

Ezekiel – Apostacy & Restoration

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Chapter twenty of the Book of Ezekiel starts a new section of the Book, “**The Final Condemnation of Israel**”. Chapter twenty starts out reviewing the history of Israel’s apostacy and ends by looking to the restoration after the Second Advent. Ezekiel reviews Israel’s apostacy in contrast to YHWH’s continuous efforts to teach Israel his Way. **YHWH affirms that he will unequivocally accomplish his purpose in spite of Israel’s apostacy.** (Ez20:31-32,8b-9a,41b-43)

Those Who Refuse to Hear: It is the summer of 591BC: Ezekiel has been active for about two years – his message is well known. A group of “elders” comes to Ezekiel probably representing **the majority of the exiles who were NOT responding to Ezekiel’s call to repentance** (Ez20:1-5a). God provides Ezekiel with a scathing oracle of condemnation for the continued apostacy of Israel (Ez20:5b-8a).

Apostacy From Egypt to Moab:

Exodus		Numbers	
5:21	you have made us stink in the sight of Pharaoh	11:1-15	Oh that we had meat to eat!
6:9	the people of Israel ... did not listen to Moses	11:33	the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people
14:11-12	Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians	13:25-33	We are not able to go up against the people
15:23-24	the people grumbled ... “What shall we drink?”	14:1-10	Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt
16:2-3	Would that we had died ... in the land of Egypt	14:39-45	We will go up to the place that the LORD has promised
16:19-20	they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it	16:1-35	all in the congregation are holy, every one of them
16:27-29	How long will you refuse to keep my commandments	16:41-50	You have killed the people of the LORD
17:2-7	Why do you test the LORD?	20:2-13	they assembled themselves together against Moses
20:18-21	do not let God speak to us, lest we die	21:4-9	you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness
32:1-35	Up, make us gods who shall go before us.	25:1-9	the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab
		31:12-17	Have you let all the women live?

God’s Mercy and Beneficence: YHWH reminds the people of his **mercy in redeeming Israel from slavery in Egypt** and his **beneficence in teaching them the Way to life** (Ez20:8b-12). YHWH briefly reviews the apostacy of the Exodus Generation (Ez20:13-17) and the Wilderness Generation (Ez20:18-22). YHWH warns that **apostacy leads to application of the Covenant Curses** (Ez20:23-24, Lv26:33,38, Dt28:64-68).

Statutes and mish^epatim: Verse 25 has been historically one of the most controversial verses in all the Bible: “Moreover, I gave them **statutes that were not good** and **[mish^epatim] by which they could not have life**”. Beginning in the second century this verse has been used in polemic against the Jews and against “Judaizers” to argue that the teaching of God contained in the Writings of Moses is evil and NOT to be followed by “Christians”. **There is no word in English to which “mish^epatim” can be translated.** With respect to God’s teaching, it means the wisdom, understanding, and discernment which can only be attained by living by the Way of God (Is26:7-9, Ps103:6-9, 36:5-6, 19:7-11).

The Eight Occurrences: The words “statutes” and “mish^epatim” occur in juxtaposition eight times (Ez20:11,13,16,18, 19,21,24,25). In six of these verses, “**statutes**” is translated from “**huqqah**”, in two verses, 18 and 25, it is translated from “**hoq**”. **In the six verses**, the phrase מִשְׁפָּטַי - mish^epatay, “**mish^epatim of me**”, is used: **the statutes and mish^epatim are from God**. It is clear and specific in verse 18 that the “**hoq**” and the “**mish^epatim**” are NOT from God – they are the way of the world. **This is the key to verse 25.** The Masoretic Text of verse 25 is ambiguous, but given the context, a “**helper word**” clarifies the translation: “**Moreover I gave them [over to] statutes not good and mish^epatim not live by them**” (see the NIV translation).

Back to the Exiles: After reminding the “elders” about the ongoing apostacy of Israel in the Promised Land (Ez20:27-29), God again scathingly tells them that **their attitude is wrong and he will NOT respond to their queries** (Ez20:30-31). YHWH then tells them that **he will unequivocally accomplish his purpose**, but those who “**refuse to hear**” can go ahead and worship their idols and suffer the consequences (Ez20:33,39).

The Restoration: YHWH finally gives Ezekiel two oracles: **the Second Exodus** (Ez20:34-38); **the New Israel** (Ez20:40-44). After the Second Advent, God will call people from the four corners of the earth to migrate to the Promised Land and form a New Israel. The migration will be arduous, like the original Exodus. God calls it “**the wilderness of the peoples**”, alluding to earlier prophecies (Hs2:14-15, 12:9, 13:4, Jr31:2). God is explicit that not everyone who starts out on the journey will make it (Ez20:38, 34:20-22, Mt22:14). **The key to participation in the New Israel is repentance – conversion** (Ez20:43).

The PowerPoint slides for this presentation are available at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations>

The Sinai Covenant: created the Nation of Ancient Israel

"obey my voice, keep my covenant, be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation"
"you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples" (Exodus 19:5-6)

Israel's Role: to be an example nation to teach the Way of God to all nations

Role of the Nation of Israel

First Advent

Failure:
covenant
violation

Second Advent

"Spiritual Israel"

The New Testament Church:

- Old Covenant ends; New Covenant begins
- those called enter into the New Covenant through the right of Baptism
- this makes available the "better promise" – eternal life
- indwelling of the Holy Spirit is made available at Baptism so that it is possible to live by the Way of God

- the **Role of Israel** passes to the Church:
"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

(1 Peter 2:9)

Resurrection

People Called:

"He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." (Isaiah 11:12)

Second Exodus

The Family of God:

True Worshipers, since Abel, granted the gift of eternal life

Teach the
Way of God

Teach the
Way of God

Salvation to All Humanity:

- the gospel goes out to all the world
- conversion and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit made available to all

Fulfill the Role of Israel

New Israel:

- coterminous with the Church at the start of the millennium
- a physical nation in which all individuals are called to conversion