

CONCERNING THE WAY

March 10, 2009

LESSON 51: PROPHECY SERIES — THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL



We're going to take a couple of lessons and study the book of Ezekiel. This is an incredible book, but one that is very difficult for some people to get into. We won't take the time now to look at every chapter in detail, but I'll give an overview of the book up to chapter 36, so you can get a feel for it, and this will give us the background for the chapters we want to focus on.

Maybe this overview will take some of the anxiety of reading Ezekiel away. Many people find this book difficult to get through, hard to understand. But many who have taken the time to study it have found that it becomes one of their favorite books in the entire Bible.

Outline:

Chapters 1-3 - The call of the prophet, the commissioning of Ezekiel

Chapter 4-24 - Judgment pronounced on Judah (Given before the siege of Jerusalem)

Chapters 25-32 - Judgment pronounced on the Gentile nations (Given during the siege)

25:1-7 - Judgment on Ammon

25:8-11 - Judgment on Moab

25:12-14 - Judgment on Edom

25:15-17 - Judgment on Philistia

26:1 - 28:19 - Judgment on Tyre

28:20-26 - Judgment on Sidon

29:1 - 32:32 - Judgment on Egypt

Chapters 33-48 - The Restoration of Israel (Given after the siege)

33:1 - 39:29 - the Return of Israel to the Land

40:1 - 48:35 - The Restoration of Israel in the Kingdom

Background:

Like many books of the Bible, the background of Ezekiel comes from the most important chapter in the Bible – Genesis 15 – the Abrahamic Covenant, where God unconditionally promised Abraham and his descendants land, seed, and blessing, and all the world would be blessed through him. Everything in scripture is an amplification of this covenant.

The other background chapter for this book is Deuteronomy 28 (called the spine of the Old Testament)– that is the most important chapter of the Mosaic covenant. This covenant is conditional. This chapter contains blessings for obeying the covenant, curses for disobedience – this shows what happened in general to the Jews throughout history. This is the rules of the game for the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament. Verse 49 is the apex of the curses this prophesied the Babylonian invasion:

Deuteronomy 28:49 "The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand,

Judgment 1 – 931 BC – the nation was divided into northern and southern kingdoms – just after reign of Solomon

Judgment 2 - 722 BC – the Northern kingdom was swept away by the Assyrians

Judgment 3 – 586 BC – the Southern kingdom was taken by Babylon

Judgment 3 is the time period when Ezekiel takes place – he was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah, and a contemporary of Daniel.

The 1st deportation was in 605 – Daniel was taken in this one.

The 2nd deportation was in 597 – Ezekiel was taken in this one

The 3rd deportation was in 586 – Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple

Ezekiel is a prophet of God prophesying to the 2nd group of Jewish exiles along the Kebar river after 597 BC but before 586 BC judgment. He is prophesying about the 3rd judgment in 586, because the exiles were thinking that they would be returning to Jerusalem soon, they had a false optimism. Ezekiel's ministry was telling them that they had a false optimism and that they needed to make themselves comfortable in Babylonia; they were going to be staying there for a while.

The book is symmetrically structured. Chapters 1-24 are in symmetrical relationship to 33-48. Ezekiel was first commissioned in 1st section, and he prophesies judgment. He is then re-commissioned in the 2nd section, and prophesies blessings. His ministry switched halfway through. And the glory of God departs in the first section, and returns in the 2nd section, so it's very symmetrical.

Chapters 25-32 is the fulcrum of the book, is about God's judgment against the surrounding foreign nations, which are today all Muslim nations.

In 1-24 Ezekiel is speaking to the exiles warning them about the 586 judgment. In chapters 33-48 the 3rd judgment has happened, and now he's prophesying hope to the exiles, encouraging them that God is not finished with Israel, and that He has a glorious plan for the nation

Ezekiel takes great care to record dates for his prophecies; he is a great recorder/compiler. Most of the prophecies are in chronological order, until you get to some of the prophecies about the foreign nations.

Ezekiel was trained as a priest (1:3) – this explains why Ezekiel is interested in some of the subjects like the temple, the priesthood, angels, sacrifices, the millennial temple, etc.

Chapter 1 – 3 – Ezekiel's commissioning to speak for God. He must be shown to be commissioned by God, because these prophecies in chapters 1-24 are very harsh, this will help people believe him that he is sent from God

Chapter 1 – Heaven makes contact with earth, and God contacts Ezekiel.

Chapter 2 – Ezekiel receives his assignment – to speak God's Word, to give God's Word of judgment to the house of Israel. In 2:8-3:11 Ezekiel eats God's words; this represents God putting into Ezekiel's heart the message of God, God's truth.

Chapter 3:21 - Ezekiel is appointed a watchman – a watchman is to declare to the people exactly what God has said. In Acts 20:26-27 Paul took on the responsibility of watchman. Teachers have the same responsibility today. If the teacher delivers what God says and the people don't listen, it is not the teacher's fault. But if the teacher does not teach what God has said, the teacher will be held responsible (James 3:1).

3:22-27 – Ezekiel is given his limitations – God strikes him dumb – he cannot speak except when

God speaks through him. This is so people will know that whenever Ezekiel opens his mouth, what comes out is directly from God.

Chapter 4 - 24 – Messages of judgment on Israel

Chapters 4-5 – 4 signs that judgment is on its way

1. Ezekiel makes a clay model of Jerusalem and plays toy soldiers to demonstrate the siege of Jerusalem is coming – people will cry out to God but He will not listen
2. Ezekiel is told to lay on his side for the length of the siege – 430 days, each day represents a year that Israel was disobedient – 430 years of disobedience
3. Severity of the siege – Ezekiel cooks using a fire burning from animal dung – represents the moral pollution of the nation – the ingredients represent the scarcity of these things that will come
4. The results of the siege – Ezekiel is told to get a haircut – shave his head – this represents what will happen to residents of Jerusalem – the few hairs he tucks away represents the small remnant that is faithful and will survive

Chapters 6-7 – Two Sermons

1. sermon on idolatry
2. sermon on imminency – that the judgment is imminent, has been ordained, on it's way

Chapters 8-11 – Prophecies through visions – God shows Ezekiel what was taking place in the temple in Jerusalem at that time, to show him how corrupt the religious establishment has become

1. Part 1 – ch. 8 – Ezekiel is shown idolatrous activity in the temple by the priests
2. Part 2 – ch. 9 – Marking the righteous inhabitants and the ones who don't have the mark are slain
3. Part 3 – ch. 10 – Ezekiel sees the glory of God leaving the temple – this is what sin does, it pushes God out gradually
4. Part 4 – ch. 11 – the glory of God leaves for good (until the millennial kingdom). The kingdom of God left the earth until the Messiah comes. **There is no Kingdom of God today on earth.**

Chapters 12-19 – False securities – 9 false concepts that the exiles were trusting in

1. The Jerusalem remnant – they were saying, well, there's still a remnant of our people left in Jerusalem – Ezekiel showed them that those people were about to leave.
2. False parables (ch. 12) – parables of the denial of the coming judgments, that the prophecies were for a future time.
3. Messages of peace by false prophets and prophetesses (ch. 13)– people saying peace, peace, and Ezekiel showed them there is no peace. They were ignoring the real problem, they were not dealing with their sin. They were preaching out of their own minds.
4. Message against idolatrous elders (ch. 14)
5. Presence of righteous intercessors (ch. 14)– people were saying, “There are righteous people in Jerusalem, God won't judge the city!” Ezekiel dispels that notion, saying even the prayers of Noah, Daniel, and Job wouldn't stop this judgment
6. Their status of God's vine (ch. 15) - they were saying their status of being God's vine protected them from judgment, Ezekiel said their sin made the vine useless
7. Their status as God's special city (ch. 16)– the city of David – nothing bad could happen to it! Ezekiel said that Jerusalem has become more wicked than Sodom and Gomorrah
8. Exiles trusted in their king Zedekiah and the agreement he had with Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 17). Ezekiel informed them that Zedekiah would ally with Egypt, thereby breaking the agreement with Nebuchadnezzar, which causes Nebuchadnezzar to come
9. The false proverb of the sour grapes (ch. 18) – God won't judge us because our parents were the

disobedient ones, not us. They weren't blaming themselves, but their parents. Ezekiel explains that the judgment will come because of the sins of this generation, not previous generations

Chapter 19 – a funeral dirge, a lamentation – shows that this judgment is inevitable

Chapters 20-24 – historical causes and the reality of coming judgment – judgment is long overdue, and has delayed only because of God's grace

Chapter 20 – a history lesson of Israel's sins

20:45 – the realities of coming judgment – the parable of the forest fire

Chapter 21 – the four messages of the sword

1. The sword has already been drawn
2. The sword has already been sharpened and polished
3. How judgment is being directed against Jerusalem
4. The sword is being drawn and polished against Ammon

Chapter 22 – three messages of judgment

1. The cause of judgment – covenant rebellion
2. The means of judgment – the smelting furnace – removes the impurities from the metal – some of this has not yet happened
3. The objects of judgment – the princes, the priests, the officials, the prophets, and the people

Chapter 23 – parable of the 2 sisters – representing the northern and the southern kingdoms – the younger sister should have learned from the sins of the older sister

Chapter 24 – 3-14 – the parable of the boiling pot

Chapter 24 - 15-24 – the death of Ezekiel's wife – God took Ezekiel's wife to represent the delight of the Jewish people's eyes will be taken away (Jerusalem and the temple). It will be so powerful that any display of mourning will be inappropriate; all you can do is keep silent.

Chapter 25 - 32 – Judgment on the Nations

Ezekiel receives word that his prophecies about Judah and Jerusalem have come true. At this point his ministry changes, and his whole tone changes. Now he turns to prophesying about the surrounding nations that have been against Israel since the beginning, and now thought they could profit by Babylon's conquering of Israel. The key verse to understanding chapters 25-32 is Genesis 12:3.

Genesis 12:3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

God's purpose was always to bless the Jew, and through Israel the rest of the world would be blessed. This is God's plan, and still is. God knew that because of this, many would come against Israel, and so this is a protection against anti-Semitism.

Israel has always been surrounded by hostile nations that don't have her best interest at heart. And during this time, these nations were happy that Babylon had conquered Israel. The reason this is so timely is that this scenario is repeating itself today. The nations against Israel are hostile towards her and would like nothing better than for Israel to be wiped out, whether they do it or some other nation (like Iran or Russia) does it.

The disturbing thing is that there is a doctrine that has taken hold of much of Christianity today that says that we don't have to treat Israel well today, because the nation of Israel today is in unbelief, they are in rebellion against God, they reject Christ. Whatever happens to them is irrelevant in God's purposes. **The whole book of Ezekiel refutes that thinking.** God in chapters 25-32 pronounces judgment on the nations that mistreat Israel, EVEN WHILE the nation was in rebellion against God! Guess what? Genesis 12:3 still

holds today!! Israel couldn't be in any worse state of rebellion than they were in the time leading up to the Babylonian exile, described in chapters 4-24. But even in that wayward state, the protection against anti-Semitism still applies. God still wants the nations (and us) to treat Israel in the proper way, even when they are in unbelief. There is no excuse for anti-Semitism. NONE! We are still held accountable to bless Israel, like these nations were for cursing Israel. God has purposed to bless the world through Israel, through the Jew. You can't go around or against God's plan, no matter how you try.

Ezekiel first pronounces judgment on nations to the East of Israel. First he deals with Ammon, then with Moab, then Edom. Ammon and Moab (Genesis 19:35-38) came from the incestuous relationship Lot had with his daughters, and Edom came from Esau, Jacob's brother. These nations were always consistent enemies of Israel. Ammon's sin was rejoicing in Israel's fall, believing that they would gain land from this. The sin of the Moabites was also that they were celebrating at the demise of Israel. The sin of the Edomites was that they tried to take revenge on the house of Judah. They looked at the fall of Israel as an opportunity to pay them back.

Then Ezekiel turns his attention to countries of the north, west, and south. To the west is Philistia, to the north is Tyre and Sidon, and to the south is Egypt.

Philistia's sin is that they tried to destroy Judah, they tried to finish the job that Babylon had started. Bible scholars tell us that this nation just simply disappeared. God sometimes judges nations by letting them just go out of existence, or losing their sphere of influence. This has happened in modern times, there are many examples. One would be Great Britain, who was once a great empire, but because of their mistreatment of the Jews has been reduced on the world stage to a small country with very little influence. We can even say that this could be happening to the United States. Our influence in the world is waning. Could this be judgment because of how we have treated Israel? It's very possible, time will tell.

Then comes the judgment on Tyre and Sidon in chapters 26-28. Tyre was thrilled when Nebuchadnezzar came against the Jews. Tyre was a great seaport, and they believed they could financially prosper if Israel fell. Ezekiel spends three entire chapters on Tyre. Ezekiel 28 contains the judgment not only of the king of Tyre, but then he begins speaking of the angelic force behind Tyre, Satan, which we studied in our previous Daniel 10 lesson. Satan is really the one pulling the strings behind these nations. Satan is the ultimate source of anti-Semitism (Revelation 12). Satan understands Genesis 12:3, he understands that all the blessings the world ever receives will be through Israel, and he is always trying to persecute and destroy Israel. The attitude that many churches teach, that God is through with Israel, and that the church has replaced Israel, is Satanic.

This is key to understanding why so many nations and people today hate Israel. Why did Haman come up with the idea of exterminating the Jews in the book of Esther? Why did Hitler come up with the idea of exterminating the Jews in Nazi Germany? Why do so many Islamic nations want to exterminate the Jews today? Is this just something they're thinking up themselves? Have the Jews done something to deserve being wiped out? No, this idea has always come directly from Satan.

Next Ezekiel turns his attention to Egypt in chapters 29-32. Why does he devote four whole chapters to Egypt? Two reasons:

1. The Jews at this time were holding out hope that Egypt would help them, would protect them from Babylon. Ezekiel 17:15 speaks of this. Israel was hoping an alliance with Egypt would save them from Nebuchadnezzar. Israel was trusting in Egypt, not in their God. God was saying to them that this nation was under God's condemnation, they were not going to be of any help. This is something God does throughout history, he puts them in a place where there is no help from any other source, until they have no other hope but to trust in God to deliver them. Then God will manifest Himself to

them. That is happening again today. Also, have you noticed that this is how God works in our own lives? Sometimes He will take away the very things that we rely on, trust in, the things we think will bring us security – jobs, relationships, retirement plans, whatever, until all you have left is your trust in the Lord. God wants us to trust in Him alone, nothing else.

2. This is where Israel spent so many years in bondage during the time of Moses. God did not forget this, how Egypt mistreated them, how cruel the Pharaoh's were.

Chapter 33

Ezekiel receives word that Nebuchadnezzar has finished besieging Jerusalem. The city has been burned, the temple has been destroyed, the Jews have been evicted from the land, exactly as Ezekiel predicted. Now the exiles Ezekiel was preaching to in Babylon, who didn't believe him, who had false optimism, now were filled with pessimism. They began to say that God has forgotten us; he has broken His covenant to us. Ezekiel in these chapters tells them that, no, He has not forgotten you, in fact, He has a glorious future planned for the nation of Israel. This is a much happier section of the book to teach from! 1-32 are very negative, 33-48 are very positive. Ezekiel builds up the exiles whose hopes were crushed by the destruction of Israel.

This is also where the spirit of God works in our hearts, when we have had our hopes crushed by something we had hoped for, something we had planned has not come about, and that's where God begins to minister to us to tell us He has something much greater in mind, something special for us. If you've been a Christian very long, you have experienced this work of the Holy Spirit in your heart.

Here Ezekiel's muteness is removed. In the early chapters of the book he is made mute by God. The only time he can speak is when God miraculously speaks through him. This is how the exiles know that whenever Ezekiel opens his mouth to speak, this has to be God Himself speaking. But now the muteness is gone, and this signals a new theme coming, a glorious restoration of the nation.

Chapter 34

In this chapter we have a prophecy of a coming selfless shepherd who would replace Israel's selfish shepherds (her evil kings). Ezekiel speaks of a time in which a king would arise that would place the people's needs above his own needs. This is how you can always tell who a false teacher or false prophet is. A false prophet always sees the people for what he can get out of them. He's not interested in feeding the flock, he's interested in fleecing the flock, he wants to use the Christian community for his own ambitions, riches, power, etc. A true shepherd of God does not behave in that way.

Chapter 34 describes a scattering of the sheep of Israel, a dispersion into the nations of the world. This was not the exile because of the Babylonian captivity. The dispersion began in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and the surviving Jews migrated to all points of the compass. Then God declares that the Jews would be regathered out of the nations and brought back into their homeland, and ultimately into the Messianic Kingdom. The regathering started officially in 1948, and continues today. According to Ezekiel, this regathering will produce a faithful remnant that will ultimately go into the Kingdom. After the Tribulation period when Christ returns, there will be a final regathering of the Jews to their homeland and the Messianic Kingdom will begin. **It's important to understand that the high point of Old Testament prophecy is the Messianic Kingdom.** Ezekiel and other prophets spoke of a major dispersion, a regathering, and then an ushering into the Messianic Kingdom.

Ezekiel 34:11-16 For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. (12) "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. (13) "I will bring them out

from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. (14) "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. (15) "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD. (16) "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment.

This is a wonderful Messianic prophecy. The Lord Jesus Christ identifies himself as the Good Shepherd (Luke 15:3-7; John 10:10-16; Hebrews 13:20; I Peter 2:25; 5:4; Revelation 7:17).

Ezekiel 34:23-24 "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. (24) "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

Most people read this and just assume this is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. David is used as a type of Christ, after all. But I believe, as many scholars do, that God is saying here he is literally going to resurrect David and restore him to a position of leadership over the nation of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

Prophets always use different terms to describe the Messiah in conjunction with David – “the root of Jesse”, the “branch of David”, the “son of David”, etc. These are well-known symbols for David being used as a reference to the Messiah. But this text has no such clause in it. It just says David – this must be the historical King David. This shouldn’t be a big surprise to us, because Revelation 20:4 speaks of a great resurrection of all Old Testament saints. This will occur at the beginning of the millennial kingdom, so certainly David will be resurrected at this time, and he will be in that group. Of course, Jesus Himself will reign over the entire earth in that time. But it appears that David will be ruling over Israel, so David will have some sort of a co-regency position with Christ.

Ezekiel 34:25-30 "I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. (26) "I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. (27) "Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. (28) "They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. (29) "I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. (30) "Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares the Lord GOD.

Verse 25 and following are obviously Millennial. They correspond to Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21. The concept of the plant being raised was an idiom Isaiah used of the Messiah in his chapter 11. Jeremiah 23:5 speaks of the Messiah as the root out of the dry ground.

Chapter 35

This is sort of a strange chapter, it seems out of place. It talks of the destruction of Edom, which has

already been discussed in chapter 25. Why is this here? The prophecies in chapter 36 are about the land of Israel, and Edom has always lusted after Israel's land. They were always an impediment to Israel entering the land and having peace in the land. In fact, when Israel was first coming out of Egypt into the land of Canaan, Numbers 20:14-22 tells us that the Edomites attacked Israel, trying to keep them from entering the land. So God is saying that He is about to remove Israel's last impediment to the land. Before Israel can be restored to the land fully, He is going to remove the Edomites. That will become the subject of chapter 36.

Who are the Edomites? Well, we don't have time to go into a detailed discussion of this, but the nation of Edom was in what is now Southern Jordan, and the descendants of the people of Edom can be found among the current day Palestinians and Jordanians. The country of Jordan sits right in the middle of the land promised to Israel by God in the Abrahamic Covenant. The land of Lebanon, Gaza, the West Bank, most of Syria, and much of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt also belongs to Israel as decreed by God. No matter what your personal feelings or your political leanings are, we can be sure that God is going to eventually move these people out and the land will become part of the nation of Israel. We don't know whether Israel will accomplish this militarily or God will perform a miracle or both, but we know it will happen.

Ezekiel 35:5-6 "Because you have had everlasting enmity and have delivered the sons of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of the punishment of the end, (6) therefore as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will give you over to bloodshed, and bloodshed will pursue you; since you have not hated bloodshed, therefore bloodshed will pursue you."

The people who were in the land when Israel would be regathered would not receive them well. They would be hostile, as we will see in these verses and in chapter 36. This has certainly been the case. The Islamic countries have fought against Israel's existence from the very beginning. There has been enmity against Israel by these people from the start, all the way back to their founder, Esau, Jacob's brother.

Ezekiel 35:9-15 "I will make you an everlasting desolation and your cities will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD. (10) "Because you have said, 'These two nations and these two lands will be mine, and we will possess them,' although the LORD was there, (11) therefore as I live," declares the Lord GOD, "I will deal with you according to your anger and according to your envy which you showed because of your hatred against them; so I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. (12) "Then you will know that I, the LORD, have heard all your revilings which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel saying, 'They are laid desolate; they are given to us for food.' (13) "And you have spoken arrogantly against Me and have multiplied your words against Me; I have heard it." (14) "Thus says the Lord GOD, "As all the earth rejoices, I will make you a desolation. (15) "As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you. You will be a desolation, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.""

This speaks very well of the anger and envy against Israel by her enemies that continues to this day. The Islamic nations want this land, and they want the Jews to be destroyed. God is saying, as these people rejoiced at the fact that the Jews were removed from their land in that day and because of how they will continue to claim this land for themselves (as they do today), He is going to do the same thing to these people and their land. God will make them desolate as a people and clear their lands of them, so that the Jews can move right in.

Chapter 36

This chapter speaks of the physical and spiritual restoration of the nation. It says that the Jews will come back to the land, yes, but there is more than just the physical return. God is saying here that the nation itself will be regenerated by the Spirit of God. Wow! In John 3 Jesus had a conversation with Nicodemus, and chided him for not understanding the concept that you must be born again of the spirit to enter the kingdom of God, and I believe Jesus was referring to the spiritual restoration predicted in this chapter.

There is no other way to have a relationship with God. It doesn't matter how good we are, it doesn't matter what church you belong to, it doesn't matter, our religious activity, it doesn't matter how much money we've given to different causes, it doesn't matter how spiritual you are, there's just one issue that's necessary to enter into a relationship with of God, and that's through the born again experience. If a person has never had the born again experience, they do not belong to God. There has to be a point in a person's life where they place their trust for their eternity in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the moment that happens, Romans 8:9 says that the spirit of God enters a person. Their body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Many people are deceived in thinking that they have a relationship with God, and they don't. If you are doubtful whether this has ever happened to you, please make sure you get this settled with God. This is the most important decision you can make in your life. It is life's most important question.

The background for this entire text is Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant. God promised that the day would come when He would literally place His laws inside the hearts of the Jews. They would no longer be obeying God based on tablets of stone on the outside of their hearts, but obeying God because He would inscribe His laws on their hearts, and they would be internally changed. Ezekiel 36 is the great fulfillment of that promise in Jeremiah 31. We, too, have this experience when we trust Christ as Savior.

Ezekiel 36:1-2 "And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. (2) 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because the enemy has spoken against you, 'Aha!' and, 'The everlasting heights have become our possession,'

The enemy is Edom and the other nations that claim the land and want to destroy the Jews. Who is doing this today? Islam. Islam claims this land. There are descendants of the Edomites among the Palestinians and Jordanians today. You can be as politically correct and tolerant as you want to be, but the truth is that Islam is the enemy of Israel, and therefore the enemy of God.

Verse 2 reminds me of what happened on September 11, 2001. When New York and Washington DC were attacked by terrorists, Islamic people around the world celebrated. They hate the United States because of our support for Israel. They say "Aha!" at Israel's misfortune or ours .

Ezekiel 36:3-5 therefore prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "For good reason they have made you desolate and crushed you from every side, that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations and you have been taken up in the talk and the whispering of the people. (4) Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD. Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the forsaken cities which have become a prey and a derision to the rest of the nations which are round about, (5) therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession

with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul, to drive it out for a prey."

The rest of the nations and Edom are the surrounding Islamic nations collectively. The press always uses the terms Arabs, but that's a very ambiguous term. Some of them are Arabs, but some are Persians, some are Egyptians. The press is too illiterate to recognize the differences. They are all Muslim nations.

Ezekiel 36:6-7 'Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and in My wrath because you have endured the insults of the nations.' (7) "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'I have sworn that surely the nations which are around you will themselves endure their insults.

Israel has endured insults from the nations since the day of their inception in 1948. I believe God is saying here that He is going to reverse that situation. The nations who now insult Israel will themselves be subjected to insults and reviling. You know, God sometimes allows us to "change his mind" by intercessory prayer. But when God swears like He does here, you can be certain that He will not change His mind.

Ezekiel 36:8-9 'But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come. (9) 'For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown. (10) 'I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places will be rebuilt. (11) 'I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

God is saying here He will restore all the tribes of Israel, not just Judah, and He will treat them better than He did before. Israel had lain desolate for two thousand years before the Jews came back and made it flourish again in the 20th century. Today, if you fly over Israel in an airplane (I've been told), you'll see that west of the Jordan River (Israel) the land looks green, east of the Jordan it looks brown and desolate. The Jews have transformed the desert into fertile fields and orchards. This verse has begun to be fulfilled in our generation, and will reach final fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. God is preparing the land to support an influx of the regathering of millions of Jews.

Ezekiel 36:12-15 'Yes, I will cause men--My people Israel--to walk on you and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.' (13) "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Because they say to you, "You are a devourer of men and have bereaved your nation of children," (14) therefore you will no longer devour men and no longer bereave your nation of children,' declares the Lord GOD. (15) "I will not let you hear insults from the nations anymore, nor will you bear disgrace from the peoples any longer, nor will you cause your nation to stumble any longer," declares the Lord GOD.'"

These verses seem to be saying that the land will no longer take the lives of the people. Things like famines, wild animals, wars, disease, or anything else in the land will ever be a threat again. Up to verse 15 God has been speaking to the land of Israel, but now we're going to see why Israel has been exiled from the land.

Ezekiel 36:16-17 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, (17) "Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity.

The phrase "like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity" is a euphemism for idolatry.

Ezekiel 36:18-19 "Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. (19) "Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them.

Verse 19 is speaking of the diaspora of a judgment, referring to the Babylonian Exile. The diaspora they went through from 70 AD to 1948 was even more of a judgment.

Ezekiel 36:20 "When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.'

People in the lands where the Jews scattered to were astonished that the Jews had left the land, that God had let them be conquered. It made these people think that their God was not a very strong God, so it insulted Him, His name was profaned by these nations because of the Jew's failures. Don't look down on them too much, we as Christians do the same thing. We embarrass and insult God by the way we act in the world.

Ezekiel 36:21 "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

God is saying He is going to restore Israel not because they deserve it, but because of His reputation. He will restore His good name, that's what's at stake here.

Ezekiel 36:22-24 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. (23) "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. (24) "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

This has begun to be fulfilled in our time, starting in 1948.

Ezekiel 36:25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

This has not occurred yet; Ezekiel the priest is recalling the Mosaic ritual for cleansing – Exodus 30:17-21, Leviticus 14:5-7,9, Numbers 19:9,17-19, which is a picture of forgiveness (Psalm 51:7, Jeremiah 33:8, Hebrews 9:13, 10:22)

Ezekiel 36:26-27 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Verses 25-27 have not happened yet, this prophecy will be fulfilled when Israel turns to God and accepts Jesus as their Messiah during the Tribulation. This is what the prophet Joel meant in a widely-

misunderstood verse about a day coming where God will pour out His spirit upon all flesh, not just some.

Joel 2:28-29 "It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. (29) "Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

This happened to some at Pentecost (Acts 2), not "all mankind". Pentecost was only a partial fulfillment of Joel 2, the firstfruits. This prophecy will be fulfilled finally in the Kingdom.

Ezekiel 36:28 "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Has this happened yet? No, but it will happen!

To summarize this, the results of Israel's regeneration will be:

1. Her permanent occupation of the land
2. A covenant relationship with God
3. Protection against relapse into idolatry
4. The abundant supply of every want
5. Self humiliation and repentance on account of past sin

When number five happens, that's when Christ will return.

Ezekiel 36:29-32 "Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. (30) "I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. (31) "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations. (32) "I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"

Again, God is doing all this out of pure grace.

Ezekiel 36:33-38 "Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places will be rebuilt. (34) "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. (35) "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.' (36) "Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it." (37) "Thus says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. (38) "Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD.""

Again I remind you that verse 25-38 are yet future. OK, that's just the warm-up for chapter 37, which we will study in detail next lesson – the vision of the dry bones.





