

Ezekiel
February 3, 2008
Chapters 36-37, Emphasis 37

I. Ezekiel 36:1-15

In the first 15 verses of Chapter 36, we see Israel receiving again the blessings of God. The language is much the same as in the 35th chapter where much of the same wording is spent condemning Edom, providing a strong contrast to God working for His people.

II. Ezekiel's New Covenant

Ezek 36:26-28

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

NIV

Seven points of restoration are included in verses 24-32:

1. Israel returns to the land (verse 24)
2. God will cleanse them from their impurities, especially idolatry (verse 25)
3. People will be regenerated with new heart and new spirit. (verse 26)
4. The Spirit of God will enable to keep his laws (verse 27)
5. The people will live in the land (verse 28)
6. God promises a new level of productivity (verses 29-30)
7. They will loathe their former practices, immorality, and idolatry (verse 31)

This later part of Chapter 36 covered Israel's historical returning to the land but also future events, such as Israel's future salvation. The teachings of verses 26-28 were also seen in Ezekiel 11:19-20 and 14:11. We will also see the concept in the next chapter.

III. Questions Concerning Chapter 37

On page 319 of Cooper's Ezekiel commentary, he writes, "Few other passages have suffered more from the extremes of interpreters who see either too much or too little in both meaning of application of the figures, symbols, and types."

It is written in apocalyptic form where the message is not immediately apparent. This was apparently a popular kind of literature during Ezekiel's time that is used here to declare God's truth.

Two questions for the chapter:

-Does this passage convey OT ideas concerning the bodily resurrection of the dead?

-Does this passage reveal anything about the relationship of Israel and the church in the NT? Certainly, the resurrection account in Dan 12:2-3 allows for us to see it here, but because of the nature of the literature and the general quietness of the OT on this topic, one cannot be too dogmatic in reading it into this passage.

Be careful when you come to a passage such as this. We have a tendency to want to provide answers where God has provided none. The main teaching of this passage is the restoration of the nation of Israel. As such, that is the place to begin...without straying too far from it.

IV. An Interesting Question, and A Good Answer

Ezek 37:1-3

37:1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." NIV

Note the valley in 3:22 (where plain and valley are the same word in Hebrew):

Ezek 3:22

22 The hand of the LORD was upon me there, and he said to me, "Get up and go out to the plain, and there I will speak to you." NIV

The “bones” represent the nation of Israel, the many millions of its people who have been killed.

Ezekiel gives a smart answer to God’s above question...why?

V. The Bones Began to Rattle

Ezek 37:4-8

4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet — a vast army.

NIV

The “rattling sound” is the same phrase as “rumbling sound” in Ezekiel 3:13, probably an indication of God working. What is God doing?

How would you react if you were watching this?

In Hebrew, “breath,” “spirit,” and “wind” are all the same word.

VI. It Lives!

Ezek 37:11-14

11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. 14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'"

NIV

Certainly, resurrection can be read into verses 11-14, as the NIV translation apparently does with its “Spirit” translation. The actual possibilities are “Spirit,” “spirit,” “breath,” and “wind.” Since the primary intent appears to be that Israel will exist as a nation again, if I had to choose one, I would probably choose “breath.”

VII. All Physical Israel

Ezek 37:15-17

15 The word of the LORD came to me: 16 "Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Ephraim's stick, belonging to Joseph and all the house of Israel associated with him.' 17 Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand.

NIV

Through these two chief tribes (Judah and Ephraim), all aspects of Judaism are included.

VIII. Jerusalem Falls

Ezek 37:24-28

24 "'My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees. 25 They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them forever. 27 My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I the LORD make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever.'"

NIV

In my opinion, until the king is mentioned of the king in verse 22, this chapter has been speaking to the future formation of Israel as a nation, being gathered from all the places where it has been scattered. Once the king is

mentioned, since we do not have a king in Israel and since “They will be my people, and I will be their God” usually refers to the New Covenant, then the chapter speaks to the future.

NOTICE THE SEQUENCE OF UNIFICATION

-Ezekiel unifies two sticks in a physical union (verse 16)

-Yahweh unifies two sticks in a physical union (verse 19)

-Yahweh unifies two kingdoms in a political and spiritual union (verse 22).

-Yahweh unifies the unified nation with himself in a permanent covenant relationship (verse 27)

There are 13 promises given to Israel in verses 15-28, including the promise in verse 28.

Discussion Point: Why does God make so many promises?