

EZEKIEL

Segment 9

Ezekiel 13, 14, 34: Leadership Rebuked

Prophets

Ezekiel 13:1-7 – Prophets’ Behavior Exposed

Here God condemns the false prophets for prophesying from their own imagination. Their omens are a lie, and they see delusions. They irk God with their “Thus says the LORD” when in fact He neither sent them nor spoke to them.

Ezekiel 13:8-9 – Consequences for False Prophets

God is against these “prophets.” They will not make it into the official count of Israelites, nor will they return to the land. (Note the meticulous list of people when they returned from Exile in Ezra 2.)

Ezekiel 13:10-12 – More Problems with False Prophets

They were telling people, “All is well” when all was not well. It is better to speak the truth, even if it is painful, than to comfort the people when catastrophe looms. They are like a poorly constructed stone wall that someone covered with whitewashed plaster. The plaster may make it look impressive, but even if a child leaned against it, it would surely topple over.

Ezekiel 13:13-16 – More Consequences

God will attack whitewashed wall with wind, rain, hailstones and cause it to fall and crush the false prophets beneath it. Their delusional vision of peace will end in violence.

In his commentary on Ezekiel, Daniel I. Block identifies five major issues with these false prophets: (1) they claim divine authority but really speak from their own inspiration, (2) they give the people a message that they want to hear, (3) they are more interested in their own welfare than the community, (4) their counterfeit predictions and prescriptions will die with them, and (5) they stand under the judgment of God almighty.¹

Jeremiah 28:1-17 – A False Prophet in Jerusalem

Hananiah is a good example of a bad prophet who made up his own prophecies during this same time. The genuine prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were

¹ Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24* in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 409-410.

prophesying a coming destruction for Jerusalem, whereas the false seers predicted the Babylonians would soon leave them alone and even release the captives. As a person living at this time, how would you know who is genuine?

Jeremiah 29:1, 8-11, 15-32 – False Prophets in Babylonia

Jeremiah's letter to the exiles sided with Ezekiel and bespoke a long exile following the destruction of Jerusalem. It further warned them not to listen to false prophets like Ahab and Zedekiah who were also committing adultery with their neighbors' wives. Shemaiah, another false prophet among Ezekiel's people, was meddling in the Jerusalem affairs and working against what Jeremiah and Ezekiel were saying.

Elders

Ezekiel 14:1-5 – Elders Condemned for Inquiring of the Prophet Whilst Still Worshipping Idols

The prophets weren't the only problem. The local leaders, the elders, wanted to have it both ways. They would worship idols and then also inquire of Yahweh by Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 14:6-11 – Destruction to Idolaters Who Inquire of Yahweh's Prophets

After calling them to repentance, God promises He will be against them and cut them off from the midst of His people. He does this so that His people will return to Him, so that His dream can come to pass, "that they will be My people and I may be their God, declares the Lord Yahweh" (14:11).

Shepherds, Then and Now

Ezekiel 34:1-22 – God Will Rescue His Flock from the Lousy Shepherds and Punish Them

In an extended analogy, God portrays His people as sheep and their leaders (whether civil or religious, neither is specified) as shepherds. He accuses the leaders of enjoying the benefits of being a shepherd without taking care of the weak, sick, injured, strayed, and lost. As a result, sheep scattered over all the mountains and hills become the prey for wild beasts—an image of exile. As a result, God will stop the shepherds from feeding themselves and rescue His sheep from their mouths. He will gather His flock together and bring them back to their native land. Once they are there, He will enter into judgment with the fat and strong sheep who tread down the pasture and muddied the water, squeezing out the weak.

Today, we still struggle with bad Christian leaders. Pastors and priests regularly teach their congregations that Jesus is God, the dead live in heaven, and the damned suffer torture in a fiery hell eternally. Many also boldly proclaim that

God's people cannot lose their salvation no matter what they do. On top of this doctrinal confusion, severe and intolerable moral lapses abound among them. God has not changed. What would His prophet say today?

EZEKIEL

Segment 10

Ezekiel 34, 37: Leadership Restored

Ezekiel 34:22-24 – David Will Be Prince among Them

Having gotten rid of the bad shepherds, God now provides a solution. He will set over them His servant David who will feed them and be their shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:25-31 – Covenant of Peace

Continuing the metaphor of sheep, God promises to banish the beasts so they can dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Ezekiel 37:15-23 – Israel and Judah Restored and Unified

The monarchy began around the year 1050BC and lasted a little more than 120 years when the fourth king failed so miserably that the northern tribes seceded. By the year 722BC, the northern kingdom disappeared owing to the Assyrian Empire's strategy of conquering and deportation. It was after 586BC, and the southern kingdom was now gone as well. Yet, hope looms on the horizon, for God plans to bring the two back together again and unite them under a single king.

Ezekiel 37:24-25 – David Will Be King over Them

This Davidic king will not be like the others who often fell short, but he will be a true servant of Yahweh. Daniel Block helpfully explains:

“The king's special relationship with Yahweh is reflected in the designation *my servant*. Whereas all the northern kings and many of their Judean counterparts, especially Ezekiel's contemporaries, had been driven by self-service, this new ruler will embody the ideals established in Deut. 17:14-20, submitting to the overlordship of Yahweh. As shepherd-king, he will function as the agent of Yahweh's reign and the symbol of the nation's unity, exercising watch[ful] care after the model set out in ch. 34.”²

Ezekiel 37:26-28 – Covenant of Peace

God's original desire was that His people would dwell in their land, multiply, and enjoy Him forever. This is in fact what He will get on the day He brings this to pass.

² Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48 in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. by R.K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1998), p. 415.

Why did Ezekiel say David would be their king? What is so special about the second king of Israel? God had chosen David to be king when he was just a boy because he was a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; 16:7, 11-13). Although David quickly gained the trust and respect of the people as a military commander, King Saul hated him (1 Samuel 18:11; 19:10). Over time, this turned into an intense and lasting persecution, during which Saul hunted David like an animal (1 Samuel 24:11; 26:20).

When Saul died, David became king and sought after Yahweh wholeheartedly. He conquered Jerusalem and brought the Ark of the Covenant there (2 Samuel 6:16-18). He wanted to build a house for Yahweh, but God prevented it, assuring him that his son would build it (2 Samuel 7:2-7; 1 Chronicles 22:8; 28:3). Undeterred, David did everything in his power to prepare an ornate and magnificent temple for his God (1 Chronicles 22:2-5). Though a warrior and an effective ruler, David also spent significant time and energy as a musician and a songwriter. Out of 150 Psalms, 73 bear his name. In them we read of his struggles, his praise, and his thanks to God. In them we gain access to his inmost passion and undying love for his God.

Psalm 63

O God, You are my God;
I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,
In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.
Because Your lovingkindness is better than life,
My lips will praise You.
So I will bless You as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands in Your name.
My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.
When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches,
For You have been my help,
And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.
My soul clings to You;
Your right hand upholds me.

As a result of his passion for God and, he made David the following promise:

1 Chronicles 17:11-14

11 "When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up one of your descendants after you, who

will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 "I will be his father and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. 14 "But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.""

This is what we call the Davidic Covenant. It is God's covenant with David to put one of his descendants on the throne forever. This would not be the historical David, but a future David—a descendant of David who would exhibit David's passionate fidelity for Yahweh.

As his story continued to unfold, David ended up sinning egregiously and suffered severely as a result. Yet, his memory seemed to glow in the hearts of his people's descendants. For example, when 1 and 2 Kings describe good kings, they often compare them to David:

1 Kings 15:3

He [Abijam] walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David.

2 Kings 16:2

Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David had done.

2 Kings 18:3

He [Hezekiah] did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

2 Kings 22:2

He [Josiah] did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left.

Throughout the monarchy, for centuries, they looked for that son of David who would fulfill these promises. That king had still not yet been born by Ezekiel's time. In addition to the two texts we have already read in Ezekiel, there are several others of note from prophets both before and after Ezekiel's time:

Hosea 3:4-5

4 For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or

household idols. 5 Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

Amos 9:11-15

11 "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old; 12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom And all the nations who are called by My name," Declares the LORD who does this. 13 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills will be dissolved. 14 "Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit. 15 "I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land Which I have given them," Says the LORD your God.

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Isaiah 16:5

A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice And be prompt in righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

5 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'

Jeremiah 30:8-10

8 'It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. 9 'But they

shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. 10 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares the LORD, 'And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar And your offspring from the land of their captivity. And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease, And no one will make him afraid.

Jeremiah 33:15-16

15 'In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. 16 'In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.'

Revelation 22:16

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

This promise ultimately will come to pass when Jesus returns to rule in the Kingdom of God. Jesus is the good shepherd who will right the wrongs of those who came before him. Ralph Alexander states it well:

"In John 10 Jesus declared, 'I am the good shepherd' (v. 14). In addition to describing the pastoral aspects of his ministry, it certainly appears that he had Ezekiel 34 in mind. He was declaring to those discerning Jews that he was the true and righteous Shepherd of whom Ezekiel spoke—the Messiah. He would lay down his life for the sheep, not exploit them."³

Come, Lord Jesus!

³ Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1986), p. 914.