

# Israel Degraded

(19) Ezekiel 19:1–20:49

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BIG BEND  
BIBLE  
FELLOWSHIP

## **Ezek 19:1-14 – Lamentation of the lions & vine.**

*“Moreover take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, <sup>2</sup> and say: ‘What is your mother? A lioness: She lay down among the lions; Among the young lions she nourished her cubs. <sup>3</sup> She brought up one of her cubs, And he became a young lion; He learned to catch prey, And he devoured men. <sup>4</sup> The nations also heard of him; He was trapped in their pit, And they brought him with chains to the land of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> When she saw that she waited, that her hope was lost, She took another of her cubs and made him a young lion. <sup>6</sup> He roved among the lions, And became a young lion; He learned to catch prey; He devoured men. <sup>7</sup> He knew their desolate places, And laid waste their cities; The land with its fullness was desolated By the noise of his roaring. <sup>8</sup> Then the nations set against him from the provinces on every side, And spread their net over him; He was trapped in their pit. <sup>9</sup> They put him in a cage with chains, And brought him to the king of Babylon; They brought him in nets, That his voice should no longer be heard on the mountains of Israel. <sup>10</sup> Your mother was like a vine in your bloodline, Planted by the waters, Fruitful and full of branches Because of many waters. <sup>11</sup> She had strong branches for scepters of rulers. She towered in stature above the thick branches, And was seen in her height amid the dense foliage. <sup>12</sup> But she was plucked up in fury, She was cast down to the ground, And the east wind dried her fruit. Her strong branches were broken and withered; The fire consumed them. <sup>13</sup> And now she is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land. <sup>14</sup> Fire has come out from a rod of her branches And devoured her fruit, So that she has no strong branch—a scepter for ruling.’ ”*  
*This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.*

### **What is a lamentation?**

*Take up a lamentation:* Ezekiel 19 is the collection of two laments, two sorrowful songs over the condition of Israel in Ezekiel’s day. It is a **lamentation** both by its poetic arrangement and by its subject matter.

### **For whom is the first lamentation?**

*For the princes of Israel:* This **lamentation** mainly concerns the later kings of **Israel**. Significantly, God here called them **princes** rather than kings, even though it refers

to three of the later kings of Judah. It is also significant that God referred to them as **princes of Israel**, even though the northern kingdom was long before conquered and scattered.

The **lioness** was **mother** to the princes mentioned in the previous verse. The **lioness** is best understood as Israel or Jerusalem itself, who **lay down among the lions** by taking her place in the community of nations.

- The lion of Judah’ was probably as proverbial a term in Ezekiel’s days as ‘the Russian bear’ or ‘the American eagle’ is in our own times.

*She brought up one of her cubs:* This refers to Jehoahaz, the son of King Josiah (also called Shallum in Jeremiah 22:10-12). Jehoahaz reigned only for a few months in 609 b.c. His reign was short but evil and brutal (**he devoured men**).

*And they brought him with chains to the land of Egypt.* King Jehoahaz of Judah was taken prisoner to Egypt in 609 b.c. (2 Kings 23:31-33), after a three-month reign.

*She took another of her cubs and made him a young lion.* This was King Jehoiachin of Judah, who reigned from 609 to 597 b.c. He also learned the ways of lions and **devoured men**.

*He knew their desolate places, and laid waste their cities:* For a time Jehoiachin seemed to rule with power and authority. Others heard and were affected **by the noise of his roaring**.

*Then the nations set against him from the provinces on every side*

When Jehoiachin rebelled against his Babylonian overlords Nebuchadnezzar brought an army against him from the many **nations** and **provinces** under his empire.

*They put him in a cage with chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon:* Jehoiachin was taken as prisoner to Babylon in 597 b.c. He never returned, **that his voice should no longer be heard on the mountains of Israel**.

## Where else have we seen Israel depicted as a vine?

Ezek 17 – parable of the Eagles and the vine

Ezek 15 – the outcast vine

Isaiah 5:1-7, Psalm 80:8-15, Hosea 10:1, Jeremiah 2:21, Matthew 21:33-40, Luke 20:9-17

v10 – *Your mother was like a vine*: Ezekiel returned to the familiar image of the **vine** as a representation of Israel. The picture is of a fruitful and strong kingdom (**fruitful and full of branches**).

*She had strong branches for scepters of rulers*: Ezekiel probably had in mind the most glorious years of Israel's monarchy, the reigns of David and Solomon. In those years God lifted Israel up among the nations and **she towered in stature**.

*But she was plucked up in fury,*

There came a day when God no longer blessed Israel and her kings. When they persistently rebelled against Him, **she was cast down to the ground**. As a result of God's judgment, **her strong branches were broken and withered**, with the **strong branches** representing her later kings.

*And now she is planted in the wilderness,  
In a dry and thirsty land.*

God transplanted the vine in an unpleasant place, Babylon. Babylon wasn't a *literal* wilderness, but it was certainly one for God's exiled kings and people.

*Fire has come out from a rod of her branches  
And devoured her fruit,*

The worst damage to the vine came from one of **her own branches**. The corruption and destruction came from within. This particular **rod of her branches** represents Zedekiah, who was king at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 b.c.

## How is it that this lamentation had become a lamentation?

These two parables described and prophesied the tragedy of the last few kings of Judah. When kings and leaders over the people of God are ungodly and become rightful targets of God's judgment, there is truly reason for **lamentation**.

## How was it that Israel had no strong branch, a scepter for ruling?

Zedekiah was the last of the kings of the line of David, until the Messiah establishes His reign as promised to David...

2 Samuel 7:12-16 – *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after*

*you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. <sup>15</sup> But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. <sup>16</sup> And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.*

From Zedekiah until Jesus the royal line of David went underground. But Jesus will rule beginning at the Millennial Kingdom which foreshadows eternity. Jesus will be the ultimate Strong Branch to rule over Israel and all the nations of the world in fulfilment of prophecy...

Isaiah 11:1 – *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

The Messiah would be in the line of King David.

## Do the nations have a strong branch today?

They have in history – Napoleon, Washington, Lincoln, FDR, Churchill, Hitler, Stalin, Mao

But today there is a vacuum of leadership which sets the stage for the strong branch of the Antichrist

- Paul-Henri Spaak Paul-Henri Spaak (1899 - 1972) was a former Belgian Prime Minister and one of the principal architects of what has, since its origins, now become the European Union. His words are chillingly 'prophetic' regarding the condition of the Eurozone...  
"We do not want another committee, we have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man, and be he god or devil, we will receive him."

## How strong a branch will be the Antichrist?

Revelation 13:4 – *So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”*

The Antichrist will be invincible. None will be able to defeat him politically or militarily. God will allow this for the same reason He allows Satan to walk to and fro on the earth, he serves a useful purpose the preparing the world for the Millennial Kingdom.

## How has the strong branch of the Antichrist been foreshadowed in our day?

- The globalist agenda is unrelenting with government policies setting the stage for world government yielding national sovereignty to the collective

community of nations and ruling against the will of the people.

- The agenda of anti-God ruling authorities is getting harder and harder to stop.

### **Ezek 20:1-7 – God’s oath to Israel**

*It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me. <sup>2</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <sup>3</sup> “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Have you come to inquire of Me? As I live,” says the Lord God, “I will not be inquired of by you.”’ <sup>4</sup> Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Then make known to them the abominations of their fathers. <sup>5</sup> “Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, ‘I am the Lord your God.’’ <sup>6</sup> On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ the glory of all lands. <sup>7</sup> Then I said to them, ‘Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.’*

*It came to pass in the seventh year:* This took place some two years after the prophecies of Ezekiel 1-3 (Ezekiel 1:2) and one year after the prophecies of Ezekiel 8 (Ezekiel 8:1).

*Certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me:* As happened previously in Ezekiel 14:1, the **elders** of Israel in exile came to Ezekiel as a recognized prophet, to **inquire of the Lord** through him.

### **How did God respond to those inquiring of Him?**

*I will not be inquired of by you:* This was God’s initial response to the elders of Israel, much the same as He said to them the last time they **inquired** of God (Ezekiel 14:3). He said it strongly with an oath (**As I live**).

*Then make known to them the abominations of their fathers:* Following in Ezekiel 20 is a strong description and denunciation of Israel’s **abominations** through their history, together with remarkable promises of restoration and mercy.

*On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob:* God referred

to an **oath** He made to Israel **in the land of Egypt**. We have no record of this specific oath, but it is simply a restatement of aspects of the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12:1-3).

*I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land...the glory of all lands:* God repeated the promise originally given to Abraham and his covenant descendants, renewing it for the generation yet in Egypt. God promised to take them out of Egypt, and into Canaan, which He called **the glory of all lands**.

### **What had God commanded Israel to throw away?**

*Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before His eyes:* God not only gave Israel an oath; while the people of God were still in Egypt, God gave them a command. The command was to **throw away** the **idols of Egypt**. They were to have nothing to do with the gods of Egypt.

### **What is the problem with questioning God?**

Honest questions are rarely wrong, but the tone and the timing can be. God welcomed sincere questions from His servants when they were born out of a desire to please Him (Luke 1:34–38; Judges 6:12–18).

### **Should we question God’s Word?**

If “questioning the Bible” means that when we read something that seems implausible or contradictory we start asking questions, then that can be a healthy response. When we approach the Bible as God’s infallible Word, delivered through the hands of His trusted servants (2 Peter 1:21), we are pressed to wrestle through those questions because of a desire to know God better.

### **How do people wrongly question God’s Word?**

If we believe we have found an irreconcilable error and, because of that, we refuse to give the Bible the respect it deserves. When questioning the Bible sets us in judgment of the Bible, it is wrong.

- For centuries, Satan has worked to discredit the Bible’s accuracy, reliability, and authority. He uses the same tactics he used on Eve in the Garden of Eden by hissing, “Did God really say . . . ?” (Genesis 3:1).

We see this challenge at its strongest these days with the advancement of the LGBTQ agenda. There is a mighty push to declare homosexuality righteous, but this cannot be done with the Bible in its proper place of authority.

### **How do people attempt to get around God’s clear prohibition of homosexual activity (Genesis 19:1–13; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9)?**

- They question the Bible’s authorship, specifically the apostle Paul, claiming that people did not understand homosexuality at that time.
- They assert that ancient civilizations were not as informed or enlightened as we are today, and therefore the Bible’s moral standards are outdated.

Churches and denominations are crumbling under this attack, because, like the Jews in Jesus’ day, they “*loved the praise of men more than the praise of God*” (John 12:43).

### How do people today question the relevance of Bible?

Many professing Christians declare that they believe the Bible to be God’s Word, but pick and chose what they believe to be relevant to our culture.

- Some claim to read and love the Bible, but their lifestyles indicate something else. “Times are different now,” they say. “God understands that the 21st century is more advanced and some of those commandments just don’t apply to us now.”

It is true that certain select portions of Scripture were for the Jews only during a specific era, but there are principles behind these commandments that are for all people for all time and God Himself has not changed (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

- His moral law has not changed (Ecclesiastes 3:14; Isaiah 46:9–11).

God judged nations for the sins that some professing Christians now champion such as embracing cultural idols.

### Ezek 20:8-17 – God’s mercy to Israel

<sup>8</sup> *But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, ‘I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.’* <sup>9</sup> *But I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they were, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt.* <sup>10</sup> *“Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.”* <sup>11</sup> *And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them.’* <sup>12</sup> *Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them.* <sup>13</sup> *Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them.* <sup>14</sup> *But I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles, in whose sight I had*

*brought them out.* <sup>15</sup> *So I also raised My hand in an oath to them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ the glory of all lands,* <sup>16</sup> *because they despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols.* <sup>17</sup> *Nevertheless My eye spared them from destruction. I did not make an end of them in the wilderness.*

### How did Israel respond to God delivering them from Egypt?

*But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me:* Even while in Egypt, Israel did not listen to God and truly **forsoke the idols of Egypt**. In response, God said He would judge (**I will pour out My fury on them**).

### Why did God deliver Israel from Egypt?

*But I acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles:* Despite Israel’s sin, God extended His grace and mercy to Israel while still in Egypt. He did this to preserve His reputation among the Gentiles, and fulfilled His promise **to bring them out of the land of Egypt**.

*Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness:* Despite the sins described in Ezekiel 20:8, God did as He described in Ezekiel 20:9. God set them free from slavery and Egypt and set them on the road to Canaan, the Promised Land.

*I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments:* God did much more than bring Israel out of Egypt. He brought them to Mount Sinai where He gave them His law. He gave them *His Sabbaths* as a **sign between them and God Himself**. He did it all to separate Israel to God Himself. Even in the wilderness, they **greatly defiled God’s Sabbaths**.

*I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness:* As He did in Egypt (Ezekiel 20:8), God said He would judge Israel in the wilderness. Yet as He did before, God held back His judgment acting for His name’s sake, to preserve His reputation **before the Gentiles**.

*I did not make an end to them in the wilderness:* Israel certainly *deserved* God’s judgment in the wilderness, but God mercifully brought them into the Promised Land.

### What key characteristic of God is demonstrated here?

God is merciful... He was longsuffering toward Israel. All God’s dealing with people is merciful: 120 years during the time of Noah prior to the judgment of the flood, Israel in

history, and during the time of judgment of the Tribulation (multitudes will be eternally saved).

### **Ezek 20:18-24 – More mercy in the wilderness**

<sup>18</sup> “But I said to their children in the wilderness, ‘Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols.’ <sup>19</sup> I am the Lord your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; <sup>20</sup> hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.’ <sup>21</sup> “Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; but they profaned My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness. <sup>22</sup> Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out. <sup>23</sup> Also I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, <sup>24</sup> because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their fathers’ idols.

**Summary:** God’s statutes were to set Israel apart from the other nations because they were God’s representatives on earth. Yet Israel persisted in their rebellious acts while God withheld judgment on Israel for His namesake because they were His chosen people. But God’s patience with Israel would get to the point where they are judged and the consequence would be their being exiled from their promised land and dispersed among the Gentile nations.

### **Did God make good on His promise to disperse Israel among the Gentile nations?**

Yes, due to the Babylonian invasion and later when the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the rebuilt temple of Jesus’ day.

*But I said to their children in the wilderness:* The generation that came from Egypt would not trust or obey God as they should. God mercifully spoke to the next generation and told them to not repeat the same mistakes as their fathers.

*I am the Lord your God: Walk in My statutes, keep my judgments, and do them:* God gave that generation born and raised in the wilderness the path and the opportunity to **walk** in His ways.

*Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me:* Sadly, the generation born and raised in the wilderness did not obey God. God said, **they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments.**

*I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness:* As He did regarding Israel in Egypt (Ezekiel 20:8) and the generation that came out of Egypt (Ezekiel 20:13), God said that He would judge the generation of Israel born and raised in the wilderness.

*Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for My name’s sake:* Once again, God spared Israel and did so with an eye towards His reputation among the Gentiles.

*I raised My hand in an oath to those in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries:* In the late wilderness period God promised Israel that if they persisted in disobedience and rebellion, He would **scatter** them to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:27 and 28:64). Ezekiel and the elders he spoke to lived the fulfillment of that **oath**.

### **Ezek 20:25-32 – God silent to all who will not listen**

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I also gave them up to statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live; <sup>26</sup> and I pronounced them unclean because of their ritual gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through the fire, that I might make them desolate and that they might know that I am the Lord.” <sup>27</sup> “Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel, and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “In this too your fathers have blasphemed Me, by being unfaithful to Me. <sup>28</sup> When I brought them into the land concerning which I had raised My hand in an oath to give them, and they saw all the high hills and all the thick trees, there they offered their sacrifices and provoked Me with their offerings. There they also sent up their sweet aroma and poured out their drink offerings. <sup>29</sup> Then I said to them, ‘What is this high place to which you go?’ So its name is called Bamah to this day.”’ <sup>30</sup> Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers, and committing harlotry according to their abominations? <sup>31</sup> For when you offer your gifts and make your sons pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols, even to this day. So shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live,” says the Lord God, “I will not be inquired of by you. <sup>32</sup> What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, ‘We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.’”

**Summary:** God gave Israel up to the statutes of pagan Gentile nations that came with consequences. Israel has a long history of rebellion against God in their unfaithfulness and worship of worthless idols. So why should God be inquired by such people?

*I also gave them up to statutes that were not good:* Since Israel rejected God's law (Ezekiel 20:8, 20:13, 20:16), God allowed them to live under the law of other nations – laws that **were not good and judgments by which they could not live.**

*I pronounced them unclean because of their ritual gifts:* Israel served and gave honor to the pagan idols in the most **unclean** and terrible ways, ultimately including child sacrifice (**they caused all their firstborn to pass through the fire**).

*That I might make them desolate and that they might know that I am the Lord:* These great sins while in the land eventually brought the long withheld judgment of God.

*In this too your fathers have blasphemed Me:* Ezekiel here retraces some of Israel's history, beginning at the nation as they received Canaan as God's gift. Even then they were **unfaithful** to God when He **brought them into the land.**

*They saw all the high hills and all the thick trees, there they offered their sacrifices:* In terrible ingratitude, Israel used the very **hills** and **trees** God gave to them to offer their sacrifices to pagan idols. The sacrifices were of all kinds, including incense (**sweet aroma**) and wine (**drink offerings**).

*What is this high place to which you go?* Israel used the tops of hills and mountains for idol altars and sacrifice so often that the term **high place** was used for any place of idolatry, no matter what the elevation (as in Ezekiel 16:24-25). The name **Bamah** means *high place*.

*Are you defiling yourselves in the manner of your fathers:* After spelling out a long history of Israel's sin and idolatry, the elders were those and represented those who did **defile yourselves with all your idols, even to this day.** *Nothing had changed.*

*So shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel?* God made it clear that He owed no special revelation to such a disobedient people. If we want to hear God's voice and receive His guidance, it is always best to obey what He has already said and walk in the path already revealed.

**What attitude did the Jews inquiring of God have that gave Him cause to refuse their inquiry?**

v32 – *We shall be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone:* God forcefully rebuked the unspoken and hidden sins of the elders and many others among Israel's exiles. They almost *looked forward* to the opportunity to live **like the families in other countries** and to forsake the Lord, **servicing wood and stone.** God had to correct this evil attitude or Israel would completely assimilate into the countries where they were exiled.

**Why would Israel want to be like the other nations?**

For the same reasons today's Christians want to be like the world...

- Be accepted by others
- To avoid persecution

**What is the cause of all the anti-Semitism in the world?**

Why does the world hate the Jews? Why is anti-Semitism so rampant in so many different nations? What is so bad about the Jews? History has shown that at various times over the last 1,700 years the Jews have been expelled from over 80 different countries. Historians and experts have concluded there are at least six possible reasons:

- Racial Theory – the Jews are hated because they are an inferior race.
- Economic Theory – the Jews are hated because they possess too much wealth and power.
- Outsiders Theory – the Jews are hated because they are different from everyone else.
- Scapegoat Theory – the Jews are hated because they are the cause for all the world's problems.
- Deicide Theory – the Jews are hated because they killed Jesus Christ.
- Chosen People Theory – the Jews are hated because they arrogantly declare they are the "chosen ones of God."

These are just excuses to mask the real reason...

- The truth is that the world hates the Jews because the world hates God. The Jews were God's chosen people (Deuteronomy 14:2). Through the Jewish patriarchs and prophets God used the Jews to bring forth His Word. And He sent His Son, Jesus the Christ, in a Jewish body to redeem the world of sin.

Satan, the prince of the earth (John 14:30; Ephesians 2:2), has poisoned the minds of men with his hatred of the Jews. Satan has tried to wipe out the Jews through the Babylonians, the Persians, the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Hittites, and the Nazis. But he's failed every time.

## How do we know that God is not done working through Israel?

- The 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel 9 is yet to be fulfilled.
- Romans 11:26 tells us that some day all Israel will be saved, and this cannot come to pass if Israel no longer exists.
- God has preserved the Jews for the future, just as He has preserved their remnant throughout history.
- Prophecy is being fulfilled through the Jews today: back in the land, resurrected the Hebrew language, nations aligning against them...

### God Will Restore Israel

<sup>33</sup> “As I live,” says the Lord God, “surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. <sup>34</sup> I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. <sup>35</sup> And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. <sup>36</sup> Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you,” says the Lord God.

<sup>37</sup> “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; <sup>38</sup> I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord. <sup>39</sup> “As for you, O house of Israel,” thus says the Lord God: “Go, serve every one of you his idols—and hereafter—if you will not obey Me; but profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols. <sup>40</sup> For on My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel,” says the Lord God, “there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them, and there I will require your offerings and the firstfruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things. <sup>41</sup> I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. <sup>42</sup> Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. <sup>43</sup> And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. <sup>44</sup> Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have dealt with you for My name’s sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel,” says the Lord God.’ ”

**Summary:** Despite Israel’s rebellion, God will rule over them. And He would restore them to the land so that they would realize He is sovereign over them. He would purge the rebels from them.

a. **Surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you:** God said this with a vow (**As I live**), emphasizing the fact that though Israel had in many ways forsaken Him, *He* had not forsaken them. God would **rule over** them on His own terms.

b. **I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you:** God had fulfilled His promised to **scatter** disobedient Israel. Soon He would fulfill His promise to restore them, and with the same energy as intent as His previous judgment.

c. **I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face:** God promised to deal with Israel in their return from exile much as He dealt with them when they came out of Egypt. He would prove to them His love and faithfulness, and so **plead His case with** Israel.

a. **I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:** God promised that the time of exile would be a necessary corrective and that the **covenant** He had with Israel would be again restored. The correction would begin by selecting those who were restored to the land, as a shepherd identified his flock **under the rod**.

b. **I will purge the rebels from among you:** God promised that not all those in exile would return. **Rebels and those who transgress** would **not enter the land of Israel**. This purging work would be another way God would reveal Himself to Israel (**then you will know that I am the Lord**).

a. **As for you, O house of Israel:** Having walked through Israel’s history of sin and God’s history of mercy to Israel, having brought the matter to the present day, and having spoken of the future, now Yahweh gave them a challenge.

b. **Go, serve every one of you his idols:** God called His people to a decision point. If they wanted to serve their **idols**, then they might as well make up their minds and do it. Let them become Babylonians in every regard now that they were in Babylon.

c. **But profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols:** What God did *not* want from Israel was a

divided heart. When they brought Yahweh worship from hearts also given to idols, it profaned God and His name. In New Testament phrasing, God called Israel to be hot or cold, but no longer lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16).

a. **On My holy mountain...all the house of Israel...shall serve Me:** God promised that when Israel was restored to the land, the people would once again **serve** Him in a way that He would **accept**. This was fulfilled when the temple was rebuilt under Ezra and Zerubbabel.

b. **I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples:** God clearly longed for Israel's restoration to the land. When God brought them back from where He had **scattered** them, it would be like a pleasing sacrifice unto Him. It would also glorify God **before the Gentiles**.

a. **Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel:** God's restoration of Israel to the land would be a powerful revelation of Himself, both to Israel and to the world. This was true in the return from the Babylonian exile; it was also true Israel's 1948 return to the land.

b. **For which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers:** God promised the land to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and his covenant descendants. It was their land, and it remained their land even after God scattered them from the land because of their disobedience.

c. **There you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled:** Restored Israel would no longer be given over the same sins as they were before the exile. They would **loathe** themselves **because of all the evils that they have committed**.

d. **I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways:** The overwhelming mercy of God toward Israel would be a powerful revelation of Yahweh's existence and character (**then you shall know that I am the Lord**).

**Is this referring to Israel's restoration from the Babylonian or the Roman exile?**

Both... the immediate context applies to the Babylonian exile but it would also be true for their restoration in 1948.

### **Fire in the Forest**

<sup>45</sup> *Furthermore the word of the Lord came to me, saying,* <sup>46</sup> *"Son of man, set your face toward the south; preach against the south and prophesy against the*

*forest land, the South,* <sup>47</sup> *and say to the forest of the South, 'Hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree and every dry tree in you; the blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be scorched by it."* <sup>48</sup> *All flesh shall see that I, the Lord, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched."* ' ' <sup>49</sup> *Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! They say of me, 'Does he not speak parables?'"* "

**Summary:** God told Ezekiel to preach to Israel warning them of the Babylonian fire that is coming against them where all would be burned.

a. **Son of man, set your face toward the south:** God told Ezekiel to **preach against the south**, that is, the land of Israel, which lies south of where Ezekiel was (Babylon). Here Judea and Jerusalem are represented as a forest ready to be burned. Jerusalem was as full of people as the forest is full of trees.

b. **Behold, I will kindle a fire in you:** The Babylonian army would come with devastating judgment against Judea and Jerusalem. The judgment would be so complete that it would burn both the **green tree** and the **dry tree** – those obviously ready to burn in coming judgment, and those who were relatively righteous and innocent.

c. **All flesh shall see that I, the Lord, have kindled it:** God's judgment against Israel would be so powerful and complete that the whole world would take notice.

a. **Ah, Lord God!** This was another of Ezekiel's passionate pleas unto God.

b. **Does he not speak in parables:** The elders of Israel (Ezekiel 20:1) and others rejected or even despised Ezekiel's message because they claimed it was hard to understand. Their understanding was willful and would be judged.

**What applications come from our discussion this evening?**

- The nations are clambering for a "strong branch" to lead it so they will embrace the Antichrist but only the Messiah will be able to give them what they long for.
- It is only healthy to question God if we have the proper motives... to know Him better.
- God is merciful toward Israel and us!
- Antisemitism is a symptom of hating God.
- God is not done working through Israel!