

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious
Part XXI: God's Big Lesson On Getting Answers From Him
(Ezekiel 20:1-31)

I. Introduction

- A. Psalm 66:18 NIV teaches that if we cherish sin in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us, that He will not answer our questions or petitions that we bring to Him in prayer!
- B. Ezekiel 20:1-31 vividly illustrates this truth, and we view the passage for our insight and edification:

II. God's Big Lesson On Getting Answers From Him, Ezekiel 20:1-31.

- A. In Ezekiel 20:1, almost 11 months after the elders of Israel had last come before the prophet Ezekiel seeking an answer from the Lord (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1263), these same elders returned to Ezekiel's house and sat before him, again seeking an answer from the Lord to the questions or concerns that burdened them.
- B. The Lord then told Ezekiel that He would not answer their questions, Ezekiel 20:2-3. Indeed, God rhetorically asked Ezekiel if he would judge them, essentially telling him, "Judge these people," v. 4a; *Ibid.*, p. 1263-1264.
- C. To explain His very negative response toward these elders, God recounted His past dealings with Israel down through history, revealing that Israel's current generation was even more rebellious against Him than were their forefathers, Ez. 20:4b-31a (We rely on the outline in the Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, 1978, ftn. to Ez. 20:1-32):
 - 1. God told how the people of Israel had rebelled against Him in Egypt, Ezekiel 20:5-9:
 - a. When the Lord with uplifted hand solemnly swore to be Israel's God while they were in Egyptian bondage (Ezek. 20:5-6), He called them to cast away their false idols, Ezekiel 20:7.
 - b. However, the people rebelled against the Lord, and even held onto the idols of their Egyptian overlords, infuriating the Lord into making Him want punish them, Ezekiel 20:8.
 - c. Nevertheless, for His own name's sake, that is, to protect His reputation before the lost Gentile world in fulfilling His promise to His people, the Lord brought Israel up out of Egypt with great power, Ezek. 20:9.
 - 2. God told how Israel had rebelled on the journey from Egypt to Kadesh-barnea, Ezekiel 20:10-17:
 - a. When the Lord had brought Israel into the wilderness out of Egypt, He gave her His Law, directing that if the people would observe it, they would live by its rules and be blessed of God, Ezekiel 20:10-12.
 - b. However, they refused to obey God's laws as especially illustrated in their pollution of the Sabbath Day restriction to where God again wanted to destroy them in the wilderness, Ezekiel 20:13.
 - c. Yet, to protect His reputation before the Gentile world, once again, God did not destroy Israel, v. 14.
 - d. The Lord still punished that older generation, promising to destroy them in the wilderness (v. 15-16) but He did not destroy the nation, salvaging Israel's younger generation to protect His reputation, v. 17.
 - 3. The Lord told how even the younger generation rebelled against Him in the wilderness, Ezekiel 20:18-26:
 - a. God then urged the younger generation in Israel to obey His Word for blessing (Ezekiel 20:18-20), but that younger generation rebelled against Him, infuriating the Lord like their fathers had done, Ezek. 20:21.
 - b. Once again, the Lord refused to destroy them to protect His reputation, Ezekiel 20:22.
 - c. However, He warned that He would scatter them among the nations, giving them over to their sins in judgment were they to continue to sin against Him, Ez. 20:23-26; *Ibid.*, Bib. Know. Com., O. T., p. 1265.
 - d. The Lord explained how Israel had rebelled against Him even upon entering Canaan, Ezekiel 20:27-29.
 - 4. God then told how Israel in Ezekiel's era was more rebellious against Him than the fathers, Ez. 20:30-31a:
 - a. The Lord noted how Israel's people even in Ezekiel's era practiced the idolatry of their fathers, v. 30.
 - b. However, they were worse than the fathers, giving their children as sacrifices to pagan gods, Ez. 20:31a.
- D. Accordingly, God **again refused** to answer the questions of Israel's elders, for they intended to be like the Gentile nations around them in worshiping idols made of mere wood and stone, Ezekiel 20:31b,c.
 - 1. After noting how Israel's people in Ezekiel's day gave their children up as human sacrifices to pagan idols (v. 31a), God again asked if Israel's elders would [dare] come before him to inquire of Him, Ezek. 20:31b.
 - 2. God then swore that He would not answer them, Ezekiel 20:31c.

Lesson: *When Israel's elders again sought to receive an answer from God, the Lord recounted the nation's long history of rebelling against Him with multiple, heinous sins as His great reasons for not answering their petitions.*

Application: *(1) If we want answers to prayer, we must confess our sins to God and turn from them. (2) If we wonder why God does not answer our prayers, we must review His past dealings with us to discern the reason why!*