



# THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | FEBRUARY 23, 2020

---

## Class 9 – Blind Leadership (20:1-23:49)

PURPOSE: To relate to the early Jews in Exile -leaving their glory days, entering into hostile territory, always looking ahead to the Kingdom of Redemption.

### Introduction: “Make Your Forehead Harder than Flint”

Behold, I have made your face as hard as their faces, and **your forehead** as hard as their foreheads.<sup>9</sup> Like emery **harder than flint** have I made your forehead. Fear them not, nor be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house.”

(Ezekiel 3:8-9)

In the previous section Ezekiel found himself surrounded by Jerusalem’s elders (8:1) who appear to be consulting him (14:1-3), and God, on their nation’s future. But Ezekiel did not waiver to tell them the grim news of God’s coming retribution for Israel’s ongoing love affair with idolatry which was forbidden.

Eleven months later (compare 8:1 with 20:1) the elders come back to Ezekiel to “inquire” again of the Lord about Ezekiel’s looming threats of God’s coming judgment. At this time Jerusalem’s future hanged in the balance as King Zedekiah sought to make a military pact with Egypt against Nebuchadnezzar in 591 B.C. The elders, probably representing the king, were concerned that Ezekiel’s recent not-too-positive-sounding oracle might still stand.

In Ezekiel 20:4 God basically tells Ezekiel to toughen up (“..will you judge them, will you judge them son of man?..”). Ezekiel was not now to back out and compromise God’s message.

This is where many faithful Christians find themselves today. We are gently asked to erase the essentials of the gospel (e.g. talk of sin, our need for forgiveness, Christ’s sufficient work on the cross)...but, *will we?*

## I. Comeback #1: Israel's Legacy of Lust (Ezek. 20)

### A. Strike 1: Idolatry in the Egyptian Captivity of Moses' Day

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.’<sup>8</sup> 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.**

- Ezekiel 20:7-8 (cf. Josh. 24:14)

### B. Strike 2: Idolatry in the Wilderness

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.

- Ezekiel 20:13 (cf. Exod. 32)

### C. Strike 3: Idolatry in the Promise Land

No surprises here either (Ezekiel 20:23-32).

## II. Comeback #2: Ezekiel Helping the Babylonians?! (Ezek. 21)

### A. Since the Countdown was “ON” ...

And all flesh shall know that I am the LORD. I have drawn my sword from its sheath; **it shall not be sheathed again.**

- Ezekiel 21:5

### B. ...Ezekiel Lived in This Imminent Reality

As for you, son of man, **mark two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to come.** Both of them shall come from the same land. **And make a signpost;** make it at the head of the way to a city.

- Ezekiel 21:19

### **III. Comeback #3: Plenary Corruption (Ezek. 22)**

#### **A. From the Princes**

-who were savage towards families (22:6-7, 25).

#### **B. To the Priests**

-who desecrated holy things (22:26).

#### **C. To the Officials**

-who acted like the Mafia (22:27).

#### **D. To the Prophets**

-who announced lying omens (22:28).

#### **E. And Finally...To the People**

-who oppressed the poor and needy (22:29).

And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach [ i.e., “Stand in the Gap” ] before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, **but I found none.**

- Ezekiel 22:30

### **IV. Comeback #4: North to South Being Incorrigible (Ezek. 23)**

Revisiting the God-Married-to-Unfaithful-Wife analogy of Ezekiel chapter 16, here in chapter 23 more is explained. At one time God was ‘married’ (figuratively speaking) to northern Israel. This specifically is Samaria = “Oholah,” meaning “her tent.” This northern Israeli territory was taken captive by Assyria in 722 B.C. in God’s retribution to her, for her going after foreign gods.

The second wife (allegorically) is Jeruslaem = “Oholibah,” meaning “my tent is in her.” Instead of learning from her sister Oholah’s fate, Oholibah multiplied all her vile acts all the more. She also joined in the debauchery of child sacrifice to idols.

Ezekiel 23:32-35 graphically describes unfaithful Jerusalem's final outcome. She drinks her sister's wide cup of judgment and in a bizarre display of drunken stupor crashes the ceramic bowl, licks and swallows the wet shard pieces, and cuts out her breasts which were once offered to her lovers.

Ezekiel 23:38-39 goes on...

Moreover, this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths.<sup>39</sup> For when they had slaughtered their children in sacrifice to their idols, **on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it.** And behold, this is what they did in my house.

## Conclusion

One of the greatest challenges for our contending for the faith today, is that the world around us just does not seem to "get it" concerning the offense of sin. We are very much in Ezekiel's predicament. But that does not change our message. Peacefully and earnestly we fight on.

### **The Book of Ezekiel Course Outline:**

- Introduction to Ezekiel
- Ezekiel's Close Encounter (1:1-28)
- Ezekiel's Strange Commissioning (2:1-3:27)
- Four Signs of Coming Judgment (4:1-5:17)
- Two Messages of Coming Judgment (6:1-7:27)
- Idolatry in the House (8:1-18)
- God's Glory Departs (9:1-11:23)
- Straight Talk to the Covenant People (12:1-19:14)
- Blind Leadership (20:1-23:49)
- The Purge (24:1-27)
- Foreign Raiders Not Exempt (25:1-33:20)
- Reentering the Land on God's Terms (33:21-39:29)
- Restoration of Temple Worship (40:1-46:24)
- Restoration of the Land (47:1-48:35)