

# EZEKIEL

## Hard to Heart

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### *“Election Dei”*

20:33-44

Before we launch into our text, I have a footnote to our last study. We were talking about the Sabbath and I pointed out that the text spoke of it as an arrangement between God and Israel. It is therefore not binding on Gentiles. Never was; never will be.

Then I mentioned that the Sabbath does not derive from the Creation account where we read God rested on the seventh day. It's an important point so I want to say a little more about that before we go on.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.  
Genesis 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.  
Genesis 2:3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Some do argue that the Sabbath started with the seventh day of creation and, therefore, is an ordinance for all and for all time.

One problem with that is, even if it were an ordinance, it might not be obligatory. For example: Marriage was also given as an ordinance during Creation week, but not everyone is obligated to get married.

You'll notice that the Creation account does not include any command from God to observe the Sabbath. The passage says nothing at all about what man should do, only what God did.

Further, there is no record in the Bible at all of any command to Adam's descendants to keep the Sabbath until you get to the Law of Moses when it is given as a sign between God and Israel. No record of it being observed from Adam to Moses exists.

Finally, the Creation account speaks of "the seventh day" and does not use the technical term, *shabbat*. True, the seventh day, Saturday, is the day on which the Jews keep shabbat; but that does not make the seventh day the Sabbath. July 4th is our Independence Day. Other nations of the world don't celebrate it, however, just because it is July 4th.

Don't let folks judge you as to days, and diets, etc., etc.

Now to our text for tonight...

What does it really mean, that Israel is God's elect nation, the Jews His chosen people?

A distinction must be made between the nation and the individuals in the nation.

Israel as a nation was the object of God's national election. It put them into a place of privilege and blessing.

The great passage describing Israel's national election is Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

Deuteronomy 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 7:7 The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

Deuteronomy 7:8 but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Israel's national election guarantees that God's purpose for choosing the nation will be accomplished and that the elect nation will always survive as a distinct entity.

National election does *not* guarantee individual salvation. Each individual Jew within the nation must believe and then it is counted by God for righteousness. These individuals make up what is sometimes called the believing remnant of Israel.

When Jesus came to earth, He offered to the nation of Israel the promised kingdom of Heaven on earth. The nation, through its leaders, rejected the offer. The kingdom was thus postponed, to be offered a second time, at the Second Coming of Jesus to the earth.

Mean time the nation of Israel, as a discipline, has been dispersed throughout the world. Nevertheless, miraculously they remain a nation - which makes perfect sense since they are God's elect nation.

A new entity, the Church, is being formed. It is a mystery previously concealed but now revealed in the time in which we live. When the Church is complete, Jesus will return in the air to resurrect and rapture believers of the Church Age.

Then follows a seven-year period of time, the Tribulation, upon the earth. It is especially dedicated to revealing to individual Jews that Jesus is their Messiah. Two-thirds of the Jews will be killed, but the one-third that survive will be a believing remnant - individual Jews who are saved.

The Lord will return to earth. The believing remnant will recognize Him as their Messiah. At that time Israel it will be possible to say all Israel is saved. The elect nation will consist of only the believing remnant.

Our text at the end of chapter twenty looks towards this future time, this dispersion and regathering.

Ezekiel 20:34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.

Ezekiel 20:35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face.

Ezekiel 20:36 Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will plead My case with you," says the Lord God.

The Jews being addressed were not “scattered” in many “countries.” They were in Babylon. They would remain there for seventy years then be brought back to Jerusalem. This scattering is therefore something in the farther future.

The Jews would be scattered again, in 70AD, when Titus and his legions destroyed Jerusalem, leaving no stone unturned. It is that scattering that God was talking about.

They would be scattered “into the wilderness of the peoples,” meaning out of the Holy Land and all through the world. Historically, this is exactly what has happened to Israel as a nation.

God said a time would come when He would again plead with them. He compared it to when He first delivered the nation from bondage in Egypt. Only in this future deliverance, they will come from all over the world.

Ezekiel 20:37 "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

Ezekiel 20:38 I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the country where they dwell, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

“Pass under the rod” is terminology borrowed from shepherding. The shepherd would inspect his sheep by using his rod to look beneath their coat, searching for defects or blemishes or parasites.

Here it is being applied to individual Jews. God will fulfill His unconditional covenant with them. It seems to be a reference to the New Covenant of giving them a new heart to worship Him. It’s the Millennial Kingdom, with

its center in Judea. God was talking about the one-third of Jews who would constitute the believing remnant after the Tribulation.

Many will not pass the inspection. They will “not enter the land of Israel,” or the kingdom for that matter. These are the two-thirds of the nation that die in their unbelief during the Tribulation.

Ezekiel 20:39 "As for you, O house of Israel," thus says the Lord God: "Go, serve every one of you his idols - and hereafter - if you will not obey Me; but profane My holy name no more with your gifts and your idols.

This is a tough verse. Some therefore suggest it is sarcasm. But if we keep it in context, and remember we are looking into Israel’s future, it might make more sense.

These words might describe the discipline the nation is under since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. The word for “serve” is a tech-term used to describe the service of the priests in the Temple. You might recall that the Jews were profaning the Temple by setting-up idols in it. They are no longer going to be able to “profane” the Lord by bringing “gifts and... idols” to Him in the Temple, ***since there will be no Temple during the time of their world-wide dispersion!***

All that will change in the future.

Ezekiel 20:40 For on My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel," says the Lord God, "there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them, and there I will require your offerings and the firstfruits of your sacrifices, together with all your holy things.

There *will* be a future Temple, on the “holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel.” Worship will be re-established.

We follow the news and trends regarding the rebuilding of the Temple. We know from passages in Daniel and the Revelation that a Temple will exist in the Tribulation. But the Tribulation Temple is not what the Lord is looking forward to. That Temple will be served by nonbelieving Jews.

Still, it's exciting to realize that a Temple must exist in the Tribulation. Efforts to build it mean we are nearing that time.

As I've told you, the actual site of the Temple is probably not where the Muslim mosque now sits. There are at least two other possibilities, based on solid archaeology.

And the Temple itself could be erected in next to no time. It consists of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies - two relatively small rooms.

Ezekiel 20:41 I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles.

Israel, God's elect nation, will be the key nation in the Millennial Kingdom. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world.

Ezekiel 20:42 Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers.

God will keep His promises, all of them, to the letter.

A lot of people think that God is through with Israel as a nation. For example, there is a theological position called amillennialism. The amillennial view holds that the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 is a symbolic number, not a literal description; that the millennium has already begun and is identical with the current Church Age. Amillennialism holds that while Christ's reign during the millennium is spiritual in nature, at the end of the Church Age, Christ will return in final judgment and establish a permanent physical reign.

It is popular among the denominations that consider themselves Reformed. Along with denying a literal thousand year kingdom, they deny both a national restoration of Israel and the salvation of the believing remnant. They say there is no future for anything 'Israel,' only for the Church.

For us, the big problem with amillennialism is that it does not take the Bible in its plain, literal sense. It spiritualizes passages.

But that's not all. If God isn't going to keep His promises to Israel, then two things trouble me:

1. Why not? Is He unable to keep His promises? Is He unwilling? Unfaithful?
2. If He can renege on His promises to Israel, than will He do the same to me?

*Not to worry!* God is able, willing, and faithful to keep His promises to Israel and to us.

And, really, all you need to do to see that amillennialism is incorrect is look at the rebirth of Israel as a nation on May 14, 1948 - just as prophesied.

Ezekiel 20:43 And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed.

Think of this verse in light of what you read in Zechariah 13:8-9.

Zechariah 13:8 And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the Lord, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it:

Zechariah 13:9 I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.' "

God will reveal Himself to Israel through the Tribulation and the remnant will be saved and call upon the Lord. They will "loathe [themselves]... because of all the evils... committed" by Israel as a nation, as God's elect nation.

Ezekiel 20:44 Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel," says the Lord God.' "

Ah, the mercy of God! This is a strong statement of Israel's election as a nation. God will accomplish His purpose in and through them. Their "doings" may be "corrupt," but that cannot void His promises or His providence.

You cannot understand Bible prophecy unless you take it literally and distinguish between Israel as a nation and everyone else.

