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"For The Sake Of His Glorious Name"
Ezekiel 20

A pastor answered his phone at home only to hear the woman's voice requesting,
 "Six cases of vodka to my house please."

The pastor recognized the voice as one of his parishioners, and gently replied, "I'm your pastor."

He expected an apology from the woman for what she was doing, and for dialing the wrong number.

Instead, she retorted almost angrily, "What are you doing at the liquor store?"

Certainly, there is a double standard portrayed here in this caller, but also an attitude which is very prominent in the thinking of our culture.

"I can do basically what I want. There are really no wrongs. I have the freedom to live the life-style I please."

When it comes to morality, people don't want to change their behavior but expect the government to provide money to find some kind of cure for their disease. We never see the consequence of say illicit sexual relationships on television programs. We hear of drugs that may help STD's but there is no indication that abstinence is the way for such to not happen.

In fact the public has been so intimidated by those who want to live immoral life-styles along with the direct help of the media, the popular response is to accept such immoral life-styles as being okay. Even churches get involved in accepting the union of those from the same sex. I heard of a group this week that may accept the union of those from the same sex even performing the ceremony to make that happen.

People want to do what they want without any consequence.

To make this even more palatable, people like a god who goes along with their life-style. The politically correct thinking is to have a life where everyone "co-exists," (you have probably seen that bumper sticker – that puts together all the different religions). So everyone is going to heaven regardless of what one believes.

It's been called hot-tube religion. People like a church setting where they are made to feel good about themselves, and what they are doing is fine. It is more like a country-club than a place where lives are changed by the power of the living biblical God.

However, the problem comes when there is trouble, pain, evil, and death. The hot tube religion has to disassociate itself from these things, and to deny that He has anything to do with them. He is a god who means well, but cannot intervene for his children. God is all good with no justice or judgment, resulting in a fatalistic or pessimistic attitude. Some on the other hand blame a god when troubles come but have never even given him a serious thought of consideration before that time.

What's happening in our culture today is no different from the time of Ezekiel around 590 B. C. as Ezekiel is in Babylonian Captivity with those taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar.

Having established His covenant with Abraham, the Biblical God developed the nation of Israel, but the nation had fallen away from the true and living God, and had gone after false gods. The nation had started to live as she pleased, thinking that there were no consequences for her actions. The nation would not listen to the prophets He sent to cause the people to repent of their sin and turn to the Lord.

God got Israel's attention when He took the northern kingdom captive in 722 B. C. by the Assyrians. He was telling the nation that to live as one pleases in idolatry and immorality brings God's judgment. There are consequences to one's actions before HIM.

Then 136 years later God got the southern kingdom's attention when He let Nebuchadnezzar take His people captive and destroy His temple and city of Jerusalem. Three deportations of Israel were made by Nebuchadnezzar, 586 B.C., 606 B. C, and 586 B. C.

God was telling His people that living in a Hot Tube Religion will experience consequences for their disobedience to God in breaking His laws and directions.

Chapter 19 of Ezekiel sets forth Judah, the southern kingdom, as the lioness, and the two kings (lions), Jehohaz and Jehoiachin, are taken captive – Jehohaz was taken captive to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco (609 B. C. _ II Kings 23:33-34), and Jehoiachin was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon (596 B.C. – II Kings 24:15). This was the consequence for their disobedience to the Lord.

Now in our text for today, Ezekiel 20, some elders came to Ezekiel inquiring of him. We are not told what they asked Ezekiel, but it must have been something to do with what was happening to those already in Babylonian Captivity because of their rebellious life-style – living as they pleased in a hot tube religion.

The false prophets had said that there would be peace and a speedy restoration. But that hadn't happened.

The people still in Jerusalem had rejected God's truth. The people now in captivity had rejected God's truth. Still they didn't think God was being fair with them. They wanted to hear what would please them without any change of behavior. They wanted hot tube religion – a good God who approved of what they did . They wanted a God of mercy and love, but not a God of justice and judgment.

To straighten out their thinking about who the biblical God really was, God used Ezekiel to give the people in Babylonian Captivity a brief history of God's dealings with the nation of Israel

I. God's brief history lesson for Israel from their past to their present (Ezekiel 20:1-32).

1. God's choice of Israel & life in Egypt (20:5-9).

Ezekiel reminded Israel that even though He chose Israel to be His own still they rebelled against Him in getting involved in the idols of Egypt. But for the "**sake of His name**" (20:9) in the sight of all the other nations, the LORD delivered them out of Egypt. God demonstrated His love and grace to Israel.

2. God's working with His people on the journey from Egypt to Kadeshbarnea (20:10-17).

Even though God gave Israel His statutes and ordinances and the sabbath as a sign that the nation was the biblical God's unique people in a relationship with Him. Even though Israel rebelled against the LORD at this time, God spared His people for the "**sake of His name**" (20:16). He showed Israel His grace and forgiveness.

3. God's relationship to His people in the wilderness (20:18-26).

Israel followed the pattern in the wilderness that they had before rejecting God's faithfulness in His statutes and ordinances along with the sabbath. Still for the "**sake of His name**" (20:22), God did not destroy His people but showed them His grace and mercy,

4. God's involvement with His people in Canaan, the land He promised them (20:27-29).

Even after God brought Israel into the promised land (Canaan), the nation eventually turned to other gods offering their sacrifices to them.

5. God's relationship with the people in Ezekiel's day (20:30-32).

The people of Israel had not changed in their attitude toward God. They became involved in idolatry. Their idolatry would be God's consequence of judgment.

God's actions can not be judged by the people as unfair and not suited for them. They would not become like the other nations involved in idolatry without any consequences.

Still God had a bright future for His people Israel. In the midst of judgment God offered His HOPE to them.

II. God's bright future for His people Israel (Ezekiel 20:33-44).

God used Ezekiel to foretell to Israel in captivity with Him around 590 B.C. that God had incredible things in store for this nation in His time through His love and grace.

1. Christ will bring His judgment with His grace of cleansing and restoration (20:33-38).

These verses are not referring to the time when Israel would return from captivity under Cyrus in 536 B.C. Rather these verses are looking down through history to the end of the great tribulation time at the time of Christ's return when Israel will be judged (20:37 – pass under the rod – of God's judgment) and there will be a purifying of the nation (cf. Zechariah 12:10-13), and Israel will be restored to her land (cf Romans 11:25-27).

2. Christ will bring His people back into their land promised to them in Abraham (20:39-44 – cf forefathers – 20:42).

Cleansed of their rebellion, Israel back in their land will no longer profane God's **holy name**.

Israel will dwell in Jerusalem, Mt Zion, and they will serve the Lord. Israel will be a soothing aroma to the Lord – referring to the millennial time when Christ will rule from Jerusalem over the entire world. They will loathe, or dislike their former behavior. They will realize how sinful they were and now the necessity to trust and keep trusting in the LORD and do His will at all times.

At that time, Israel will know that God is God. He is the LORD, the self-existent redemptive God. This will be truly the fulfillment of the NEW COVENANT (bond of the covenant – 20:37) to Israel as foretold by Jeremiah would take place when Christ returned to set up His millennial reign on earth (cf. Jeremiah 31:27-34).

That NEW COVENANT says that God would put His law within them and on their heart He would write it; and He would be their God and they would be His people. God would forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

Then, Israel would know that God has done all of this for them **"for MY NAME'S SAKE"** (20:44). **Yes, for the sake of HIS NAME.**

As Israel wanted to hear that there were no consequences for their behavior – as they wanted a God who approved of their actions, making them feel good, yes, a hot tube religion, God said that was impossible.

Why was that impossible? The biblical God's name was at stake as God reminded Israel of that in this chapter 4 times.

Ezekiel 20:9 – For the sake of My Name.

Ezekiel 20:14 – For the sake of My Name.

Ezekiel 20:22 – For the sake of My Name.

Ezekiel 20:44 – For My Name's sake.

Why was God's name at stake as He dealt with His people Israel who had gone into idolatry and immorality, when they were supposed to represent the LORD.

III. God's teaching about His Name.

1. God's name represents His holiness.

Note Ezekiel 20:39 - My Holy Name.

Then the text reads, "You will profane no longer."

20:9 – That it (my name) will not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom you have lived.

20:29 – That it (my name) should not be profaned in the sight of the nations in who sight I had brought them out.

Profane means to violate or desecrate.

God's holy name can not be violated or desecrated. That's is God's holiness is transcendent moral purity. His holiness knows no sin and tempts no one to sin.

God chose Israel to represent Him, to be His witness to the other nations of His holiness. He told Israel to be holy for I am holy (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7). Becoming involved in the other idolatry and immorality of the other nations,

God knew that His HOLY NAME would be desecrated in the sight of the other nations whom He had given Israel victory over (Ezekiel 20:22). In Ezekiel 36:20 God tells Israel that the other nations are saying because of Israel's behavior that their God is no different from the gods of the heathen.

What's at stake here in God's holiness is His holy reputation before Israel and before the pagan nations. Since God's very reputation was being desecrated by Israel, God had to bring His judgment upon the people.

The desecrating of God's holy name will always eventually bring God's judgment upon the people who have disobeyed Him.

Disobeying God always has consequences. Those who don't repent of their sin will face God's judgment.

This leads to mocking sin. Fools mock at sin. That is a fool jokes about **sin**, sneers **at sin**, excuses **sin**, and blame others for his **sin**.

That is what was happening in Israel's day. They were mocking sin.

Times have not changed. Just listen to the nightly comedians or those conditioning us through Hollywood and television. There is no concept that some day a person will have to give an account to God for deeds done in this life.

Yes, God will judge the sinner who rejects Him. It's called the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20:11-15.

2. God's name represents His integrity – His trustworthiness – His faithfulness.

God never goes back on HIS WORD.

As Israel was disobeying the Lord, God had not gone back on His covenant with Abraham that He had tied Himself into Israel in spite of how they responded to Him. Eventually they would get the land promised to Abraham in Genesis 15:18.

That's why we pointed out from Ezekiel 20:42 that the text stated that God would bring Israel into the land of Israel, into the land which He swore to give to Israel's forefathers.

Then in Ezekiel 32:37, God told Israel that he would bring the nation "into the bond of the covenant." This, as we pointed out, refers to the New Covenant from Jeremiah 31, which Christ will establish with Israel at the beginning of His millennial kingdom on earth.

The Abrahamic Covenant was made with Abraham some 1400 years before the time of Ezekiel. The Covenant was still in alive and well. The New Covenant was an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant in the blessing aspect of the Covenant with Abraham. In fact the Abrahamic Covenant was still alive and well at the announcement to Mary that she would be the bearer of the Savior of the world. Mary in her magnificat praised the LORD that the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled (Luke 1:55). Of course Christ would be the one to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant to Israel, which is yet future from Ezekiel's day as indicated in Ezekiel 20:39-44). But today, as Galatians tells us, through faith in Christ we are spiritually part of the Abrahamic Covenant by being in the church of Jesus Christ (Galatians 3).

God's name always represents His integrity, His trustworthiness, His faithfulness. His Word is always dependable.

How great to be reminded of that as we live in this world which is rocking and rolling with the ideas of men a part from the true and living God revealed in Jesus Christ. Yes, and when things are rocking and rolling in our lives as well, we can trust the Lord's promises and presence to be there for us and give us the wisdom and direction we need as we wait upon HIM.

3. God's name represents His mercy and grace – His eternal love for Israel and us.

This is what the atheists miss who charge God in the Old Testament as just being One who is reckless and irresponsible using people as He pleases. He has no heart. Of course such is far from the truth, as God in His justice, His holiness, is also a God of mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

That's why He told Israel in Ezekiel 18 that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Rather, God delights in people turning from their wickedness to HIM, which brings them His life. In fact our Lord was called, Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). Jesus taught that the angels rejoice in heaven over one sinner who repents, or turns to HIM!!

In fact this entire chapter of Ezekiel 20 in recording how God had to deal in judgment with Israel when they turned to other gods also, although not written in the text per se, there is God's grace, mercy, His love. For when Israel turned to Him in their history, God was quick to come to their aid with His forgiveness and grace.

God is more ready to forgive sinners, than sinners are ready to come to Him for forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ today. God is more ready to show mercy than to bring judgment. Like Adam, people run from God because of their sin. That's what Israel did. People do the same today. As followers of Christ, we can do the same. We run from God, or we get angry with God, or think that God doesn't care. That's why the Scripture exhorts us to keep short accounts with the Lord and with others – to not let the sun go down on our wrath (Ephesians 4:26).

That's why Romans tells us that "God proved His love toward us, for while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God's grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness is always based upon His person, His holy character.

Isaiah 43:25 is a great reminder of this reality. Listen to God speaking.

"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for my own sake – And I will not remember your sins."

That is total mercy, total grace, and total love.

4. God's name tells us He is most longsuffering.

God used Ezekiel to give Israel in captivity 1400 years of their history. In fact in Ezekiel 18, God reminded Israel that He was their Creator. Still, in spite of their disobedience to God, He did not reject His people who He selected to represent Him in the Old Testament times and through whom came the Savior. He certainly disciplined them and tried to bring His people back in fellowship with Himself.

God is still working with Israel today although according to Romans 11, the nation is set aside for a time as God is now working directly with the church. Yet Israel still has a future. Even though now a recognized state and under a lot of duress, the nation will turn to the Lord when He comes at the end of the tribulation time and be part of Christ's millennial reign on earth as mentioned in our text in Ezekiel 20:38-44.

If we think that God is not longsuffering, we need to take a look at God's dealing with Israel. That's why God told Israel that He was slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness. (Numbers 14:18).

We could also ask that question about the church as to whether or not God is longsuffering with each of us? Of course the answer is, "YES." If it weren't for His mercies we would be consumed.

"The LORD is compassionate and gracious, and slow to anger" (Psalm 103:8).

"The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger" (Psalm 145:8).

Why was God's name at stake in the life of Israel? Why is God's name at stake in our lives who claim to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior?

God's name represents His Holiness.

God's name represents His Integrity.

God's name represents His Mercy, Grace, Love, and Forgiveness.

God's name represents His longsuffering.

But there are some questions for each of us today from considering this passage in Ezekiel 20.

IV. Questions for each of us to answer.

1. Have I responded to God's mercy, grace, and love, His forgiveness?

****God told Israel in Ezekiel 18:30-32.**

"Repent, and turn from your transgressions . . . repent and live."

****Today, Jesus Christ has come.**

Paul told the Romans, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" (2:4).

Seeing one is under God's judgment because of his sin and disobedience against God, can only lead one to see that Jesus is the ONE who has paid the price for one's sin which is death, was buried and rose again to provide him or her His forgiveness and eternal life.

Indeed, in Christ, God has shown us HIS eternal mercy.

"Whom (referring to Christ) God displayed publicly as a propitiation (satisfaction, the mercy seat it could mean) in His blood through faith" (Romans 3:25).

Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament mercy seat and He is now the believer's mercy. Jesus has come to provide us His salvation. His death, burial and bodily resurrection have satisfied God's wrath. We only have to accept Jesus to receive the eternal mercy, forgiveness, and life Christ has won for us.

Mercy there was great, and grace was free, pardon there was multiplied to me. There my burden soul found liberty at Calvary.

"There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus is the only name through which we find God's salvation through faith in the LORD.

Jesus Christ is for the sake of God's glorious name.

I trust today you know what it means in your life to experience by faith in Jesus Christ His mercy provided for you in HIM.

2. As believers do we praise the LORD for His holiness, mercy and longsuffering, His patience with us?

The Psalmist penned: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, **but to your name give glory**, because of your lovingkindness, because of your truth (Psalm 115:1).

IT'S GOD'S GLORIOUS NAME THAT WE PRAISE!!

--A HOLY NAME

--A NAME OF INTEGRITY

--A NAME OF MERCY

--A LONGSUFFERING NAME

"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting (Psalm 118:1).

Read Psalm 136 sometime. The whole Psalm is praise to the LORD for His lovingkindness, God's hesed, His redemptive Love that is everlasting. This Psalm was probably used antiphonally in the temple worship. It was the Great Hallel recited at the Passover meal.

3. As believers are we letting God's holiness, His integrity, His mercy, and longsuffering come through our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit?

It's interesting to note that one of the fruit of the Spirit is patience or longsuffering, and love suffers long.

**Are we longsuffering –
In our personal lives with others?
In our relationships as husbands and wives?
With our children?**

May we, in our personal and family relationships, follow the admonition of the James, "To be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger" (James 1:19). And "a gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

In our church relationships?

Dr. Harry Ironside told of a young man who became impatient in a church business meeting because the meeting was not going his way. He stood up and disrupted the meeting by saying, "I want my rights. I want my rights."

An elderly man much more mature in his walk with the Lord responded, "Did I hear our young friend say he wanted his rights? If he received his rights, he would be judged and sent to hell. Jesus Christ went to the cross to die for his 'wrongs' to make him right."

Hearing that the younger man apologized for action out of impatience rather than love, and the meeting continued.

Along with seeking to be longsuffering in the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

4. As believers are we open to the Lord's loving discipline? (Hebrews 12:7-11).

Israel was certainly disciplined by the Lord for her direct disobedience to the Lord, for the nation would not repent of her sin. Sometimes God's discipline is preventative to keep us from disobeying Him. Other times God has to discipline is corrective in helping us work through some challenge that comes our way, so our lives yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

For the unbeliever, Whitfield used to say that God puts thorns in his bed to awaken that person from the sleep of spiritual death, to make one rise to seek God's mercy.

For the believer, God is seeking to conform us to the image of His Son, to insure that we continue in His mercy to submit to Him as Lord of our lives – so we continue living for the GLORIOUS NAME OF OUR GOD.

J. I. Packer calls this "kindly discipline" in which God's judgment, His severity touches us for a moment to keep us from having to bear the full brunt of His severity, and to keep us on the path of His mercy and goodness.

In the full revelation of the Bible, over Ezekiel 20 could be put the sign of the cross of Christ.

For at the cross, the holy integrity of God's judgment of sin takes place, and out of that comes God's mercy and longsuffering for us – all wrapped up in Jesus Christ's life, death, burial, and bodily resurrection for us to provide us His forgiveness and eternal life.

Through faith in the Lord, God leads us in the paths of righteousness for the sake of HIS GLORIOUS NAME, giving us the privilege to represent the greatest Name on earth, the name of Jesus, who provides us eternal salvation through faith in HIM!!

Knowing we represent the greatest NAME in all heaven and earth should cause us to serve the Lord with gladness, with enthusiasm doing all in the NAME of the LORD Jesus (Colossians 3:17).

Two masons were working on a building. The one man was asked what he was doing and he replied, "Just piling one stone on top of another until the job is done." The other mason was asked what he was doing, and he replied, "I'm not just building a stone wall, I'm building a cathedral."

We have the awesome privilege to represent the awesome life-changing glorious NAME of Jesus Christ this week. May we represent His NAME in His humility yet in His victorious power for His glory!!