



Lesson 11
Chapters 20-23



Overview: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Ezekiel speaks in the 7th year, 5th month 10th day (20:1)**
 - It is the last dated prophetic discourse before the siege begins in the **9th year 10th month 10th day (Ezek 24:1)**.
- **As I understand it, Ezekiel will have nothing more to say to the people until the siege begins.**

Overview: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Chapter 20, 21:** The elders again come to Ezekiel. (see 8:1;14:1)
 - God again rejects them, “I will not let you inquire of me.”
 - Instead, God will tell them what HE wants to say.
 - He recounts His dealing with Israel through history (past, present, future) (20:1-44).
 - He presents a series of judgment parables and demonstrations (20-45-21:27)
 - He pronounces judgment on Ammon (21:28-31)

Overview: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Chapter 22-23:** He follows up with a series of lessons to show how far Israel had fallen.
 - The defiled city (22:1-16).
 - Israel has become dross (22:17-22).
 - The corrupt land (22:23-31).
 - Israel's debasement (23:1-49).
 - the parable of Oholah and Oholibah.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

Israel's history
(past, present, future)

(20:1-44)

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- **God Again refuses the elders (1-4)**
 - The elders come to Ezekiel. God flatly refuses to be inquired of by them.
 - This doesn't mean He won't speak to them
 - God will tell them **what HE wants to say, not what THEY want to hear.**
 - “Judge them and show them the abominations of their fathers,” is the call to Ezekiel.
 - Ezekiel doesn't judge on his own merit (i.e. self-righteousness)
 - He passes judgment as an emissary of God.
 - In the following section God explains WHY He will not be inquired of by them.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- Several times we will see God state WHY He spared Israel and put up with them.
 - 20:9; 14; 22, 44 *“For My name sake...”*
 - Recall Moses interceding for the people
 - Ex 32:11-12; Num 14:12-16; Deut 9:24-29.
- **God tried to save His people**
 - (2 Chron 36:15-16) , *“The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.”*

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- Israel in Egypt (20:5-9)
 - The people rebelled in Egypt.
 - God could have destroyed them there, but He didn't (20:8-9)
- Israel in the wilderness (20:10-17)
 - God took them out of Egypt and gave them laws to live by and the Sabbath as a sign between God and the people.
 - They rebelled and refused to listen, and wouldn't follow the law.
 - They profaned His Sabbaths.
 - God could have destroyed them, but He didn't (20:17)

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- A new generation (20:18-26)
 - God raised up a new generation of people in the wilderness
 - He warned them to keep His law and observe His Sabbath.
 - They were no better than their fathers
 - (Read Num 25, Baal-Peor in Moab)
 - God could have destroyed them, but He didn't (20:21-22)
 - He also begins to give a glimpse into what the future holds for His people.
 - Compare Ezekiel 20:23-26 with Deut 4:25-28

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- Israel in Canaan (20:27-29)
 - Once again they turned to idolatry
 - They wanted to be like the nations around them.
 - They have been this way until this very day; a rebellious people
- Present day Israel (30-32)
 - They are acting just as their fathers did
 - And still they have the audacity to inquire of God.
 - God will not be inquired of by them (20:31).
 - What they desire (the unspoken request to God?) – **to be like the nations** – will not come about.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- What is to come (33-44) I see this as clearly pointing to the new covenant.
 - When divine wrath is satisfied. God will be king over His people
 - God will gather His people into the wilderness and He will judge them there.
 - They will “Pass beneath the rod...” (20:37) (Lev 27:32)
 - Not punishment, a technique used by shepherds to inspect and separate the sheep.
 - God will purge... separate the sheep, keeping only the good.
 - The “bond of the covenant...” A covenant is a “bond.”
 - This is foreshadowed by what happened to Israel in the wilderness. (Num 14:26-30).

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- “Go... Serve you idols...” This is not God encouraging them to commit idolatry. He is rhetorically acknowledging that they will.
 - Later... the people will listen. They will come to the High Mountain of Israel (Zion?) and serve God
 - He will free them and accept them.
 - The people will be as a soothing aroma.
 - God will be proved Holy (manifested, declared)
 - The people will loathe their past (repentance)
 - He WON'T deal with them according to their ways.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

Judgment Parables and demonstrations

(20:45-21:27)

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- A new prophecy: against the south, the great fire (20:45-21:5)
 - He faces south (toward Teman). “Teman” could be:
 - a town in Edom (south of the Dead Sea) would be southwest
 - “On the right” or “south.” So if he looked south, to the right would be Judah.
 - Probably he has Judah in view (21:1-2). Remember, destruction will come from the north.
 - The “forest” is likely symbolic to mean the people.
 - Ezekiel’s complaint, “They say I am just speaking parables.”
 - Just a story-teller... *We can feel the frustration of Ezekiel.*
 - God honors his complaint. In 21:1-5 He restates the prophecy in plain language.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- He follows this up with three play-acted prophecies
 - The groaning cry (21:6-7)
 - The sword (21:8-17)
 - The crossroads (21:18-27)
 - God shows Nebuchadnezzar two paths (Ammon and Judah)
 - He seems reluctant to attack Jerusalem, but if his diviners, shaken arrows, idols, and the prophetic liver agree...
- Judgment on Ammon (21:28-31)
 - 21:28 says they were insulting (NIV) Mocking (NLT) a reproach (NAS)
 - I see school kids on the playground, “Nyah Nyah Nyah”
 - God is dealing with Jerusalem now
 - Ammon’s time is coming.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

**How far has Israel
fallen?**

(22:1-31)

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- **The defiled city (22:1-16).**
 - **God levels a number of charges against Jerusalem:**
 - **Shedding blood**
 - **Making idols**
 - **Disrespect to parents**
 - **Mistreatment of orphans**
 - **Despised holy things**
 - **Profaned the Sabbath**
 - **Slander**
 - **Lewdness**
 - **Adultery**
 - **Sexual misconduct**
 - **Accepting bribes (Corruption)**
 - **Usury**
 - **Forgetting God**

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Israel has become dross (22:17-22).**
 - They were precious silver... Not any more.
 - The blast furnace is used to remove the dross and bring out pure silver.
 - This process is painful for the dross AND the silver.
 - Compare this with Psa 66:10; Mal 3:2; 1 Pet 1:3-7; Rev 3:18
- **The corrupt land (22:23-31).**
 - The prophets conspired to profit from the people
 - Priests profaned the holy things
 - Princes sought dishonest gain.
 - The prophets conspired on their message
 - The powerful oppressed the weak and poor
 - Among these people, God searched for someone to stand in the gap... No one was found.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

**The sisters, their
harlotry and judgment**

(23:1-49)

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Oholah and Oholibah...**
 - Sisters who turned to harlotry (23:1-4).
 - Oholah = “She who has a tent” = Samaria = The older
 - Oholibah = “My tent is in her” = Jerusalem = The younger
 - The names seem symbolic
 - God placed His tent (tabernacle/later the temple) in Jerusalem
 - Samaria set up it’s own place of worship.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Their lewdness (23:5-21).**
 - The political and spiritual entanglements are described using explicit sexual imagery.
 - The main point seems to be:
 - Oholah (Samaria) was bad.
 - Oholibah (Jerusalem) was worse.
- **This imagery was not chosen randomly.**
 - There is something about sexual degeneracy that bothers most people.
 - We see/feel how disgusting this is to God.
 - Even those involved are brought face to face with its ugliness.

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- **Their punishment (23:22-35).**
 - **Oholah's punishment is already past**
 - **Oholibah will face the same (see 23:32-34)**
 - **Your sister's cup**
 - **Cup of horror and desolation.**
 - **Gnaw its fragments/tear your breasts (in anguish?)**

Discussion: Ezekiel 20-23

- Their conduct – restated (23:36-44).
 - God restates their sin in more specific, less allegorical language.
- Their punishment – restated (23:45-49)
 - Again a less allegorical restatement of their punishment.
- What about the “righteous men?” (23:45)
 - Is it that those who used Judah for her harlotry seem to be considered righteous by comparison?
 - Or is it more in line with 1 Cor 6?
 - Did the righteous few (prophets and others), by standing strong, “judge” those who fell away?

*You will suffer the penalty for your lewdness
and bear the consequences of your sins of
idolatry.*

*Then you will know that I am the Sovereign
Lord.*