

Series: Questions

Title: Shall I Be Enquired of By You?

Text: Ezekiel 20:1-44

Date: July 19, 2020

Place: SGBC, NJ

**Ezekiel 20: 1: And it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, the tenth *day* of the month, *that* certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the LORD, and sat before me. 2: Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 3: Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to enquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.**

God will not be enquired of by a sinner who has broken God's covenant of works. We all broke God's covenant in Adam—and became guilty before God. How then can sinners like us have liberty to come to God in the holiest of holies and be accepted?

We can never come to God by a covenant of works. God gave the law to show us our offense when we sinned in Adam in the garden (Rom 5:20). He gave the law to show us our sins and shut our mouths in guilt (Rom 3:19-20). But God did not give the law for us to attempt to justify ourselves thereby. As God describes the sins of Israel in this chapter, we see our sins in the garden when we broke the covenant of works in Adam,

### In Egypt

**Ezekiel 20: 4: Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge *them*? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers: 5: And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying, I *am* the LORD your God; 6: In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands: 7: Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.**

Notice, it is repeated that God lifted his hand. God swore by himself because he can swear by no greater (Heb 6: 13-14). The children of Israel promised by a covenant vow to be true to God alone.

**Ezekiel 20: 8: But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt:**

They had already broken God's covenant in Adam so it was no surprise to God that they broke his covenant law. Again, I repeat, God gave the law to show us our sin and inability; to shut our mouths and declare us guilty before God.

**Ezekiel 20: 8...then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. 9: But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were*, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.**

Notice, God spared them for his name's sake. God will not allow his name to be polluted by the heathen saying God promised but was not able to bring it to pass. Also, there were elect children who would be born through these rebels therefore God spared them for his name's sake. Most importantly, Christ was coming through the tribe of Judah therefore God spared them for his name's sake.

### In the Wilderness

**Ezekiel 20: 10: Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. 11: And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them.**

That statement does not mean sinners have the ability to keep the law; God simply states a fact. Only one Man obeyed, Christ the GodMan!

**Ezekiel 20: 12: Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify them.**

The sabbath days typified Christ who is the believer's Sabbath Rest. When we are brought to rest in Christ by faith it is a sign—an evident token—that God himself has indeed sanctified us. That is what God typified by the sabbaths of the law.

**Ezekiel 20: 13: But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14: But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. 15: Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands; 16: Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but**

**polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. 17: Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.**

God is faithful to his covenant in condemning, as well in saving. Therefore, God did not destroy the fathers but let them wander for 40 years until they died. Then he delivered only Joshua, Caleb and the children 20 years and under. God always fulfills his covenant promises.

**Ezekiel 20: 18: But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: 19: I *am* the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; 20: And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God. 21: Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness. 22: Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.**

Over and over God reminds them how he lifted up his hand to them in covenant promise. Over and over God reminds them they never kept one covenant promise. Yet, over and over, God reminds them that he spared them for his name's sake, that his name would not be polluted among the heathen. God does everything in covenant for his name's sake.

### In Canaan

**Ezekiel 20: 23: I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; 24: Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols. 25: Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were* not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; 26: And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I *am* the LORD. 27: Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. 28: *For* when I had brought them into the land, *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings. 29: Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.**

Before delivering the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, God declared to them that they would bring his covenant law and God promised that he would scatter them among the nations. God knows the end from the beginning. As soon as the children of Israel entered Canaan they began breaking God's covenant law and worshipping idols. Next, God speaks to the elders who sat before Ezekiel who God had now scattered into Babylon.

### In Babylon

**Ezekiel 20: 30: Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? 31: For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you.**

God asks the elders sitting before Ezekiel, "Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? And commit ye whoredom after their abominations?" They had to answer, "Yes!" So do we. Each of us broke God's covenant in the garden in Adam, the same as the father's in Israel, their children and their children's children. We learn from this that sinners left to ourselves will not and cannot come to God in a covenant of works. We broke God covenant in Adam—and we continue to this day breaking God's law in our sinful flesh.

Therefore, God asks our question, "Shall I be enquired of by you, o house of Israel?" God will not be enquired of by a sinner who has lied to God by breaking God's covenant. The only way God will accept us at his holy throne if we have kept covenant with God in perfect righteousness and holiness of heart. How then can ruined sinners like us be accepted of God and enquire of God?

**Proposition:** The only way a sinner can come to God is by the everlasting covenant of grace which Christ fulfilled for his people—but how shall a sinner be brought into the bond of that covenant of grace?

### **GOD'S IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**

**Ezekiel 20: 32: And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.**

We were all like them. When God scattered them into Babylon they said we will adopt the practices of the heathen, combining it with God's worship, and worship idols of wood and stone. Left to ourselves we cannot and will not bow to Christ—nor can we even know the way of salvation in him. While dead in sins we are content to worship idols and die in our sins.

1 Corinthians 2: 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

But God sovereignly chose a people in Christ and entered covenant between Father and Son to save us. Therefore, God will bring each of his elect out from this world by the power of his sovereign, irresistible grace—**Ezekiel 20: 33: As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: 34: And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.**

God chose his elect by grace. He predestinated us to be conformed to the image of Christ . Therefore God shall call and separate each one out of this sin-cursed world.

Romans 8: 28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29: For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30: Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31: What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?"

Therefore, to his elect, God says, "NO, you won't conform to this world!" With *his mighty hand and stretched out arm*—his irresistible, sovereign, power—*with his fury poured out*—upon Christ our Substitute in our place and upon our enemies—God *rules over his people*—as our Sovereign Savior. He successfully sanctifies us out from this world. God says, "I will", "I will", "I will", "*I will bring you out from the people.*"

### THE ROD OF THE GOSPEL AND THE BOND OF THE COVENANT

**Ezekiel 20: 35: And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. 36: Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. 37: And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 38: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.**

A shepherd would use a staff to separate and count his sheep—that is the rod here. It typifies the gospel of Christ in the hand of Christ our Shepherd through the preaching of his word.

Psalm 110: 2: The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. 3: **THY PEOPLE SHALL BE WILLING IN THE DAY OF THY POWER**, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Our great Shepherd separates his sheep from other sinners and brings each of his sheep under the rod of the gospel and into the bond of the covenant. I read an article this morning by Pastor Jack Shanks. He was writing on the purpose of a pastor compared to the "religious idiocy" of this age. He said, "I don't want to be 'a nice old preacher.'" Speaking of what the gospel does he wrote—"*My intention is to separate men.*" Using the rod of the gospel preached by his undershepherd, Christ our Shepherd separates his sheep from the goats and brings us into his fold. Christ is the Shepherd of his sheep. Through *the rod of the gospel* Christ separates his sheep from the goats of this world, numbering us as his own—this gospel staff separates the sheep from the goats.

John 10: 1: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2: But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3: To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4: And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5: And a stranger will they not follow but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers....14: I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. 15: As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16: And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd....24 Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. 29 My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. 30 I and *my* Father are one.

Christ shall bring each of his lost sheep out of the countries wherein we are scattered. He shall bring each of his sheep under the rod of the gospel. He shall know us—regenerating us by the Spirit. He shall make the word effectual in our hearts, so that we hear his voice and follow him. And he shall not lose one sheep!

By giving us spiritual life through the Spirit of God, he pleads or reasons us—"come now let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as wool"—if you obey the word of this gospel. He reveals in our hearts that Christ has

fulfilled all the terms of the covenant on our behalf so that there remains nothing for his people to do for acceptance with God.

Daniel 9:24: Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Christ establishes us and seals us by the Spirit so that we know all God's promises are in Christ and fulfilled by Christ

2 Corinthians 1: 20: For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. 21: Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; 22: Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Then for the first time v38 *ye shall know that I am the LORD*. Then, by faith, we say as king David did

2 Samuel 23: 5: Although my house *be* not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.

## IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

**Ezekiel 20: 40: For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me:**

God brings each believer to worship God our Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, at his heavenly mountain. In other words, God brings us to worship him in spirit and in truth. We were carnal and so was our religion. But God takes us from Mt Sinai and the law and our carnal religion with its carnal works, from the letter of the law, from the works we could see.

Hebrews 12:18: For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19: And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: 20: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: 21 And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

God brings us to worship God in spirit in heavenly Mt Zion, heavenly Jerusalem; he brings us to truly serve the true and living God through faith in spirit and in truth.

Hebrews 12: 22 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

Men and women will stop looking to earthly Israel, earthly Mt Zion, earthly Jerusalem, the letter of the law, their filthy works, and an earthly kingdom only when God creates them anew in Spirit making them worship God in spirit and in truth in heavenly Jerusalem where Christ our Life sits at God's right hand. Christ taught this to the woman at the well. She said,

John 4: 20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...23: But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

## **THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST**

**Ezekiel 20: 40...there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41: I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered;**

Remember our question? Shall I be enquired of by you? When God makes us approach him through faith in Christ then "Yes!" God shall accept us. God will be enquired of by us at his throne of grace when we come in Christ alone. He accepts us, accepts our worship and accepts our service in the sweet savor of Christ's righteousness. When God has gathered us out and robed us in Christ's righteousness, created in us a new holy heart, through faith in Christ God accepts us *in Christ's sweet savor*.

Ephesians 1:6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 5: 2:...Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

1 Peter 2: 5: Ye [are]...an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

## THROUGH SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT AND BELIEF OF THE TRUTH

**Ezekiel 20: 41: and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. 42: And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, 43: And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. 44: And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.**

When God has truly sanctified his child then in our hearts God is sanctified. In our hearts we behold God set apart, separate from all vain gods. We behold God as the one true and living God. Therefore, we are not ashamed. We glorify God in our gospel and in our lives declaring before this heathen world that “salvation is of the Lord.”

Now, we cease glorifying in ourselves: knowing ourselves to be nothing but sinners so that we put no confidence in our works—*And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed.* We broke the law in our first covenant head, Adam. We broke the law of God in ourselves. Even as believers “*in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.*” We can never be saved by our works only through faith in Christ.

Galatians 3:10: For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11: But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith....13: Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: 14: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Romans 8:1: *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

When the Spirit of God has sanctified us then we know God and we praise only God's name because he has not dealt with us according to our sins. He saved us by free grace, by his merit, by his works—*And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.*

Psalm 103: 10: He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11: For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

Brethren, there is not one covenant in this world that men will not break. Sinners always find a way to justify lying to God. But the bond of this covenant can never be broken. It is bound by: God the Father's immutable purpose, the Son's effectual blood, the Spirit's unbreakable seal and by the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts which never fails to keep us believing on Christ and loving one another — “*The love of Christ constraineth us!*” (2 Corinthians 5:14)

“Oh to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace, now, like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to thee.”

**Amen!**