

## *Second Baptist Church of Doylestown*

### *Ezekiel Chapter 19-20*

*1/13/16*

### *Ezekiel Chapter 19*

#### **A Lament Over Israel's Princes - Verses 1-14**

<sup>1</sup>“Take up a lament concerning the princes of Israel <sup>2</sup>and say: “What a lioness was your mother among the lions! She lay down among them and reared her cubs. <sup>3</sup> She brought up one of her cubs, and he became a strong lion. He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater. <sup>4</sup> The nations heard about him, and he was trapped in their pit. They led him with hooks to the land of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> “When she saw her hope unfulfilled, her expectation gone, she took another of her cubs and made him a strong lion. <sup>6</sup> He prowled among the lions, for he was now a strong lion. He learned to tear the prey and he became a man-eater. <sup>7</sup> He broke down their strongholds and devastated their towns. The land and all who were in it were terrified by his roaring. <sup>8</sup> Then the nations came against him, those from regions round about. They spread their net for him, and he was trapped in their pit. <sup>9</sup> With hooks they pulled him into a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon. They put him in prison, so his roar was heard no longer on the mountains of Israel. <sup>10</sup> “Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard planted by the water; it was fruitful and full of branches because of abundant water. <sup>11</sup> Its branches were strong, fit for a ruler's scepter. It towered high above the thick foliage, conspicuous for its height and for its many branches. <sup>12</sup> But it was uprooted in fury and thrown to the ground. The east wind made it shrivel, it was stripped of its fruit; its strong branches withered and fire consumed them. <sup>13</sup> Now it is planted in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land. <sup>14</sup> Fire spread from one of its main branches and consumed its fruit. No strong branch is left on it fit for a ruler's scepter.’ “This is a lament and is to be used as a lament.”

**19:1-14** Ezekiel used illustrations to communicate many of his messages. With the picture of the lioness and her cubs, he raised the curiosity of his listeners. The lioness symbolized the nation of Judah, and the two cubs were two of its kings. The first cub was King Jehoahaz, who had been taken captive to Egypt in 609 B.C. by Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:31-33). The second cub was either King Jehoiachin, who had already been taken into captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 24:8-17), or King Zedekiah, who soon would be taken (2 Kings 25:7). This illustration showed that for Judah, there was no hope for a quick return from exile, and no escape from the approaching Babylonian armies.

**19:11-12** Not even the political and military might of Judah's kings could save the nation. Like branches of a vine, they would be cut off and uprooted by the “east wind”—the powerful Babylonian army.

### *Ezekiel Chapter 20*

#### **Rebellious Israel Purged - Verses 1-29**

<sup>1</sup>In the seventh year, in the fifth month on the tenth day, some of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and they sat down in front of me. <sup>2</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>3</sup> “Son of man, speak to the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Have you come to inquire of me? As surely as I live, I will not let you

inquire of me, declares the Sovereign LORD.' <sup>4</sup> "Will you judge them? Will you judge them, son of man? Then confront them with the detestable practices of their ancestors <sup>5</sup> and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, "I am the LORD your God."<sup>6</sup> On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands. <sup>7</sup> And I said to them, "Each of you, get rid of the vile images you have set your eyes on, 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 would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in Egypt. <sup>9</sup> But for the sake of my name, I brought them out of Egypt. I did it to keep my name from being profaned in the eyes of the nations among whom they lived and in whose sight I had revealed myself to the Israelites. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I led them out of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. <sup>11</sup> I gave them my decrees and made known to them my laws, by which the person who obeys them will live. <sup>12</sup> Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. <sup>13</sup> "Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—by which the person who obeys them will live—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the wilderness. <sup>14</sup> But for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. <sup>15</sup> Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land I had given them—a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands—<sup>16</sup> because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols. <sup>17</sup> Yet I looked on them with pity and did not destroy them or put an end to them in the wilderness. <sup>18</sup> I said to their children in the wilderness, "Do not follow the statutes of your parents or keep their laws or defile yourselves with their idols. <sup>19</sup> I am the LORD your God; follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. <sup>20</sup> Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God."<sup>21</sup> "But the children rebelled against me: They did not follow my decrees, they were not careful to keep my laws, of which I said, "The person who obeys them will live by them," and they desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. <sup>22</sup> But I withheld my hand, and for the sake of my name I did what would keep it from being profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose sight I had brought them out. <sup>23</sup> Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the wilderness that I would disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries, <sup>24</sup> because they had not obeyed my laws but had rejected my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths, and their eyes lusted after their parents' idols. <sup>25</sup> So I gave them other statutes that were not good and laws through which they could not live; <sup>26</sup> I defiled them through their gifts—the sacrifice of every firstborn—that I might fill them with horror so they would know that I am the LORD.'<sup>27</sup> "Therefore, son of man, speak to the people of Israel and say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: In this also your ancestors blasphemed me by being unfaithful to me: <sup>28</sup> When I brought them into the land I had sworn to give them and they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices, made offerings that aroused my anger, presented their fragrant incense and poured out their drink offerings. <sup>29</sup> Then I said to them: What is this high place you go to?" (It is called Bamah to this day.)

**20:1-49** Here Ezekiel gives a panoramic view of Israel's history of rebellion. The emphasis is on God's attempts to bring the nation back to himself and on God's mercy for his constantly rebellious and disobedient people. Ezekiel gives the message that the people alone are responsible for the troubles

and judgments they have experienced. Those who persist in rebellion God will purge out (20:38), while he will bring the faithful back into the land of Israel. The reason: so that "you will know that I am the LORD" (20:42).

**20:12-13** The Sabbath, instituted by God at creation, was entrusted to Israel as a sign that God had created and redeemed them (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). This day of rest was a gift from a loving God, not a difficult obligation. But the people repeatedly violated the Sabbath and ignored their God (see also 20:20-21). The Sabbath was meant to be a reminder that they were God's special people. Today, many Christians celebrate the Lord's Day, Sunday, as their Sabbath. Whatever the day, we must be careful to fulfill God's purpose for the Sabbath. He wants us to rest, to refocus, and to remember him.

**20:23-24** At the very beginning of Israel's history, God clearly warned the people about the consequences of disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). When the people disobeyed, God let them experience those devastating consequences to remind them of the seriousness of their sins. If you choose to live for yourself, apart from God, you may experience similar destructive consequences. Even through such consequences, however, God may be drawing you to himself. Let your misfortunes bring you to your senses and to the merciful God before it is too late.

**20:25** Why would God give them statutes that were not good? This isn't talking about any aspect of the laws of Moses—Ezekiel reinforces that law (20:11, 13, 21). Evidently the Jews had taken Exodus 13:12 and 22:29, the dedication of firstborn animals and children, as a justification for child sacrifice to the Canaanite god Molek. God gave them over to this delusion to get them to acknowledge him, to jar their consciences, and to revitalize their faith (20:26).

#### **Rebellious Israel Renewed - Verses 30-44**

<sup>30</sup> "Therefore say to the Israelites: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Will you defile yourselves the way your ancestors did and lust after their vile images? <sup>31</sup> When you offer your gifts—the sacrifice of your children in the fire—you continue to defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. Am I to let you inquire of me, you Israelites? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will not let you inquire of me. <sup>32</sup> "You say, "We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve wood and stone." But what you have in mind will never happen. <sup>33</sup> As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will reign over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. <sup>34</sup> I will bring you from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered—with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath. <sup>35</sup> I will bring you into the wilderness of the nations and there, face to face, I will execute judgment upon you. <sup>36</sup> As I judged your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will judge you, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>37</sup> I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. <sup>38</sup> I will purge you of those who revolt and rebel against me. Although I will bring them out of the land where they are living, yet they will not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>39</sup> "As for you, people of Israel, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Go and serve your idols, every one of you! But afterward you will surely listen to me and no longer profane my holy name with your gifts and idols. <sup>40</sup> For on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD, there in the land all the people of Israel will serve me, and there I will accept them. There I will require your offerings and your choice gifts, along with all your holy sacrifices. <sup>41</sup> I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations. <sup>42</sup> Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn with uplifted hand to give to your

ancestors. <sup>43</sup> There you will remember your conduct and all the actions by which you have defiled yourselves, and you will loathe yourselves for all the evil you have done. <sup>44</sup> You will know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake and not according to your evil ways and your corrupt practices, you people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

**20:35-38** When the Israelites disobeyed God by refusing to enter the Promised Land the first time, God chose to purify his people by forcing them to wander in the wilderness until that entire generation died (Numbers 14:26-35). Here he promised to purge the nation of its rebellious people again as they would cross the vast wilderness from their captivity in Babylon. Only those who faithfully followed God would be able to return to their land. The purpose of this wilderness judgment would be to purge out all those who worshiped idols and to restore all those faithful to God.

**20:39** The Israelites were worshiping idols and giving gifts to God at the same time! They did not believe in their God as the one true God; instead, they worshiped him along with the other gods of the land. Perhaps they enjoyed the immoral pleasures of idol worship; or perhaps they didn't want to miss out on the benefits the idols might give them. Often people believe in God and give him gifts of church attendance or service, while still holding on to their idols of money, power, or pleasure, not wanting to miss out on any possible benefits. But God wants all of our lives and all of our devotion; he will not share it because devotion to anything else is idol worship. Beware of trying to keep God pleased while also pursuing the pleasures of sin. You must choose one or the other.

#### **Prophecy Against the South - Verses 45-49**

<sup>45</sup> The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>46</sup> "Son of man, set your face toward the south; preach against the south and prophesy against the forest of the southland. <sup>47</sup> Say to the southern forest: 'Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to set fire to you, and it will consume all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it. <sup>48</sup> Everyone will see that I the LORD have kindled it; it will not be quenched.'" <sup>49</sup> Then I said, "Sovereign LORD, they are saying of me, 'Isn't he just telling parables?'"

**20:45-47** The "south" refers to Jerusalem and Judah. The "southland" is the region of the Negev, which is compared to a forest about to be destroyed by fire. **20:49** Ezekiel was exasperated and discouraged. Many Israelites were complaining that he spoke only in riddles (or parables), so they refused to listen. No matter how important our work or how significant our ministry, we will have moments of discouragement. Apparently God did not answer Ezekiel's plea; instead, he gave Ezekiel another message to proclaim. What has been discouraging you? Have you felt like giving up? Instead, continue doing what God has told you to do. He promises to reward the faithful (Mark 13:13). God's cure for discouragement may be another assignment. In serving others, we may find the renewal we need.