

Acceptable
Ezekiel 20:39-42
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A. Bad Habits (v. 39):

1. Said – This is completely what the Lord has to say about bringing His people back to Himself and their blessings.
 - a) The Lord directs this message to Israel by repeatedly saying “you”. When saying “you” the Lord says “Me or I”. This definitely demonstrates that this is a personal relationship and worship is at the center of it all.
2. Lord (Adonay not Yahweh) God – The Lord, through Ezekiel, verbalizes that when He addresses Israel He does so as their Ruler who has all authority and power and sincerely desires to maintain a genuine relationship with them.
3. Lord (Adonay not Yahweh) God – Since the Lord has a covenant with Israel and has all authority and power; He is their strength, their warrior and therefore their King whom they have and need.
4. Go, serve everyone his idol – As the Lord promises restoration, He also promises to purge those who do evil among Israel. So, the Lord ironically commands them to continue the lifestyle they have developed of worshipping idols and see if they would return to ~~in~~ His restoration process since He is King (vs. 33) and Lord God (vs. 39).
 - a) Many times, we limit idols to graven images. What is it that we love so much, that it competes with time, energy and money being spent when compared to the same being provided to the Lord?
 - b) In Ezekiel’s day Israel was still rebellious, just like her ancestors, and was involved in idolatry and child sacrifice. Therefore, God refused to let them inquire of Him (cf. v. 3). He would not be a divine Ouija board they could manipulate for an answer whenever they pleased.^[1]
 - c) They can serve their idols, but they cannot do so and serve the Lord at the same time. So “go” is sending them in a different redirection.
 - d) The Lord is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5), He does not like us worshipping other gods. He says that His name is Jealous (Exodus 34:14; Duet. 4:24; 5:9; Jos. 24:19; Ez. 39:25; Nah. 1:2).

5. Go serve – Just as in the case of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, the Lord God commands them to not be complacent but to actively go to their idols. He commands them to labor like a slave who is in bondage before them. In other words, challenging them to see if their idol will restore them or if He will include them in His restoration of Israel.
 - a) A figurative reference to a shepherd’s staff is used in counting sheep (Lev 27:32; Jer. 33:13). I will let you go in by number (so, RSV, following the LXX) into the fold. 38. I will purge out from among you the rebels. The rebels will be separated and not allowed to share in the future restoration. 39. “Serve ye everyone his idols. God will give them up to pursue their chosen way to its inevitable end”.^[2]
 - b) When we are in need, and it seems like the Lord is silent or non-responsive, we sometimes turn to other means to achieve what we believe is essential to us.
6. But later you will listen to me – When this form of worship proves fruitless, these individuals will provide the Lord God their full attention intellectually and spiritually. This will bring them to a full understanding of all He is teaching them and will do for them.
7. But later you will listen to me – Our exhaustive efforts to find alternative methods to be blessed and find fulfillment away from the Lord will prove fruitless. The emptiness can create an appetite to understand fully intellectually and spiritually all that the Lord has to say. Many believers come this way the older they get.
8. My holy name you will profane no longer – The people of Israel are worshipping idols, but when they turn their hearts back to the Lord, His sacred memory and reputation will no longer be defiled among the nations with their gifts to their idols.

B. True Worship (v. 40):

1. My holy mountain – The Lord’s holy mountain is a high mountain in His place of worship. By it being high, worship is definitely intentional because the worship has to ascend (in their case on foot or donkey) to worship the Lord. It stands out as people go about the bustle that sometimes life demands.
 - a) A mountain: 1. Jerusalem is two thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea. The rock where the altar of burnt offering stood—now covered by what is called the “Mosque of Omar”—is the highest part of Mount Moriah. We look up to heaven in worship. 2. *It is conspicuous*. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Private worship should be unostentatious and

secret (Matt. 6:6); but public worship should be open to all, and well known, that others may be invited, and that God may be glorified. Churches should be built in conspicuous places.

3. *It is consecrated by old memories.* There the fathers worshipped, and there also God came down and blessed his people in the olden time. Faith is strengthened, and worship is stimulated by such memories.^[3]

- b) The Lord will be worshiped, not at the holy places, but at The Holy Place. Israel itself will be a *pleasing odor*, an acceptable sacrifice to God (20:41: cf. Rom. 12:1). Besides the idea of separateness, the concept of *holiness* here means God's strange power to bring history to this successful conclusion, despite being represented by a powerless people. Zion will be the seat of God's rule—not Babylon nor Thebes, the two historic seats of ancient Near Eastern power.^[4]

2. Declares the Lord God – On the mountain the Lord speaks with authority focused on rebuilding His relationship with Israel and all those who went astray worshipping idols.
3. Declares the Lord God – Because the Lord has all power, He speaks with all authority so that He will regather Israel to His place of worship reestablishing His relationship with His people before all the nations.
4. Everyone will serve Him – This must be a time during the millennial or the new heavens and the new earth because he is saying that this is everyone in Israel.
5. Everyone will serve Him – The Lord God is going to compel all Israel continuously, endlessly to sacrificially labor before Him like slaves. This work must be done in an exhilarating manner (Deuteronomy 28:47-48). God demands our full attention in worship.
6. I will accept him – This kind of exhilarating service brings the Lord great pleasure and atones for the debt Israel owes to the Lord.
7. I will seek – The Lord, who has all power and authority, is continuously, endlessly inquiring and examining what gifts they need to bring or have brought before Him.
8. Your contributions – The offering the Lord seeks is what is required of them and therefore what they were obligated to bring to His holy mountain (His place of worship).
9. Choicest of your gifts – The Lord is seeking for something specific. He is seeking an offering that was specially set aside because it is the first fruits of all that they were going to bring. This is why it is a meaningful purposeful gift unto the Lord.
10. Your holy things; Sanctuary, holy – Everything being done must include all that the Levitical Law requires.

11. As a soothing aroma – When worship takes place in the manner described in verse 40, the Lord says it is like a nice smelling fragrance of perfume in His presence.
12. I will accept you – The Lord finding pleasure with the offering causes Him to now have a renewed relationship with Israel. Their worship before the Lord, on His holy mountain, accomplished its purpose.
13. I bring out; To go forth – When the service provided produces acceptable worship and the Lord’s relationship with Israel is renewed, He is then prepared to take them out of the bondage they were experiencing.
 - a) The people wanted to be like their idolatrous neighbors, but God would not let His people become totally divorced from Him: What you have in mind will never happen. He would remain their God, ruling over them with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath (v. 33). The words “mighty hand” and “outstretched arm” would call to mind God’s strength in delivering His people from Egypt (cf. Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; Ps. 136:12; and cf. “outstretched arm” in Ex. 6:6 and “mighty hand” in Ex. 32:11). However, His hand and arm would now bring wrath, not deliverance.^[5]
14. I bring out; To go forth – When our worship before the Lord is sincere the Spirit of the Lord can set us free from anything that encumbers our relationship with the Lord. This empowered relationship strengthens our bond with Christ in such a meaningful manner (John 15:1-11) we can “do all things through Christ” (Philippians 4:13).
 - a) As the sheep will pass under the rod of the Great Shepherd, those who do not belong to Him—unbelieving Israelites who rebel against God—will be removed. God will not allow those sheep to enter His land. God’s process of purification will mean that only true sheep will enjoy the covenant of blessing.^[6]
15. Gather from being scattered – The Lord scattered Israel because of their disobedience. Their relationship with the Lord was temporarily severed. Because He is the Lord God, He continually desires to have a relationship with His people. So as soon as they made their worship genuine and true, the Lord God accepts it and reestablishes what He always desired, “a relationship” with Israel. The only reason we can have a relationship with the Lord is because He is always seeking His children’s attention; He is gracious, and He is love (Nineveh; Jonah 4:1-4).
16. I will prove myself holy; dedicated – Their sincere worship reestablishes their relationship with the Lord, regathering them as a nation from among the nations. This establishes

that the Lord God is holy; it is only because His holiness was not respected that his people were defeated. Once His holiness it is respected, because He is King of Kings (vs. 33) He can do anything; no matter how powerful and mighty those in power maybe, He can rebuild His nation anytime He chooses.

C. Live Blessed (v. 42):

1. You will know that I am the Lord – Not only will the nations know by this experience that the Lord reigns and was not defeated by them, but Israel will also know because when the almighty Lord regathers them. They will come to their senses and have a full understanding of why they suffered for so many years.
 - a) It stresses God’s self-existence and His covenant-keeping faithfulness. Israel will come to understand the true meaning of God’s name (and character) when He brings her into Palestine. This promise does not depend on her faithfulness, for she had been extremely unfaithful. The promise, made by God, depends on *His* faithfulness. He will demonstrate His covenant loyalty by fulfilling it (cf. Ezek. 20:44).^[7]
2. When I bring you into the land of Israel – It is the king, the Lord God who by His power and might will reestablish them back into Israel. They could not do this on their own. It is He alone that has the power to take them from their captivity back into Israel.
3. I swore – Their deliverance led to restoration back into the land of Israel because the Lord does not break His promises.
4. To give to your forefathers – The restoration of their relationship with the Lord is because He is faithful to His promises. He diligently works to maintain His promises no matter how long ago they were established or how unfaithful His people may be.

^[1] Dyer, C. H. (1985). [Ezekiel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1265). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^[2] Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Eze 20:33). Chicago: Moody Press.

^[3] Spence-Jones, H. D. M., ed. (1909). *Ezekiel* (Vol. 1, p. 362). Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^[4] Lind, M. (1996). *Ezekiel* (p. 173). Herald Press.

^[5] Dyer, C. H. (1985). [Ezekiel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1265). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^[6] Dyer, C. H. (1985). [Ezekiel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1266). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^[7] Dyer, C. H. (1985). [Ezekiel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1266). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.