

# GRACE INSTEAD OF JUDGMENT

## Ezekiel 20-21

### **HOW BIG IS OUR GOD?**

Is He big enough to handle the issues we're facing?

Israel's problems *always* come back to a minimized concept of God.

Whether it's their disobedience to His Word

Whether it's their failure to trust Him when facing the obstacles of life

The problem always comes back to their concept of God.

Their God is too small.

That's why Ezekiel keeps coming back to their understanding of Who He is.

They need a renewed vision of God. –*SO DO WE!*

When faced with the choice to obey God, or to go our own way

When faced with the obstacles of life . . .

### **How big is our God?**

Can He handle it?

Can we trust Him with it?

### **We need to refocus on Him.**

Captives in Babylon are aware of what's going on back home and the battles the nations are launching against them.

Nebuchadnezzar is taking part in the main battles.

People are hoping he'll be defeated, so they can go home.

Instead of acknowledging that *their sin* is keeping them in captivity, and repenting, they hope *the wars* will reverse their fortune.

They're unable to see that GOD is controlling the battles

and that *He* is directing them according to HIS plan;

NOT according to *their* desires.

### **[ REVIEW OF GOD'S PAST DEALINGS 20:1-32 ]**

**Some of the elders come to Ezekiel seeking God's direction**

They want him to consult God on their behalf. **20:1-4**

**The Lord refuses to reveal anything to them**

**— because the people don't really want to obey Him anyway.**

Throughout their history they've *always* rebelled against Him.

**In *every* period of God's dealing with her,**

God has demonstrated His faithfulness to them, . . .

**Israel has rebelled against Him**

**Each time Israel rebelled**

**Each time God forgave them**

God has provided *everything*, yet they have rebelled against Him.

Therefore, the day of judgment has come.

[ He demonstrates how this has happened over and over again, by . . . ]

**REVIEW OF GOD'S PAST DEALINGS 20:5-32**

**IN EGYPT 20:5-9 20:5-7**

Israel's birth, as a nation, occurred in Egypt.

God revealed Himself to them there and made a vow to be their God.

Before the Egyptians, God glorified His name with mighty deeds.

Israel has to acknowledge that Yahweh is superior to the gods of Egypt.

They saw His mighty signs. He made a covenant to be their God.

Yet they rebelled! **20:8**

They preferred to seek help from the useless gods of Egypt.

They turned away from their God

In the midst of their affliction, God came to their rescue. **20:9**

**God freed them from Egypt,**

***NOT* because of who *they* were,**

**but *for His own name's sake*;**

so *HE* wouldn't be embarrassed before the pagan nations who were watching.

Each nation identifies with their own god.

If a nation is powerful, they serve a powerful god.

When a nation is defeated, it shows that their god is weaker.

A key question: *"What kind of God is Yahweh, the God of Israel?"*

To answer, God defeats Egyptians, in spite of Israel's rebellion.

**His intervention *isn't* because of *them*,**

**it's because of *His own Name*!**

—To let the nations know how great *HE* is!

**IN THE WILDERNESS 20:10-17 20:10**

Once they're free from Egypt, God takes them to the wilderness to give them His law & make a covenant with them.

God gives them their constitution, by which they become a nation.

He gives them laws so others will recognize that they belong to the sovereign God who has the right to rule their lives. **11-12**

*What more could Israel want?*

They have the One true God on their side!

However, *they don't obey His laws!* **13**

God has every right to punish, and even destroy them  
***For His own name's sake, though He punishes the rebels, God saves them. 14-17***

## **AT THE BORDER OF CANAAN 20:18-26**

As they're about to enter the land, God repeats His standards.

He warns them not to imitate their parents! **18-20**

But the children repeat the same sins their parents committed

God again has the right to destroy them. **21-22**

Over and over again **God chose not to destroy them, *for his own name's sake!***

He scatters them among pagan nations that they might live under laws of other countries and recognize that God's ways are right.

Instead of learning the lesson, they *imitate* evil ways of the other nations. **23-26**

He takes them through this so they will acknowledge Him as their God.

Even though His name is belittled, God permits it so that His people might repent and return to Him.

***In each of these periods God forgives Israel,***

***not for her sake,  
but for His name's sake!***

**IN EZEKIEL'S TIME 20:27-32**

After prolonged time in wilderness, God gives them the land He promised.

*Did that change things?*

*Did they acknowledge Him and give Him honor? **27-29***

Rather than acknowledge Him, they set up worship centers on the hills

where they can worship idols like the pagan nations.

Though God gave them everything, they still don't submit to Him.

***So what about the present?***

***Was this generation any different?***

***THEY STILL REBEL.***

Ezekiel demonstrates that *they're still doing it!*

In spite of God's patience and mercy, *they still rebel against Him.*

They still follow idols, forget about God, and depend on the nations for defense. **30-32**

God's had enough! He won't respond to them any more.

The glory's gone. They can "have it *their* way!"

***"We want to be like the nations around us!***

Like ***people of the world,***  
***who serve wood and stone.***"

"We don't want to be different!"

"We don't want to follow the God of our fathers."

"We'd rather follow idols, like everybody else around us."

**God is no longer going to spare them.**

**They are desecrating *His name*.**

Therefore, judgment is coming, to call them back to Him.

## **REVELATION OF GOD'S FUTURE DEALINGS 20:33-44**

**Judgment eliminates the rebellious. 20:33-39**

All this historical background demonstrates that God is just.

This generation, like those before them, deserve what's coming!

He's going to regather them from captivity and bring them out to the wilderness to destroy the rebels.

When He's done, He'll call out a remnant of faithful people and bless them.

**Restoration because of His Name 20:40-44**

**God is again going to forgive Israel,  
not for her sake, but for His name's sake!**

He will give them a heart that is predisposed to follow Him.

Then they will know Who He is,

They will know what a mighty God we serve!

**God doesn't give US what we deserve**

***He forgives because of His grace,***

***For His name's sake.***

## **TWO FIGURES OF JUDGMENT 20:45-21:32**

Before restoration, they must pass through judgment.

**2 figures** show how severe judgment will be.

**1. Figure of a fire in a dry forest 20:45-49**

**God's judgment will be like a fire in a dry forest.**

Like dry brush fire, it will spread quickly and consume everything

[ Ezekiel complains: People don't believe him.  
They think he's bluffing! These are just words—a parable.  
God tells Him to respond by pronouncing a 2nd figure: ]

## 2. Figure of a sharpened sword 21:1-32

**God's judgment will be like a sharpened sword.**

It WILL come, and it will destroy them! *God has spoken!*

It doesn't really matter whether they believe it or not!

### 21:2-7

God is against them.

He will bring the very nations they have been trusting against them.

He is sovereign over the nations also. (21:25-27)

The crown will be removed--"*until Shiloh comes*"

--until the One to whom it rightly belongs comes--looks ahead to Promised One

**God won't abandon His people.**

In spite of the coming judgment,

**God will fulfill His promise**

*Messiah will come!*

He's the One to whom it rightly belongs.

He will wear the crown, when He comes.

## **HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE APPLY TO OUR LIVES TODAY?**

Israel's example reminds us of importance of watching *our* attitude.

Israel's rebellion came because of lack of gratitude and lack of trust in God

They lost their vision of God.

They forgot what a mighty God we serve.

–we easily forget Who He is and what He has done for us!  
Like Israel, we take our eyes off God and begin to think we're self-sufficient.

We become ungrateful, and eventually do things *our* way,  
or the same way as other people around us.

Eventually, these independent, rebellious attitudes lead to judgment.

**Sometimes God has to discipline His children,  
in order to correct us.**

**But, after discipline, God restores us.**

After discipline comes grace => forgiveness.

**Like Israel, WE may require corrective discipline.**

***God deals with us  
according to His grace  
for His Name's sake.***

***How should we respond to God's way of dealing  
with us?***

Israel's story ought to motivate us to consider OUR attitude.

How big is *OUR* God?

*Are we grateful?      Do we trust Him?*

Are we willing to *submit* to Him, and *obey HIM*--live by *His*  
standards, rather than our own?

God wants us to be *different!* As His people, He wants us to  
look like Him.

He wants us to respond to His grace with:

**Gratitude      Submission/obedience**

**It's not about us!**

**We don't live for OUR name's sake!**  
**We live for HIS name's sake!**  
**Our life isn't centered on us.**  
It's centered on Him.  
**It's about HIS name.**