

Restoration of Israel

(26) Ezekiel 35:1 – 36:38

By Scott Huckaby

10/3/2021

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Ezekiel 35:1-15 – Judgment on Mount Seir

Summary: God brings a word to Ezekiel against Mount Seir. On the eastern side of the Jordan River, **Mount Seir** was a center of the Edomites, the descendants of Jacob's brother Esau. This was a word **against** the Edomites. Ezekiel had already spoken short previous word against Edom (Ezekiel 25:12-14). Perhaps Ezekiel put this prophecy here to answer the question, "How can we be restored if there are enemies like Edom who hate us so deeply and wish to take advantage of our desolation?"

God promised to answer the **anger** of Edom and their **envy** against Israel. Ezekiel 35 speaks powerfully to any people or nation who sets themselves against Israel:

- With anger and envy (Ezekiel 35:11)
- With an ancient hatred (Ezekiel 35:5).
- With a desire to take their land (Ezekiel 35:10).
- With rejoicing in Israel's bloodshed (Ezekiel 35:6).
- By taking advantage of Israel's troubles and increases them (Ezekiel 35:5).
- By acting as if God Himself was not present in the land of Israel (Ezekiel 35:10).
- By speaking against and blaspheming the God of Israel (Ezekiel 35:12).

Ezekiel 36:1-12 – Blessing on Israel

God promises to renew the land of Israel...

Have verses 8 and 11 been fulfilled?

v8 – *O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit:* God promised a divine ecological and agricultural renewal to the land of Israel. It certainly has been fulfilled in recent times... Mark Twain visited the land of Israel in 1867 and published what he saw in his book, *"The Innocents Abroad."* He described the land as being a barren wasteland, devoid of both vegetation and human population.

"a desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds... a silent mournful expanse.... a desolation.... 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."

- God has made the desert bloom increasing the rainfall over 450% since 1900.
- Since 1948 Israel has more than tripled the amount of land used for farming and production has increased *sixteen times*.
- Israel produces 95% of its own food requirements and has a large agricultural export industry.
- God has even restored the forests with over 400 million trees since the Jews have returned to the land.

v11 – *I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings.*

The blessed and renewed land would receive many more people, both from birth and immigration.

- There were only 40K Jews in the land of Israel in 1900, there is over 7M now, about half the world-wide population.

God promised not only to *restore* Israel, but to bless them *beyond* previous times. This promise is focused on the land, but certainly connected to the Jewish people as well.

Ezekiel 36:13-28 – The Renewal of Israel

¹³ *Thus says the Lord God: "Because they say to you, 'You devour men and bereave your nation of children,' ¹⁴ therefore you shall devour men no more, nor bereave your nation anymore," says the Lord God. ¹⁵ "Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore, nor shall you cause your nation to stumble anymore," says the Lord God.'*

¹⁶ *Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ¹⁷ "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in*

her customary impurity. ¹⁸ Therefore 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. ¹⁹ So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. ²⁰ When 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.’ ²¹ But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. ²² “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “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. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, 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. ²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of 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 keep My judgments and do them. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

v13 – Why did people say about Israel, “you devour men and bereave your nation”?

People would come to say this about Israel because their land would become a desolate and seemingly forsaken land that devoured its inhabitants.

- This described the land of Israel from the Roman conquests of the first and second centuries until the Zionist movement starting in the 19th century.

v14 – How has this promise been fulfilled?

You shall devour men no more, nor bereave your nation anymore: As we discussed, God working through the effort and ingenuity of the Israeli people, as well as through supernatural blessing.

v15 – Has this promise been fulfilled?

Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore: Partially but it will not be completely fulfilled until the Millennial Kingdom.

v16-18 – Why did God pour out His fury on Israel?

Despite Israel being God’s people called to represent Him on earth with all the revelations He gave them about Himself, they were disloyal disobeying Him and pursuing idols.

v19 – What was the consequence of Israel’s disloyalty?

So I scattered them among the nations: God long before, at the beginning of Israel’s history as a nation, promised that He would punish them with exile if they were to persist in their disobedience and rejection of Him.

“The Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other...” (Deut 28:64)

Dispersion — The Jews were warned repeatedly that they would be dispersed worldwide if they were not faithful to their covenant with God.

“And among those nations you shall find no rest, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul” (Deuteronomy 28:65).

Persecution — The Lord also warned the Jews that they would be persecuted wherever they went. This has certainly been the case from Haman’s murderous plan in the book of Esther to Antiochus Epiphanies rages, the medieval crusades, Spanish Inquisition, Russian pogroms in the 1800’s, Hitler’s holocaust, and Islam’s fanaticism.

“the foreigner who comes from a distant land...will say, ‘All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it’” (Deuteronomy 29:22-23).

Desolation — God promised that after their dispersion, their land would become “desolate” and their cities would become “waste.”

Why has there been so much persecution of the Jews? Why is antisemitism such a persistent problem?

The world hates the Jews because the world hates God. The Jews were God’s firstborn, His chosen people (Deuteronomy 14:2). Through the Jewish patriarchs, the prophets, and the temple, God used the Jews to bring forth His Word, the Law, and morality to a world of sin. He sent forth His son, Jesus the Christ, in a Jewish body to redeem the world of sin. Satan, the prince of the earth (John 14:30; Ephesians 2:2), has poisoned the minds of men with his hatred of the Jews. See Revelation 12 for an allegorical depiction of Satan’s (the dragon’s) hatred of the Jewish nation (the woman).

What was the miracle that has become apparent in the centuries of Israel's Diaspora (dispersion)?

For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob. (Malachi 3:6)

The preservation of the Jewish cultural identity – The uniqueness of the Jews has been preserved despite the Diaspora, the worldwide dispersion of the Jews that happened soon after the Romans sacked Jerusalem in 70AD. Despite most Jews not being religious, they have maintained their cultural heritage wherever they have gone. The Jews not being assimilated into local cultures for multiple centuries is unprecedented in history.

Isaiah 66:22 – For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me," declares the Lord, So your offspring and your name will endure.

v20 – How is it the Jews profaned God's holy name in the nations where-ever they were dispersed?

When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name: The mere fact of their exile could be seen as God's rejection of His people. And since they rejected God's provision in Messiah-Jesus and for the most part became secular humanists is an affront to God's name.

v21-23 – Why did God promise to restore Israel?

God's promises of restoration to Israel were not only for the sake of Israel, but even more so for His **holy name**. Israel **profaned** His name **among the nations**, yet God promised to **sanctify** His own name and reputation.

Why is it so important to God that His name be exalted among the nations?

He wants his name to be regarded by the nations not as some ineffective tribal god, but as the Lord of the whole earth. And Israel is to be the channel through which this vindication will be achieved.

v24 – Is this referring to the restoration from exile in Babylon?

For I will take you from among the nations: When Ezekiel first gave this prophecy, Israel was practically desolate and her people were exiled. God promised to not only bring back His people from the Babylonian captivity, but a greater and more complete gathering from multiple nations.

- The restoration from Babylon was merely a foreshadow of the ultimate restoration following their multi-century Diaspora.

How would Israel earn their restoration to the land?

This is a trick question... there is no way they could earn their restoration to the land. God would restore them because of the unconditional promises He had made to them. God in His grace gives us what we don't deserve.

- The Abrahamic Covenant promised to Abraham and His covenant descendants a *land*, a *nation*, and a *blessing* to extend to all nations (Genesis 12:1-3).
- The Mosaic or Sinai Covenant gave Israel the *law*, the *sacrifices*, and the *choice* of blessing or curse (Exodus 19).
- The Davidic Covenant that promised an *everlasting dynasty*, a *perfect ruler*, and the *Promised Messiah* (2 Samuel 7).
- God's plan of redemption through the covenants is completed and perfected in the New Covenant.

v25-26 – What is it the New Covenant promised here?

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you: The new covenant promises a spiritual cleansing of God's people, a cleansing made possible by the death of Jesus when the new covenant was instituted.

What does the symbolism of sprinkling clean water represent?

Its symbolism is derived from ritual washings with water which were intended to remove ceremonial defilement (Exodus 30:17-21; Leviticus 14:52; Numbers 19:17-19).

- This reference to cleansing by the **clean water** of the new covenant is the likely connection Jesus had in mind when He spoke of being *born of water* in John 3:5. As Paul would later write of the believer, *you were washed* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

How is it God would cleanse Israel from all their filthiness and idols?

The sin and corruption mentioned previously in Ezekiel 36:17-18 would be cleansed by God's work through the new covenant. This would not be the mere *covering* of sin as accomplished by the imperfect sacrifices of the Old Testament, but a true *cleansing* of sin by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

What is the new heart and spirit promised here?

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you: This is the spiritual transformation promised in the new covenant. Instead of the law working from the outside in, God promised a new heart to work from the inside out.

- Jesus referred to this great work of spiritual transformation through the new covenant when He spoke of being *born again* in John 3. Paul spoke of it when he wrote of believers being new creations in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Does this mean the New Covenant replaces the Law of the Mosaic Covenant?

Matthew 5:17-18 – *Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

The Law in the Mosaic Covenant served its purpose to reveal our condition before God so that we may wholeheartedly embrace the blessing of the New Covenant...

Galatians 3:24 – *the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Anyone trying to earn God's favor for salvation by keeping the Law if they are honest with themselves would have to conclude that they can not do it without God's help... that if they were to have eternal life, it would be by God's grace through faith.

So why then do we bother to study the Mosaic Law since we are now under the New Covenant?

It helps to better understand the mind of God so that we may be more like Him and please Him out of gratitude for what He has done for us. And there are principles in the Law that apply to all people for all time.

Does being grateful mean that we need to pay Jesus back for what He has done for us?

No... that would be salvation by works and besides, there is no way we could ever pay Him back!

- Being grateful is being thankful... our doing good works is to please our Savior out of our love for Him, not out of any sense we are beholden (obligated to pay Him back).

What is the difference between a heart of stone and one of flesh?

I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh: God promised a new nature in the new covenant. In that covenant men and women are made new men and women, with a new nature patterned after the nature of Jesus Himself...

Ephesians 4:22-24 – *that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

In the ancient world the heart was the center for volition and the intellectual catalyst for feeling and action. A 'heart of stone' implied inflexibility and willfulness, while a 'heart of flesh' meant submission and compliance.

What other aspect of the New Covenant is God's promise to put His Spirit within us?

I will put My Spirit within you: This is the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Under the new covenant, the Spirit dwells in every believer...

Romans 8:9 – *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.*

Whom does the Holy Spirit indwell?

1 John 4:15 – *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

All who confess Jesus as the Savior-God has a born again human spirit and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

What are the benefits of having the presence of the Holy Spirit?

He assures us that we are eternally secure...

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*

He helps the believer understand God's Word...

1 Corinthians 2:14 – *But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Believers may have fruit of the Spirit...

Galatians 5:22-23 – *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*

Believers may exercise gifts of the Spirit...

1 Corinthians 12:7 – *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all*

How is it God would cause Israel to walk in His statutes?

Cause you to walk in My statutes: The spiritual transformation and indwelling Holy Spirit would help the believer to obey God's law. Obedience would be more of a matter of *being* what God has *already made* the believer as a new man or woman in Jesus Christ, filled with God's own Holy Spirit.

v28 – What does Israel dwelling in the land have to do with the New Covenant?

Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers:

The promises of *land* and gathering to the land are part of the very fabric of the new covenant. It is a plain and serious error to subtract these promises from the new covenant itself.

- The return mentioned in this passage does not refer to the return to Canaan under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah but to a final and complete restoration under the Messiah for the Millennial Kingdom.

What is the ultimate goal of the New Covenant for Israel?

You shall be My people, and I will be your God: This phrase speaks of restored and true relationship between God and His people. The cleansing and transformative work of the new covenant would make a depth and strength of relationship possible for all God's people that only a select few knew before.

Ezekiel 36:29-38 – More on Israel's Renewal

Summary: God elaborates on the agricultural blessings He will give Israel after they become His people. These blessings reflect the removal of much of the curse during the Millennial Kingdom with no famine among the nations. The land of Israel would be like the Garden of Eden (verse 35). The nations around Israel would recognize that the restoration of Israel as the work of God. And the cities of Israel would be filled with "flocks of men."

What applications do we see from today's discussion about the restoration of Israel?

- God is not done with Israel... those who think modern Israel has not relevance to the promises of God are gravely mistaken.
- God is not happy with nations who mistreat His people Israel and there will be very unpleasant consequences for them.
- God is fulfilling prophecy in Israel today... those who do not recognize this are missing out on a great blessing.
- The New Covenant is for all people, both Israel and Gentile.
- We are blessed to live in the era of the New Covenant which promises the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- The Millennial Kingdom will be a blessed time for all people, Israel and Gentile.