

The Dry Bones Live!

(27) Ezekiel 37:1–28

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10/10/2021

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

Has the church replaced Israel in the promises of God?

Many think so which has contributed to our being in the age of scoffers because you can not have a correct view of eschatology (study of the end times) if you have that false understanding.

Jesus was Jewish and all of the writers of the Bible were Jewish so why don't we hear more about modern-day Israel from the pulpit?

- Research shows that 14 of the top 25 church denominations believe no Scriptural promises remain for the Jews.
- There is an erroneous view in the church today that God has replaced Israel with the church
- Most religious leaders don't think there is a connection between modern day Israel and the Israel of Scripture
- The Israeli – Palestinian conflict has become so politicized that most preachers seek to avoid the controversy.

Why is it important to have a correct view of Israel?

- Over 83% of God's Word concerns Israel in some fashion, so that is a lot of Scripture to mishandle or set aside.
- God is not done with Israel. The promises He made to them will be fulfilled.
- Israel is God's prophetic clock. The stage is being set for God to start working through Israel again as His representatives on earth. Watching Israel reveals how close we are to the end of the Age.

How do we know that the church has not replaced Israel in the plans of God?

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

(Romans 11:25)

God has made separate promises to Israel and the church so He is not done working through Israel as a nation. The role of the Jews did not end with the founding of the Church, it was suspended until the Church is completed. The Church

Age will end at the rapture and God will again work through the Jews.

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed (Revelation 7:4)

The Jews as a nation will return to being God's people during the Tribulation as represented by 144,000 or 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes who go out preaching that Jesus is the Messiah. This is God working through the nation of Israel again to help people to know Him. A great multitude of people will respond to these Jewish evangelists because supernatural fulfillment of prophecy will be a regular occurrence during the Tribulation.

If someone asked you to prove that the Bible was true, what would you say?

Fredric II, King of Prussia (1740-1786) asked Joachim von Zieten, General of the Hussars, a Christian known to be well grounded in his faith to, "Give me proof for the truth of the Bible in two words!" General von Zeiten replied, "Your majesty, the Jews!" Indeed, God has blessed and preserved the nation of Israel as no other nation on earth.

Isaiah 66:22 – "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain.

How is Israel is the most important and obvious sign of the times?

The most prolific prophecy in the Old Testament is about Israel returning to the land prior to the Messiah coming to establish His Millennial Kingdom. For example...

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. (Ezekiel 36:24)

This prophecy of the return of the Jews refers to a re-gathering from multiple nations; it cannot refer to a return from captivity of the single nation of Babylon. The context here makes it clear that the Jews are returning to the land of Israel in unbelief. This is exactly what has been occurring; Israel is essentially a secular nation in the model of Europe and the United States.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 – The Dry Bones Live

The 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. ² Then 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. ³ And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” So I answered, “O Lord God, You know.”

⁴ Again He said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!’ ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.” ’ ’

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸ Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Also He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘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 breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then He said to me, “Son of man, 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!’ ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “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. ¹³ Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. ¹⁴ I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in my own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,” says the Lord.’ ”

v1-2 – What did it mean when Ezekiel said the hand of the Lord came upon him?

Ezekiel’s remarkable prophetic experience is not specifically called a *vision*, but that seems to be the sense of the phrase, *brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord*. We regard what follows as something Ezekiel saw as a vision, not with his physical sense of sight.

What did God show Ezekiel?

In the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones: Ezekiel saw a large **valley**. This was truly *Death Valley*; the floor of the valley was so dense with human **bones** that it was described as **full of bones**.

- The lives represented by these **bones** were not only dead; they were also disgraced. In the thinking of ancient Israel, an unburied corpse with exposed remains was a shocking disgrace to the dead.

What does the fact that the bones were very dry tell us?

Dry bones are not only dead; they have been long dead. When something has been dead so long, we normally give up hope it will ever live again.

v3 – What do we learn from Ezekiel’s response to God’s question, “can these bones live?”

- Ezekiel had no hope in the bones, but he did have hope in God.
- Ezekiel did not presume to know what God wanted to do with the bones.
- Ezekiel was confident that God *did* know.

v4-6 – What did God tell Ezekiel to do about the dry bones?

Prophesy to these bones: God gave the prophet something to do. God commanded him to speak, to **prophesy** to the dry, dead **bones**. By all outward observation this was a vain and foolish act.

- The Apostle Paul said that the message of the cross – God’s rescue for lost humanity in the person and work of Jesus – was *foolishness to those who are perishing* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord: Ezekiel could only preach this message full of faith in God. Yet if he was confident that he spoke *the word of the Lord*, he knew God’s word had supernatural power.

Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live: God promised to fill the dry bones with **breath**. He promised to **bring flesh** upon those bones and cover them **with skin**. God would make the once dead and dry bones **live**.

What was the significance of God saying He'd give the dry bones breath?

Their life would be marked by **breath** living once again in these bones. This has a double sense, because the ancient Hebrew words for **breath** and *spirit* are the same. This was a granting of God's Spirit (as previously promised in Ezekiel 36:27) and the restoration of life-giving breath.

- At its root *ruah* denotes the sense of 'air in motion', i.e. wind or breath.

v7-8 – What happened next?

So I prophesied as I was commanded: If Ezekiel had any doubts, he put them away and did what God **commanded**. To human perception this proclamation of the word of God was foolish, yet Ezekiel obeyed.

The bones came together, bone to bone: As Ezekiel **prophesied**, there was first a **noise** among the bones, a **rattling**. As he continued, the bones began to assemble themselves into skeletons.

The sinews and flesh came upon them: After the bones were assembled, muscles and tissue came upon the bones. The bones were full of activity, yet still did not yet have the **breath** of life in them. The reviving of the dry bones clearly happened in stages.

- Stirring of the bones.
- Assembly of the bones.
- Sinews and flesh upon the bones.
- Skin upon the tissues covering the bones.
- Awaiting the breath of God.

v9-10 – What else was Ezekiel to prophesy?

Prophesy to the breath: The previous verse left the valley full of revived, animated bodies that yet lacked breath. Now Ezekiel was told to call upon the **breath** (spirit, wind), praying the breath/spirit would come **on these slain, that they may live**.

Come from the four winds, O breath: In this vision, Ezekiel had already proclaimed God's word to the dead and dry bones, and had seen a remarkable work done. Yet it was not enough; there also needed to be a work *by the Holy Spirit*.

So I prophesied as He commanded me: Perhaps this was, humanly speaking, an easier message for Ezekiel to preach. He had the encouragement of seeing the beginning of a supernatural work with the re-animation of the dry bones. Now he **prophesied** and prayed for the work to be completed.

Breath came into them: After Ezekiel's faithful proclamation of God's message, the work of reviving the dry bones was completed. The **breath** of God came into the reanimated bodies, and they **stood upon their feet**.

What did the revived dry bones become after God breathed His Spirit into them?

An exceedingly great army: They became an **army**, and an **exceedingly great** one. They lived to act under the orders of the one who gave them life.

When will Israel have an exceedingly great Army?

In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left. (Zech 12:6)

This has happened in our lifetime; Israel's military is among the most powerful on earth. – Israeli forces have won against superior forces in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1981. Today the Israeli Defense Force is the most powerful in the region and Israel is currently the only nation in the Middle East with nuclear weapons. God has protected Israel from its inception and has enabled them to build a military capability that has brought them security and stability.

v11 – What did the dry bones represent?

These bones are the whole house of Israel: We might have supposed that Ezekiel understood that the **bones** in his vision represented his people. Yet, it might have surprised him when God revealed they represented **the whole house of Israel**, not only those from the kingdom of Judah. The restoration would include those from the northern kingdom of Israel that fell to the Assyrians some 150 years earlier.

Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off! The house of Israel had reason to say this, both those from the south and the north. Their only **hope** for life and restoration was in God.

v12 – What would God do for Israel?

I will open your graves and cause you to come up: The same message is communicated through a slightly different picture. Instead of the bones being exposed, here they are buried in **graves**. The effect is the same; life is brought to that which was dead.

Bring you into the land of Israel: As promised many times in other places (such as Ezekiel 36:24 and 36:28), this revival of Israel also included their restoration to the land.

v13 – What was the reason behind Israel’s restoration?

Then you shall know that I am the Lord: God would powerfully reveal Himself to Israel through this great work of revival and restoration to the land.

v14 – What else would God do for Israel?

I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live: The breath in the revived bones was more than the breath of human life; it was the **Spirit** of the living God. This is another way of expressing the great promise of the New Covenant found in the previous chapter (Ezekiel 36:27).

How do we know that this promise has yet to be fulfilled?

Israel is persisting in their unbelief being mostly secular and not recognizing Jesus as their Messiah despite their being restored to the land. This means that the promise is yet to be fulfilled, and will be fulfilled as part of God’s plan for Israel during the 70th Week of Daniel.

What observations can we make about how God uses His servants in the revival of the spiritually dead?

- God’s servant must know that the bones are dead and dry.
- God’s servant must walk among the dead.
- God’s servant must speak forth God’s word.
- God’s servant must have almost a foolish confidence in God’s Word.
- God’s servant must recognize that the work of the Holy Spirit is essential.
- God’s servant must boldly pray for the Spirit to move.
- God’s servant must speak in the power of faith.
- God’s servant must notice every evidence of the Spirit’s work.
- God’s servant must look for God’s people to be revived into an army of service.
- God’s servant must not say that hope is lost.

Ezekiel 37:15-28 – One Kingdom, One King

¹⁵ *Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying,* ¹⁶ *“As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: ‘For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.’*

Then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.’ ¹⁷ *Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.*

¹⁸ *“And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, ‘Will you not show us what you mean by these?’—* ¹⁹ *say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make*

them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.” ’ ²⁰ *And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.*

²¹ *“Then say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;”* ²² *and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.* ²³ *They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.*

²⁴ *“David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.* ²⁵ *Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children’s children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.* ²⁶ *Moreover I will ^[c]make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore.* ²⁷ *My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people.* ²⁸ *The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” ’*

v15-16 – What was this exercise of the sticks all about?

At God’s instruction, Ezekiel took two sticks. On one was writing identifying it with **Judah** and on the other was writing identifying it with **Ephraim** (that is, **Israel**). The sticks represented the kingdom of the northern ten tribes (**Israel**) and the kingdom of the southern two tribes (**Judah**).

- In Ezekiel’s day the northern kingdom had been conquered and destroyed for some 150 years. Yet God still considered them a people, even though they were scattered among the nations.

How does this passage show the folly of the Anglo-Israel delusion about being among the supposed lost tribes?

There were no “lost tribes.” The prophets all recognized the northern tribes as still in existence and knew of no such error as ‘lost’ tribes (cf. Isaiah 43:5-7, ‘every one’; Isaiah 49:5-6; Jeremiah 3:12-15).

- The Jews in the Diaspora retained their cultural identity which means they knew they were Jews... it was not some hidden identity that would be revealed in

the last days. There is no prophecy of that being the case.

- This idea is very close to thinking the church has replaced Israel in the promises of God, a false teaching that results in unorthodox interpretations of Bible prophecy.

What was the significance of referring to the northern tribes as Ephraim?

The tribe of Ephraim was the largest and most influential tribe of the northern kingdom. Several times in the Old Testament the northern kingdom was called **Ephraim**.

- Joseph was the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two dominant tribes in the northern kingdom. Of these two, Ephraim, the younger son, dominated northern politics from the beginning.

v17 – What was the significance of the two sticks becoming one?

Israel and Judah would no longer be a divided nation, their restoration would be as a united nation, see Ezekiel 37:22.

- When God ultimately restored the tribes of Israel, He would restore them all.

v21 – Would the re-gathering promised here be from Babylon?

The restoration after the Babylonian exile was only a shadow of this promise. This was a promise to bring the Jewish people **from among the nations**, from a scattering much broader than the Babylonian captivity.

I will make them one nation in the land: This looked forward to a restoration much greater than what happened in the days of Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah. God would bring the Jewish people *as a whole* back into the land.

V22 – Has the promise of restoring Israel and Judah as one nation been fulfilled?

This has not yet been fulfilled in history the divisions between north and south remained following the Babylonian exile. In the NT period, these divisions were clear enough in the animosity between Jew and Samaritan.

v23 – Has the prophecy that Israel would no longer defile themselves with idols been fulfilled?

They shall not defile themselves with their idols: This promise is a reference to the new covenant. Until Israel embraces the New Covenant, they always put something else before God even if they are not bowing down to some craven image.

v24 – Who will rule over the united Israel-Judah nation?

David My servant shall be king over them: In Ezekiel 37:22 God said that there would be one king over the restored and unified Israel. Here we learn the one king is David (as previously stated in Ezekiel 34:23-25).

- This can only happen during the Millennial Kingdom when resurrected saints will be ruling with Christ.

v25 – What is the significance of referring to the united nation of Israel-Judah as Jacob here?

Jacob means here the *twelve tribes*; and the *land given to them* was the whole land of *Palestine*; consequently, the promise states that, when they return, they are to possess the whole of the *Promised Land*.

How is it that David will rule over Jacob forever?

My servant David shall be their prince forever: This promise is *not* as a strange and imprecise reference to Jesus the Messiah, but as part of the several promises that King David will once again rule over Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (Isaiah 55:3-4, Jeremiah 30:8-9, Hosea 3:5).

- And, of course, following the Millennial Kingdom is the Eternal State... the Millennial Kingdom foreshadows the Eternal State in many respects (God with us, utopia on earth, removal of curse, etc.).

How do we know that God will not boot Israel from the land yet again so their return this time is not a fulfillment of prophecy?

Notice the reference to “forever.” Once the Jews return to the land from all the nations in the world, they are there from now on. God will not allow all the threats to their existence to uproot them from the land of Israel. Why would an Omnipotent God who is in control allow Israel to again be uprooted from the land He gave them before they have had an opportunity to fulfill His purpose for them? It is not God’s pattern to prematurely end restoration before they turn back to Him. The Jews are in Israel to stay...

Amos 9:14-15 – I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” Says the Lord your God.

v26 – What is this covenant of peace God will make with Israel?

This is another reference to the New Covenant that makes it possible to have peace with God and consequently peace between all people.

I will establish them and multiply them: These promises are characteristic of the new covenant (as in Ezekiel 36:10-11). God's ultimate restoration of Israel would be on a large scale, not a small scale.

v28 – How would the restoration of Israel impact the Gentile nations?

All nations would see that it was the Lord who made Israel holy. She would be set apart from all nations as God's special possession. No other nation would have the Lord dwelling in its sanctuary uniquely in its midst as would Israel.

I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore: The promise of this **sanctuary** will be described in great detail in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48. To Ezekiel and the Babylonian exiles, no restoration could be complete without some kind of temple.

- The restoration of the temple is thus far more than simply a matter of repairing war-damage. It is God's way of demonstrating that he is not dead and that Israel are still his people.

What applications do we see from our discussion today?

- The church as not replaced Israel in the plan of God.
- One can not have a cogent understanding of Bible prophecy unless they make a correct distinction between the Church and Israel.
- God works through His servants in order to revive the spiritually dead.
- Israel is fulfilling Bible prophecy today!
- Israel being back in the land is forever.
- The New Covenant is yet to be fulfilled in Israel but it will be.