

I WANT TO KNOW MY BIBLE

Why We Should Care About Israel

TEXT: Ezekiel 20, 34, 36-39

INTRODUCTION: I hope the statement I am about to make is not true here at St. Andrew Baptist Church. I hope what I am going to say is not true in your life.

Most Christians today do not really care about Israel.

- At most they have a small interest in the history of Israel because they recognize that through Judaism God laid the foundation for Christianity.
- They may be politely respectful because they are aware that their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, was a Jew.
- But sadly, most Christians have no particular fondness for Jews, and in fact may have a disdain for them more so than many other races of people.
- And most Christians have no particular concern about what happens to Israel as a nation or to the Jews as a people.

I am telling you that if any of those statements reflect your own thoughts about Israel or about the Jews that you, as a Christian, are making a big mistake.

The latter half of the Book of Ezekiel clearly shows us why we, even us non-Jews, should care about Israel.

I. BECAUSE ISRAEL REMAINS AT THE HEART OF GOD'S PLAN FOR THE WORLD.

While there are a multitude of passages that declare this truth in both Old and New Testament, Ezekiel 20 is one of the best summaries I am aware of in the Scriptures. While this chapter contains 49 verses, I have whittled our reading down to portions of 11 of those verses. As we read this summation of Israel's history of wickedness, I want you to watch and listen for the reason God gives that He has not utterly destroyed them. It is stated three times in these few verses.

Ezekiel 20:5–22 ... 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, 'I *am* the LORD your God.' ... ⁸ But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. ... Then I said, 'I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.' ⁹ But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they *were*, ...

¹¹ And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, 'which, *if a man does, he shall live by them.*' ¹² Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths...¹³ Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ... Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them. ¹⁴ But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out. ... ¹⁷ ... I did not make an end of them in the wilderness.

¹⁸ "But I said to their children in the wilderness, 'Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols.' ²¹ "Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; ... Then I said I would pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the wilderness. ²² Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles, in whose sight I had brought them out.

A. The integrity of Almighty God is the guarantee of Israel's ultimate blessing.

Three times God recites a period of utter disregard by the people of Israel for the commandments of the Lord and God says, "**I said I will pour out my fury on them ..., but I acted for My name's sake ...**"

1. **God had every reason and right to cast Israel off as His chosen people.**
2. **In His holiness God could have exterminated them for the multitude of their sins.**
3. **But the Lord God had made promises. He had made covenants.**
4. **Some of those covenants were without condition. God just said, "I will ..."**

a. The Abrahamic Covenant

Genesis 12:1-3 ¹ Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ² **I will** make you a great nation; **I will** bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ **I will** bless those who bless you, And **I will** curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 22:16-17 ¹⁶ and said: "**By Myself I have sworn**, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— ¹⁷ blessing **I will** bless you, and multiplying **I will** multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

b. The Davidic Covenant

2 Samuel 7:12-16 ¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, **I will** set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and **I will** establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and **I will** establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ **I will** be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, **I will** chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took *it* from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." ' ' "

God is saying in Ezekiel, look Israel, I could have wiped you out. As I destroyed the nation of Edom for their sin.

**I could have righteously destroyed you,
but I didn't for My name's sake.**

- **Because I had promised you blessing,**
- **because I promised you a future,**
- **because I promised you would be My chosen people forever.**

I have not and I will not give up on you or abandon you.

Now, look again with me at the rest of Ezekiel, chapter 20.

Ezekiel 20:32–44 ³² What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, 'We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.'

³³ "As I live," says the Lord GOD, ... 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. ... ³⁷ "I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸ I will purge the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against Me; ... 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. ...

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.' "

God says, Israel, I will never let you go. My honor is bound up in what happens to you. Even if you do not now want to be My people, you just want to be like the other nations in their rebellion against Me, I will never let it happen.

I will cause you to become what I have promised. I will accomplish it by My mighty hand. I will not act based on your wickedness and corruption but for My name's sake, says the Lord God.

May I offer here a tremendously important aside?

God's absolute faithfulness to Israel to keep His promises no matter what is also a guarantee to us that God keeps all His promises to us who have been adopted into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

- **Whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have everlasting life. (John 3:16)**
- **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ... I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27–28)**

- **I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)**
- **God will wipe away every tear ...; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”... “Behold, I make all things new.” ... (Revelation 21:4–5)**

Hallelujah! God is the Promise Keeper!

He is ever true.

He cannot lie.

In spite of our sin, in spite of our unworthiness, even when we are unfaithful, He is always faithful!

This is not a license to sin. Nor am I telling you there is no penalty for unfaithfulness. One of God’s sure promises to us dear fellow believer is

Hebrews 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

When you and I walk stubbornly and persistently in sin, God brings sufferings and tribulations into our lives just as He did to Israel. But also as surely as God did not cast Israel away but continues to purpose to accomplish His will in them, so also God does not cast away those who have come to Him by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our confidence in that truth should inspire greater faithfulness on our part.

But there is another reason why Israel remains at the heart of the purpose of God for His world. Did you catch it? Just as the Lord declared four times that he would fulfill His purpose and promises for Israel, He declared this further reason why He would do for Israel what He said He would do.

B. God will maintain His faithfulness to Israel for the sake of us Gentiles.

Ezekiel 20:9 But I acted for **My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles** among whom they *were*, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt.

Ezekiel 20:14 But I acted for **My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles**, in whose sight I had brought them out.

Ezekiel 20:22 Nevertheless I withdrew My hand and acted for **My name’s sake, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the Gentiles**, in whose sight I had brought them out.

Ezekiel 20:41, 44 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**. 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.’ ”

Sometimes we see God's promises to Israel and God's faithfulness to the Jews, and we consider God's blessings upon this chosen people, and we think, "Man, I wish I were a Jew!"

But brother and sister, God chose the nation of Israel for our sake.

God chose the Jews so we could become a part of God's family and enjoy His blessings for all eternity.

God chose the Jews so that through them He could

- **Demonstrate His precepts and ways**
- **Send the Word of the Lord**
- **Provide the Savior for our sins**
- **Give us the gospel so that we could be saved**
- **Prove the absolute trustworthiness of God to help move us to trust Him**

Why should I care about Israel?

Because Israel remains at the heart of God's plan for the world.

And

God's faithfulness to keep His promises to Israel is absolute proof that He will keep His promises to me if I become His child through faith in Jesus Christ, His Son.

Now, that is one reason. I have two more.

I am going to tell them to you now, but I am going to explain them to you tonight.

Why should I care about Israel?

II. BECAUSE ISRAEL IS THE CALENDAR FOR END TIME EVENTS.

What is a calendar for? It tells you when something is going to happen.

III. BECAUSE WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND ISRAEL TELLS US THAT TIME IS SHORT.

The calendar for life as we experience it right now does not have many pages left.

CONCLUSION: This morning, we need to act on the truth revealed in Ezekiel 20. **God's faithfulness to keep His promises to Israel is absolute proof that He will keep His promises to me if I become His child through faith in Jesus Christ, His Son.**