

Series: Questions

Title: Shall Covenant-Breakers Prosper? (1 of 2)

Text: Ez 17:1-24

Date: June 14, 2020

Place: SGBC, NJ

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Ezekiel 17: 1: And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2: Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; 3: And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD;

A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: 4: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he set it in a city of merchants. 5: He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed *it* by great waters, *and* set it *as* a willow tree. 6: And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. 6: And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.

7: There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers: and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. 8: It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine.

9: Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. 10: Yea, behold, *being* planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew.

11: Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12: Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these *things mean*? tell *them*, Behold, the king of Babylon [Nebuchadnezzar: first great eagle] is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, [king Jeconiah] and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; 13: And hath taken of the king's seed, [Zedekiah—Jeconiah's uncle; Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah king in Jeconiah's place] and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: [anyone who would be a threat to Babylon.] 14: That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, *but* that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

Nebuchadnezzar and Zedekiah entered covenant by an oath. Zedekiah swore by an oath that he would remain base/humble under Nebuchadnezzar's ruling hand and would not lift himself up in rebellion. Nebuchadnezzar swore that Israel would stand as a nation and prosper under his rule.

Ezekiel 17: 15: But he [Zedekiah] rebelled against him [Nebuchadnezzar] in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, [Pharaoh was the other great eagle] that they might give him horses and much people. 15: Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such *things*? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?

16: *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, [God swears by an oath, he swears by himself because he can swear by no greater] surely in the place *where* the king *dwelleth* that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, *even* with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die. 17: Neither shall Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: 18: Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when, lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these *things*, he shall not escape. 19: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; *As* I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. [when Zedekiah despised the oath and broke the covenant with Nebuchadnezzar he did so to God. God will repay] 20: And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. 21: And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it*.

22: Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set *it*; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant *it* upon an high mountain and eminent: 23: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. 24: And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

Proposition: God's holy justice will destroy all covenant-breakers: either in Adam in justice or in Christ by grace. Let's see what that means.

ADAM IN ZEDEKIAH

We see Adam in Zedekiah. Zedekiah's covenant and oath to Nebuchadnezzar was a covenant and oath to God. So look at God and Zedekiah. God gave Zedekiah one law—he was not to lift himself up in rebellion but remain humble under God's hand by being under Nebuchadnezzar's rule. It was a covenant of works. If Zedekiah kept the covenant he would live but if he disobeyed God would justly kill him. Zedekiah broke covenant and God recompensed it upon his head—he died.

As a king Zedekiah was a representative head—his rebellion was recompensed not only on him but on all Zedekiah’s house. Three things resulted:

2 Kings 25: 7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

- *Death*—Nebuchadnezzar killed all Zedekiah’s princes and all his children and Zedekiah died in Babylonian bondage
- *Blindness*—Nebuchadnezzar plucked out Zedekiah’s eyes
- *Separation*—God scattered the remainder of Israel into the four winds of the earth

Like Zedekiah, God set Adam in a well-watered garden, in a prosperous land to serve God, as a humble willow, not a mighty cedar. God made a covenant of works with Adam—“*of all the trees though mayest eat, but in the day though eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, thou shalt surely die.*” Obey and live, disobey and die—covenant of works. Adam disobeyed God—in pride against God he ate of that one tree—he broke the one law God gave him.

Like Zedekiah, God made Adam represent all the children who would be born of Adam—all mankind. So when Adam disobeyed we all disobeyed.

- *Death*—we became guilty of sin and dead spiritually
- *Blindness*—we come into the world spiritually blind
- *Separation*—our sins separated us from holy God.

Romans 5: 12: Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:...19: For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, [hold your place here while we look at the good news in our text]

CHRIST THE LAST ADAM

Ezekiel 17: 22: Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent: 23: In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. 24: And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the LORD have spoken and have done it.

Before God made Adam, God chose a people in Christ his Son and blessed us with all spiritual blessings. So the Son of God, Christ Jesus, came through the very most top of high cedar—through Israel, through the tribe of Judah, through the house of David—as God promised.

God cut Israel down to a stump but Christ came forth from it. When you leave today, look to your left, between the scrubby tree and the fence you will see a stump. Out of that stump a tender plant is growing. If it grows it will be a mighty tree one day. God cut Israel down to a stump because of their sin and rebellion—they were under Roman rule just like Zedekiah was under Babylonian rule when Christ came. But from that stump Christ was born and grew up “*the tender one*”—Christ is the tender one in our text.

Isaiah 53:2: For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

Isaiah 11: 1: And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

Isaiah 4:2: In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Jeremiah 23:5: Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

Zechariah 6:12: And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

Why did the Son of God take a human body? All who God purposed to save—those God chose by free grace—broke the covenant of works in Adam. God is holy therefore for holy God to receive his people, we have to be as righteous and holy as God—we have to keep the law without once breaking it from a holy heart. Since all God’s elect are guilty in Adam, God must execute us because the wages of sin is death, we must die under the justice of God. How can God save his people and at the same time honor his law by executing his people? How can his people be shown mercy yet die under the justice of God?

The Son of God took our place: he came down and took flesh like God’s elect, yet without sin. He put himself under that covenant of works in our place that he might put his people under the everlasting covenant of grace. Christ lived perfectly

under the law. Then he bore the sin of his people and died under the justice of the law in our place. By his obedience Christ made his people righteous and holy.

To show us how superior Christ to the first Adam, like Zedekiah, Adam was put in a prosperous garden—but Christ came into a sin-cursed world where every sinner hated him and was against him by nature. Adam had one law—Christ was made under all the laws of Israel. Adam lifted himself in pride and rebelled against God—but Christ humbled himself under God’s hand, and became obedient, even unto the death of the cross. Christ Jesus the Son of God made his people righteous by his obedience—that is why he cried out, “It is finished!”

Romans 5: 19: For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. 20: Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

In order to show us God is satisfied with his people in his Son, God raised Christ from the dead—*“planted [Christ] upon an high mountain and eminent.”*

Hebrews 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Like a tender plant grows into a mighty tree, Christ is the Tree and his church the Branches which grows with every child he calls by grace—*“and it shall bring forth boughs, [branches] and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.”* God’s elect, who Christ redeemed: Jew and Gentile, from every race, rich and poor, male and female, all dwell in Christ the goodly Cedar. From Mt Zion, at God’s right hand, the glorified GodMan is calling out his people through this gospel—and shall not lose one who he justified by his precious blood.

God our Savior receives all the glory—*“And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, [God brought down proud Israel and exalted Christ who humbled himself under God’s mighty hand] have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: [Israel was a green tree but God dried it up because Israel broke his covenant, Christ was like a dry tree but God made the church into a flourishing tree by Christ fulfilling the covenant for his people] I the LORD have spoken and have done it.”*

A WORD OF APPLICATION

When God calls his child, he regenerates us by the Holy Spirit but he does not put us under a covenant of works, it is not *“do this and live.”* It is Christ has done it! Now you freely have eternal life through faith in him! God’s covenant is unbreakable between the Father and Son, therefore unbreakable for his people who believe on him. Like as God swore by himself to destroy Zedekiah, God swears by himself into our hearts—swearing by himself he can swear by no greater.

Hebrews 6: 13: For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, 14: Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15: And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16: For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17: Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

He says of each believer in Christ

Psalm 89:28: My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

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.

The covenant of grace declares Christ did all the works for his people therefore God promises each believer that he will be our God and we his people—it is this everlasting covenant of grace that he writes on our hearts.

Jeremiah 31: 31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34: And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

David said, “he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: this is all my hope and all my salvation” (2 Samuel 23: 5) So God promises his believing child,

Psalm 92: 12: The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13: Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; 15 To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

AMEN!