Ezekiel 14

Idols in the Heart: Noah, Daniel and Job

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

I can sit in the right chair, in front of the right preacher, holding the right Bible, and still have an idol on the throne of my heart. God won't play along with a divided heart — He goes after the heart itself. And nobody else's faith can stand in for mine: not Noah's, not Daniel's, not Job's.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 14 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word
⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

[1]Then came ◷ certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

[2]And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

[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 enquired of at all by them?

[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;

[5]▲ That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their ⇄ idols.

[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 abominations.

[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 enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

[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.

[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.

[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;

[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.

[12]The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,

[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:

[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.

[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:

[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.

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:

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.

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:

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.

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?

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.

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** ◷ certain of the elders of Israel
- **v3** ⚠ set up their idols in their heart
- **v3** ⇄ idols *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** ⚠ the stumblingblock of their iniquity
- **v3** ▲ should I be enquired of at all by them?
- **v5** ▲ That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart
- **v5** ⚠ they are all estranged from me through their idols
- **v6** Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols
- **v6** turn away your faces from all your abominations
- **v8** ▲ I will set my face against that man
- **v8** ⇄ ye shall know that I am the LORD
- **v9** ▲ I the LORD have deceived that prophet
- **v11** ★ that they may be my people, and I may be their God
- **v13** ⚠ when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously
- **v13** ▲ will break the staff of the bread thereof
- **v14** ⇄ Noah, Daniel, and Job *(every occurrence)*
- **v14** ◷ they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness
- **v16** ▲ as I live *(every occurrence)*
- **v16** ◷ they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters
- **v21** ⚠ my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem
- **v22** ★ therein shall be left a remnant
- **v22** ★ ye shall be comforted
- **v23** ▲ I have not done without cause all that I have done in it

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 14:3 (KJV)

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 enquired of at all by them?

Setting

Ezekiel is in Babylon among the exiles of 597 BC; Zedekiah reigns in a still-standing Jerusalem. The chapter isn't dated, but it sits between the oracles of the sixth year (8:1, about 592 BC) and the seventh (20:1, about 591 BC). Both of those dates also begin with elders sitting before Ezekiel — so this was a pattern. The exiles' leaders came to the prophet's house looking religious and wanting a word from God.

Structure

- vv1–5 — **idols in the heart:** "some elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me" (v1). God tells Ezekiel, "these men have set up their idols in their hearts" and put "the stumbling block of their iniquity" before their faces. "Should I be consulted by them at all?" (v3). God will answer such a man Himself, "in view of the multitude of his idols" (v4), to "lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols" (v5).
- vv6–8 — **repent:** "Repent and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations" (v6). The same applies to the foreigner living in Israel (v7). "I will set My face against that man and make him a sign and a proverb" (v8).
- vv9–11 — **the deceived prophet:** if a prophet gives such a man the word he wants, "it is I, the LORD, who have prevailed upon that prophet" (v9). Both bear their guilt alike (v10), so that Israel "may no longer stray from Me." "Thus they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (v11).
- vv12–20 — **Noah, Daniel and Job:** when a land sins "by committing unfaithfulness," God may "destroy its supply of bread" (v13), send wild beasts (v15), the sword (v17) or plague (v19). "Even though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job were in its midst, by their own righteousness they could only deliver themselves" (v14). "As I live" (vv16, 18, 20), "they could not deliver either their sons or their daughters" (vv16, 18).
- vv21–23 — **the four judgments and the survivors:** "My four severe judgments against Jerusalem" (v21). Yet "survivors will be left in it" and will come to the exiles; "you will see their conduct and actions" and be comforted (v22), knowing "I have not done in vain whatever I did to it" (v23).

Repeated words

idols (vv3, 4, 5, 6, 7); heart / hearts (vv3, 4, 5, 7); man and beast (vv13, 17, 19, 21); deliver (vv14, 16, 18, 20); Noah, Daniel and Job (vv14, 20); "as I live" (vv16, 18, 20).

Contrasts

sitting before the prophet (v1) ⟷ idols set up in the heart (v3). Seeking a word from God ⟷ God setting His face against the seeker (v8). Estranged from Me (v5) ⟷ My people, and I their God (v11). The righteousness of three great men (v14) ⟷ unable to save even their sons and daughters (v16). Calamity on Jerusalem (v22) ⟷ comfort for the exiles (vv22–23).

Chapter theme (my words)

I can sit in the right chair, in front of the right preacher, holding the right Bible, and still have an idol on the throne of my heart. God won't play along with a divided heart — He goes after the heart itself. And nobody else's faith can stand in for mine: not Noah's, not Daniel's, not Job's.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 14:5 (KJV)

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

Idols behind the eyes (vv1–5)

These elders weren't bowing to statues in Ezekiel's living room. Their idols were "in their hearts" — set before their faces as a stumbling block, the thing they looked at and lived toward. Wiersbe, in Guzik, compares them to the Pharisees (Matt 15:8–9), and Guzik to Ananias and Sapphira: correct on the outside, divided within. McGee, in Guzik, likens it to "coming to church with a big Bible under your arm." Alexander, in Guzik: "No true direction can be given to those who have erected idols in their hearts." But God's purpose is not just to expose them. He answers so that He may "lay hold of" (*taphas*) their hearts — Wiersbe, in Guzik, says to "recapture" them. Judgment here is a rescue operation for the heart.

Repent (vv6–8)

The call is plain: turn from idols, turn your face from abominations. It reaches the foreigner too (v7); God's standard is the same for everyone in the community. The one who refuses, God will oppose personally — Trapp, in Guzik: "I will look him to death" — and make him a proverb, a byword for judgment.

The deceived prophet (vv9–11)

This is a hard passage. If an idol-hearted man goes looking for a prophet who will tell him what he wants, God may let that prophet be "prevailed upon" (*pathah*, enticed, deceived) and speak a false word — then judge both of them. Block, in Guzik: "Yahweh answers insincerity with insincerity." Compare Micaiah's vision in 1 Kgs 22:19–23 and Paul's warning in 2 Thess 2:10–12: those who refuse the truth are given over to the lie they prefer. God isn't the author of sin here; He is handing people over

to what they chose (Rom 1:24). And the goal is gracious: that Israel would stop straying and be His people again (v11). Guzik observes that the exile did, in a real sense, cure Israel of open idolatry.

Noah, Daniel and Job (vv12–20)

Four judgments — famine, wild beasts, sword and plague — are pictured one at a time. Guzik calls them "Ezekiel's version of the four horsemen" (compare Rev 6:8). In each case even the most righteous intercessors could save only themselves. Wright, in Guzik: "a nation cannot shelter under the goodness of a few individuals." Noah saved his family through the flood, and Job interceded for his friends (Job 42:8) — but not here. Jerusalem was too far gone (compare Jer 15:1, where even Moses and Samuel could not turn God's heart toward the people).

Which Daniel?

Two main views. (1) Most conservative interpreters, and Guzik, take him to be Ezekiel's contemporary, the Daniel of the exile, whose wisdom and righteousness were already known (Dan 1–2); Feinberg, in Guzik: "Daniel's fame for wisdom and piety was already wide-spread in Ezekiel's day." (2) Some scholars point to the Hebrew spelling (*Dan'el*) and to a righteous king "Danel" in older Canaanite (Ugaritic) texts, and argue Ezekiel means an ancient hero like Noah and Job. Guzik holds to the biblical Daniel. Either way, Noah and Job are not Israelites — righteousness, not ancestry, is the point — and Clarke, in Guzik, insists Job was as real a person as Noah or Daniel.

Survivors who prove God right (vv21–23)

"How much more" Jerusalem, facing all four judgments at once. Yet some will survive and be brought to Babylon. Guzik notes that "conduct and actions" here are evil deeds: these survivors are not a godly remnant. Taylor, in Guzik: "So the remnant of the fugitives would be wicked men." When the exiles see them, they'll understand why the city fell — and that God did "not ... in vain" whatever He did. The comfort is the comfort of seeing that God is just.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **elders — *zaqen* (H2205):** an old man, a community leader.
- **idols — *gillulim* (H1544):** idols — a contemptuous word, possibly related to dung pellets; Ezekiel's favorite term for false gods.
- **stumbling block — *mikshol* (H4383):** something that trips a person up, an occasion of sin.
- **iniquity — *avon* (H5771):** guilt, perversity, crookedness.
- **consulted / inquire — *darash* (H1875):** to seek, consult, ask of God.
- **lay hold of — *taphas* (H8610):** to grasp, seize, take hold.
- **estranged — *zur* (H2114):** to be a stranger, turn aside, be alienated.
- **repent / turn — *shub* (H7725):** to turn back, return.
- **abominations — *toebah* (H8441):** something detestable to God.
- **proverb — *mashal* (H4912):** a saying, byword, example.
- **prevailed upon — *pathah* (H6601):** to entice, persuade, deceive.
- **unfaithfulness — *maal* (H4604):** treachery, breach of trust.
- **righteousness — *tsedaqah* (H6666):** right conduct, conformity to God's standard.
- **survivors — *peletah* (H6413):** an escaped remnant.

- **comforted — *nacham* (H5162):** to be consoled; also to be sorry, relent.
- **in vain — *chinnam* (H2600):** without cause, for nothing.

Cross-references

Gen 6:8–9; Deut 29:18–19; 1 Sam 16:7; 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Job 1:1; Job 42:8; Ps 66:18; Prov 28:9; Isa 29:13; Jer 15:1–2; Ezek 8:1; Ezek 20:1–3; Ezek 33:30–32; Dan 1:8; Dan 6:4; Matt 15:8–9; Acts 5:1–11; Rom 1:24; 2 Thess 2:10–12; 1 John 5:21; Rev 6:8.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 14:6 (KJV)

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 abominations.

Command to obey — "Repent and turn away from your idols" (v6)

An idol is anything I set up in my heart in God's place — a substance, a person, money, approval, control. I'll name mine honestly before God and turn my face away from it, not just once but every time it shows up in front of my eyes. Turning my face is practical: delete the number, change the route, close the app, leave the room.

Sin to confess — church on the outside, idols on the inside

I can sit before the Word like those elders did and still be holding something back. I confess the places where I've asked God for direction while keeping a back room He isn't allowed into. He sees the heart (1 Sam 16:7).

Warning to heed — looking for the answer I want

If I go shopping for a word that lets me keep my idol, I'll find one — and it will be God's judgment, not His guidance (v9). Men in recovery know this: you can always find the friend who says, "You're fine." Men coming out of prison know it too: the old crew will always tell you what you want to hear. I'll seek counsel from people who love me enough to say no.

Promise to trust — "Thus they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (v11)

God's goal in all of this is relationship. He goes after my heart to win it back, not to throw it away. For the man who thinks he's too far gone, God's aim is the same: to lay hold of his heart and bring him home.

Example to follow — Noah, Daniel and Job

Each one stood righteous in a corrupt world: Noah in a violent generation, Daniel in a pagan palace, Job in the ashes. None of them could save anyone else by their own righteousness, and I can't either —

my mother's faith or my pastor's won't stand in for mine. Only Christ's righteousness covers others (2 Cor 5:21). So I'll walk with God myself, and point men to the One who can save them.

Worship

The LORD sees past my face to my heart. He pursues the estranged. His judgments are never in vain, and everything He does has a cause. He is just, and He wants His people back.

Prayer

Lord GOD, search my heart and show me every idol I've set up there. Tear down what stands in Your place and lay hold of my heart again. Keep me from looking for words that flatter me, and give me friends who tell me the truth. Make me Yours, and be my God. Amen.