

## Ezekiel 20

- Tonight we transition into a new section of Ezekiel's book, so it's appropriate to begin with a review of the structure of the book
  - We can divide the book into two halves
    - Chapters 1-23 are four long prophecies dealing with the coming destruction of the city of Jerusalem
    - These prophecies are all doom and gloom, for the most part, because they deal with a very serious judgment
    - The section we start tonight in Chapters 20-23 is the fourth and final set of prophecies concerning that destruction
  - Then in Chapter 24 until the end of the book in Chapter 48, we begin the second half of the book
    - The second half of the book consists of 10 prophecies related to the end times and to the coming Kingdom promised to Israel
    - Obviously, you can tell from that topic that the second half of the book is considerably more upbeat
  - More importantly for us, it's the part of Ezekiel that is still future state
    - And for that reason alone, it's really the most fascinating part of the book
    - It includes a look at how God handles Israel's historical enemies in the Kingdom and the future blessings for the nation
    - It especially emphasizes the return of Israel to the land and the return of God's glory to a temple during this period
    - Finally, we get a tour of some of the land featured in the Kingdom
- That's what we have to look forward to in our study of Ezekiel, but first we need to finish the first half of the book in Chapters 20-23
  - So tonight we move into Chapter 20 to begin the final prophecy concerning Jerusalem
    - This section offers additional clarification for why the Lord brings this destruction against Israel

- And it begins with a history lesson of sorts, centered on Israel's evil tendencies and the Lord's righteous response
- The story centers on the wilderness experience of Israel
- And it draws a comparison to what the people will soon experience in Babylon
- But we also find a couple of interesting sub themes
  - First, there is a section anticipating the coming Tribulation on earth for Israel
  - And a promise to bring Israel into the Kingdom that follows immediately afterward
- So let's begin by briefly setting the scene

**Ezek. 20:1** Now in the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me.

**Ezek. 20:2** And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

**Ezek. 20:3** "Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Do you come to inquire of Me? As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will not be inquired of by you.'"

- As I taught on the very first lesson in Ezekiel, the prophet is known for the precise dating of his prophecies
  - These dates are critical in Ezekiel's case, because they prove that He was a trustworthy prophet
    - He speaks about events that were both very near term and very far in the future
    - Therefore, he dates his prophecies precisely to ensure that as the near term events come to pass exactly as predicted, his prophecies will be validated
    - And as the near term prophecies are validated, we will have good reason to trust his long term predictions too
  - In the case of this fourth prophecy, Ezekiel dates his revelation to the summer of 591 BC, which was the seventh year of Zedekiah's reign
    - The man reigned for a total of 11 years, so there are still a few years before the city is destroyed

- It's been eleven months since Ezekiel received his third prophecy, which we began back in Chapter 8
- And like that third prophecy, Ezekiel's fourth prophecy comes as a result of an inquisition of the elders of Israel
  - You may remember that as Israel sat in exile in Babylon, the people remain segregated from the Babylonians
  - They lived in a settlement that they named Tel Aviv
  - They maintained for the most part their lifestyle, including establishing new leaders or elders who ruled the Jewish people
- Periodically, these elders have come to meet with Ezekiel to complain about his prophecies and dispute his predictions
  - Here we see them doing that again
    - In v.1 certain elders of Israel came to *inquire* of the Lord, the text says
    - That makes these men sound very sincere, as if they were just seeking clarity or explanation
  - But the Lord's response tells us that they did not come with honest intentions
    - The Lord tells Ezekiel in vs.2-3 to tell these men they have no right to inquire of Him
    - And based on the context and wording of those verses, it's evident that the Lord is saying that the elders ought not judge Him
    - They have made judgments about God concluding that His ways were wrong or that His plans were evil
    - So in that sense they were inquiring of the Lord
  - So in v.4 and onward, the Lord tells Ezekiel how to respond to the elders' presumptuous judgment, reminding them of their own history

**Ezek. 20:4 "Will you judge them, will you judge them, son of man? Make them know the abominations of their fathers;**

[Ezek. 20:5](#) and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God,

[Ezek. 20:6](#) on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands.

[Ezek. 20:7](#) "I said to them, 'Cast away, each of you, the detestable things of his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.'

[Ezek. 20:8](#) "But they rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me; they did not cast away the detestable things of their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

[Ezek. 20:9](#) "But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made Myself known to them by bringing them out of the land of Egypt.

[Ezek. 20:10](#) "So I took them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness.

[Ezek. 20:11](#) "I gave them My statutes and informed them of My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live.

[Ezek. 20:12](#) "Also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.

[Ezek. 20:13](#) "But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes and they rejected My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; and My sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them.

[Ezek. 20:14](#) "But I acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, before whose sight I had brought them out.

[Ezek. 20:15](#) "Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands,

[Ezek. 20:16](#) because they rejected My ordinances, and as for My statutes, they did not walk in them; they even profaned My sabbaths, for their heart continually went after their idols.

[Ezek. 20:17](#) "Yet My eye spared them rather than destroying them, and I did not cause their annihilation in the wilderness.

- The Lord's response is a story of the history of the abominations of the fathers

- So in other words, the Lord will vindicate Himself before His people by reminding them how they got here
  - And that story begins with how their prior generations of leaders systematically weakened the people of God
  - And that story begins in a very familiar place: the story of the Exodus
  - But we get some interesting details about that story that you don't find in Exodus
- First, the Lord briefly recaps how He established Israel and brought them down to Egypt
  - How He kept His promise to bring them back to a good land
  - But then Israel's leaders caused the people to rebel
- So He responded by barring that first generation from entering the Promised Land
  - Nevertheless, that punishment didn't bring Israel to an end
  - They continued on in a new generation
- We all know that story well (or at least we saw the movie with Charlton Heston) but let's take a second look at a few key details
  - First, notice how the Lord reminds them He initiated the relationship
    - He chose Israel, they didn't choose Him
    - And God extended promises to Israel giving opportunity for them to receive blessing in that relationship
    - So God has dealt graciously with Israel from the start
  - Secondly, the Lord did these things as a matter of His word
    - Notice in v.5, again in v.6 and again in v.15 that the Lord says He swore to Israel
    - That repetition emphasizes that the Lord's decrees were certain and sure, as trustworthy as the word of the Lord
    - No one can indict the Lord's faithfulness to do as He says

- In fact, He swore to bring them blessings but to also bring judgment for their offenses against Him
  - Still, the Lord didn't override His promises of blessing
  - In the end God preserved His people against annihilation in that judgment, therefore God was faithful to His word
- Thirdly, Israel has done nothing but rebel against the Lord's care and instruction
  - And the Lord says that rebellion began even while they were in Egypt
    - Notice in vs.6-8 the Lord recounts how He warned the people not to chase after Egyptian gods while they were staying in that land
    - He's referring to the time they spent under Joseph while living as free people in Goshen
    - During that time, they were warned by God not to be tempted into idol worship
  - But notice in v.8 the Lord says they would not listen to the word of the Lord
    - They didn't forsake Egypt's idols
    - So the Lord poured out His wrath on the people of Israel while they were still in Egypt
  - Now if we go back to the Exodus story, we don't find a specific mention of God judging His people for idolatry while in Egypt
    - Or do we?

**Ex. 1:6** Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation.

**Ex. 1:7** But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them.

**Ex. 1:8** Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

**Ex. 1:9** He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we.

**Ex. 1:10** "Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."

**Ex. 1:11** So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses.

- Israel prospered for years in Egypt under Joseph
- But when Joseph died, a new Pharaoh arose who became jealous of the power of the Jewish people
- So he enslaved them, which began their time in captivity in Egypt
- So what we're learning now from Ezekiel is that this enslavement was not merely the result of changing political winds in Egypt
  - In fact, the Lord testifies here in Ezekiel that He was at work behind the scenes bringing His people into slavery
    - And why did the Lord inflict slavery on His people?
    - First, as an outpouring of His wrath against their sin of idolatry in direct defiance of His word which He gave them
    - But secondly, Israel's captivity had the effect of isolating them from the rest of the Egyptians, causing them to turn away from idolatry
    - So captivity served both as a punishment and as a corrective action to stop Israel from chasing after false gods
  - Which leads us to the final point of observation: in v.9 the Lord says He took this action for the sake of His name among the nations
    - The Lord said He made Himself known to the world through His relationship with Israel
    - The nations of the world came to know of God by observing what He said to Israel and how He dealt with His people
  - So when Israel turned its back on the living God after He had graciously revealed Himself to them and blessed them, God had to act
    - He couldn't let idolatry stand unchallenged, for not only would it destroy His people through whom He intended to bring Messiah
    - But it also profaned the name and reputation of God before the other nations who observed this idolatry

- What would that say about God to the nations watching if He stood by and did nothing to stop Israel's disobedience?
- What do you conclude about a parent who stands idly by while his or her toddler destroys things in a department store?
- So now we have the pattern for this history lesson
  - First, the Lord extends His grace to Israel
    - He established His people out of nothing, out of a man and woman who were barren
    - Then He makes covenants with His people, extending promises of great blessing
    - The Lord initiates and sets the terms of every human relationship
  - Secondly, He gives His people His word, which includes warnings against them going after other gods
    - Idolatry is always the Lord's preeminent concern for His people
    - Because the very purpose for Israel's existence was that they might testify to Who is the Lord
    - Notice at the end of v.7 the Lord says I am the Lord your God, to emphasize that this is His first concern in this relationship
  - But if Israel were allowed to go after other gods, then they would cease being Israel
    - They would become like all other pagan nations...Israel's relationship with Yahweh was their defining characteristic
    - And if Israel disappeared from among the nations, then the Messiah could not come through them as promised
    - And if the Seed didn't come through Abraham's line, then God would be shown to be unfaithful to His word
    - So God's chief concern for His people – His very first command to them – was that they not chase after false gods
- Which leads to point 3: if they rebelled and went after false gods, then He would take harsh action against them
  - The Lord's response would be to set them outside the land for a time

- Specifically, they would see a penalty outside the land to the 3rd and fourth generations
- Not only would the current generation find itself outside the blessings God extended to His people
- But their offspring would also be outside the land
- Then fourthly, this penalty would always accomplish two things: bringing wrath against sin and purging idolatry from the people
  - Each time the nation sinned in idolatry, the Lord would set them outside the land for a time
  - The expelling of God's people always involved an outpouring of wrath such that many Jews died
  - But a remnant survived and it eventually returned to the land free of idolatry – at least for a time
  - So that the cycle is complete...what started with God extending His grace to His people ends with more of the same
  - In mercy the Lord brings His people back after having removed the cancer of idolatry
- Finally, the Lord does these things for the sake of His name, which means He must act in these ways
  - Therefore He cannot be persuaded otherwise
  - The exiles in Babylon should be assured that this pattern would repeat itself in their day just as it happened in prior generations
  - They could not reason nor argue their way out of what was coming
- So that's the pattern, and the Lord has already given one example in the experience of Israel in Egypt
  - But now He gives us a second example of this same pattern

**Ezek. 20:18** "I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers or keep their ordinances or defile yourselves with their idols.

**Ezek. 20:19** 'I am the LORD your God; walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and observe them.

[Ezek. 20:20](#) 'Sanctify My sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.'

[Ezek. 20:21](#) "But the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, nor were they careful to observe My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; they profaned My sabbaths. So I resolved to pour out My wrath on them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness.

[Ezek. 20:22](#) "But I withdrew My hand and acted for the sake of My name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out.

- In v.18 the Lord mentions the children in the wilderness
- That may lead you to think of the second generation of Israel that wandered in the desert, the generation of Joshua and Caleb
- But actually, this refers to the generation of Israel that left Egypt and rebelled in the desert
  - They were the children of those who first rebelled while in Goshen in Egypt
  - So when you read the Exodus story and hear about the rebellion of the children of Israel, remember that their fathers did the same
- And so here we have the same pattern, beginning with the Lord extending His grace to Israel
  - Despite their father's engaging in idolatry while in Egypt, nevertheless the Lord was faithful to bring Israel out of Egypt
  - And He gave them His word again in v.18 warning against idolatry
- And in this case, He goes a step further establishing another covenant with Israel, the Mosaic Covenant
  - In that covenant, the Lord established a sign, the Sabbath day, so that the people might remember they were in covenant with the Living God
    - That covenant gave the nation specific laws and statutes so they could know explicitly how to obey the Lord
    - Their forefathers lacked this specific set of instructions, though they did know not to follow after false gods

- Still, this was another indication of the Lord's grace for Israel that He gave them His law to follow
- But the patterns continues, so we move to step 3 and the children of Israel rebelled also
  - In Exodus and Numbers you'll find a total of ten times that Israel tested the Lord by rebelling against Him while in the wilderness
  - After the tenth time, the Lord's patience was done, and He said He would bring wrath against Israel for idolatry
  - Moses interceded for his people
  - So rather than destroy Israel in the wilderness, the Lord said He acted for the sake of His name by refraining
- Instead, the Lord set a longer plan in motion

**[Ezek. 20:23](#)** "Also I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them among the lands,

**[Ezek. 20:24](#)** because they had not observed My ordinances, but had rejected My statutes and had profaned My sabbaths, and their eyes were on the idols of their fathers.

**[Ezek. 20:25](#)** "I also gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live;

**[Ezek. 20:26](#)** and I pronounced them unclean because of their gifts, in that they caused all their firstborn to pass through the fire so that I might make them desolate, in order that they might know that I am the LORD."

- Step 4, the Lord determines to judge His people
  - We know from Exodus the Lord barred this generation from entering the Promised Land
  - After the rebels died in the wilderness, then God's wrath was spent and restoration could begin
- But that judgment continued on for generations to come
  - He says He gave Israel statutes that were not good
  - In other words, the Lord allowed Israel to fall prey to the world's statutes as they engaged in pagan idolatry

- Just as the Lord allowed a Pharaoh to imprison His people in Egypt, so the Lord used the Canaanites to discipline His people
- Their statues were not good and did not allow Israel to live, He says, in contrast to God's law which would have made Israel to prosper
  - Among the pagans practices Israel adopted was child sacrifice and sorcery
  - Practices like these caused death, not life
  - So the Lord allowed the worst of these cultures to come upon Israel as a measure of discipline against them
- So here's the pattern again: God's grace, His revelation, Israel's disobedience, God's judgment, and God's restoration...all for the sake of the name of the Lord
  - Israel has already experienced two circumstances where the nation went through this entire pattern from start to finish
    - But because those prior experiences didn't purge idolatry from the people, they must experience the pattern a third time
    - And now Ezekiel and the exiles were in the middle of that pattern, experiencing judgment for the third time
    - And they were questioning God over why things must be
  - But the Lord points the elders to the history of these prior two examples of this pattern
    - They should have clearly seen the parallels to their own generation as they repeated their fathers' sin of idolatry
    - They should have recognized the pattern for themselves, because it was plain as day
    - And they certainly should have appreciated how their own sin contributed to their situation
    - So the elders had no reason to inquire of God or challenge Him
  - But the judgment for this third turn of the wheel would be much more severe
    - And it was lasting much longer than the previous two occasions

- It started even before the nation entered into the land under Joshua
- And it was continuing now with the Babylonian captivity
- But eventually it must come to its end and lead to restoration in the land
  - So where is step 5 in this pattern for our Babylonian exiles? When do they experience restoration and a return of God's grace?
    - We might assume that their restoration occurred when the exiles were allowed to return to Israel after 70 years in Babylon
    - And certainly, that return was a kind of restoration
  - But it was not the full and complete restoration to finish the pattern
    - In fact, we're still waiting for the end of this third pattern today, for Israel's complete restoration from judgment
    - How do we know that her restoration has not yet come?
    - How do we know that the return of the exiles or even the return of Jews in 1948 isn't that restoration?
- First, Israel's presence in her land has waxed and waned over the centuries and millennia since Ezekiel's prophecies
  - But these partial and temporary occupations of the land don't qualify as the restoration required by our pattern
    - Remember, this third cycle must mirror the details of the prior two examples to fit the pattern that God outlined in this chapter
    - And in the earlier examples, Israel has always seen two things accompany their full restoration from judgment during this cycle
  - First, they were always restored as a complete people, as a whole nation with no one missing
    - Remnants didn't return; only the entire nation returned
    - For example, in the first example the entire nation that left Egypt entered into the wilderness together...no one stayed in Egypt
    - And the generation that left the wilderness all entered into the Promised Land together (to include the tribes that chose to settle on the east side of the Jordan)

- No one remained wandering in the desert
- So full restoration depends on all Israel being restored together
- Secondly, the people of Israel were always accompanied by the glory of the Lord, Who tabernacled among the people
  - For example, when the generation that departed Egypt and entered the wilderness were accompanied by the glory of the Lord as a pillar of fire and cloud
  - And the generation of Israel that left the wilderness and entered the Promised Land was accompanied by the glory of the Lord in the tabernacle
  - So full restoration must include the glory of the Lord dwelling among His people Israel
- So where does Israel stand on these two measures for our third turn of the wheel of judgment?
  - First, the whole of Israel has yet to return to her land
    - When the exiles returned from Babylon, only a small remnant accompanied Zerubbabel and Ezra to the land
    - And over the centuries that followed, a majority of Jews have remained outside the land
  - Even today as the modern state of Israel has re-emerged on the world scene, only about half of all living Jews live in the land
    - So even after 2,500 years, we're still waiting for the full restoration of Israel that's required
    - That gives us a sense of how long this judgment was intended to last
  - Secondly, the glory of the Lord has never returned to dwell among His people Israel
    - The glory of the Lord first departed from the temple shortly before the Babylonians conquered the city
    - That departure was a sign to the people that the judgment was coming, as Ezekiel explained

- Following the exiles return to the land, the glory of the Lord never resided in Zerubbabel's temple nor even in Herod's temple
  - Nor has it ever appeared in Israel since
  - And until it returns, full restoration hasn't happened and the third turn of this pattern is still underway
- So when does this final example of the pattern come to a complete end?
  - Daniel, who was a contemporary of Ezekiel, told Israel that this judgment would last many, many generations
    - In fact, Daniel said it wouldn't complete until the Messiah came to set up His Kingdom on earth
    - So the restoration that will finish this third cycle is the ultimate restoration of Israel in the Kingdom
  - So while the first two examples lasted only 3-4 generations, the third example is lasting thousands of years
    - And just as the judgment began with far greater devastation as the Babylonian army conquers Judah three times...
    - So will it also end in a far more dramatic fashion as well...

**Ezek. 20:27** "Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed Me by acting treacherously against Me."

**Ezek. 20:28** "When I had brought them into the land which I swore to give to them, then they saw every high hill and every leafy tree, and they offered there their sacrifices and there they presented the provocation of their offering. There also they made their soothing aroma and there they poured out their drink offerings."

**Ezek. 20:29** "Then I said to them, 'What is the high place to which you go?' So its name is called Bamah to this day."

**Ezek. 20:30** "Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and play the harlot after their detestable things?"

**Ezek. 20:31** "When you offer your gifts, when you cause your sons to pass through the fire, you are defiling yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will not be inquired of by you."

[Ezek. 20:32](#) "What comes into your mind will not come about, when you say: 'We will be like the nations, like the tribes of the lands, serving wood and stone.'

[Ezek. 20:33](#) "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

[Ezek. 20:34](#) "I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

[Ezek. 20:35](#) and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

[Ezek. 20:36](#) "As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you," declares the Lord GOD.

[Ezek. 20:37](#) "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

[Ezek. 20:38](#) and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

- Now Ezekiel reveals how the story ends for our third example
  - And the Lord begins by reminding the exiles how their forefathers also began by receiving the Lord's grace
    - He brought them into the land and gave them the best of it
    - But as they looked around, all they saw were high places to begin building altars to false gods
    - They commenced worshipping the Canaanite gods, offering sacrifices and offerings on these high places
  - The Lord says He confronted the people through the prophets, accusing them of worshipping at Bamah in v.29
    - The Lord is making a pun to mock the people
    - The word Bamah means high place but it also means literally "go where"
    - So as the people said to themselves let's go worship at Bamah, the Lord was asking where are you going?
    - The answer was they were going nowhere...nowhere of any spiritual meaning or value

- In vs.30-31 He reminds them of their worst behaviors, including child sacrifice
  - And then He says He will not be inquired or found by Israel's efforts to seek Him in idolatry
  - Instead, He will find them in His own way
  - And that turn toward restoration begins in v.32
- There will come a day in the future when Israel's mind will no longer desire to be like all the other nations
  - That was the heart of their problem
    - They desired to follow after what they saw around them in the world rather than be guided by God's word
    - They wanted kings, not a theocracy
    - They wanted high places dotting the landscape, not one meager tabernacle in the desert
  - They desired to worship the idols of the nations around them because they liked the way idol worship was done
    - Musical merriment, decadent feasts, dangerous rituals, and sexual orgies were a lot more exciting than prayer and sacrifice in a temple
    - But in a future day, they won't have those desires anymore the Lord says
  - And paradoxically, the nation's final restoration will begin with a period of great wrath
    - In v.34 the Lord promises to regather the nation into her land
    - This is the restoration we're waiting for, a complete gathering of all Jews worldwide
  - Once again, it's not a partial gathering...this prophecy will only be true once all Israel is present in the land
    - Certainly, we could say that regathering has begun
    - But it's still ongoing so we're fast approaching the end of these things

- After 2,500 years, we're now seeing these things beginning to come to pass
- But this regathering is initially for a period of judgment to complete the process of purging Israel of rebellion and idolatry
  - They are gathered by the mighty arm of God but with wrath poured out, He says in v.34
    - And once they have entered back into their land, the Lord will enter into the final judgment for His people "face to face"
    - That phrase indicates a very personal reckoning, a dispute that is between Israel and God, which refers to their violations of the covenant
  - In fact, in vs.36-37 the Lord says this is a personal accounting similar to what the prior generation in the desert faced
    - Here's further evidence that what's coming in this worldwide gathering is part of the earlier pattern
    - It will be like God gathering His people in the wilderness for judgment
    - In the case of the wilderness wanderings, the Lord poured out judgment in the form of a 40-year sentence of death for that generation
    - But the result of that judgment was that a new generation would enter the Promised Land
  - Well, in a similar sense, that's what God intends to do again in this future judgment
    - He promises to enter into judgment with a regathered Israel for the purpose of bringing them back into the bond of the covenant (v.37)
    - That covenant is the covenant of Law, the Old Covenant, which is the agreement that brought about the judgment in the first place
    - Because Israel violated that covenant, they are now suffering judgment
    - Yet because of this encounter in the wilderness, they will return to obedience

- How will this happen? The same way it happened before according to the pattern
  - In past examples, the rebels perished and a restored generation moved ahead without idols
    - Similarly, the Lord says in v.38 that He will purge the rebels, those who are idolators and those who disobey the covenant of Law
    - He will bring them out of their land where they reside today, but they will not enter into the land of Israel
  - Take note of that detail...remember, we said that a true restoration according to the pattern must mean that all Israel is in their land
    - But the Lord says no rebels will be allowed into the land
    - So how can we have all Israel in the land for a restoration if rebels aren't allowed to enter?
    - Once again, the answer is found in the pattern: the rebels always perish outside
  - And in this case, the rebels of Israel are removed from the lands where they are scattered but they cease to exist since they don't go into the Kingdom
    - Thus, the Lord says, Israel will know that I am the Lord
    - When all Israel is in the land and no rebels exist among Israel, then we can truly say that Israel will know the Lord
    - That will be the outcome of this final pattern of judgment and restoration
- Finally, we end with a scene of that coming restoration...a taste of what we will learn much more about in coming chapters

**Ezek. 20:39** "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord GOD, "Go, serve everyone his idols; but later you will surely listen to Me, and My holy name you will profane no longer with your gifts and with your idols.

**Ezek. 20:40** "For on My holy mountain, on the high mountain of Israel," declares the Lord GOD, "there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve Me in the land; there I will accept them and there I will seek your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your holy things.

[Ezek. 20:41](#) "As a soothing aroma I will accept you when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered; and I will prove Myself holy among you in the sight of the nations.

[Ezek. 20:42](#) "And you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the land which I swore to give to your forefathers.

[Ezek. 20:43](#) "There you will remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for all the evil things that you have done.

[Ezek. 20:44](#) "Then you will know that I am the LORD when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your evil ways or according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD."

- Dismissively, the Lord says O Israel go serve your idols for now because it won't last forever
  - In that time of future restoration when all Israel enters the Kingdom free of rebels and idolators, they will no longer give idols gifts
    - Never again will the nation profane the land in that way
    - Instead, in the Kingdom that is coming for Israel, a high mountain will dominate the landscape of the land
    - No more high places dotted with false altars...just one giant mountain with the temple of God on top
  - And in that day, the whole house of Israel – every man, woman and child – will worship the true God in one voice
    - They will all serve the Lord and will devote all the best they have to Him in thanks
    - An Israel gathered and worshipping in this way, in the land they were promised in the sight of other nations, will be for the sake of the Lord's name
    - Remember, in past generations Israel behavior put the Lord's name to shame before other nations
    - But in the Kingdom, their unified worship and the fulfillment of all that God has promised will testify to the glory of the Lord's name

- But interestingly, the Lord adds that the people of Israel will have a lasting memory of how they disobeyed and dishonored the Lord in prior generations
  - They will loathe themselves in their own sight He says
  - The phrase indicates that memories of some kind persist into eternity to help give us perspective and appreciation of God's grace
  - And this makes sense, for how much more would the Kingdom Israel praise the Lord for His mercy and grace and love knowing their past history
  - But for the same reason, they loathe their past
- Notice the final verse, v.44, the Lord adds that the people of Israel will finally know He is the Lord
  - The judgment that began in the wilderness, continues into the Babylonian captivity, and peaks in a coming time of intense judgment, has a good outcome
  - It causes Israel to come to saving faith and a recognition of the Lord's goodness and grace, that He didn't deal with them according to their evil ways
  - Oh that He would do the same for all of us