. Whether the judgment was famine, wild beasts, the sword, or plague, such righteous men would not be able to deliver their sons and daughters. Righteous men can save only their own lives, not those of their families. The principle here is that righteousness is not inherited (14:12–20).

God was about to send a fourfold calamity against Jerusalem consisting of sword, famine, wild beasts and pestilence. A remnant would survive this judgment, but they would be carried away into captivity to join the Jews already there since 597 B.C.. Those later captives would bring "comfort" to the earlier captives. This "comfort" was the sense of understanding which results when new light is brought to bear on an otherwise perplexing situation. When they see the spiritual condition of the second wave of captives, they would realize that God's judgment against Jerusalem was just (14:21–23).<sup>21</sup>

### **12–23 Jerusalem's Certain Doom**

The presence of a righteous remnant within Jerusalem would not prevent the city's destruction. Individuals might be delivered, but the city's doom was certain. To emphasize this point, the Lord stated that even if Noah, Daniel, and Job, three individuals famed for their righteousness, were residents of the city, it would not be spared. These men would escape, but they could save no others, not even their children. (The appearance of Daniel in this threesome is problematic. The Hebrew form of the name is spelled differently here than in the Book of Daniel. Furthermore, Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel's, while Noah and Job were figures from antiquity. Some have suggested that Danel, a just ruler who appears in a Canaanite tale dating to the second millennium B.C., is in view here. In this case all three examples would be non-Israelites who lived long before Ezekiel's time. However, others object to this identification, arguing that the Old Testament does not mention this legendary figure anywhere else and that the Lord would not use a worshiper of Canaanite gods as a model of righteousness.)

Men and animals would be destroyed by the Lord's judgment, which would come in the form of the sword, famine, wild beasts, and a plague. In addition to preserving any righteous individuals left in the city, the Lord would also allow a few of the wicked to survive and join the exiles in Babylon. When Ezekiel witnessed the degree of their sin, he

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<sup>21</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 14:9–11). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

would then know from firsthand experience that the Lord's judgment of the city had been necessary and perfectly just.<sup>22</sup>

**Chuck Smith 12-14:** In other words, God says, "When I bring judgment upon the land, even though there are righteous men in it, those righteous men will only deliver themselves. They can't deliver anybody else by their righteousness. They'll only deliver themselves."

Now, it is interesting the three men that God spoke of: Noah, whom God delivered when He brought His judgment upon the earth; Daniel. Now Daniel was at this time alive and one of the counselors to Nebuchadnezzar. Already, he was a very young man, at this point probably in his early twenties, but yet he had already developed a tremendous reputation as a spiritual giant and as a spiritual leader, a spiritual man. And, of course, that was evidenced when first he was brought into captivity in Babylon. And he purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meats and requested that he be allowed a vegetarian diet. He didn't want the meat that had been sacrificed to pagan idols, the meat that wasn't killed according to the kosher laws. And he said, "Just let us eat vegetables." And the guard says, "Hey, you know, if you guys are just eating vegetables, you'll begin to look skinny and sick, you know, then they'll have my head, man." Daniel said, "Well, give us ten days and take a look after ten days and if we look skinny and malnourished then we'll eat your meat." The guy said, "Fair enough." And after ten days ole Daniel and his buddies were healthier, ruddier looking and all than all the others who were eating this polluted meat of the king, so they were able to go on. Then he had begun to be known for his interpreting of the king's dreams and all. And so Daniel already was coming into prominence in the minds of the people, and though he was a young man, still he is named with Noah, Daniel, and Job. Righteous men, examples of righteous men.

**ESV: 12–23** Noah, Daniel, Job. Five clearly formed paragraphs make up this oracle: the first four detail four modes of divine judgment on Jerusalem: famine (vv. 12–14); beasts (vv. 15–16); sword (vv. 17–18); and pestilence (vv. 19–20). The final paragraph provides a summary and holds open the possibility of a remnant (vv. 21–23). For this oracle's holding up righteous heroes of the past, cf. Jer. 15:1. For its implied hope that a few righteous might suffice to save many wicked, cf. Gen. 18:22–33. The implicit assertion that each individual is held to account for his or her own life (the summary phrase of each paragraph here) was an implicit theme of Ezekiel from the start (see Ezek. 3:16–21) and will see its fullest treatment in ch. 18.

**History, Judgment**—Judgment is not blind anger lashing out without reason. God's judgment, just as His deliverance, works to accomplish God's eternal purpose of forming a permanent relationship with a faithful people. He uses all elements of creation to judge His people—human armies, natural disaster, wild animals, and sickness.

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<sup>22</sup> Dockery, D. S., Butler, T. C., Church, C. L., Scott, L. L., Ellis Smith, M. A., White, J. E., & Holman Bible Publishers (Nashville, T. (1992). *Holman Bible Handbook* (438). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

### **Ezekiel 14:13**

**Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:**

**Clarke: By trespassing grievously**—Having been frequently warned, and having refused to leave their sin, and so filled up the measure of their iniquity.

The prophet declares that when the land sinneth, and God sends one of his four judgments (cf. 5:16, 17) against it—famine (vv. 12-14), hurtful beasts (vv. 15, 16), sword and war (vv. 17, 18), pestilence (vv. 19, 20)—though the righteous ancients, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in that land, they could deliver only themselves. The application to Jerusalem (vv. 21-23) finds no righteous persons within it. And what wicked survivors will escape all four judgments, in apparent exception to the principle enunciated above, will be a grim proof to the exiles of God's righteous judgment on Jerusalem. By trespassing grievously. A closer rendering is *by treacherously committing treachery*. See also 15:8; 17:20; 18:24; 20:17; 39:26; Lev. 5:15; 6:2.<sup>23</sup>

**Prayer, Intercession**—Lot's righteousness and Abraham's prayers (Ge 18:23-33) could not save Sodom. The most proverbial righteousness cannot save a country once God moves against it. God does not change His mind (1 Sa 15:29). A people's ongoing sin eventually makes intercessory prayer fruitless.

### **Ezekiel 14:14**

**Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.**

**[three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job] Dake:** God testifies here to the righteousness of these three—Noah, Daniel, and Job. This testimony confirms their final salvation (Ezekiel 14:14,16,18,20). All three prevailed in saving others:

1. Noah (Genesis 6:8-9:29; 1 Peter 3:20)
2. Daniel (Daniel 2:5,48-49; cp. Ezekiel 28:3). He was the only one of these men alive when Ezekiel wrote
3. Job (Job 42:8-10). Compare Moses and Samuel as intercessors (Jeremiah 15:1)

**Clarke: Though—Noah, Daniel, and Job**—The intercession even of the holiest of men shall not avert my judgments. Noah, though a righteous man, could not by his intercession preserve the old world from being drowned. Job, though a righteous man, could not preserve his children from being killed by the fall of their house. Daniel, though a righteous man, could not prevent the captivity of his country. Daniel must have been contemporary with Ezekiel. He was taken captive in the third year of Jehoiakim, Daniel 1:1. After this Jehoiakim reigned eight years, 2 Kings 23:36. And this prophecy, as appears from 8:1, was uttered in the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, who

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<sup>23</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:13). Chicago: Moody Press.

succeeded Jehoiakim, and reigned only three months, 2 Kings 24:6, 8. Therefore at this time Daniel had been Fourteen years in captivity. See Newcome. Even at this time he had gained much public celebrity. From this account we may infer that Job was as real a person as Noah or Daniel; and of their identity no man has pretended to doubt. When God, as above, has determined to punish a nation, no intercession shall avail. Personal holiness alone can prevent these evils; but the holiness of any man can only avail for himself.

**LAN:** Noah, Daniel, and Job were great men in Israel's history, renowned for their relationships with God and for their wisdom (see Genesis 6:8-9; Daniel 2:47-48; Job 1:1). Daniel had been taken into captivity during Babylon's first invasion of Judah in 605 B.C., eight years before Ezekiel was taken captive. At the time of Ezekiel's message, Daniel occupied a high government position in Babylon. But even these great men of God could not have saved the people of Judah because God had already passed judgment on the nation's pervasive evil.

**McGee:** If Noah were in the city of Jerusalem, the Lord says, they would not listen to him. Just imagine what a warning Noah would have been to those people! But the people in Noah's day did not listen to him, and the people of Jerusalem would not have listened to him had he been there.

I get rather amused over the excitement about the search for Noah's ark. I think they may find it, but let me ask you: How many believers do you think its discovery will make? If Noah himself were here today, who would believe him? They would call him a square and an old fogey! (One thing nice about being a square is that you don't go around in circles as do a lot of other people. Some of those going around in circles really think they are big wheels, too!)

They wouldn't have listened to Noah, and they wouldn't have listened to Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar listened to Daniel, however. What a tribute that is to Daniel! Yonder in the palace of the world's first great ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, is Daniel. The Babylonians knew Daniel, and they knew he was God's man. The Lord says that the Israelites would not have listened to Noah *or* Daniel *or* Job!

**ESV 14, 20:** **Noah** and **Job** are well-known righteous men of the past (see Gen. 6:9; Job 1:1). Noah saved only his family; the protection of Job's piety did not even extend that far. The identity of **Daniel** (cf. also Ezek. 28:3) has been disputed. Traditionally, he is identified with the hero of the book of Daniel, a contemporary of Ezekiel, who served in the court of Babylon and then of Persia. His reputation might have spread widely enough by this time for Ezekiel to expect his audience to recognize him (cf. Dan. 2:1, which is well before Ezekiel's call, although it is hard to say whether he was widely known outside the court, and Ezekiel was not in Babylon itself). Others suggest, however, that the Daniel mentioned here should be identified with an ancient sage of the Syrian region, known from the Ugaritic texts as a just and pious ruler. This is suggested by the fact that the other two figures, Noah and Job, are from the distant past, and are not Israelite (contrast Jer. 15:1, using Moses and Samuel). Further, the book of Daniel consistently spells the name with the consonants *d-n-y-'l* (with vowels, *Daniye'l*), in Ezekiel it is *d-n-'l* (with vowels, *Dani'el*), which some students of Ezekiel suggest points to the Daniel in

Ugaritic texts. On balance, however, there is no conclusive evidence indicating that the Daniel mentioned in Ezekiel is anyone other than the biblical prophet Daniel.

**BSB:** The mention of Noah, Daniel (see Daniel 1:1, "Introduction: Author"), and Job presents the great examples of righteousness (Gen 6:8, 9; 7:1; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel. He went into captivity with those taken from the northern kingdom in 605 B.C. He was given wisdom by God (Dan 2:20-23) and had a respected place of leadership among the exiles (Dan 2:45-49). Note the lofty company with whom Daniel was grouped, namely, Job and Noah. This is a crucial contemporaneous witness to the historicity of Daniel.

### **Ezekiel 14:15**

**If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts:**

**Chuck Smith 15-16:** These men, if they were dwelling there, they could only deliver themselves. They can't even deliver their families. Every man must have his own personal relationship with God. God has no grandchildren, only sons. You cannot have a relationship with God through your mother, through your father, through your family. You've got to have your own personal relationship with God. And these men, as righteous as they were, Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord for he was righteous in all of his generation. And yet, he could only deliver himself and his sons who came into the ark with him.

Now, this of course, to me is a...God it says, "If I'm bringing these terrible things upon the land, the noisome beasts and the famines and so forth, the righteous can only deliver themselves." In other words, the righteous will be delivered even as we will be delivered before God brings His judgment upon this earth. And any man who says otherwise is denying the righteous principles of God.

### **Ezekiel 14:16**

**Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate.**

**Constable 15-16:** If God's judgment by wild beasts resulted in the depopulation of the land, including the children (cf. Lev. 26:22; Deut. 32:24), the righteousness of Noah (cf. Gen. 6:9), Daniel (cf. Dan. 6:4-5, 22), and Job (cf. Job 1:1, 8;2:3) would not deliver even their own family members from divine judgment. God would spare just these men alone. God had spared Noah's family for his sake (Gen. 6:18), and he had spared Daniel's friends for his sake (Dan. 1:6-20; 2:17-18; 3) and Job's friends for his sake (Job 42:7-10),

but he had not spared Job's children. Probably the order of these names is climactic. It is not chronological.

### **Ezekiel 14:17**

**Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it:**

God says that He intends to bring a sword upon the land. He is going to allow Nebuchadnezzar into the land, and he will destroy it.

Soon these captives will be coming from Jerusalem, that remnant that will escape, and when they tell you the things that happen and when you see these people, you'll know that what I did was righteous in My judgment when you hear the abominations and things that were going on. You'll know that I was righteous when I brought My judgment against Jerusalem.

### **Ezekiel 14:18**

**Though these three men *were* in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves.**

**Constable 17-20:** The presence of these three men would not save the city if the Lord brought an invading army against it (vv. 17-18). The same would be true if God judged His people with disease, the effect of siege warfare (vv. 19-20; cf. Rev. 6:1-8). The Lord confirmed the certainty of each of the last three forms of judgment with His oath (vv. 16, 18, 20).

### **Ezekiel 14:19**

**Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast:**

### **Ezekiel 14:20**

**Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, *were* in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their righteousness.**

**McGee:** Noah would not have been able to save his own family in that city—“they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.” Daniel saved a couple of empires, but if he had been in that city he could not have helped them at all. That is the reason that God got Daniel out of Jerusalem. God’s people wouldn’t hear him, but an old pagan king in Babylon listened to Daniel and made him prime minister.

How many churches are there today where the people will really listen to the Word of God? I do not think there are many. That is one reason that this hour God is permitting His Word to go to the world via radio and why He is allowing the Word to reach groups of people that many Christians had given up on. My friend, if the folk in churches are not going to listen to the Word of God, He is going to go out yonder where people *will* receive it. Daniel would not have done any good in Jerusalem, but he was made top man in Babylon and there a pagan king listened to him. My friend, God is going to let people hear the gospel who are willing to listen to Him.

### **Ezekiel 14:21**

**For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?**

This is question 16. The next question is in Ezekiel 15:1.

**[my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence] (Dake):** Four judgments upon Jerusalem:

1. The sword
2. The famine
3. The noisome beast
4. The pestilence

**Clarke: My four sore judgments**—SWORD, war. FAMINE, occasioned by drought. PESTILENCE, epidemic diseases which sweep off a great part of the inhabitants of a land. The NOISOME BEAST, the multiplication of wild beasts in consequence of the general destruction of the inhabitants.

**BKC 21-23:** Having established this general principle (vv. 12-20), Ezekiel applied it to Jerusalem. How much worse it will be when God sends against Jerusalem His four dreadful judgments—sword and famine and wild beasts and plague (cf. 5:17). It would be worse for Jerusalem because she did not have three giants of righteousness to intercede for her. If those righteous leaders could not save a wicked land, how could Jerusalem hope to escape with her paucity of righteous individuals?

In the midst of announcing judgment God included a note of consolation. God’s judgment would be vindicated by the exiles in captivity when they observed the evil character of those who survived Jerusalem’s fall. Yet there would be some survivors—sons and daughters who would be brought out of it, 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 exiles already there (the ones addressed by Ezekiel) would see their conduct and their actions, and be consoled regarding the disaster on Jerusalem.

Some have felt that the “conduct and actions” Ezekiel was referring to were the righteous deeds of this remnant which prompted God to spare them. But Ezekiel was probably referring to the wicked ways of the captives. The word for “conduct” (*derek*) was used 35 times in Ezekiel’s book to refer to the people’s *evil* actions (cf. 3:18-19; 7:3-4, 8-9, 27; 11:21; 13:22; 14:22-23; 16:27, 43, 47 [twice], 61; 18:23, 25, 29-30; 20:30, 43-44; 22:31; 23:31; 24:14; 33:8-9, 11, 17, 20; 36:17, 19, 31-32). The word for “actions” (*‘ălîlôt*) is used 8 times in the book to refer to the *sinful* deeds of Israel (14:22-23; 20:43-44; 21:24; 24:14; 36:17, 19). 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. They would be forced to admit that these people did deserve to be punished and that God was not unjust.<sup>24</sup>

**Constable:** The Lord promised to send judgment by these four agents against Jerusalem: war, famine, wild animals, and disease (cf. Lev. 26:22-26). Four agents of divine judgment would overcome even the influence of three extremely righteous individuals, super-saints.

The number four conveys the idea of completeness with an allusion to the four quarters of the earth. The logic is this: If there would be no sparing in one judgment, how much more certain would the universal judgment be in the case of four devastating judgments?

### **Ezekiel 14:22**

**Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it.**

**[a remnant that shall be brought forth]** God has always saved a remnant to preserve the nation of Israel, so that He can carry out His covenants with them in the eternal future (Isaiah 1:9).

**Clarke: Behold, they shall come forth unto you**—Though there shall be great desolations in the land of Judea, yet a remnant shall be left that shall come here also as captives; and their account of the abominations of the people shall prove to you with what propriety I have acted in abandoning them to such general destruction. This speech is addressed to those who were already in captivity; i.e., those who had been led to Babylon with their king Jeconiah.

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<sup>24</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 14:21–23). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**A remnant.** *Any survivors to lead out sons and daughters* (LXX, Syr., Sym., Vulg.). When these bad figs (Jer 24:8-10; 29:16-20) come forth unto you in Babylon, ye shall be comforted or reconciled by the justice of God's punishment on Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup>

**Constable 22-23:** In spite of this severe judgment on Jerusalem, some of the inhabitants would survive and would join the Jews already in exile (i.e., a remnant, but this time an apostate remnant, cf. Jer. 44:27-30; Amos 9:8, 11-15). The formerly exiled Jews would see their conduct and actions (Heb. *'alilah*, evil actions) and feel some comfort in view of the calamity that had overtaken Jerusalem. They would then see that what the Lord had done to Jerusalem was fair because these Jerusalemites' actions deserved judgment (cf. Gen. 18:25). 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.

A vicarious deliverance from individual sin, however, is impossible, except for the singular *eternal* vicarious deliverance provided by Jesus the Messiah in his substitutionary death for all sins (cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Cor 5:21). He alone can deliver others because of his death for their sin and his resurrection from the dead.

**The Church, Remnant**—The remnant testifies to God's justice. The people who were exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. could not understand why God was letting Babylon destroy Jerusalem in 587 B.C.. When they saw the evil conduct of the new exiles, they would understand why God had to punish His people. We need to look forward and find God's directions into the future rather than look to the past and question God's actions.

### **Ezekiel 14:23**

**And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.**

**BSB:** The “comfort” (*vaḥamu*, Heb.) was for those who observed the judgment of God upon Jerusalem. Through revelation, God changes the mind of the hearer. Ezekiel sees that God's judgment was not without cause and purpose. Ezekiel's use of “remnant” (v. 22) was primarily a reference to those who escape the sword, famine, and pestilence. The observance of this “remnant” and “their ways and their doings” will prove to the exiles in Babylon that God was just in His destruction of Jerusalem.

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<sup>25</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 14:22). Chicago: Moody Press.

**Missler:** Noah, Daniel, and Job were specified in particular as having been saved from overwhelming calamities for their personal righteousness. The intercession even of the holiest of men cannot avert God's judgments. Noah, though a righteous man, could not by his intercession have preserved the old world from being drowned. Job, though a righteous man, could not preserve his children from being killed by the fall of their house. Daniel, though a righteous man, could not prevent the captivity of his country. The holiness of any man can only avail for himself.

It is interesting to contrast the judgments here with the judgments of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 18. Abraham asked God if there were 10 righteous there, would He spare the city. Ten were not found. One was, Lot. Lot had to get out of there first, before the city was destroyed. God preserved Lot before judging. In fact, the angels pointed out that they could not even produce the judgment until Lot got out of there. Getting the righteous man out was a condition for the judgment to go forth.

Ezekiel's focus here was that Jerusalem was not going to be spared, and that even if Noah, and Job, and Daniel could be there, they would be saved, but not those around them. The thrust of this passage was the Jerusalem was NOT going to be spared.

**Clarke: Ye shall know that I have not done without cause**—There is no part of the conduct of God towards man that is not dictated by the purest principles of justice, equity, and truth. He does nothing but what is right; and whatever is right to be done, that ought to be done. In God's justice there is no severity; in God's mercy there is no caprice. He alone doth all things well; for he is the Fountain of justice and mercy.

The expanded recognition formula (**you shall know**; cf. Introduction: Style) emphasizes the justice of God's actions.

### **The Four Sore Judgments (Missler)**

Notice the architecture of the Bible. The 4 Sore Judgments mentioned were: Sword, Famine, Wild Beasts, and Plague. Check Rev 6, the 4 listed there are: Sword, Famine, Wild Beasts, and Plague.

Whether Israel reaped God's blessings, or His 4 Sore Judgments, was entirely up to them. It was their choice. They had been given truthful warnings up front.

See Lev 26:1-2, 14-15, 17. Verse 17 "slain" = sword. Lev 26:20; "land shall not increase" = famine. Lev 26:22; wild beasts. Lev 26:25; plague.

These parallelisms of idioms in Scripture are very intentional, engineered to catch our attention so that we cannot miss who the real author of these Words is.