

Ezekiel 19-20 • The end of an era

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

We are here to get into the Word and find out a little bit more about what the book of Ezekiel is all about. So, open your Bible there, in the Old Testament, to Ezekiel. We go through the Old Testament here on Wednesday evenings, going through the New Testament on Sunday morning. And some of these Old Testament books can be really challenging to kind of figure out.

If you've ever just read through the Old Testament and read through a book like... Isaiah or, you know, you go through, and you hit some good spots. I mean like in books like Isaiah, you know, you read through Isaiah, and you go, wow, you know, I remember that I read that passage every Christmas or something like that.

But, you know, going through these various books of the Bible, some of them I mean, they're long for one thing. I want to say Ezekiel here is like, what? 48 chapters. I forgot. I think it's 48 but...just there's a lot of prophecy. There's a lot of stuff that can be kind of challenging to understand. And as we are taking up chapter 19, Ezekiel 19 tonight here; this is one of those chapters that needs a little bit of a backstory in order for us to really lay hold of it.

But there's something else we need and that's the help of the Holy Spirit. So, let's pray and ask for His help.

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for sending Your spirit that we might understand the Word and that You might illuminate our hearts with insight and wisdom. So, we want to just open our hearts, Lord, to receive from You tonight, and we pray that You'd fill us with peace and grace and wisdom, and we ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

What we're going to see here as we go through Ezekiel chapter 19 is a lament, which is a cry, for the fallen and there's another word I'm trying to think of (Pastor Paul closes his eyes and puts his hands to his head trying to recollect). It's for basically the Kings, the Davidic Kings. And the reason the Lord wants Ezekiel to take up a lament about this is because it's the end of an era.

I think you probably know that when David took the throne of Israel, after Saul died, he began, first of all, for seven years, he ruled just over the Southern

Kingdom and then the Northern Kingdom finally came along. And they connected, you know, once again under his leadership. And God made some incredible promises to David.

In fact, we call those the Davidic promises, or if you will, the Davidic covenant. And I'd like to, we're going to actually put it up on the screen tonight and I want to show it to you. It's out of 2 Samuel chapter 7, and it begins to go like this. This is going to take up about four different slides. So, follow along with me. It says,

2 Samuel 7:1-13 (ESV)

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you." But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, "Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?'"

2 Samuel 7:1-13 (ESV)

I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"'"

2 Samuel 7:1-13 (ESV)

Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more.'

2 Samuel 7:1-13 (ESV)

And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Now that, this is what we call the Davidic promise, or the Davidic covenant. God made a covenant with David. David was like, you know, he's just talking to Nathan, you know, over a cup of coffee or whatever. And he's saying, you know, I really would like to build the Lord a house. And he's talking about a temple, which of course, Solomon is the one that got around to building. And Nathan was kind of like, hey, you know, whatever's in your heart. Do it, man. Go. You go!

Well, then Nathan goes home that night, and the Lord appears to him, speaks to him, and says, okay, I got a message that I want you to take back to David. And the message is essentially this, you want to build me a house, but that's not the way this is going to work. I'm going to build you a house.

And of course, they have different ideas of a house in mind because David wanted to build a temple and God was saying to David, but I'm going to build for you a dynasty, the Davidic Dynasty.

Now, even after Israel split and became two kingdoms, Israel to the north, Judah to the south, the Davidic kings continue to rule over the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and they were in the line of David. And of course, they fell into idolatry, just like the Northern Kingdom had before them. And just as the Northern Kingdom had been conquered by the Assyrian army, we know that the Southern Kingdom was going to eventually be conquered by the Babylonian army.

And the reason is because they got away from God. They began to worship idols, instead of the one true God. But in the midst of all this, there ended this Davidic dynasty. It ended. Do you guys realize that when Zedekiah ended his reign (referring to **Jeremiah 52**), when the Babylonians came that third and final time and invaded Jerusalem, broke down the walls, destroyed the temple, burned the city, killed, I don't know how many people, and took the rest of them, essentially hostage, back into the Babylonian empire into exile.

When that final king ended his reign, no other kings from David's line ever ruled again. It was the end, truly, of an era. No more kings. In fact, no more kings period. We had governors after this, right? Now, it's interesting you might've noticed in that final slide that we looked at from 2 Samuel, the Lord told David that, (paraphrasing) one of your sons is going to rule forever. He says, (paraphrasing) this Davidic line will not be broken. And one who is from your own body will rule forever.

And of course, the fulfillment of that will be Jesus, who rules and reigns even now, but from heaven, but will return to this earth and will sit once again on

David's throne. Even though I believe David is actually going to sit on a throne too in Jerusalem, in his resurrected form, but that's another theological point altogether.

The point is that's why it was so vital. Do you guys remember reading through the New Testament? You read through Matthew, and you read through Luke and what do those gospels essentially begin with? A genealogy. Matthew starts right off at the beginning with the genealogy and Luke gets into it a little bit and then gives the genealogy and they give two different genealogies.

Matthew gives the genealogy through Joseph, which was the legal connection that Jesus had to the throne of David, even though Joseph was not his biological father, which is why Luke gives the genealogy through Mary, because that's the biological right that He has to prove that He was born in the line of David and therefore is, you know, can rule and reign under that Davidic promise.

See, when Jesus comes and takes up His throne and rules during the Millennial Kingdom, that will be a final fulfillment of what God said to David; what He said to David a thousand years before Christ was born, that (paraphrased) One of...one from your own body will rule and reign forever. But right now, the Davidic rule is about to come to an end. This is prior to that final end.

But there's still...Ezekiel is still being told to take up a lament. And so, as we look at Ezekiel 19 beginning in verse 1, the Lord says, *"¹and you take up a lamentation (And again, that's a cry) for the princes of Israel,"* and He refers to the kings or even the sons of the kings as princes. *"² and say:..."* and now He's going to begin to couch it in more symbolic, almost storytelling language.

He says in verse 2, *"² and say: What was your mother? A lioness! Among lions she crouched; in the midst of young lions she reared her cubs."* And the mother that is being spoken of here is a general term for the Nation of Israel and the cubs here in this picture, this word picture, are the princes who would be king under the promise of the Davidic Covenant.

Verse 3, *"³And she brought up one of her cubs;"* Now, it doesn't say which one He's talking about because He's giving it to us in story form, so we have to figure it out by the description. And here's the description, *"...he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men."* Boy, that could apply to a lot of the kings of Judah.

"⁴ The nations heard about him; he was caught in their pit, and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt." Wow! There you go. He just, the Lord

just gave away who we're talking about here in this story by this description, this cub, if you will, that turned into a young lion and of course, that means became king, is the son of Josiah, a man by the name of Jehoahaz (Referring to **2 Kings 23:30 ESV**).

And again, his father was King Josiah (Referring to **2 Kings 22-23:35 ESV**), who was a very godly man, but you'll remember was killed in battle and wasn't very old. He was in his forties, I think, at the time, and he went out to fight against king...the King of Egypt, Pharaoh Neco, and he was killed. And he really died before his time. He should not have gone out into battle.

It was not the Lord's doing. It was not the Lord's command for him to go, but he did and he ended up losing his life. Well, Jehoahaz, his son, assumed the throne. And after reigning for only three months, that same King of Egypt, Pharaoh Neco basically came and overthrew Jehoahaz and brought him back to Egypt with a hook in his nose because he was not a godly man at all. And the Lord did not rescue him and Jehoahaz eventually died in Egypt. So, the lament continues.

Verse 5, *“⁵ When she saw that she waited in vain, that her hope was lost, she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion”* Now we're skipping actually ahead. We're going to skip over one of the kings, and we're going to go now to King Jehoiachin because he wasn't the next king, but he's the next one being referenced here. And I'll...you'll see here how we know that.

Verse 6, *“⁶ He prowled among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men,⁷ and seized their widows. He laid waste their cities, and the land was appalled and all who were in it at the sound of his roaring.”* So, even though he had a short reign, he was a fairly vicious, sort of aggressive, king.

And it says, *“⁸ Then the nations set against him from provinces on every side; they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit.⁹ With hooks they put him in a cage and brought him (Okay. Here it is.) to the king of Babylon; they brought him into custody, that his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel.”*

That's a very important description right there because we find out about this young king (Referring to **2 Kings 24 ESV**) that even though he reigned for a short period of time and kind of ravaged the land. That he eventually was captured by the Babylonian Army, taken captive to Babylon, and never returned. Because that's what it means that his voice was never again heard, on the mountains of Israel.

He never came back home and essentially that's exactly what happened to King Jehoiachin. He was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and he was taken to Babylon where he stayed in prison for 37 years (Referring to **2 Kings 25:27-30 ESV**). And after 37 years he was actually released from prison by one of the kings. And treated a little bit better, but he still died in the Babylonian/Persian empire. He never did make his way home.

So now we've talked about this lament of these Davidic kings. Now you'll notice this prophetic story begins to speak of Israel in picture form. And it says in verse 10, *"¹⁰ Your mother was like a vine..."* And we've seen before that Israel is often depicted as a fruitful vine.

He says, *"¹⁰ Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard planted by the water, (And that's always a good thing.) fruitful and full of branches by reason of abundant water. ¹¹ Its strong stems became rulers' scepters; (Okay, we're still talking about the fact that royalty came from Israel.) it towered aloft among the thick boughs; it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches."*

"¹² But (verse 12) the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried up its fruit; they were stripped off and withered. As for its strong stem, fire consumed it. ¹³ Now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. ¹⁴ And fire has gone out from the stem of its shoots, has consumed its fruit, so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for ruling."

Did you catch that? Did you catch that? No scepter for ruling. And that's another, again, this is a lamentation. He's saying the Davidic line has been broken for now. And that's why he goes on to say, *"This is a lamentation and has become a lamentation."* And what that really means is this is a poetic cry and it has become the cry of the people, essentially all right.

So, that's the end, it's the end of the Davidic line. Think about how long it's been since the Davidic line has essentially been broken. And it's going to take Jesus coming back to restore that Davidic lineage to the throne of Israel and He will return and that and His kingship and His rule will be restored, and we're excited about that.

You know, we say, Come, Lord Jesus, (**Revelation 22:17 ESV**) *"¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'* you know, according to Revelation. Even so, come Lord Jesus, our hearts, our desire is to see that happen because we want to see these things restored. They've been broken. They were broken through disobedience and rebellion and just frankly flat-out stupidity.

Ignorance and stupidity. We want to see them restored. We long to see them restored. So, there you have Ezekiel chapter 19. That's what that's all about. It's about the cry, the lament over the broken Davidic line.

Ezekiel chapter 20 is a bit of a longer chapter, but honestly, kind of a fairly easy read. It starts off by saying, *“¹ In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me.”* Now I'm going to have you stop there for just a moment. Let me remind you of something, (Referring to **Ezekiel 1:1-3 ESV**) Ezekiel is in Babylon. He was taken in the first wave after the first invasion with many of the other young princes and individuals who are of noble birth.

Ezekiel, Daniel, others, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they were taken in that first wave of invasion from the Babylonian Empire. And so, that's where he is. There are elders also of Israel who were also taken into exile early on and they have now come to Ezekiel and they're sitting. They're literally coming to him and sitting before him.

And the reason they're doing that is because they know that he's a prophet and they want to inquire of him. Now, God has mentioned this previously in another chapter that He's no longer going to answer these elders of Israel. He said it in a previous study. He said (paraphrasing), when they come before you, I'm not going to answer them. I'm not going to talk to them because they really don't care. They come as if they really want to hear from Me but they really don't care. Their hearts are not with Me.

And so that's why the Lord says in verse 2, *“² And the word of the Lord came to me: ³ “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them, Thus says (Yahweh God, or) the Lord God, Is it to inquire of me that you come? As I live, declares the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you.”*

And so again, the Lord is simply saying, you can ask questions, but I'm not going to answer you because your heart isn't right to hear. Have you ever wondered if that's ever the case with us? Have you ever wondered that? Have you ever wondered? Have you ever prayed about something and not gotten an answer, and then kind of wondered later on, I wonder if my heart just wasn't right. I wonder if I wasn't in a place to hear. I wonder if I just wasn't willing to listen. We think sometimes when we ask questions, we're always ready for the answer. Until the answer comes, or the answer doesn't come and then we find out that our heart really wasn't right.

I had somebody write me a note, just this week, and remind me of something I said in one of my teachings. And I was talking about the fact that when we go through hard times, the question that everybody always asks is, why? Why did this happen? Why, or why is this happening to me?

And this person wrote me to say, you asked the question of us, in your teaching, why are you asking that question? Why are you asking God, why? Is it because you want to judge Him? And the guy said, that's exactly why I wanted to know. I wanted to know because I wanted to judge Him. I wanted Him to give me the reason why I was going through the hardship that I was going through so that I could judge whether it was an appropriate response by the Lord.

Yeah, it was a real kind of one of those, you know, turn-on-the-light moments in his heart. And he said, I realized my heart wasn't right. Isn't that interesting? So, we ask questions all the time. Have you ever noticed that God doesn't always answer? Sometimes our hearts aren't right and we're not in a place to even receive the answer.

And if we did get an answer, we would simply judge it on the merits of our own understanding. And we would say, Well, that's ridiculous or something equally as dumb. So, it's kind of an interesting sort of a question. Now, the Lord beginning in verse 4 here, you'll notice starts to talk directly to Ezekiel, okay.

Because remember, He's not going to talk to these elders. He's not going to answer them. So, He says, *“⁴ Will you judge them, son of man, will you judge them? Let them know the abominations of their fathers, ⁵ and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt; I swore to them, saying, I am (Yahweh, your God) the Lord your God. ⁶ On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt (In other words, out of slavery) into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands.”* Did you notice how many times the Lord said, I swore to the offspring?

“⁷ And I said to them, ‘Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.’ ⁸ But they rebelled against me and were not willing to listen to me. None of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

“Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. 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 in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.”

Stop there for a moment. Here's what God is saying (paraphrased), I called my people. I revealed myself to my people and I told them, I'm going to bring you out of this land, out of slavery. I'm going to bring you to a free land where you are in charge of your own property, your own income, and I'm going to bless you in that land. He said (paraphrased), but the people rebelled.

He's telling...He's giving the history, but they rebelled. And so, He said, essentially, So, I'm going to cast them away. But then He says, but I didn't do it. You know why? Because I had not only revealed myself to my people. I revealed myself to all of Egypt.

Remember all those plagues He brought? (Referring to **Exodus 7:14-11:10 ESV**) He revealed His power to the Egyptians. So how is...does it look, I mean, think about it, if God reveals Himself in glory and power and says, These are my people and then kills them. It's like you know, He can't even bring His people out of bondage?

So, He says, (paraphrasing **Ezekiel 20:9 ESV**) for the sake of my name, that my name might not be profaned. I withheld judgment, even though my people, even though my people deserved judgment, I withheld it. Now you're going to find that statement is going to be repeated in this chapter. Verse 10, ¹⁰ *So I led them out of the land of Egypt (this is of course all through Moses) and brought them into the wilderness. ¹¹ I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, (He's talking about the law.) by which, if a person does them, he shall live.* He's reminding them of the fact that He brought him into the wilderness, gave him the law.

¹² *Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, (Did you take note of that? The Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel. Okay, very important.) that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them. (But what happened?) ¹³ But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not walk in my statutes but rejected my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. “Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them. ¹⁴ But I 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.”*

Do you guys remember? You guys remember how that even came down? (Referring to **Exodus 32 ESV**) Moses is up on the mountain receiving the law, and he's there for 40 days and 40 nights, and Joshua is a little ways away. And he starts coming down with the tablets. And Joshua says, I think I hear the sound of celebration or something or mourning. I forget what Joshua said. He thought he heard, or war, I think he said, I hear the sound of war. And Moses said, no, it's the sound of partying (essentially).

They've already turned their backs. Remember what God said to Moses? He said, I'm, I'll get rid of, tell you what I'll do, I'll get rid of all of these people and I'll start over again with you. I'll start from your seed, Moses, rather than the land of Israel, this will be the land of Moses.

Do you remember what Moses said? He said, Lord, think about what your enemies are going to say. Think about what the Egyptians are going to say. Think about all the other nations. And of course, Moses interceded exactly the way the Lord wanted him to and called him to do. And the Lord relented from sending that judgment and wiping out the Nation of Israel.

He's talking about it here. He simply left Moses out of the story, but it happened. So, he says, ¹⁴ *...I acted for the sake of my name, ...* Verse 15, ¹⁵ *Moreover, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, ¹⁶ because they rejected my rules and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols.*"

¹⁷ *Nevertheless, my eye spared them, and I did not destroy them or make a full end of them in the wilderness. ¹⁸ "And I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor keep their rules, nor defile yourselves with their idols. ¹⁹ I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules, ²⁰ and keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.'*"

²¹ *But the children rebelled against me. They did not walk in my statutes and were not careful to obey my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; they profaned my Sabbaths. "Then I said I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. ²² But I withheld 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 other words, God is saying (paraphrasing), I didn't do this in secret. I brought them out very publicly. And these nations heard of Me, and they knew that it was Me.

“²³ Moreover, (verse 23 says,) I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, ²⁴ because they had not obeyed my rules, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my Sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers' idols.” And of course, that was what He told them through the law.

Verses 23 and 24, is a very short summary of the curses of the Law of Moses that were given to the people, where He said (paraphrasing), if you refuse to obey me, I'll scatter you among the nations. Now, verse 25 and 26 is a little challenging to read just on the surface, so bear with me for a moment and let me explain it.

He goes on to say, *“²⁵ Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and rules by which they could not have life, ²⁶ and I defiled them through their very gifts in their offering up all their firstborn, that I might devastate them. I did it that they might know that I am the Lord.”* And What God is recounting here is how they were eventually given over to paganism and to paganistic worship rituals, including the giving of their children, the offering up of their children as a sacrifice.

Horrific, horrific rules that, of course, could not ever impart life and so, honestly where it says here in the ESV, *“²⁵ ...I gave them statutes...”* I actually like the New King James better, which says (paraphrased), *“I gave them up or I gave them over to statutes or rules.”* And He's basically saying, I just...I let them loose just to run with paganism and just so they could see...so they could see just how awful paganism really is. I just...I gave them over to the desires of their heart.

Verse 27, *“²⁷ “Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: In this also your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me. ²⁸ For when I had brought them into the land that I swore to give them, then wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their pleasing aromas, and there they poured out their drink offerings. (Meaning to other gods. To pagan gods.) ²⁹ (I said to them, ‘What is the high place to which you go?’ So its name is called Bamah to this day.)”* and Bamah simply means high place.

What you've got going on in verse 29 is a wordplay that kind of gets lost in the translation from Hebrew to English. So just know that there's a wordplay going on in verse 29.

“³⁰ “Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and go whoring after their detestable things? ³¹ When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire, you defile 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.”

So, what's the Lord saying throughout this whole thing? He, these elders come to Ezekiel and say, we want to inquire of the Lord. And so, Ezekiel receives this word from the Lord that says, no, you ask Me questions. I'm not going to answer them. Here's what I am going to do. I'm going to give you a history lesson. And I'm going to show you in that history, how you have constantly been rebellious, how you have constantly gone your own way. And maybe you'll begin to understand why I'm done. I'm done answering your questions. I'm done giving you valuable insights to save your lives. This is a time of discipline and punishment.

Verse 32, *“³² What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, ‘Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.’ ³³ “As I live, declares the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out I will be king over you. ³⁴ I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out.*

³⁵ And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. 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. ³⁷ I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.”

All right, I want you to stop there. We don't really know unless you have a biblical understanding, you may not know what it means to “*pass under the rod,*” this is a way ultimately of God determining who are His and who are not.

And it basically brings the idea or the picture of passing under the rod, the...of the shepherd holding out his rod and the sheep would be made to pass under it, single file, in such a way that the shepherd could not only count his sheep but

determine which one, which ones are his and which ones are not, okay. Because often farmers would get together and graze their family (correction their flocks) together.

And then when it came time to determine whose flock is whose, they would have them pass under the rod and they would make a determination. And so, that's why the Lord is talking here about (paraphrasing), I'm going to make you to pass under the rod. I'm going to determine which ones of you are really mine and which ones are not.

And that's why He says in verse 38, if you look with me in your Bible, *“³⁸ I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord.*

³⁹ “As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord God: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols.”

He's basically saying, Fine, you want to worship idols, go worship idols, but you will no more profane My name. There is coming a day when you will all pass under the rod, and I will determine who is mine and who is not. And those who are not will no longer enter into the land.

“⁴⁰ For on my holy mountain, (Verse 40) the mountain height of Israel, declares the Lord God, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land. There I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. ⁴¹ As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, (but, excuse me) when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations.

⁴² And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your fathers. ⁴³ And there you shall remember your ways and all your deeds with which you have defiled yourselves, and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed.”

Wow! Do you guys remember? What's He telling him here? He's saying, when on that day when you come to your senses, and you come to Me. You're going to think back on the life you live, and He says, you're going to, you're going to hate yourself and you're going to hate the way you lived. You're going to hate

all the lost opportunities. You're going to hate how sin just grabbed hold of your heart and wouldn't let go. And you're going to regret all the times you gave in and lived that lifestyle.

Do you know that's a normal part of coming to the Lord?

The Beatitudes, in Matthew chapter 5, give us a stair-step approach to approaching God. And the very first beatitude is, *“³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* And what it means to be poor in spirit is to understand how depraved you are, how lost in sin, but what's the next?

“⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,...,” “Blessed are those who mourn,...” Do you know it's a natural progression in coming to the Lord to recognize how much we've lost, how much stupidity we engaged in, how much ridiculous rebellion we laid hold of and to mourn about it? So many lost opportunities. So many lost relationships, lost family members, lost income, lost chances. So, this isn't an overwhelming sorrow. This is a godly sorrow that leads to repentance, turning away, and walking to God.

And He says in verse 44, *“⁴⁴ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, (Oh, if I dealt with you according to your evil ways, you would be toast.) nor according to your corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, declares the Lord God.”*

And then the chapter is going to end here with another just very very short prophecy spoken against the lands of the South or the South Land, if you will. And in the Hebrew Bible, I'll just tell you that this section we're going to read that finishes off chapter 20, actually begins the next section, the next chapter in the Hebrew Bible. So, take that for what it's worth.

“⁴⁵ And the word of the Lord came to me: ⁴⁶ “Son of man, set your face toward the southland; preach against the south, and prophesy against the forest land in the Negeb.” Now, your Bible either says Negeb or Negev. It either ends in a B or a V. It can go either way. And it just depends on your translation. But that's the...essentially the name of that area of southern Palestine, where Israel butts up against ancient Edom. All right. And so that's the Negeb. And it was a forested land at one time. It is not anymore. And you'll see why.

Verse 47, *“⁴⁷ Say to the forest of the Negeb, 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 in you and every dry tree. The blazing flame shall not be*

quenched, and all faces from south to north shall be scorched by it. ⁴⁸ All flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it; it shall not be quenched."

And there you have the reason right there why there's no forest land in that area today. But it's kind of interesting how Ezekiel responds to the Lord having received this short prophecy.

He says, *"⁴⁹ Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! They are saying of me, 'Is he not a maker of parables?' (Or if you will, riddles, mysterious sayings?)"* It's kind of a little complaint here by Ezekiel. He gets this little prophecy, and he goes, by the way, God, were you aware of the fact that they're basically saying of me, Yeah, he kind of makes this stuff up. He's just making this stuff up. Are you aware that they're saying that?

Isn't it funny the questions we ask God like He's disconnected with some things, or just needs us to fill Him in on certain things? Anyway, that's where we're going to stop tonight. We're going to pick it up in chapter 21. So hopefully that helps understand a little bit better for you chapters 19 and 20 and what those chapters mean.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You so much for giving us the ministry of the Word. We thank You, Father, for the book of Ezekiel. And challenging though it may be to read and to understand, Lord, You give us insight and You help us to understand Your character, Your heart, Your desire for Your people and Your desire to make things right.

So, we thank You for that, Lord. We pray a blessing, Father, upon our hearts to continue to hear and respond to the Word of God. Be with us, we pray, Father, in Jesus' precious name, amen.