

Reading Guide for Ezekiel 12:21-14:11

Ezekiel 12:21-14:11 forms a unit that centers around the theme of prophecy, specifically, the false prophets and their destructive effect on the exilic community. Throughout this unit, judgment is promised on them, thus ending their influence on the elders and the people. Ultimately, these prophets will be proven false by the imminent destruction coming upon Jerusalem, an event they denied would happen. Conversely, the judgment will validate Ezekiel as a true prophet of the Lord.

Two Disputation Oracles Concerning Ezekiel's Prophecies (12:21-28)

The opening section of this unit contains two disputation oracles, each beginning with a message-reception formula ("The word of Yahweh came to me...") and ending with a signatory formula ("the declaration of Yahweh").

Each oracle contains a statement, or thesis, that leads the people to believe that Ezekiel's prophecies should not be heeded. The thesis is then corrected through a counter-thesis provided by the Lord, followed by a disputation of the false view.

The first false thesis (v. 22) reflects the people's attitude that, because the judgment Ezekiel has predicted had not yet come to pass, it must be untrue. The Lord's counter-thesis is that it will indeed be fulfilled and not be delayed any longer. The second, shorter disputation oracle reveals the people's attitude that though Ezekiel's visions may come to pass, their fulfillment is far in the future (v. 27). The Lord responds again, stating that the judgment will in fact happen in their days.

I. Disputation Oracle: Certain Fulfillment (12:21-25)

Message-reception formula (12:21)

Thesis: Ezekiel's Vision will not Come to Pass (12:22)

Counter-thesis (12:23)

Disputation (12:24-25)

II. Disputation Oracle: Imminent Fulfillment (12:26-28)

Message-reception formula (12:26)

Thesis: Ezekiel's Vision is for the Distant Future (12:27)

Counter-thesis (12:28a)

Disputation (12:28b)

Oracles Against the False Prophets and Sorcerers (13:1-23)

The next section contains another pair of oracles, the first pronouncing judgment on the false prophets (13:2-16) and the second on the female sorcerers (13:17-23). These oracles follow a similar pattern: each begin with a pronouncement of woe and each contain two accusation/judgment oracles. Because of the destructive effect the prophets and sorcerers have on the community, the Lord will intervene and deliver His people from their lies and deceit.

Message-reception formula (13:1)

I. Oracle Against the False Prophets (13:2-9)

Command to Prophecy (13:2)

Pronouncement of Woe to the False Prophets (13:3-4)

Accusation: (13:5-7)
Disregarding the Coming Danger (13:5)
Promising Fulfillment of False Prophecies (13:6)
Falsely Claiming Divine Authority (13:7)
Judgment (13:8-9)

Accusation: Giving the People False Hope (13:10)
What Ezekiel will Say to the False Prophets (13:11)
What Others will Say to the False Prophets (13:12)
Judgment (13:13-14)
What the Lord will Say to the False Prophets (13:15-16)

II. Oracle Against the Female Sorcerers (13:17-23)

Command to Prophecy (13:17)
Pronouncement of Woe to the False Prophets (13:18a)

Accusation: Ensnaring the People (13:18b-19)
Judgment (13:20)

Accusation: Condemning the Righteous and Encouraging the Wicked (13:22)
Judgment (13:23)

The Lord's Response to the Elders' Consultation (14:1-11)

This final section begins with the elders among the exilic community approaching Ezekiel, seeking a word from the Lord (cf. 8:1ff). They are condemned for consulting the Lord in the same manner they seek idols and fortune-tellers. The question immediately arises if the Lord should even answer them. He does, however, answer them.

The Lord's first response (vv. 4-5) indicates His purpose in answering the elders, which is to show Himself as the only true God and lay hold of the hearts of His people. The second response (vv. 6-11) is a call to repentance, seeing that only in the Lord will they find truth. For those who refuse, both the false prophets and those who follow them will be cut off from the covenant community forever.

Narrative Introduction (14:1)
Message-reception Formula (14:2)
The Lord's Inquiry to the Prophet (14:3)
First Oracle of Response (14:4-5)
Second Oracle of Response (14:6-11)