

EZEKIEL 14:1-11

1. READ 14:1-11.

2. REVIEW. This paragraph reveals some spiritual realities that would shock some:

- (1) Idolatry is not a “physical idol” problem, but a _____ problem. (3-7)
So, since our heart is an “idol factory,” it’s a problem for you and me!
- (2) The Lord invites all to come, but is under _____ obligation even to listen to a hypocrite playing spiritual games, and won’t let Himself be reduced to being the tool of a phony “prophet.” To be sure of winning the Lord’s ear, you must come with sincerity and on his terms, among which is not worshiping any of His rivals simultaneously—no worship of *both* God *and* money, or God *and* sex, or God *and* fame. (3)
- (3) God does not feel obligated to fight fair with phony preachers and prophets who use His name to earn fame and fortune. Play games with God, and He’ll play _____ with you! Psalm 18:25-26 1 Kings 22:19-23 Jer. 20:7,10

3. MEDITATE. How do these realities make you feel? Do we treat God like a tame lion, who must be at our beck and call, no matter how we’re choosing to disobey? And think for a moment about the “fake spirituality” and phony “prophets” so popular today, and about their eager followers. Led Zeppelin describes one in the opening lines of their song “Stairway to Heaven”: “There’s a lady who’s sure, all that glitters is gold, and she’s buying a stairway to heaven.” Are you confident that you can distinguish spiritual glitter from biblical gold?

4. PRAY. Ask the Lord to protect you from phony preachers, no matter how popular they get. And to deliver you from thinking He’s a tame lion, and trying to “use” Him.

EZEKIEL 14:12-15:8

1. READ ch. 14:12-15:8, noting which three famous biblical heroes get the spotlight.

2. REVIEW. Hard to believe, but God cares deeply what his creatures think of Him! He doesn't want his children to think that he is like a parent who punishes hastily or unjustly, without good reason. To defend his status as perfectly just, God here lays out the case that his destruction of Jerusalem is justified, concluding: "Then you will know that it was not without good reason that I have treated her this way" (14:21). Amazing! Once, God vowed that he'd spare an evil city if only a few righteous folks were found there (Gen. 19). But Jerusalem's judgment is so deserved and locked in that even if the most righteous persons in history lived there, He would still burn it down. You'll hear God accused of being unjust because of so much suffering in the world, but never doubt his justice.

If you were asked, "Who were the three most righteous Old Testament saints?" would you have named Noah, Daniel, and Job? Yeah, me neither. As the limelight bathes these three heroes, we realize that Noah and Job, who lived in the ancient past, weren't even Israelites. And standing in between them? A contemporary, and a person not much older than Ezekiel himself: Daniel, who lived not far away in Babylon! Taken to Babylon as a hostage in 604 B.C., the remarkable Daniel quickly distinguished himself at the palace as a young man of extraordinary wisdom and integrity. His fame in Nebuchadnezzar's court is likely a big reason why the Jews were given freedom to become successful bankers, merchants, and farmers (according to Babylon's historical records).

3. MEDITATE. Ezekiel recognized one of his contemporaries as one of the three most righteous people in history. Perhaps someone *you* know is regarded by heaven as one of the most righteous people on earth. If someone asked you, "Who are the three most righteous (honest and godly) people you know?" who would you name? Is there a chance that anyone—a child, grandchild, someone at school or work—would name you?

4. PRAY. (1) Thank God that he is just, and so (1) your eternal life is secure if you own his righteousness because you have believed in his Son, and (2) one day he will deliver his persecuted children and correct all injustice. Pray, too, for the righteous people you admire, that they would stay straight and true.

EZEKIEL 16

1. **READ** ch. 16—all 63 verses, the longest chapter in the book by far, and longer than half of the Twelve Minor Prophets.

2. **REVIEW.** Tender and brutal. Heartwarming and heartbreaking. Scary and hopeful. Beautiful and semi-pornographic. Somehow this chapter manages to embrace all those polar opposites. When I first came across this chapter, it changed my heart, and at that moment and for years it became my favorite chapter in the Old Testament.

There are four parts—yes, the number 4 surfaces again as Ezekiel’s favorite number!—of this story, *your* story: Redemption _____

Rebellion _____

Ruin _____

Restoration _____

See if you can pick them out, and put the verse numbers by them.

3. **MEDITATE.** Think back over your life. How has this romantic, brutal, hopeful story—rescued newborn...adopted child...beloved wife...prostitute-adulteress...restored wife mirrored your own spiritual story?

4. **PRAY.** Review in prayer “the agony and the ecstasy” of your spiritual history—your redemption, your times of rebellion, ruin, and restoration. God wants your love; present it to Him.