



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

EZEKIEL

Week 3

The Price of Promiscuity

Ezekiel 23

OPENING
up to the Word

It is possible to tell when someone is being sexually promiscuous, but how can you know when someone is being spiritually promiscuous?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. We're used to thinking of prostitution as a grave sin against God, but how does this chapter describe God's attitude towards spiritual prostitution?

2. We tend to think of lust as a sexual issue. But how did God describe Samaria and Jerusalem's spiritual lusting (vs. 5-7, 12-15)? What seemed to be attractive to them about the Assyrian and Babylonian culture?

3. In this chapter, sexual language is used to describe the unfaithful political and religious affiliations Israel and Judah had entered. Why do you think God chose to describe Israel's unfaithfulness in this way?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you think you have ever been guilty of spiritual promiscuousness, or unfaithfulness to God?

2. What are three powerful attractions that tempt you and I to be spiritually unfaithful to God?

WINDOW
on the Word

Oholah (v. 4) means "her tent," and **Oholibah** means "my tent is in her," possibly referring to God's sanctuary in Jerusalem. Oholah represented Samaria, the capital city of Israel, while Oholibah represented Judah. Israel had first been unfaithful to God by seeking security through alliances with Assyria, instead of relying on God to protect her. Judah failed to learn from her older sister's example, making alliances first with Assyria, and later with Babylon. When her "lover" Babylon turned out to be cruel, she turned to Egypt for protection. **Sabeans** (v. 42) were a nomadic tribe whose name could be translated "drunkards." Jerusalem even sought favor from these people, further prostituting herself in God's eyes.

Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Fire

DAY 16

Ezekiel 24

Have you ever gone through a period in your life in which things just seemed to go from bad to worse?

1. What was so significant about the date mentioned in verse 1 that God asked Ezekiel to record it?
2. What did Jerusalem pour out on a bare rock, with no attempt to hide it (v. 7)? What do you think this represented?
3. Sometimes God uses our own pain to teach others important lessons. What pain did Ezekiel experience (vs. 15-18), and what lesson was Israel to gain from it (vs. 19-24)?
4. What was the “delight” of the people’s eyes that God was going to take away as he had taken away Ezekiel’s wife (v. 18, 21)?
5. Something important was going to happen in Ezekiel’s life and ministry as a result of the fall of Jerusalem. What was it (vs. 25-27)?

1. What is the darkest time you ever went through in your life? What had been your darkest moment before that?

2. When things or situations in your life went from bad to worse, how did you respond?

“Record this date” (v. 2), January 15, 588 B.C.—the day Ezekiel had been warning Judah about for over four years (2Ki 25:1, Jer 39:1; 52:4). On this date the Babylonians began the siege of Jerusalem.

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

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WINDOW

on the Word

Five Countries Who Rejoiced at Israel's Calamity

Tyre was an important Phoenician city located between Sidon and Acco. The name means "rock." Today the modern city of Sur is joined to the mainland by a sandy isthmus.

Tyre ●

Sea of Galilee

Ammon was the territory controlled by the Ammonites—descendants of Ben-ammi, the son of Lot by his daughter. The Ammonites were condemned by the prophets as persistent enemies of Israel.

Ammon

Moab was sometimes the enemy of Israel, and other times a vassal state. The territory of Moab is a high plateau between the valleys of the Arnon River and the Zered brook.

Moab

Philistia refers to the territory occupied by the people of the coastal plain of southern Palestine, generally from Joppa to Gaza. The Hebrew name "Philistia," occurs only eight times in the Old Testament.

Philistia

Dead Sea

Edom

Edom is derived from the Hebrew word meaning "red," possibly because of the reddish color of the sandstone in that area. In the Old Testament, Edom is often identified with the country or mountain of Seir.

“Aha” Yourself!

DAY 17

Ezekiel 25–26

Have you ever noticed how people congratulate themselves when they get away with doing something for which others got caught and punished?

1. Who were the five countries that took great delight in watching Israel fall to the Babylonians (25:2, 8, 12, 15-16; 26:1-3)?
2. What lesson can we learn in these two chapters about rejoicing over those who are experiencing calamity?
3. What did all the countries that offended God have in common that would bring his judgment on them (25:3, 4, 8-9, 12-13, 15; 26:2-3)?
4. Who would come and wreak destruction on Tyre (26:7-14)?
5. What did God want these countries to learn from his judgment against them (25:5, 7, 11, 14, 17; 26:6)?

1. Do you remember a time when you really wanted to see someone fall, or fail, because of something they had done to you?
2. What were you hoping would happen to this person, and why?
3. Th mind of christ living in us produces an entirely different attitude, does it not?

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

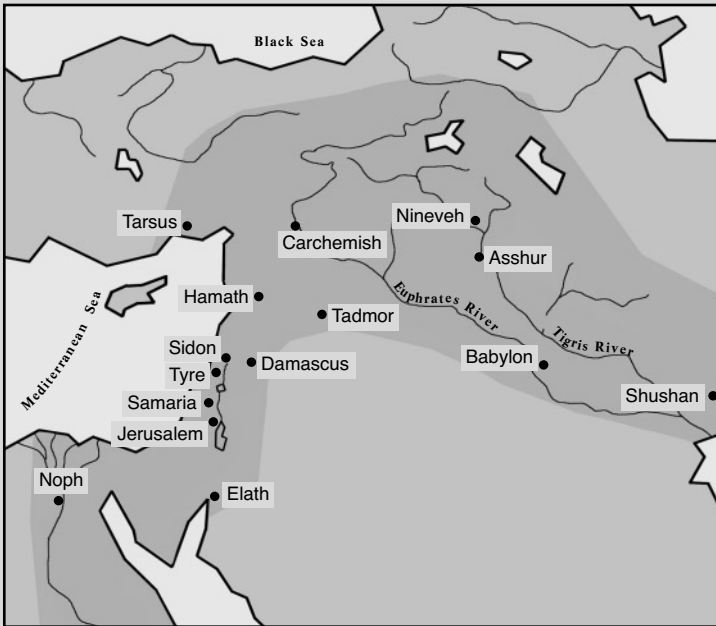
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

TYRE

MERCHANT OF THE NATIONS



Tyre during Ezekiel's time had a vast merchant empire stretching from Egypt to Persia. Tyre acquired her wealth through trade and boasted some of the best craftsmen in the surrounding territories. Solomon used some of Tyre's artisans to help build the Temple. Besides her skilled workers, Tyre was also famous for a unique purple dye made from mollusks found on the nearby shores.

Tyre depended on the mainland for potable water, food and fuel. In return Tyre supplied the people of the mainland with merchandise from Spain, Africa and Greece.

Tyre's empire slowly diminished because she lacked the military power to stand against the Babylonian Empire, Alexander the Great, the Crusaders and the Muslims. What was once a powerful and opulent merchant empire is now nothing more than ruins and history.

Sinking the Pride of the Fleet!

DAY 18

Ezekiel 27–28

In World War II, the greatest German battleship of its day, the Bismarck, was the terror of England, and was considered unsinkable by the Germans. Yet, the Bismarck had a short life—it was sunk by British battleships. Can you think of other instances where something did not live up to its much-heralded billing?

1. Although Tyre grew wealthy through her sea trade, what attitude did this success spawn (27:3)?
2. How many countries relied on Tyre for their trade goods and luxuries (vs. 12-23)?
3. Why would the fall of Tyre bring such sadness and mourning from so many countries (vs. 33-36)?
4. What thoughts did success and wealth bring to the king of Tyre (28:1-6, 12-18)?

1. Think of one thing in your life that you thought never would happen, yet did, and one thing that you were sure would happen, but didn't.
2. Everyone has a tendency to place too much pride and trust in something other than God. Can you think of such an area in your own life? How would you feel if it were suddenly taken from you?

*The city-state of **Tyre** (27:2) was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar in 585 B.C. It took 13 years to destroy the coastal cities, but he was unable to conquer the island of Tyre, which lay half a mile off shore. In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great destroyed both the coastal cities and the island. Many countries depended on Tyre for trade, and her fall would devastate their economies. **Sidon** (28:20-21) was another seaport nation 20 miles north of Tyre and one of the oldest maritime powers. **The King of Tyre** (28:12) is the subject of great debate, because his description seems far greater than could be applied to a mere man. Some feel Ezekiel is describing Adam in poetic language, represented by Ethbaal III. Other scholars feel Ezekiel was describing the god of the King of Tyre. Still others feel that Ezekiel was describing Satan and his fall and expulsion from heaven.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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WINDOW

on the Word

Babylon's Coming—but Pharaoh's in De Nile

Ezekiel 29–30

OPENING
up to the Word

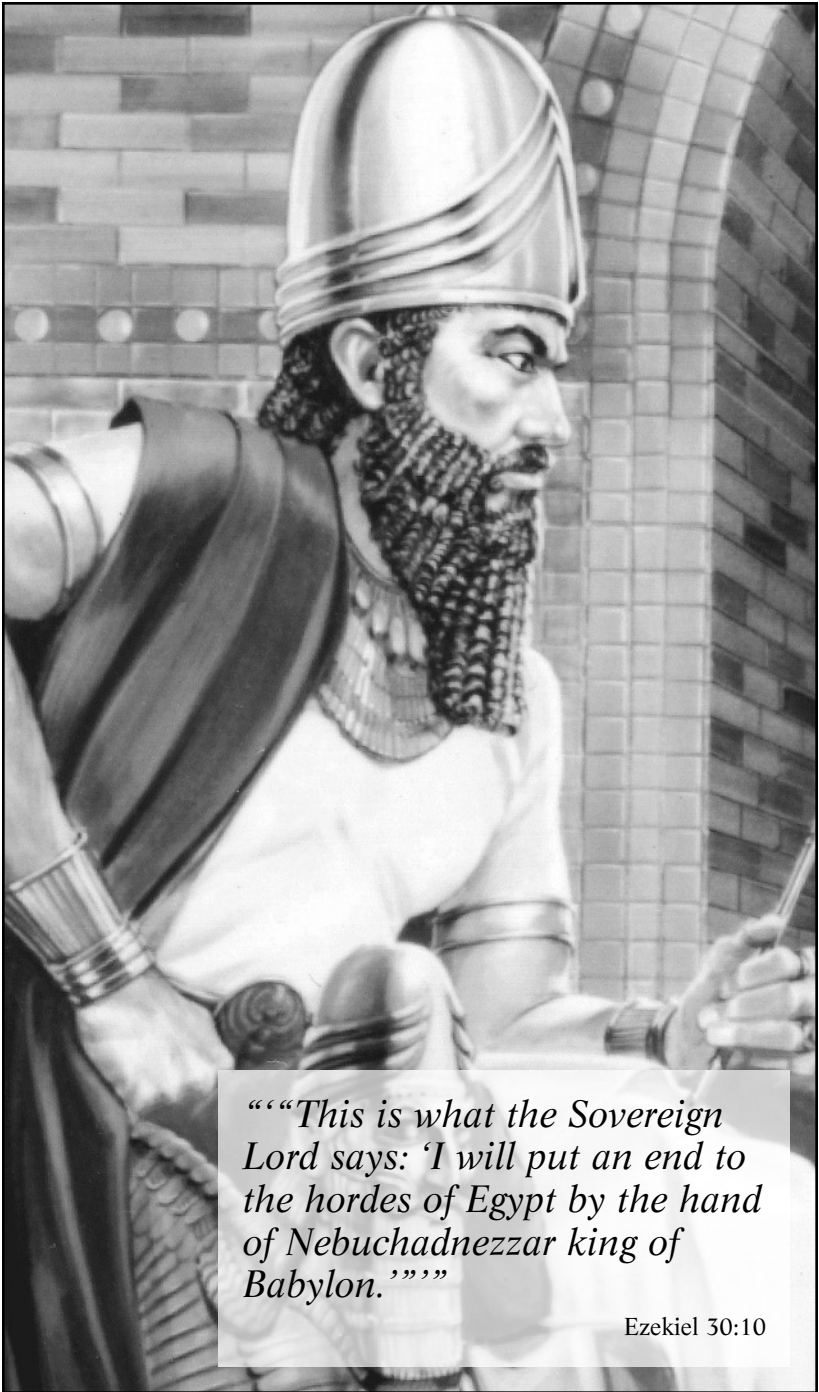
Being top dog for a long time can often breed a false sense of security—we feel things will never change. Have you ever lost a position in which you felt secure?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** Pharaoh had begun to take credit for things he had nothing to do with (29:3, 9-10), so God humbled him. How do people today take credit for things they had nothing to do with?
- 2.** In the past, Israel would seek help or protection from Egypt, but whenever they did, they were disappointed. How did God describe the Egyptians (vs. 6-7)?
- 3.** Who would God use to humble the mighty Egyptian empire (vs. 19-20)?
- 4.** How would Egypt's position in the world change (vs. 13-16)?
- 5.** Can you think of any modern comparisons to Egypt losing her great position of influence and power and never regaining it?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** Do you feel your positions are a result of God's work in your life, or a result of your hard work and diligence—or both—or simply good luck?
- 2.** Have you ever looked back on your life and tried to recognize God's part in your success or accomplishments?
- 3.** Try to imagine for a moment how God would view your accomplishments. How do you think his assessment of how you got where you are might differ from yours?



““This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.’””

Ezekiel 30:10

The Price of Pride and Glory

Ezekiel 31-32

OPENING
up to the Word

Has your pride or your desire for glory ever exacted a price from you?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Egypt became a conquered nation despite their great strength and armies. Their feelings of invincibility were similar to what previously powerful, but conquered nation (31:2-3)?
2. Assyria had everything going for it as a nation (vs. 4-9). So what caused God to judge it (vs. 10-11)?
3. Egypt was defeated. Similar things would happen to them that had occurred to other, once proud kingdoms. What would those things be (32:19-26)?

LIVING
out the Word

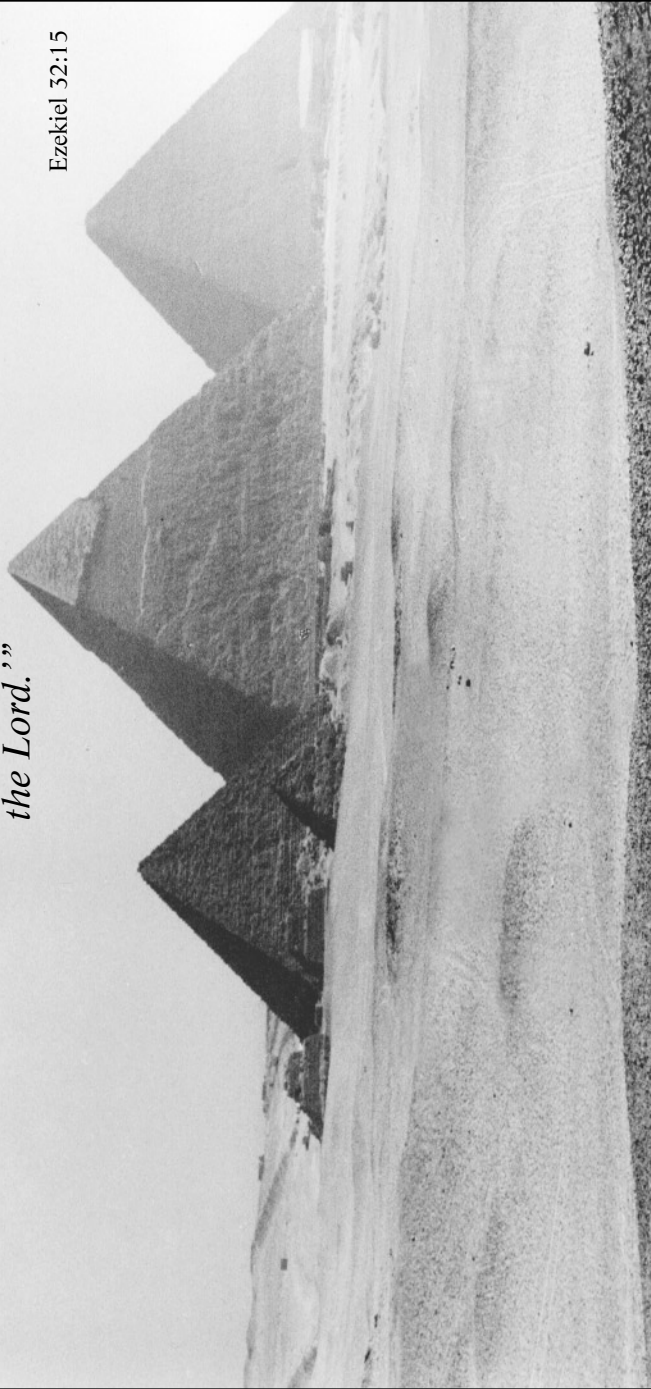
1. What do the greatest and most powerful people of our world, who do not know Christ, have in common with the poorest and weakest who do not know Christ? How is everyone equal in death?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt invincible? (a) no, never; (b) yes, only once; (c) yes, several times; (d) yes, frequently.
3. In which area of your life do you feel the most confident? Has your confidence ever turned into pride or a quest for personal glory?
4. When someone tells you that you are really good at something, how do you take it? (a) I don't think much about it; (b) I think about it, but don't let myself get carried away; (c) It hardly ever happens, so when it does it's hard not to soak it up; (d) I'll admit it, I eat it up. I wish I had more moments like that.
5. What have you learned from watching other people being humbled in their pride? How has it affected the way you accept or seek compliments?

WINDOW
on the Word

Pharaoh (31:2) at this time would have been Hophra, who ruled Egypt from 589 to 570 B.C. His forces were defeated by the Babylonians. **"Trees of Eden"** (v. 9). Ezekiel is comparing Assyria to a great tree that (in the Assyrians' own eyes) rivaled the glory and majesty of the trees in the Garden of Eden.

“When I make Egypt desolate and strip the land of everything in it, when I strike down all who live there, then they will know that I am the Lord.”

Ezekiel 32:15



In One Ear and Out the Other

Ezekiel 33

OPENING
up to the Word

How well do you pay attention to warning signs?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Far from being eager to judge Israel and to bring death to those in Jerusalem, what was God's plea to his people (v. 11)?

2. Not all the people were killed when Jerusalem was destroyed. Yet, those who remained developed the idea that God was leaving the land to them because they were special. How did God correct that notion (vs. 23-29)?

3. Ezekiel became popular in exile, and many people came to listen to him. What did God reveal to Ezekiel about the effect his prophecies were having on them (vs. 30-32)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Can you think of three times in history when failure to listen to a warning resulted in a catastrophe?

2. Make a list of the warning signs that surround us all the time, and ask yourself how well you pay attention to them.

3. How many warning signs can you think of that God has placed in your life to keep you away from danger?

Faith or Entertainment?

Ezekiel must have attracted sizable crowds. His prophecies seemed to be more performance than preaching. Hundreds of curious onlookers must have congregated to see what this eccentric, who claimed to be a messenger of God, was going to do next.

But after the show was over, so the people's interest quickly waned. While they enjoyed Ezekiel's creative and highly symbolic presentations, they paid little attention to the real message God was conveying through him. They returned to business as usual, without making any changes in their lives.

The people of Ezekiel's day were not unlike some modern Christians, who tend to be spectators rather than players. Christian publishing is at an all-time high. We clamor to buy and read the latest books, hear and see the latest popular Christian personalities and latch on to the latest Christian fads.

But when it comes to hearing and applying the basic message of the gospel, we often seem to lack interest.

God reached the people of Ezekiel's day by using methods that would arrest their interest. God gets our interest today in a variety of ways. Once that has happened, we must open our ears to hear the message he has for us.