

Session 3 The Forerunner Message in Ezekiel 36-37

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Ezekiel 36-37 describes the restoration of Israel's land, crops, cities, population, government, and relationship with the Lord. This restoration of Israel contrasts with judgment of Edom in 35:1-15.

B. Outline for Ezekiel 36-37

Ezekiel 36 God's restoration of Israel to her land.

36:1-7 The Lord will judge the nations hostile to Israel

36:8-15 The Lord will bless the land and nation of Israel

36:16-21 Israel profaned the Lord's name

36:22-36 The Lord will vindicate His name by transforming Israel

36:37-38 The Lord desires partnership with Israel

Ezekiel 37 The restoration of Israel's national life

37:1-14 The vision of the valley of dry bones

37:15-28 Israel will be unified and restored

II. THE LORD WILL JUDGE THE NATIONS HOSTILE TO ISRAEL (EZEK. 36:1-7)

A. Ezekiel prophesied to the mountains of Israel (36:1-7) which speak of the people and the land.

¹*"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, 'O mountains of Israel...*

²*"Because the enemy has said of you, 'Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession,'"*

³*therefore prophesy... "Because they [Israel's enemies]...swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations and you are...slandered by the people."*

(Ezek. 36:1-3)

1. ***Prophesy to the mountains:*** Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the mountains of Israel.

2. ***Israel's enemies claim to possess Israel:*** Their claim on the land of Israel as their possession is a direct challenge to the Lord. Their words and attitude are an insult to the Lord (36:2-3).

B. The Lord sees and will answer both Israel and her enemies in His jealousy (36:4-7). Israel practiced idolatry in the mountains. Israel's cities had been plundered by the nations all around.

⁴*...thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains [of Israel]...the desolate wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around...*

⁵*"I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession..."⁶*"I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury...**

⁷*"I have raised My hand in an oath...the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame." (Ezek. 36:4-7)*

1. **Rest of the nations:** The nations around Israel will be judged for their hostility against Israel.
2. **My jealousy:** Ezekiel was to proclaim God's jealousy for the land of Israel.

III. THE LORD WILL BLESS THE LAND AND NATION OF ISRAEL (EZEK. 36:8-15)

- A. The Lord will release His blessing on the people, the cities, and the land (36:8-11).

8"But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall...yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come. 9...I am for you, and I will turn to you...10I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 11I will multiply upon you man and beast...Then you shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezek. 36:8-11)

1. **Yield your fruit:** The mountains and land of Israel were to yield fruit for God's people.
2. **They are about to come:** The time would come for Israel's people to come to the land.
3. **I am for you:** The Lord's zeal for Israel is manifested in His commitment to them (36:9).
4. **I will multiply men:** The Lord will multiply Israel's people and livestock (36:10).
5. **Rebuilt cities.** The desolate and abandoned cities shall be rebuilt and inhabited.
6. **Know the Lord:** Israel shall know that God is the Lord (36:11, 23, 36, 38; 37:3, 6, 13, 14, 28).

- B. The Lord's commitment to land will be seen by the multiplication of the population (36:12-15).

12"Yes, I will cause men to walk on you [the mountains of Israel], My people Israel; they shall take possession of you... 13Because they say to you, 'You devour men and bereave your nation of children,' 14therefore you shall devour men no more..." says the Lord GOD. 15Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore..." (Ezek. 36:12-15)

1. **My people:** The Lord referred to "My people" (36:8, 12, 28; 37:12, 13, 23, 27).
2. **You devour men:** Israel's enemies mocked them saying that its land devours its people. Israel's persistent sin resulted in the Lord needing to discipline them through fatal calamities that occurred related to the land such as famine, drought, pestilence, and wild beasts. Ezekiel called Israel to repent to avoid God's discipline as expressed by calamities on the land—famine, wild beasts, plague, and bloodshed that would result in the lost of life (5:17).

17"So I will send against you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you. Pestilence and blood shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword against you." (Ezek. 5:17)

3. **No more:** The time is coming when the nations will no longer be able to describe Israel as being devoured by the judgments of God on the land because Israel will be obedient.

4. **Taunts:** Israel will no longer hear the taunts and reproaches of the nations (36:15). The Israelites will not be insulted by their neighbors any longer because there will be honor, glory, peace and unity with them. The Lord will alter the relationship between nations.
- C. Israel's return from Babylon in 536 BC was a partial fulfillment of the blessings promised here. This prophecy looked beyond the return from exile under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Under these leaders only a portion of the whole house of Israel returned to the land, and afterwards the land again came under reproach and oppression from Gentile nations like Rome, etc.

IV. ISRAEL PROFANED THE LORD'S NAME (EZEK. 36:16-21)

- A. Ezekiel highlighted some of the Lord's reasons for restoring Israel (36:16-21). Ezekiel described the challenge that the Babylonian captivity created for the Lord's name or reputation. All of salvation history depends upon God's people trusting and embracing His leadership.

17“...when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways...

18Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it. 19So I scattered them among the nations...I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. 20When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.’ 21But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.” (Ezek. 36:17-21)

1. **Defiled:** Israel defiled their land by their sinful ways, especially by murder (blood), immorality, and idolatry. The same sins will prevail in end-time Israel and in the nations.
21They did not repent of their murders...sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Rev. 9:21)
2. **Scattered:** The Lord judged them by scattering them among the nations (Deut. 29:1-30:10).
3. **Israel profaned God's name:** The fact of Israel requiring to be conquered and exiled due to their sin profaned God's holy name, as it appeared foreign gods triumphed over the Lord.
4. **They said of Israel:** The Gentiles asked why God's people were driven out of His land. Israel was disciplined by God when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and took the people captive.
 - a. This brought reproach to God's name because it appeared that He had not been willing or able to protect Israel or fulfill His promises to them (36:19-20).
 - b. The nations drew false conclusions about the Lord after witnessing what Babylon did to Israel. That is, Israel's exile from the land made a mockery of God's reputation.
5. **I had concern for My holy name:** The Lord's zeal for His name is an important part of His motivation for restoring Israel to the land.
 - a. In their future exaltation, it is essential for God's people to be rooted in gratitude and humble. Thus, the Lord is establishing a “salvation storyline” for His family.

- b. Israel's safety and national well-being in the millennial kingdom is connected to taking responsibility for their national sin (that was committed in this age). Israel must not continue to rationalize or blame-shift their sin (with a defensive and stubborn heart), but rather must respond with gratitude and humility in light of their future exaltation.
- c. The Lord was not making a relational statement about His lack of concern for Israel. His declaration of restoring Israel for His glory must be interpreted in context to God's incomprehensible love for His people which is established over and over in Scripture.

B. God wants voluntary love from His people, so He will not force any person or nation to love Him. He is creating the optimum environment for multitudes to choose love by the way He has directed history over 6,000 years. The result will be God's glory (love, gratitude, humility) filling the earth.

V. THE LORD WILL VINDICATE HIS NAME BY TRANSFORMING ISRAEL (EZEK. 36:22-36)

A. The Lord will vindicate His name and reputation in the sight of the nations (36:22-23).

22...“I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. 23And I will sanctify My great name... which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.” (Ezek. 36:22-23)

1. ***Not for your sake***: The Lord is not going to restore Israel for the sake of national honor among the nations that they deserve because of their special dedication or abilities. The Lord wanted to establish clearly that Israel had no claim to receiving honor from God.
2. ***Profaned God's name***: They profaned God's name, or His testimony, in the nations.
3. ***Sanctify My name***: He will sanctify His name by openly revealing *what He is like* and not allowing Israel or the Church to continue to defame it (as they have done through history). He will display His love, power, and wisdom in the way that He establishes Israel in the land in great blessing and world leadership and yet in a relationship of obedient love to Him.
4. The Lord will sanctify His name before Israel and all the nations by causing them to see what He does when He judges the Antichrist's empire (Ezek. 38:16-17; 39:7, 21-22).

4“You [the Antichrist] shall fall upon the mountains of Israel...7The nations shall know that I am the LORD...21I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment which I have executed...22Israel shall know I am the LORD...” (Ezek. 39:4-22)

B. Israel's national salvation and supernatural transformation (36:25-32): This passage points out that Israel will begin to regather to the land in unbelief—notice the word “then” in 36:25.

24“For I will take you from among the nations...and bring you into your own land. 25Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness... 26I will give you a new heart...I will take the heart of stone out...and give you a heart of flesh. 27I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes... 31Then 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.” (Ezek. 36:24-31)

1. ***New heart:*** The Lord will give Israel a new heart that is inspired, instructed, and energized by the indwelling Spirit. The *heart of stone* speaks of rebellious heart that is unmoved by God. A *heart of flesh* speaks of a soft heart that is sensitive and easily moved by the Spirit.
2. ***You will remember:*** Israel will remember their evil ways in a way that produces gratitude.
3. ***You will loathe yourself:*** This is not about living under condemnation (Rom. 8:1) but about seeing the truth about sin in light of extravagant mercy and generosity. Those who are aware of being forgiven much are those who overflow in grateful love for Jesus (Lk. 7:47).

¹There is...no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus... (Rom. 8:1)

⁴⁴Then He...said to Simon, “...I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears...⁴⁷her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” (Lk. 7:44-47)

- C. The Lord’s gracious restoration of Israel will reveal the truth about God to the nation (36:33-36).
- ³³...“On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt... ³⁴[it] shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. ³⁵So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’ ³⁶Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it.” (Ezek. 36:33-36)***
1. ***The nations which are left:*** The nations shall know that the Lord rebuilt the nation of Israel.
 2. God’s name and reputation being sanctified includes the Lord cleansing Israel from sin, empowering her by the Spirit, rebuilding the nation, replanting the agriculture, and more.

- D. The Lord desires partnership with Israel. He answers their prayers to increase their population (36:37-38). Rain on Israel in the millennial kingdom will also come in response to prayer.
- ³⁷...“I will let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men ³⁸... like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days...Then they shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezek. 36:37-38)***

¹Ask the LORD for rain in the time of the latter rain...He will give them showers... (Zech. 10:1)

VI. THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL’S NATIONAL LIFE (EZEK. 37:1-28)

- A. Ezekiel saw the transformed land of Israel in chap. 36 and the national resurrection in chap. 37.

- B. Ezekiel 37 has two messages. First, the vision of the valley of dry bones (37:1-10) and its interpretation (37:11-14), then a message with a symbolic action of binding two sticks together (37:15-17) and the interpretation in 37:18-28. The Lord plans a permanent reunification of His people (37:15-24).

VII. THE VISION OF THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES (EZEK. 37:1-14)

- A. Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones gives insight into how the Lord will restore His people.

¹The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. ²Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. (Ezek. 37:1-2)

1. **Brought me out:** The Spirit transported Ezekiel in a vision to a valley of dry bones (1:3; 8:1).
2. **Full of dry bones:** He saw very many bones in the open valley which were very dry. He may have assumed these were those killed in a major battle, maybe the Babylonian conquest of Israel. The bones were “very dry,” suggesting that they had been there for a while (37:2).
3. **Pass by them all:** The Lord caused Ezekiel to pass by them or to walk “around” the valley.

- B. The dry bones came to life by the power of the Spirit (37:3-10). The Lord asked him, “Can these bones live?” The Lord told him again to prophesy to the bones; it may have seemed absurd to him.

³He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” So I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.” ⁴Again He said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵... “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. ⁶I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live.”” (Ezek. 37:3-6)

- C. As he spoke to the bones, he heard the sound of the bones rattling as they came together (37:7-10). He saw sinew, flesh, and skin come on them, but there was no breath in them; they were not alive.

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Also He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath... ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’” ¹⁰So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. (Ezek. 37:7-10)

- D. The Lord interpreted the vision for Ezekiel (37:11-14). It spoke of the restoration of whole house of Israel at the end of the age. They will be like dry bones and without hope of recovery (37:11).

¹¹Then He said to me, "...these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' ¹²Therefore prophesy and say... 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel...¹⁴I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it.'
(Ezek. 37:11-14)

VIII. ISRAEL WILL BE UNIFIED AND RESTORED (EZEK. 37:15-28)

- A. He was told to perform a prophetic act to signify that the Lord would unify Israel (37:15-19). He united two sticks that represented the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

¹⁶"...take a stick...and write on it: 'For Judah and...his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and...his companions.'¹⁷Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one...¹⁹say, "... 'Surely I will take the stick of Joseph [Israel]...and I will join them with...Judah, and make them one...'"
(Ezek. 37:16-19)

- B. The Lord will establish David as their king and make a covenant of peace (34:24-28).

²⁴"David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments...²⁵They shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob...where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever...²⁶I will make a covenant of peace...and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; ...I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ²⁸The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore." (Ezek. 37:24-28)