

## #1 Ezekiel 36 – The Gospel According To God – Communion

**#2 Romans 1:1–3 (NASB95)** <sup>1</sup> Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for *the Gospel of God*, <sup>2</sup> which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning His Son...<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of *the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation* to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

**#3 Ezekiel 36:22–27 (NLT)** <sup>22</sup> “Therefore, give the people of Israel this message from the Sovereign YAHWEH: **I am bringing you back, but not because you deserve it.** I am doing it **to protect My holy name...**<sup>24</sup> For I will gather you up from all the nations and bring you home again to your land. <sup>25</sup> **“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols.** <sup>26</sup> **And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.** <sup>27</sup> **And I will put My Spirit in you so that you will follow My decrees and be careful to obey My regulations.**

As we come to the communion table to remember the death of the Lord Jesus Christ – let’s review the Good News (“Gospel”) as God sees it and spoke it through Ezekiel!

**#4 Ezekiel 36** <sup>25</sup> **“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols.**

\*\*This is God’s answer for His people’s failure! He had to clean them up first before they could serve Him. This was God’s plan for the redemption of Israel and for the saving of all people – *“whosoever”* will believe.

He says He needs to cleanse us from our **“filthiness.”** God’s own assessment of the people of Israel and ultimately all mankind is that **WE ARE FILTHY: #5 Romans 3:9–11 (NASB95)** <sup>9</sup> What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; <sup>10</sup> as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; <sup>11</sup> THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

**“Not because you deserve it”** Not for any merit in them (or in you or me); they (and we) deserve judgment because they (and we!) are a bunch of stubborn, stiff-necked, rebellious people (De 9:6-7). But, FOR THE SAKE OF GOD’S HOLY NAME which He must vindicate because of the dishonor brought upon it by the sinning Jews before the surrounding heathen nations.

The entire system of animal sacrifices in the Law was given by YaHWeH as a temporary solution to the human problem of the filthiness of sin (Eze 24:13). Even God’s “chosen” people had to have their sins atoned for **constantly** so that God could be their God and dwell among them.

These sacrifices had to be repeated year after year; and as Hebrews says: **#6 Hebrews 10:1–4 (NLT)** <sup>1</sup> The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim

preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. <sup>2</sup> If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. <sup>3</sup> But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. <sup>4</sup> For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

But this promise in our verses in Ezekiel of making them clean, is permanent, not a part of their sacrificial system. In fact, under that system the history of God's people in the OT is a picture of complete and utter failure. Ultimately, the only way YaHWeH could forgive the *"iniquity, transgression and sins"* of the people of Israel was to provide one perfect and permanent sacrifice for them.

YaHWeH actually used Abraham earlier to picture how this would happen: **#7 Genesis 22:1** Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup> He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah **#8 (2 Chronicles 3:1** Then Solomon began to build the house of YaHWeH in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah), and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."...**#9** <sup>7</sup> Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said..."Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup> **Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself (lit. "see Himself") the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."**

**#10 Isaiah 53:5–6 (The Living Bible)** <sup>5</sup> But He was wounded and bruised for *our* sins. He was beaten that we might have peace; He was lashed—and we were healed! <sup>6</sup> *We*—every one of us—have strayed away like sheep! *We*, who left God's paths to follow our own. Yet God laid on *Him* the guilt and sins of every one of us!

God did *"see Himself the Lamb"* for a sacrifice on Mount Moriah for sins. This is why John the Baptist said: **#11 John 1:29 (NASB95)** "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is what Jesus was explaining to Nicodemus: **#11a John 3:14–15 (NKJV)** And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Paul gives us the spiritual explanation of this miracle in Romans Chapter 3: **#12 Romans 3:21-25 (TLB)** But now God has shown us a different way to heaven--not by "being good enough" and trying to keep His laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). <sup>22</sup> Now God says He will accept and acquit us--declare us "not guilty" --if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, **#13** by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. <sup>23</sup> Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's glory; <sup>24</sup> yet now God declares us "not guilty" of offending Him if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in His kindness freely takes away our sins. <sup>25</sup> **For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us.** He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath.

**So the first part of the "Good News" is bad news: \*\*You have a problem – you are a sinner, separated from a Holy God by your "iniquity, transgression and sin."**

Haven't we all "strayed away like sheep"?! Tried to fill the emptiness in our souls with filthy, contaminating, worldly pleasures?

BUT - God has made a way for you to be saved from His just wrath, but you must seek Him with all your heart and cry out to him from the depths of your soul: **"God have mercy on me a sinner."** (Luke 18:13)

Have you asked Him to forgive you through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for your sins? **Have you turned from your self-willed life and come under God's "New Management"?** Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power; are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

If you come to God that way, the next verse in Ezekiel tells us how God promises to respond to you:

**#14 Ezekiel 36** <sup>26</sup> **And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.**

Why do we need a new heart and a new spirit? The problem is that mankind is spiritually dead since the Garden of Eden. God told Adam that **"in the day you eat of that fruit you shall surely die"** but as we read, he didn't die immediately physically but rather spiritually; and then death followed years later. That affected us all because we were all "in" Adam at the fall. **#15 Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..." **#15a – A new heart & Spirit**

The people of Israel could not change their own hearts – or recreate their spirits! The only solution to spiritual death is supernatural life. God had to give them new hearts and spirits. This is what Jesus was talking about in John chapter 3 to Nicodemus.

**#16 John 3:1-8 (NLT)** <sup>1</sup> There was a man named Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader who was a Pharisee. <sup>2</sup> After dark one evening, he came to speak with Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are evidence that God is with you." <sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup> "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. <sup>7</sup> So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

Once God has cleansed our sins on the cross – He can create **a new spirit** within us, so we can fellowship with Him.

Paul describes it like this, using technical terms! **#17 Titus 3:4-5 (NKJV)** <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, <sup>5</sup> not by works of

righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,

**#18** the washing of regeneration (“**New Genesis**” “**palingenesia**”– “**return to existence,**” “**coming back from death to life**”) and renewing (“**New in Nature**”) of the Holy Spirit,

**#18a** **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)** <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Have you experienced this spiritual new birth? Are you born from above? This spiritual miracle within us is heaven’s response to our cries to God for forgiveness, and the free gift of salvation in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. Finally, YaHWeH addresses the last and very necessary step in His Gospel plan:

**#19 Ezekiel 36** <sup>27</sup> **“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. NASB95**

**“I will put My Spirit within you”** God knew that even with their sins forgiven and a new heart, they would still have trouble living out His Law. **As we have observed, the OT is a sad history of failure to follow God’s Law when it wasn’t written on their hearts – but just an outside-in set of standards and rules.** So He promised to fill them with the Author of His Word, His Spirit, and do a supernatural work IN them – essentially writing His Law on their hearts!

This can’t happen to any human being until their sins are forgiven and they have been born from above.

When the people Peter was preaching to on the Day of Pentecost were convicted of their sin they asked: **#20 Acts 2:37-39 NLT** “...Brothers, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.”

Those who have been believers, both Jew and Gentile, since the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 – have been privileged to experience the fulfillment of this prophesy that the Spirit of God lives in us; and, through His presence, produces fruit and gives us gifts and “**causes**” us to walk in the ways of God! Jesus

**#21 John 14:15** “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup> “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup> *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Trying to be a Christian based on a set of standards and rules written in the NT is just as impossible as a Jew following the Law. We need supernatural empowering; and Jesus made this same promise clear to His disciples.

It is the Holy Spirit that works in us to, as He said; **“cause you to walk in My statutes”** Even after we are born again – we will still struggle to live out even the Ten commandments and the Sermon on the Mount, without the Holy Spirit to help our weaknesses (flesh).

The Holy Spirit helps us **“put to death”** the wicked deeds of the flesh **#22 (Galatians 5:19–21 (NASB95))** <sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: (sexual) immorality, impurity, sensuality (lustful pleasures), <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities (hostility), strife (quarreling), jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes (selfish ambition), dissensions, factions (division), <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing (wild parties), and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.)

**And He leaves behind a trail of goodness in our lives: #23 Galatians 5:22–23 (NIV84)** <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

**#23a 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (NIV84)** <sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Let me ask you this morning, what Paul asked the believers in Ephesus in Acts 19: **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”**

**#24 Acts 19:1–7 (NLT)** <sup>1</sup> While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. <sup>2</sup> **“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”** he asked them. “No,” they replied, “we haven’t even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” <sup>3</sup> “Then what baptism did you experience?” he asked. And they replied, “The baptism of John.” <sup>4</sup> Paul said, “John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. **#25** But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.” **(Mark 1:8 (NASB95))** <sup>8</sup> “I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” <sup>5</sup> As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.

Are you struggling to walk in God’s statutes and His will in your life? Are you seeing the evidence of His goodness in your life increasing? No? Maybe it is because you don’t have the power of the Holy Spirit in your life? **The answer to being a better Christian is NOT to try harder to follow a set of rules or to work harder to look outwardly like everyone else in church.**

If you really want to walk in God’s ways and experience His goodness, the solution is the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. **He will guide you into all the truth, He knows your weaknesses and supports you in time of temptation, He**

**comforts you in time of trouble, He corrects you and teaches you God's truth.** Our lives will please God; and even though we sometimes fail Him, there is no condemnation for those who are God's children, but rather a continuing sanctifying work of His Spirit.

**#26 So, what is the Gospel according to God? God says: "I will forgive your iniquity, transgressions and sin through the sacrifice of Jesus My Son! I will cause you to be re-born from above and give you a soft heart toward Me! I will put My Spirit, love and goodness in you and give you the power to please Me in all you do!"**

So the place to start is the cross of Jesus the Christ. Have you truly humbled yourself to your Savior and cried out to Him for forgiveness and a new heart and spirit? Then come and celebrate His death on the cross with us!

(After communion – a call to be filled with God's Spirit. ***"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"***)