

Ezekiel 20:30-39: Clear prediction of God removing idolatry from Israel during the exile. On Christ's first advent, the Jews definitely do not worship idols. It is rampant among the Gentiles, but there is not a single rebuke for the Jews on the sin of idolatry in the gospels.

Summary of the background Ezekiel 20:1-29:

The dated prophecy (1) is four years before Jerusalem's fall. It is for the elders in exile who comes for a word from God (1-4) but instead Ezekiel is charged to review Israel's shameful past of indulging in idols. He starts with Egypt before the Exodus (5-9 see v8), followed by their time in the wilderness (10-24 see v24). Even on entering the Promised Land (25-29 see v26, v28), idols are ubiquitous and they even practice human sacrifices.

Explaining the Passage Ezekiel 20:30-39:

In v30-31, it is clear that God is addressing the elders again for v31 is picking up from 20:3. God speaks directly to these elders in v32-35 to affirm that idols will be abolished from among them. He will first bring them into "the wilderness of the peoples" (35) suggesting that it will be in their exile. Then the method in v37-38 is to separate out the rebels and only the faithful will enter the land. Passing under the rod is like Lev. 27:32, when the shepherd uses it to count the flock and separate his tithe, the holy 10% for the Lord. Truly, after the exile, only devout Jews return and idolatry in Israel is eliminated. In the days of Christ absolutely *no* idols are found. Hence, v39 again speaks directly to the elders present, that they will eventually listen and will surely do away with idols.

Linking to v40-44: The final vision of v40-44 with all Israel serving God is definitely in the Millennium for the loathing of themselves in v43 is not apparent in Israel today. On this basis, Dispensationalists argue that v30-39 is to be taken together and all these will happen in the Millennium, only to be fulfilled with Christ's Second Advent. They also insist that "face to face" in v35 must be taken literally. But this ignores that v30-39 is addressed directly to the elders present and the cessation of idols among the Jews in Christ's days confirms that v30-39 is already fulfilled. Note also v35, the statement of "wilderness of the peoples" do fit a description of the exile. Moreover, the passage is filled with metaphors (e.g. milk and honey v15; My eyes spared them v17; withdrew My hand v22; every high hill v30; play the harlot v30; serving wood and stone v32) and so why insist that only "face to face" is to be taken literally? If v30-39 is in the Millennium, it implies that the present Messianic Jews are not the predicted purified remnant of God.

Comparing v30-39 to Eze. 34:11-32 (refer to the Prophecy 1-p): The latter passage is a rebuke to Israel's leaders after Jerusalem's fall in 33:21-22. Ezekiel is recommissioned (Eze. 33:7) to speak to the refugees, prophesying how God will test and purify them before Israel's present regathering to the land. This passage also ends in 34:23-31 on the Millennium and so it is usual for prophetic rebukes such as v30-39 to close on a vision of restoration in the Millennium. However, note that Ezekiel is yet to be recommissioned in v30-39 and his original charge in Eze. 1:3 is to rebuke Israel for their sins before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. The charge is that if they will not repent, they will be exiled (70 years in Babylon). God knows that they will not repent and thus predicts under Ezekiel's first commission that He will abolish their idols and then bring them back to the land after the first exile. Therefore, if v30-39 are on events of testing in the Millennium after Christ return, it does not fit well with Ezekiel's first commission of rebuking sins that are in Jerusalem before the fall, especially when idols already disappear after the first exile.