



**John's Use of Ezekiel: Understanding the Unique Perspective of the Fourth Gospel**, Brian Neil Peterson, Fortress, 2015 (ISBN 978-1-4514-9031-2), xiv + 241 pp., pb \$39

Brian Neil Peterson is assistant professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Lee University in Tennessee (USA). Peterson's third monograph, *John's Use of Ezekiel*, is a welcome addition to his earlier work, *Ezekiel in Context* (2012). The OT scholar does not claim expertise in Johannine studies but suggests that sometimes an outsider is able to provide fresh insights. He therefore proposes that many of the interpretive lacunae in regard to the book of John can be resolved by recognizing the influence of Ezekiel on

the Fourth Gospel. He contends that Ezekiel played a dominant role in influencing the Gospel's author.

Following introductory remarks, the book is divided into eight chapters. In chapter 1, Peterson outlines interpretive difficulties with the Gospel of John and theorizes that the book of Ezekiel resolves such issues. He provides a helpful graphic diagram of the rhetorical peaks and valleys of Ezekiel, which is reproduced from his prior monograph on Ezekiel. The major peaks consist of the opening vision of Yahweh's glory (Ezek 1–3), the vision of the defiled temple (Ezek 8–11), the two metaphors of Israel's broken covenant (Ezek 16, 23), the vision of the revived nation (Ezek 37), and the vision of the rebuilt temple and Yahweh's return (Ezek 40–48).

The following six chapters explicate Ezekiel's rhetorical peaks in relation to the Gospel of John. The only peak not examined in detail is the third peak, although Peterson does address the relation of Ezekiel's extended metaphors to the Fourth Gospel in a lengthy footnote. In chapter 2, Peterson juxtaposes John 1 and Ezek 1–3, presenting a cluster of parallel themes that include creation imagery and rejection motifs. In chapter 3, Peterson notes the similarities between Jesus' sign acts and the sign acts of Ezekiel. He contends that the number of signs, the purpose of the signs, and the response to the signs are the same in both books. Chapter 4 deals with the second Ezekielian peak as Peterson argues that the unusual placement of the temple cleansing in John 2 is an intentional rhetorical device used to evoke the withdrawal of the Lord's presence in Ezek 8–11. In chapter 5, Peterson explains how the 'I am' sayings of John present Jesus as the fulfillment of messianic motifs in Ezek 12–39. In chapter 6, resurrection is addressed through thematic and linguistic similarities between John 17, John 20, and Ezek 37. Peterson contends that notable 'peculiarities' in John's presentation of the Passion Week can be explained by his reliance on Ezek 37. Chapter 7 deals with the final Ezekielian peak as Jesus' post-cross return to Jerusalem parallels the return of Yahweh to the temple in Ezek 40–43. Both books end with a future-looking hope in a more permanent reign of Yahweh/Jesus on the earth. Further, Peterson contends that 'the destruction of the first temple afforded John the opportunity to present Jesus as its spiritual replacement' (p. 193). The brief final chapter of the book provides a synopsis of the argumentation from the previous chapters. The book concludes with an index of subjects and scripture references.

*John's Use of Ezekiel* is a well-written, well-organized, and well-researched monograph. Peterson offers extensive footnotes for readers who desire further study. And indeed, Peterson's thesis bears further investigation. His convincing arguments offer a way forward for Johannine scholarship, which has reached something of a stalemate in regard to difficult issues like the placement of the temple cleansing. The theological, structural, thematic, and linguistic parallels that link John and Ezekiel are difficult to ignore now that Peterson has methodically brought them

to light. A minor weakness in the argumentation, however, is Peterson's treatment of John 21. The author fails to substantively address how the puzzling final chapter of the Fourth Gospel relates to Ezekiel. He does count the large catch of fish as one of the eight Johannine miracles but does not explain how the chapter's placement relates to the overall scheme of rhetorical peaks in Ezekiel.

Peterson's hypothesis evokes several implications that bear further study. First, Peterson peripherally touches on the question of John's audience. He posits a Jewish audience because non-Jews would not likely have recognized 'the structural and thematic connections to Ezekiel' (p. 23). Of course, such an assumption is contingent on the accuracy of Peterson's theory. Second, Revelation appears to borrow heavily from Ezekiel. If Peterson is correct, the likelihood that the Fourth Gospel and Revelation come from the hand of the same author increases.

To conclude, *John's Use of Ezekiel* is an essential monograph for Johannine scholars. Peterson's work yields promising new avenues for future research into the Johannine corpus. Scholars of Ezekiel will also find the monograph an enlightening and captivating read. For those who view the two biblical testaments as a complete unit, Peterson's insights provide a new depth of meaning for the OT prophetic book. While the monograph is primarily directed toward the academy, Peterson's clear and engaging writing style will broaden his audience to even non-specialists.

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