

Ezekiel 35-37 • The Word that Gives Life

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Ezekiel chapter 35. We are nearing the end of this prophetic book. Ezekiel chapter 35. Let's open up in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the opportunity tonight to get into the Scriptures because we believe that the Word gives life, and we need life. We need to be filled and nourished and equipped. We believe, LORD, there's a transformative work that You desire to do in us, and we believe that begins right here; by hearing, embracing, and walking out the Word of God.

So we pray that You'd help us today to do all of that. We come to you, LORD God, in an attitude of utter dependence. We pray for the ministry of Your Holy Spirit to speak words of life to us. We thank You Father. We ask You to be with us. In the Name of Jesus, amen. Amen. Amen.

Chapter 35 of Ezekiel. This is a prophecy that was given to Ezekiel, which speaks a word of condemnation toward the nation of Edom concerning their attitude and their actions toward the nation of Israel in their difficult days.

You know, there's a passage in the book of Proverbs that kind of speaks about the attitude of the LORD related to how you respond to your enemy— or even not respond to him, but respond concerning your enemy when he falls, or she.

And the Bible says that if you look upon your enemy in the day of his disaster and you rejoice, then you need to be careful... because the LORD may very well take His direction and His attention away from your enemy and put it on you. Because God does not want us to respond to our enemy, particularly in the day of their difficulty, with an attitude of haughtiness or delight. We should not never be delighted to see somebody fall.

Here's what was going on, and this is the reason this chapter was— is given to us in the book of Ezekiel. When the Babylonian Empire came against the city of Jerusalem, the Edomites who lived to the south of Israel thought to themselves, Aha, this is the time we're going to get the land. We're going to take over the land. It's— we're going to— this is now going to be ours.

And we are— they were delighted to see what the Babylonians were doing. Not only that, they joined with the Babylonians in routing out the Israelites and they attacked the Israelites that were in a weakened condition. We'll kind of see that as we go in here.

But I want you to notice— oh and then just remember that the Edomites were the physical descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, who was then renamed Israel. Alright? So we're talking about very close relations here between the Edomites and the Israelites.

So it begins in verse one by saying, *“The word of the LORD came to me, ‘Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it.’”* Stop there for a moment. Just let me remind you that Mount Seir is the geographical name that is given in the Bible for Edom and the reason it is used is because it was the mountain range that kind of defined that area.

And that mountainous homeland is where the Edomites lived. By the way, what was Edom back then is kind of divided now between Israel and Jordan. The western side of what was Edom, back then, is now Israelite territory and the eastern half of what was Edom, back then, is now Jordanian territory. So the nation of Edom has gone away.

Although the people of the Edomites lasted for quite a long time before they were finally snuffed out. You know, Herod, during the time of Jesus? The Bible refers to him as Idumean, but that's another name for an Edomite. So Herod, King Herod, a lot of people think King Herod, who ruled over the area of Judea at that time; they think he was a Jew. He was not; he was an Edomite.

So there were some issues between, you know, the Edomites, some jealousy issues, and it goes on here in verse three. This is the message now that God has given Ezekiel. He says, *“And say to it,”* and He's kind of prophesying to Mount Seir, if you will. *“Thus says the LORD God: Behold, I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out My hand against you, and I will make you a desolation and a waste. ⁴ I will lay your cities waste, and you shall become a desolation, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”*

Now, He hasn't explained at all why this desolation is going to come to Edom. But He does now, beginning in verse five— and I want you to notice this. Look very carefully at this, *“Because you cherished perpetual enmity,”* and that means hatred, *“and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity.”* And notice that it was, *“at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment.”*

“Therefore,” verse six, *“as I live, declares the LORD God, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you.”* In other words, what you sow, so also shall you reap. Right?

Now, we've always known that the Edomites, you know, were constant enemies of the nation of Israel for the most part. There's several passages in the Bible that tell us that they coveted the land. And we, I don't know if you remember that there's a very short book of prophecy; we'll get to it eventually. It's called the book of Obadiah. I bet it's been a long time since you read through that book.

It's a single chapter, but it's all about the condemnation of Edom. And we can see in the prophecies given to Obadiah a lot of things about the attitude of the Edomites toward Israel; their jealousy, their longing for the land, their longing for the blessings, you know, that were actually given to Israel.

And so what happened is the Edomites allowed their long standing hatred of Israel to spill over. And once, as I said before, the Babylonians began to attack, the Edomites were all too eager to help. And to the degree that they aided the Babylonians and even... viciously took advantage of the weakened Israelites who were already beaten down and beleaguered.

Yes, that's right, I said *beleaguered*. That's my word for the week. By the way, you can write that one down. Use it five times and it's yours. Alright? Alright.

So, God says, verse 7, look with me here. *“I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation, and I will cut off from it all who come and go.”*⁸ *And I will fill its mountains with the slain. On your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain with the sword shall fall.”*

And look at verse nine. This is interesting, *“I will make you a perpetual desolation.”* Of course, that means ongoing. And He even says that. *“And your cities shall not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”*

And then He begins to talk more about the attitude of the Edomites toward Israel. He says,¹⁰ *“Because you said, ‘These two nations and these two countries,’* and this is referring to the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. Right? The divided kingdom of Israel. He says, *“Because you said that ‘they shall be mine, and we will take possession of them’ – although the LORD was there—”* In other words, you knew that the LORD was there, and you did not fear the LORD,¹¹ *“Therefore, as I live, declares the LORD God, I will deal with*

you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them. And I will make Myself known among them when I judge you.”

Did you catch those three key words that the LORD exposes concerning the Edomites in verse 11? He refers to their anger, their envy, and their hatred. And so the LORD says, all these things are going to come back on your head, because you gave into these things. Do you guys know that the things we give into, those are the things that master us, aren't they?

You know, you give into any area of sin.... What did Jesus say? He said, (in John 8:34) *“He who sins is a slave to sin.”* Right? So what we give into in the area of sin in our lives, it masters us.

And God is basically telling the Edomites, you've given into these things. You've given into your anger over and over and over again. You've given into your envy. You've given into your hatred. And now they dominate you. You've been so dominated by them that you will now reap these things. And when I come to judge you... and notice God says in verse 12, *“And you shall know that I am the LORD.”* Oh, and I like this next statement. He says, *“I've heard all the revilings that you uttered....”*

A reviling is a statement of criticism that is abusive and insulting. So He's saying, I heard all of your insights— or insults rather. I heard all of your abusive statements about the people of Israel, *“saying, ‘They are laid desolate; they are given us to devour.’”* And look at— He says, in verse 13. He says, *“And you magnified yourselves against Me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against Me,”* and He says, *“I heard it.”*

Isn't that funny? Sometimes we talk and we don't think God hears us. And God comes to the Edomites and He says, *“I heard it.”* I heard what you said. I heard when you criticized the people of Israel. I heard when you reviled them, when you spoke abusively; when you said, in the privacy of your own tent, Now is the time we're going to take over. We're going to devour them. He says, *“I heard that.”* I heard that.

Verse 14, last two verses of the chapter, *“Thus says the LORD God: while the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate.”*¹⁵ *As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”* So chapter 35 is really just that message to the Edomites. And, but there's a message in there for you and me, as it relates to how we view our enemies and how we respond to our enemies.

Now chapter 36, we're going to bring things up here a little bit because this is the flip side. Just as God speaks these words of judgment against the nations of Israel that come against Israel, God is going to now, promise to restore Israel here in this chapter, but He's also going to speak to them about why He's restoring the nation of Israel. Look at verse one, *"And you, son of man, prophesy."* We're in chapter 36. *"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, 'O, mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD.'"*

Now he (Ezekiel) just got done prophesying to Mount Seir, which represents Edom. Now he is prophesying to the mountains of Israel. And you know, this is a word that is spoken in essence to Israel as a country, as a geographical country, but it obviously applies to their people. But I want you to notice, He (God) says, *"I want you to prophesy to the mountains of Israel."*

Did you catch that? That's very different from what He (God) told him (Ezekiel) about Edom. He said, *"I want you to prophesy against Mount Seir."* But He doesn't say that here. He doesn't say, I want you to prophesy *against* the mountains of Israel; I want you to prophesy to, so he's (Ezekiel) speaking the word of the LORD to Israel.

"Thus says the LORD God: Because the enemy said of you, 'Aha!'" which is that statement that means we've got you now and, *'The ancient heights have become our possession,'* that's what the enemy has been saying. *"Therefore prophesy and say, thus says the LORD God: Precisely because they made you desolate and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became the talk and evil gossip 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 the hills, the ravines and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted cities, which have become a prey and derision to the rest of the nations around, ⁵ therefore, thus says the LORD God: Surely I have spoken in My hot jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, that they might make it its pasturelands a prey."*

⁶ *"Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, thus says the LORD God: Behold, I have spoken in My jealous wrath because you have suffered the reproach of the nations. ⁷ Therefore thus says the LORD God: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach. ⁸ 'But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel"*

for they will soon come home. ’” So God is promising here that not only is He going to restore the land....

The land is going to be restored. He says it's going— it's been desolate, but it's going to burst forth in fruit. But then He's going to go on, and He's going to talk about— He also says, and I'm also going to restore the people to the land. I'm going to restore the land and the people. Right? ⁹ *“For behold,”* look what God says to Israel, *“I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. ¹⁰ And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. ¹¹ *...and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.”*

* Pastor did not read entire verse. It says, *“And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful.”*

¹² *“I will let people walk on you, even my people Israel. And they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no longer bereave them of [their] children.”* So God says, you're no longer going to be desolate, I'm going to make you a fruitful place. You know, you ask yourself, well when did that happen? Is Israel a fruitful place today?

Well, actually it is. It's a fruitful place today, way more than it ever was. It's going to be, of course, even more fruitful in— during the millennial kingdom. But we forget how recently the nation of Israel was an utter wasteland. Do you guys know that in the late 1800s, it was considered an utter wasteland?

I don't know if you know of it, but the American author Mark Twain visited the land of Israel during his lifetime and he wrote about it. He wrote about what he saw there. The year was 1867. Listen to what he says, Quote. He described it as, quote, *“A desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but it's given over wholly to weeds. A silent, mournful expanse. A desolation.”* He writes. *“We never saw a human being on the whole route. Hardly a tree or shrub anywhere, even the olive tree and the cactus. Those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country.”* End quote. Isn't that interesting? So, you know, this was the way Israel looked in the mid to late 1800s.

And today, Israel is one of the biggest producers of fruit in the world. So God has already begun to turn that around as people have come back to the land as Israel was reformed as a nation in the late 1940s and it's becoming fruitful and it— these things that God speaks of are coming to play— to pass. Israel is a very different place today.

So let's go on, verse 13 in your text. It says, *"Thus says the LORD God: Because they say to you, 'You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children....'"* Those were things their enemies said of the land.

He says, ¹⁴ *"...therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the LORD God. ¹⁵ And I will not let you hear any more the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the LORD God."*

Now, some of these things aren't going to come to pass fully until the millennial kingdom or what we call the Messianic kingdom. And you'll remember that follows immediately on the heels of the great tribulation. So God pours out His wrath in that latter part of the great tribulation. And then Jesus returns to the earth. We're going to talk more about that tonight and how Israel is going to respond to the coming of the LORD, which we know is the Second Coming.

They're going to think at first it is the first, and then they're going to realize it was the second. And we'll talk about that. But then great things are going to take place in Israel at that time, and no longer will they be the reproach of the nations. All right.

Now, having promised the good things that He did for Israel in all these previous verses, now the LORD is going to clarify in the following verses of this chapter the reason why He's going to bring all this about.

What do you suppose it is? Why is God going to bless Israel? Because they're a cool people? No. Because they're godly? No. None of those reasons. He's going to explain it here. Look what He says in verse 16, *"The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁷ Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before Me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. ¹⁸ So I poured out My wrath upon them for the blood that they'd shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it."* You'll remember Israel was deep into idolatry, ¹⁹ *"I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them."*

But look at verse 20. This is very important you hear this, *"But when they came to the nations, wherever they came...."* In other words, wherever they were scattered, *"...they profaned My holy Name, in that people said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of His land.' ²¹ But I had*

concern for My holy Name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.” I want you to stop there for a moment.

This is very important guys that we see this because you're going to see something very important about the character of God. He says, You sinned; I scattered you into the nations. But when you went into the nations, you profaned my name. Not necessarily by your actions while you were in the nations, but just by the fact that you had to go into those places, and that you had to be scattered.

And the people looked at you and they said, Wait a minute, aren't these the people of Israel? Couldn't their God keep them safe? Couldn't their— I thought their God gave them their land, the land that goes by their name. What happened? I guess their God's not strong enough to keep them in their own land. They were conquered, first by the Assyrian Empire in the Northern Kingdom, then by the Babylonian army in the Southern Kingdom. Oh, I guess their god isn't strong enough. Too bad, huh?

That is profaning the name of the LORD. Right? So God is saying here, I had concern for My name because you guys profaned It, by being so disobedient that I literally had to vomit you out of the land that I had given you. You profaned— that was a smear on Me because I am your God. Right? And everyone knows that. So it's really important that we see this. God is saying that all these people, these other nations, they were viewing God through His people.

Christians, that's still happening today. The world views God through us. You know, it's been said, and I think it's true, that you may be the only Bible anybody ever reads.

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine if somebody never picked up the Bible once in their lifetime, but they learned about God completely through you? Through your life? Your actions? Your words? Your deeds? Yikes! Huh? Yeah. Yikes. I mean, think about that. God is seen through His people. It's— that's what He's telling Israel right here, And you profaned My Name because I had to kick you out of your own land, the land that I'd promised to give you perpetually, if you just would obey Me.

So being concerned for His Name, His own reputation, God now has a message for the people of Israel. Look at verse 22 and following, *“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 the sake of My holy Name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.”

But He says, ²³ *“I will vindicate the holiness of My great Name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the LORD God, when through you, I vindicate My holiness before their eyes.”*

Here's how He's going to do it; Verse 24. Well, He's actually going to do it two ways. Verse 24 is the first way, *“I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.”* This is the physical restoration of Israel.

Guys, stop here. This is important. No other nation in the world has been scattered and brought back. No other nation in the world has had its people distributed into the four corners and then brought back. It has happened to one nation of people: Israel. And Israel today is living proof of the existence of God. You know people say all the time, “Oh, you can't prove the existence of God.” Well, I beg to differ. First of all, He's got His fingerprint all over creation and we can see the beauty of design in all that has been made.

But then there's Israel! How do you explain little Israel? This little sliver of a country. The United States of America dwarfs Israel. And yet Israel has blessings from the LORD that the United States and other big countries could never hope to have. It is truly amazing, but God's not done. He says, “I'm going to restore you physically to the land.”

But I want you to go on and read here in verse 27 and following what else, or excuse me, verse 25 and following, what else He's going to restore. He says, *“I will sprinkle clean water on you.”* That's a washing. *“And you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.”* ²⁶ *And I will give you,”* listen to this, *“a new heart and a new Spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh.”*

See what He's talking about here? This is the spiritual restoration that is coming to the nation of Israel. By the way, it's not there yet. Israel has not been Spiritually restored yet. We're going to talk about when that's going to happen, but He goes on to describe this Spiritual renewal. Verse 27, *“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules.”* ²⁸ *You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”*

Again, much of this has not yet been fulfilled. You know, there are a lot of Jews today who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. But you know, of the Jews living in Israel today, by far the largest portion of those Jews consider themselves secular. They don't believe in God. They don't believe in God. And it's a fairly large percentage. It's like, of all the different groups of Israelites, like 41% is the largest block and 41% of the Jews consider themselves secular. You know, so it's pretty interesting, isn't it? God prophesies this Spiritual restoration of the nation.

We're thinking, wow, that's a pretty huge change over what's happening today. And you're wondering, when is that going to happen? Well I'll tell you when it's going to happen; the Bible tells us when it's going to happen. It's going to happen when Jesus comes back a second time.

Now, I want you to remember the time frame. We are in what is called the Time of the Gentiles, which is the Church Age. It's the Time of the Gentiles for Israel, but it's the Church Age for us. The next thing on God's prophetic timetable is the catching away of the Church. Okay? So the Church is going to be removed. And then the great tribulation period is going to commence.

The Antichrist will be revealed. He will enter into a bargain, a covenant with Israel. For a seven-year covenant, but halfway through that covenant, he will renege on that covenant. And I believe that that covenant is going to create the way for the rebuilding of the Temple during those first three and a half years.

And it's going to be a very fast project. And the Temple is going to be rebuilt and the Jews are going to think, "Wow, our Messiah is here." And then he's going to turn on them and he's going to set up his own image in that Temple.

And he's going to say, "You worship me." And he's going to make the world take the mark of the beast at that time.

That's why people, when they call me or they write me, or whatever, and they say, "Pastor Paul is the jab the mark of the beast?"

I go, "No, the mark of the beast doesn't happen until midway through the great tribulation. So it's— no. It's not possible that could be the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast doesn't even begin till three and a half years into the great tribulation. We're not in the great tribulation. We know that because we're still here and the Antichrist has not yet been revealed.

And Israel has not entered into any covenant with any world leader, right? It hasn't happened. None of those things have happened. Again, the next thing on God's prophetic calendar is the catching away of the Church.

So, the Antichrist will renege on that, demand the worship of the Jews and the world; persecute those who refuse to worship him and then at the very conclusion of the great tribulation, the nations of the earth will come against Israel to destroy it, and they will begin to do so. And it will look like Israel is about to go down in flames.

And then, there's going to be a trumpet that's going to sound. And that's when Jesus will return to this earth and He's going to fight for Israel, overcoming all of her enemies and establishing His rule. But at that time, Israel is going to recognize her Messiah. Where is this told? It's in the book of Zechariah. And I'm going to put it on the screen. We're going to read some passages here. The first one is Zechariah 12. Look at this.

Zechariah 12:1-3 (ESV)

The oracle of the word of the Lord concerning Israel: Thus declares the Lord, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him: "Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it."

"The oracle of the word of the LORD," concerning who? The United States of America? No, Israel. "Thus declares the LORD who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him, 'Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples.'" This is going to be in the great tribulation period. "All who lift it will surely hurt themselves." And look at this, "And all the nations of the earth will gather against it."

Okay? This is talking now about the end of the great tribulation. Now we go to the next one from— we... but we're actually going back in Zechariah to chapter nine.

Zechariah 9:14, 16 (ESV)

Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like

lightning; the Lord God will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. On that day the Lord their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.

It says, “Then the LORD will appear over them and His arrow will go forth like lightning. The LORD God will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. On that day the LORD their God will save them, as the flock of His people, for like the jewels of a crown, they shall shine on His land.” And then look what it goes on to say in Zechariah chapter 12.

Zechariah 12:10-11, 13:1 (ESV)

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great... On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy.” Look at this. *“So that when they look on Me, on Him Whom they have pierced,”* in other words, Who they crucified, *“they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over Him as one weeps over a firstborn.”*¹¹ *On that day, the mourning of Jerusalem will be as great...¹ On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,”* look at this, *“to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.”*

Now, I'm going to have you leave that slide up for just a moment. It's very important that we see this. First of all, you see this progression in the book of Zechariah, how Jerusalem, He says, I'm going to make it a cup of staggering. That talks about the tribulation period.

He says, I will bring all the nations of the earth against her. And He speaks there about how the LORD then will appear over them and He will fight on their behalf. He will march forward. And then we read in chapter 12 that He says, I will pour out such a spirit of grace on the nation of Israel at that time, that they're going to look upon Me and they're going to recognize Me, He says. And they're going to know this isn't the first coming of Messiah. It was the Second Coming. The first coming we (Israel) denied—our people denied it and we crucified Him.

He (God) says, *“They will look on Him Whom they have pierced.”* This is crazy people; this was written hundreds of years before it happened. Before they, you know— this is the Old Testament, you know. And He says that they will mourn and they're going to mourn over their Messiah. Because they know that they've plunged themselves into a history of pain because they rejected their Messiah and it says they're going to cry over Him like, like a couple would cry over the loss of a first-born child.

But what is the result going to be? They're going to receive their Messiah. They're going to recognize Him for who He is— not just their Deliverer from all the kingdoms that came against them, but the Savior of the world. And the result is at the very end of that passage, He says, *“I'm going to cleanse them from their sin.”*

Because that's what Jesus does, right? He cleanses us from our sin. I want you, as we leave that slide up for a moment, that very last phrase, *“to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness,”* I want you to read the next verse that we're looking at here in Ezekiel, which is verse 29, *“And I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer 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 for your iniquities and your abominations. ³² It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.”*

You might be thinking, Wow that seems kind of harsh— God saying, *“Be ashamed.”* But you know what? You have to be ashamed of your sin in order to come to a Savior. What did Jesus say in the Beatitudes? *“Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* (Matthew 5:4)

You think He was just talking about mourning over the loss of your car? Or your house? Or because you had a rainy day when you planned a picnic? He's talking about mourning over sin, *“Blessed are those who mourn over their sin, for they shall be comforted.”* That is a first step to true repentance.

Paul calls it *godly sorrow* in his New Testament epistles (2 Corinthians 7:10). It leads to repentance and life. Right? So He (God), you know, He's not being cruel to them here. He's encouraging them to go through the natural steps of repentance.

Verse 33, *“Thus says the LORD God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities.”* Okay this is again, at the end of the great tribulation when Jesus returns, *“I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt.”*³⁴ *And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by.*³⁵ *And they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’*³⁶ *Then the nations that are left all around you...*” Some of them have been conquered in this great battle that we call Armageddon. But He says,³⁶ *“the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the Lord; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.”* Boy, that's assurance, isn't it? God says, *“I will do it.”*

³⁷ *“Thus says the Lord God: This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: to increase their people like a flock.”*³⁸ *Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”*

Now we're going to cover one more chapter here tonight, and we're going to do it fairly rapidly because I think a lot of you are familiar with this chapter [37] anyway. It's the chapter where Ezekiel, in a vision, is allowed to see the physical and Spiritual condition of Israel. And this is really just an extension of the chapter we just read, because it's a promise in visionary form, that God is simply going to restore Israel. Right?

So we're going to go through this fairly rapidly. It says,¹ *“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones.”*² *And He led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.”*

So, it's kind of interesting, isn't it? In the last chapter, we have this picture of hopefulness, and now we're brought into a picture of hopelessness as it relates to these—this picture of these dry bones, which is a picture of death. And don't think of skeletons. These are dismembered bones that are scattered all over the valley floor. There's no two bones that are connected still. Okay? It's a very grim picture.

And notice what God says to Ezekiel. How would you like this question posed to you? And He said to me,³ *“‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ And I answered, ‘O Lord God, You know.’”*

By the way, that's a great answer. And I would encourage you to use it a lot. If God ever asks you a question, just answer by saying, You know. That's a great answer. I love it.

You know, he (Ezekiel) doesn't go, "Well let me think on that for a sec," or try to postulate his own opinion, you know, of what he thinks. You know, You know. But you know, the question is almost ridiculous from a human standpoint, not from God's, but from a human standpoint. He's (God) looking at these bones scattered around the ground and He goes, "What do you think, Zeke, you think these bones could live again?"

Now from a human standpoint, what would Ezekiel say? "Not a chance. Not a chance." Right? "They're dead, bleached bones. There's no organs. There's no blood vessels. There's no circulatory system. There's no skin. No, of course they can't live." But, you know, Ezekiel has learned a few things about talking to God.

What he's learned is nothing is impossible with God (Job 42:2, Luke 1:37 and others). So he goes, "You know."

And "Then He said to me," verse 4 *"Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."*

So, isn't it interesting? I want you to also take special note of the fact that God tells Ezekiel to speak this. He tells Ezekiel to speak it over the bones, right? God doesn't say, Now I'm going to speak over these bones and just sit back and watch what happens. He says, "You, Ezekiel, speak life into those bones. And that's how it's going to happen."

And the important thing to remember there is that Ezekiel wasn't told to say just any words. He was told to say the words of the LORD. And that's what had the power; it's the word of the LORD. There's a belief today in the body of Christ that you have the power to what you speak can change things. And it's largely really ridiculous. It's called the Word Faith movement. And the Word Faith movement believes that whatever you speak is going to happen, and so they will even deny reality.

I remember back many years ago when Sue and I were living in Montana, there was a woman in our church who had been caught up in the Word Faith movement; she was covered with a rash. She came to church though, and the pastor went up to her and said, "Oh dear, when did you get this rash?"

And she says, "I don't have a rash."

He was kind of like, "I can see it."

"I don't have...." Well finally she explained to him that, "I'm just— I'm not speaking anything about this rash and I'm— it's going to, I know it's going to go away. Because I'm not going to speak; I'm speaking health and...."

People, (Pastor sighs and shakes his head) you are not God. God can speak and make things happen. You know, there's a passage, I think it is in Ecclesiastes? "*Who can speak and make it happen if the LORD has not decreed it?*" (Lamentations 3:37) I think that's Ecclesiastes, "*Who can speak and have it happen if the LORD has not decreed it?*" Think about that.

And the answer is nobody. Nobody. Nobody can speak and have it happen if the LORD has not decreed it. That is why what Ezekiel is about to do in this vision is going to have an impact because it was the word of the LORD that he was told to speak.

Look at verse seven, "*So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.*" Can you imagine watching this even in a vision? It would be bizarre, wouldn't it? ⁸ "*And I looked and behold, there were sinews on them,*" and that's like muscle and tendon and things like that, "*and flesh had come upon them and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them.*"

So they're put together, but they're dead. He says No breath. Right? By the way, in Hebrew and in Greek, the word for breath is the same word as spirit. Okay? Same word. So, it could have easily been translated, there was no Spirit in them.

Verse 9, "*Then He said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath,'*" or to the wind. It can also mean wind, "*Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.*" ¹⁰ "*So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the Breath,* or if you will, the Spirit, "*came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.*"

So this is another picture of what we just read in the previous chapter. This physical and spiritual restoration of the nation of Israel. It's just— see God does this, when He's going to do something, He repeats it. He repeats it. It's not talking about a separate event.

It's the same event we just read about. ¹¹ *“Then He said to me, son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.”* ¹² *Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people.”*

So He changes the metaphor now to one of a graveyard. He says, “I'm going to raise you up.” He says, “And I'll bring you into the land of Israel and you shall know that I am the LORD when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, O My people.” So now He kind of enters into a different illustration.

And frankly, this illustration shouldn't surprise us here because that's what spiritual restoration is depicted as: being dead and then coming to life. Right? Do you remember what Paul said when he wrote to the Ephesians? Let me put this on the screen for you; from Ephesians chapter two.

Ephesians 2:1-6 (ESV)

... you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

He says, “... you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses,” What did He do? He “made us alive,” He raised up us out of our grave, if you will, “with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

So you see, the picture is consistent through the Word of God as it relates to this Spiritual restoration. And we're participants in that Spiritual restoration. Isn't that cool? The things He's talking about that are going to happen in Israel one day during the Messianic kingdom, they've already happened to us, the Church because Israel denied the LORD and rejected the Messiah. And so God turned to the Gentiles... and we received that Spiritual restoration. It's pretty cool.

Now the LORD goes on to promise Israel saying verse 14, *“And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.”*

Pretty cool, huh? Can I just say one quick thing before we just kind of finish out the chapter and the last part of it's pretty, pretty quick. It just speaks of the restoration of the divided kingdom of Judah and Israel into one.

But before we get to that, can I just mention very quickly the power of the Word to bring us back to life? The power of the Word to bring us back to life; you know, ever since Covid hit and our YouTube channel blew up, and much to our surprise, we started— you know, people started listening to teachings from all over the world, my inbox has just, I mean, I spend about two hours a day just answering emails from people asking Bible questions and stuff like that.

But I also get tons of testimonies. I don't know why the LORD has blessed me with hearing testimonies daily. But He has... and I'm taking it. And what I hear over and over and over and over again, is that because Covid hit and because people couldn't go anywhere and because they decided, you know what, I'm finally going to read through the Bible.

And then they started reading through the Bible and they— it got tough for them. And so they went online to get some help and then they found us and they got hooked on the ministry of the Word and going through the Bible. I hear testimony after testimony after testimony of people whose lives have been utterly transformed— and I mean utterly changed. And I have just— it has really challenged me as a pastor, to think differently than I even did before. Or I don't know about differently, but more forcefully about the power of the Word to change lives.

Now, as many notes as I get from people telling me about their testimonies, I get people who write me who are very desperate for change in their lives. And they'll talk to me about how they've ruined their lives. And they say, Pastor Paul, I don't even know if I can be saved. I, I am the most wretched of people. I

have frittered away my life. I have sinned. I have lived in utter pleasure for self. I've been selfish and lawless and evil. What hope is there for me? And their— they tell me about all of their problems.

And after receiving all these incredible testimonies about what happens when people immerse themselves in the Word of God; and that's the key, not just hear it occasionally, but immerse themselves in the Word of God, I write to these people who are desperate, and I tell them all the same thing.

Listen, I could sit, and we could counsel until we're blue in the face, and I could give you all kinds of Biblical counsel, or I could talk to you about your problems, or we could talk about how you're feeling, or we could.... But if you will just immerse your heart in the Word of God, *He'll* do the transformation.

He can do it. I can't.

And so what I do is I usually try to start them on a kind of a program of Bible study, and I'll suggest a book that might be— might speak to their particular issue just as a starting point. Often it's the book of Galatians or Romans or Matthew or something like that.

In fact, I just did this this last week. Guy wrote me just absolutely just broken. He says— you know, in his 50s, you know— I don't even know if I've ever been saved. I thought I was. I'm a wretch. What can I possibly do? I said, okay, here's what I want you to do. I want you to— I give him a link; I go to my study in the book of Galatians And I want you to read the verses that I cover in the— in each successive study, you read them and you take notes about what you read. And read them maybe a few times, three, four, five times through.

Then listen to the study that we do online, and take notes again. Write down things the LORD brings to your mind. Then pray about those things. And then when you're done praying, do the next study. And then when you're done with that, do the next study. And when you finish that book, do another book. And when you finish that book, go to another book. And go through the Bible! Chapter by chapter, verse by verse. God will change your life.

Stop complaining about it. Stop wallowing in your sorrow. And get into the Word! Daily. You know, the people who tell me their lives have been changed are the ones who tell me they spend three to five hours a day in the Word.

And you know what? You know what I call that? I call it intensive care. Because some people, if I were a doctor, I would throw these people into

intensive care because their Spiritual condition is such that they need to be watched over and monitored every day, every minute of every day. And, you know, when you're out of intensive care, you can slack off a little bit. You know what I mean? When you're just in a regular hospital room. And then when you get out of the hospital, I suppose you can probably lessen that a little bit and still stay pretty healthy. Spiritually speaking, some people need to be in intensive care and they don't realize it. You know? They want to come to church once a week and get all better. That's like the doctor giving you a pill and you taking it once in a while for your condition.

I'll take it once in a while; tells me to take three a day, I'll take one a week. And then they're wondering why their life doesn't change. Or why their physical condition doesn't get any better. And it's the same thing Spiritually. You know?

People, if you're in trouble, then you've got to be in intensive care. You know? Go through a book of the Bible every day. Every. Single. Day.

I don't know if I have enough time.

You have the time. *We have the time to do what we want to do.*

Last part of the chapter; verse 15, "*The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁶ Son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him,'*" now remember Judah is the southern kingdom and "*then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.'*" Now in this section of verses the northern kingdom of Israel is being referred to as Ephraim instead of Israel. And it's referred to that— both of the kingdoms are being referred to by their primary largest and most influential tribes. Okay?

The Southern kingdom is called Judah because of the most influential largest tribe. You remember who Ephraim was? He was one of the sons of Joseph. He had two sons, and Ephraim became the most prominent of the tribes of the Northern 10 tribes that we call Israel. The Bible often refers to the Northern kingdom as Ephraim, as it does here.

Anyway, here's the point: verse 17, "*And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when your people say to you, 'Will you not tell us what you mean by these?' ¹⁹ Say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the*

stick of Judah,” and look at this, “and make them one stick, that they may be one in My hand.”

What is God saying? It’s going to be one nation. ²⁰ *“When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹ then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. ²² And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel.”*

And look at this, *“And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.”*

Now, let me just stop to say this. Although the nation of Israel today is just one nation, it's not a divided kingdom anymore. There's one part of this prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. What is it? It's the king, isn't it? They haven't had a king since the Babylonian invasion. Right? So the Davidic kings have not—have ceased. And that's not going to happen now until the millennial kingdom, but God talks about it here.

Look what He says in verse 23, *“They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backsliding in which they have sinned. And I will cleanse them, and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”*

Look at this, verse 24, *“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in My rules, and be careful to obey My statutes.”*

Guys, in the millennial kingdom, David is once again going to rule over Jerusalem. Jesus is going to rule over the world. David is going to rule over Jerusalem. In fact, that's going to be repeated. Look at verse 25, *“They shall dwell in the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David, My servant, shall be their prince forever. ²⁶ And I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant. And I will set them in the land and multiply them and will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore.”* In other words, God is going to be in their midst. ²⁷ *“My dwelling place,”* look at this guys, *“shall be with them and I will be their God and they shall be My people.”*

Where have you read that? How about the book of Revelation? Let me show you on the screen. We'll end with this pretty quickly. Revelation 21.

Revelation 21:1-3 (ESV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her Husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.'"

Final verse in Ezekiel 37; verse 28, *"Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies,"* or sets apart, *"Israel when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."*

And that's where we stop. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for giving us this time tonight. These three chapters are very important as they relate to the nation of Israel and even future prophecy related to Israel and the world. And I thank You, Father, for giving us these insights; for showing us, LORD, that You have a plan and that You are working things all in accordance with them.

We thank You and praise You, LORD, for the goodness of Your Word and the power of Your Word to transform our lives. LORD, we pray that You would do it, change our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' precious Name, amen.