

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EZEKIEL 36-37

We've all heard advertising claims or campaign pledges that offered more than the promiser could deliver. Truth be told, there've been times when we've all been guilty of making promises we can't keep.

I've heard it said, "The only person who makes more bombastic promises than a politician is a young man proposing marriage to his sweetheart." Probably so!

Some promises are just too good to be true.

Yet God made a promise... and He repeated it throughout the OT. A promise that for centuries was held suspect by Bible scholars and theologians.

God promised that He'd **return** the Jews from the four corners of the world - **regather** them to the land He gave to Abraham - and **re-establish** His Kingdom.

And for centuries respected Christian scholarship scoffed at such an idea. Roman Catholic theologians assumed God was through with the nation Israel.

They spiritualized God's promises to the Jews, and applied them to the Church... Yet a few faithful voices dared to take the Bible literally. The Puritans and some of the Reformers were early advocates of a Jewish restoration. They wrote of "the calling of the Jews."

Of course, as it turns out God's promise to the Jews was not too good to be true. After nineteen centuries of waiting that promise is being fulfilled today, before our very eyes. Modern

Zionism is bringing Jews from all around the world back to their ancient home of Israel.

One cynical author wrote, “Magnificent promises are always to be held suspect.” That is, unless those promises come from God... as we’ll see tonight...

Ezekiel 36 begins, “And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, ‘O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God: “Because the enemy has said of you, ‘Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession,’ therefore prophesy, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Because they made you desolate and swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you are taken up by the lips of talkers and slandered by the people” - therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God!”

Here in one sentence the prophet Ezekiel capsules 1900 years of Jewish history. This was a time period known in Jewish history as the Diaspora or *Dispersion*.

The Jewish Diaspora began with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD at the hands of the Romans.

Like Babylon six centuries earlier, Rome sacked the city, burned the Jewish Temple; then took its treasures to Rome. In the process they killed a million Jews - the final few died at Masada near the Dead Sea. The rest of the Jews were scattered throughout the empire.

And for the last 1900 years the Jews have lived as strangers in a strange land. The wandering Jew has gone from country to country seeking a place where he was welcome - a home

where he and his countrymen could live out their religion in peace - *but to no avail.*

Everywhere the Jews have gone they've encountered prejudice, and hatred, and persecution.

Tragically, whether living under the Muslim crescent or the Christian cross their plight has been similar.

In 135 AD Roman Emperor Hadrian made it a capital offense to practice Judaism... In 339 Constantius II made it illegal for Jews to intermarry with Christians...

In 438 AD Theodosius II banned Jews from holding high office in the Roman world... In 630 AD the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius led a massacre of Jews who had re-entered Jerusalem to settle in the city...

Yet as the Church's persecutor, the Roman Empire, passed from history's pages, Jewish society lived on.

In 1066 AD Muslim rulers of Granada in Spain slaughtered 4000 Jews in a single day... In 1149 Berbers living in Spain gave the Jews a choice - covert to Islam or die... In 1096 Pope Urban II ordered the first Crusade to rid the Holy Land of the Muslims.

Sadly though, as the Crusaders traveled to Israel they practiced fighting on Jews. As they killed Jews, and burned synagogues they assumed they were doing God a favor by ridding the world of Christ killers.

In 1215 at the fourth Lateran Council the Roman Catholic Church ordered the Jews to wear a badge distinguishing

them from Christians. This both segregated the Jews and exposed them to scorn.

In 1290 the Jews were ordered out of England.

In 1306 they were banished from France.

In 1483 Torquemada brought the Inquisition to Spain and thousands of Jews were slaughtered...

In 1660 Jews in Europe were falsely blamed for spreading the Black Plague, and all over Europe panic stricken people spilled Jewish blood in retaliation.

And sadly the Diaspora goes on and on reaching a crescendo in the early 20th century with the rise of the Nazis and the spread of anti-Semitism across Europe.

In choosing Israel for *special privileges* God also chose her for *special responsibilities*. He made a covenant with the Hebrew people. He promised them enormous blessing if they kept His Law, but He would curse them to the same degree, if they rebelled against His covenant. And sadly, rebel they did.

Their rebellion came to a head when they rejected God's Son, Jesus. The Jewish leaders stood at Pilate's judgment seat and cried out, "His blood be on us and on our children." And it has been for over 1900 years.

In "The Fiddler On The Roof," the old Jew, Tevye, prays, "I know, I know, we are the chosen people. But once in a while can't you choose somebody else?"

Once, a Jewish rabbi appeared before the Spanish monarchs, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. He said, "You cannot curse us for there is a blessing on us, and you cannot bless us for there is a curse on us."

In other words, it wasn't Spain that had power over the Jews, it was God that controlled their destiny. For 1900 years God had chastened His people, Israel.

God stood silent as He watched them endure the pogroms, the horrors of ghetto life, even the Holocaust.

As Ezekiel said of the Jews in verse 3, *“you became the possession of the rest of the nations... and slandered by the people...”* Yet all the while, God's promise of restoration kept echoing in the background.

Ezekiel continues, *“Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around...”* And as God dispersed His people, Israel, He brought desolation on their land.

During the 400 years of Arab rule and the 800 years of Turkish rule, the land of Israel was never resettled.

In 1881 only 300,000 people lived in Israel compared to over two million during Roman times, and most of those people weren't settled. They were nomads.

Under the Arabs and Turks the land was mistreated. Vast forests that in biblical times were covered with trees were denuded. The land was stripped bare.

At one point, Turkish rulers placed a tax on a landowner's trees, making it economically advantageous for him to cut down all his trees.

Over time the land's fertile terraces had eroded and the rich farmland turned into either swamps or desert.

The ecological cycle was so disrupted that the rains that once watered the land dried up. Mark Twain made a visit to Palestine in 1867 and he described the land.

“Where prosperity has reigned and fallen; where glory had flamed and gone out; where beauty has dwelt, and passed away; where gladness was, and sorrow is; where the pomp of life has been, and silence and death brood in its high places, there the reptile makes his home, and mocks human vanity... To this region, one of the (biblical) prophecies is applied: *‘I will bring the land to desolation.’* No man can stand (in this land) ... and say the prophecy has not been fulfilled.”

Verse 5, “Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country.” Of the nations who took the land God gave Israel for themselves, He mentions Edom specifically.

Edom could refer to Israel's archenemies, the Arabs.

Today, Arabs accuse the Jews of stealing the land from the Palestinians, but the truth is that before the Jews returned, the land was largely unwanted by anyone. It was untilled, uncultivated, and worthless.

Yet now that the Jews have turned the deserted land into a fruitful garden the Arabs claim it as their own.

It’s interesting, Israel’s six million Jews occupy an area less than 8000 square miles. That’s about the size of New Jersey - about half the size of Switzerland.

Whereas, their Arab neighbors number 150 million and they live on five million square miles of land. Yet the Arabs can't find room for the Palestinians?

They want Israel to give up land! Perhaps this is part of what's inflaming God's "*burning jealousy*" in verse 5.

"Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne the shame of the nations." Therefore thus says the Lord God: "I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame. But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.'" Realize, the Jews and their rabbis, who over the years were forcibly removed from their land, never relinquished their claim on the land or abandoned their hope of returning.

The heart cry of the Diaspora Jew is found in Psalm 137:5, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth - if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy." The Jewish Talmud (or tradition) has a passage that reads, "Whosoever dwells outside the land of Israel is considered to have no God." They obviously maintained the goal of returning.

One the great Hebrew poets, Yehudah Ha-Levi, lived in Toledo Spain in 1100 AD. He wrote a poem he entitled "Ode to Zion." It reads, "O city of the world (that is Jerusalem), with

sacred splendor blest - my spirit yearns to thee from out of the far-off West - had I eagle's wings, straight would I fly to Thee - moisten thy hot dust with cheeks streaming free - in the East, in the East, is my heart, and I dwell at the end of the West...

How shall I join in your feasting, how shall I share in your jest - How shall my offerings be paid, my vows with performance be crowned - while Zion pineth in Edom's bonds, and I am spent in Arab's bound! -

All the beauties and treasures of Spain are worthless as dust, in mine eyes - But the dust of the Lord's ruined house, as a treasury of beauty I prize..."

From a human standpoint, the dream of a Jewish homeland and the regathering of Diaspora Jews became a reality largely through the influence of a man named Theodore Herzl - father of the modern Zionism.

Herzl was a journalist who was covering a story in France, where he witnessed a French mob erupt in violence, and begin to shout out, "death to the Jews."

He concluded the only hope for Jewish survival was an independent Jewish state. Herzl founded the Zionist Organization, and began encouraging Jews to return to their ancient homeland of Israel. In 1881 there 25,000 Jews in Palestine, by 1914 there were 100,000 Jews.

And Ezekiel prophesied of this return. Here God blesses the land with fruit, "*for they are about to come.*"

Verse 9, "*For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. I will multiply men upon you, all*

the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. 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. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.”

God promised blessing on the land of Israel. And this is exactly what’s happened. Hastened by the Holocaust, Israel became a nation again in 1948. And since that time Jews continue to immigrate to Israel.

In 1950 the Israeli Knesset (or Parliament) enacted a law known as [“The Law Of Return.”](#) It states that the moment a Jew arrives and sets foot on Israeli territory they become an official citizen. Everyday at Ben Gurion airport you can watch Jewish exiles return to Israel. They’re weeping for joy and kissing the ground.

And if you’ve read Ezekiel 36 you realize you’re seeing a 2500 year old prophecy unfold before you.

With this massive ingathering of Jews, fields are tilled and sown. Cities rebuilt. People and livestock are multiplying. Their land is better than in former times.

Even an elaborate reforestation plan has been enacted. Over 240 million trees have been planted.

This has curbed erosion and added nutrients to the soil. The first Israeli prime minister, David Ben Gurion, once said, [“He who plants a tree plants a future.”](#)

When you visit Israel you can donate to plant a tree.

In verse 12 the promise of blessing continues, [“Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take](#)

possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children.” ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Because they say to you, ‘You devour men and bereave your nation of children,’ therefore you shall devour men no more, nor bereave your nation anymore,” says the Lord God.

“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.” Israel will no longer be an object of ridicule, but stand tall among the nations.

Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: “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. 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.

So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. 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.’ But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. “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.”’ God’s restoration of the Jews and their land was not

deserved. Their goodness had nothing to do with God's blessing. He blessed them for His name sake - to bring glory to Himself.

“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.” In many ways the idolatry of His own people had given God's reputation a black-eye.

But when He regathers the Jews and establishes a New Covenant, He'll bring glory to His *“great name.”*

And this is what Ezekiel promises in the next few verses. This passage, and others like it, as in Jeremiah 31, are identified as God's New Covenant with Israel.

Ezekiel lays out the NC in verses 24-28, “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 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. 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. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

Remember at the time, the recipients of this covenant are living in exile, they're captives in Babylon.

Yet in their darkest hour, God shines His brightest light. At their lowest, God makes His greatest promise.

This past week the Braves canned their manager. It was expected. Our Braves are on pace to lose more games than any other team in the history of baseball.

Something had to be done to shake up the team!

So Freddie got fired. But what if at this historically low juncture, the Braves brass had given Freddie Gonzalez more money, more incentives, a brand new contract! You would've thought they were mad, crazy!

This was probably Ezekiel's reaction to the covenant God promised the Jews. Ezekiel expected God to fire these people, instead He re-ups their contract. In fact, He's gives them a better, more lucrative deal.

The NC promises Israel three huge blessings...

A **regathering** to the land, a spiritual **regeneration**, and the **re-establishment** of God's earthly Kingdom.

Here Ezekiel lays out these three components...

First, **the regathering** of the Jews to their land. Verse 24, *"I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land."*

Then comes the second part of the NC, a spiritual **regeneration**, verse 25, *"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. 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. I will put My*

Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments..”

Remember the OC consisted of a set of rules. The pressure was on us to obey them, and live up to those rules. It was up to Israel to perform - to keep the Law...

Ultimately, God was proving that we can't do it on our own. The very best human efforts are never enough to measure up to God's perfect standards. This is why the OC failed. The Jews were unable to keep it.

But the NC worked differently. Rather than be based on man's performance, under the NC God does all the work. **The OC was back-breaking, the NC is knee-bending.** We trust God, while His Spirit works in us.

Realize, **at the heart of man's problem is a problem in his heart.** Our basic instinct is to sin. We're sinners by nature. There's rebellion inside. **It's not sinning that makes us a sinner, we sin because we are a sinner.**

So often we focus on the symptoms, but the problem is deeper. It reminds me of the old man who stood in church every Sunday, and prayed, **“Lord, clean out the cobwebs. Lord, clean out the cobwebs.”** Finally one Sunday a younger guy stood up after him, and prayed, **“Lord, forget about the cobwebs, just kill the spider.”**

And this is what the NC does. It gets below the symptoms, and deals with the real source of our sin...

The Holy Spirit cleanses us. In the manner of the Jewish priest, God's Spirit sprinkles clean water on us.

He cleanses us from the inside out by removing our old nature, and He plants in us a new nature. Ezekiel says God will *“put His Spirit within us.”* He takes out our heart of stone and replaces it with a heart of flesh.

Before we come to Jesus our heart is hard, callous, stubborn. But when we believe in Jesus and receive His Spirit we're given a soft, sensitive, repentant heart.

Under the NC God takes out our *defiance* and replaces it with a *compliance*. A Christian's most basic instinct is now to love God and to love others.

But the NC includes one more promise...

Not only *a regathering, a regeneration*, but also *a re-establishing* of God's Kingdom. Verse 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.”* As in days of old God will rule over Israel in their ancient home...

Realize, when the Jews returned from Babylon they saw it as a fulfillment of the regathering of this NC.

And they were excited about the re-establishment of God's Kingdom. This was what Nicodemus had on his mind the night he approached Jesus. He was a rabbi. Nic knew the NC. The kingdom was on the horizon.

And Jesus knew what he was thinking. That's why He said to Nicodemus, *“Unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”* Nicodemus had seen a regathering, and was expecting the Kingdom, but the NC had a second clause - *a spiritual regeneration*.

Perhaps Nicodemus mistook the Pharisees' zeal for this regeneration. But Jesus says the NC is more than conforming to the Law, it's a transformation of the heart. We get a new nature. We're born again spiritually. The Spirit of God comes to dwell inside us.

God wanted to give Israel the Kingdom. The Jews had been *regathered*. Jesus died to *regenerate* them.

In fact, on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus took the cup, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." The problem though is the proud Jews didn't see the need for a new heart.

Yet *they should've known*. Jesus asked Nicodemus, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?" When He explained the new birth to the rabbi, Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and of the Spirit..." These were the two miracles mentioned by Ezekiel - sprinkling of water and the gift of the Spirit. Jesus was taking the rabbi back to Ezekiel and the NC.

Fast forward to a few months after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, in Acts 3:19, Peter preaches the Gospel to the Jewish leaders. And I believe he references the NC and the coming of God's Kingdom.

He says to the Jews, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things."

They'd been **regathered**. Had they repented they would've been **regenerated**, which would've opened the door for Jesus' return to **re-establish** the Kingdom. Sadly though, the Jews rejected his message - refused to embrace Jesus - and thus, the Kingdom didn't come.

Instead, God offered the Gospel to the Gentiles. And for the last 1900 years God has overseen a great harvest of souls and the building up of His Church.

Yet the provisions of the NC remain. And in the last days God will turn His attention back to the Jews.

Israel will repent and believe in Jesus, and God will take out their heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. Romans 11:26 reads, "**All Israel will be saved.**"

Isaiah 11:11 makes a phenomenal promise. "**It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again a second time to recover the remnant of His people.**" Israel will be regathered a second time.

This is happening today. And these regathered Jews will put their faith in Jesus. Zechariah 12 puts it, "**They will look on Him who they have pierced.**" It'll take Great Tribulation, but they'll see their need for Jesus. The Lord will return and He'll re-establish God's Kingdom.

Verse 29 continues, "**I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations.**" This will happen in Israel's future.

And it's beginning today. Realize, a tiny nation like Israel now tops all European nations in gross national product per person. Israel's national GNP is \$300 B.

Israel is now the bread basket of Europe. She has the most advanced agricultural technology in the world. Each year Israel is a Top Ten leading flower producer.

Israel is also one of the world's leading technology centers... It harvests minerals from the Dead Sea... It has rich reserves of natural gas... It's a world leader in diamond exporters... Much of what the Israelis touch turns to gold. God is blessing His people economically.

Verse 31, "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I do this," says the Lord God, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!"

Obviously, this hasn't happened. Israel has yet to repent of their sins. Today, its successes are attributed to the Jewish spirit and their will to survive - not God's grace. That realization won't occur until the end times.

When we study Ezekiel 38-39 we'll see the event God uses to humble His people and turn them to Him.

Verse 33, "Thus says the Lord God: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.

Everywhere you go in Israel today, you visit cities that have been built on Tels (or ancient ruins).

“The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.’”

Early Zionist pioneers to Israel in the late 1800s early 1900s, drained swamps, stopped erosion, dug wells, enriched the soil, found new forms of irrigation... and literally transformed the land into an Eden.

It’s impressive to go to Israel today and witness the transformation. The once-barren fields are now fertile, and the once-vacant cities now bustling with traffic.

Verse 36, “Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it.”

‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men.

Then they shall know that I am the Lord.”

Jerusalem’s population exploded during feasts. But Ezekiel predicts Jerusalem won’t just be crowded on *feast days*. A flock of Jews will inhabit it *every day*.

Chapter 37, “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.” God is about to show the Prophet a vision.

The Lord told Ezekiel He was going to regather His people to the land - now He'll demonstrate how...

He takes Ezekiel out into an enormous graveyard. It's a valley full of human skeletons - decaying bones.

“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.” Obviously, the bones have been there a long time. They were brittle bones.

And Ezekiel's vision is for the end times - after the bones have been lying in the valley for a long time.

“And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” This was a tough question. Ezekiel isn't sure what God is up to... but I love Ezekiel's response...

“So I answered, “O Lord God, You know.”

“Again He said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!

God commands Ezekiel to preach to a graveyard of bones! I heard of a pastor who complained of having to preach to a dead congregation... this takes the cake!

“Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.”

The Hebrew word for “*breath*” is “*ruach*.” It's often translated *wind* or *spirit*. The Lord is going to breathe spirit into these skeletons - *but it won't happen yet...*

First He says, “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.”” 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.”

“The toe bone’s connected to the foot bone. The foot bone’s connected to the ankle bone. The ankle bone’s connected to the leg bone.” The dry bones started to rattle, and assemble together, and skeletons formed.

“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.” Once the skeletons came together muscle and skin were added. The valley was now full of human bodies, but they're not yet alive.

As we’re told, *“There was no breath in them.”*

Verse 9 continues, “Also He said to me, “Prophecy 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.””” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

And there’s no need for us to guess the explanation of this vision. Ezekiel gives it to us in the next verses...

Verse 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!’ 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.

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. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.

Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,” says the Lord.” The vision of the dry bones is a restatement of the NC... the Jews will be **regathered, regenerated,** and the rest of the chapter talks about the **re-establishment** of God’s Kingdom.

But as I said earlier, the importance of this vision is that it explains **how** the NC will come to the house of Israel. Their revival is going to occur in two phases...

First, God will resurrect a secular nation. He’ll bring to life dry bones, clothe them with muscle and flesh, but there’ll be no breath - no spirit - no life of God. The nation of Israel will be regathered in a sinful state.

They still need the breath of God - His Spirit. Thus, at a later time God will put His Spirit in them and Israel will experience the spiritual regeneration of the NC.

Jesus foreshadowed this in the upper room when He breathed on His disciples, and said, “**Receive the Holy Spirit.**” One day, the whole nation will receive the Spirit.

And this is exactly what’s happened. Today, there’s a vocal religious minority in Israel, but modern Israel is a secular state. Zionism was not a religious movement.

Herzl's book "The Jewish State" expresses his own agnosticism and disdain for the Bible. Herzl envisioned Israel as a secular state run by "an immoral band of Free Thinkers." He even designed a secular flag.

And this sums up many of today's Israeli leaders. They give lip service to the biblical terminology and themes, but most Israelis are political pragmatists.

And notice, the bones came together slowly, gradually. Verse 7 puts it, "*the bones came together, bone to bone.*" They were assembled carefully...

This is how the Jewish nation has been reconstituted. After World War I the Jewish population in the land of Israel was around 50,000 people.

But from there the numbers increased...

By 1922 there were 83,000 Jews living in Israel. By 1935 the Jewish population had grown to 300,000. By 1948 there were 640,000 Jews in Israel. In 1965 the population was 2.2 million. It was 3.5 million in 1990. And today there are 6.1 million Jews in Israel.

On May 14, 1948 Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, announced to the world from Tel Aviv, the establishment of the modern state of Israel. Jews were back in the land, and Israel had been reestablished.

The first part of Ezekiel's vision had been fulfilled.

But the second phase has yet to come. Israel has returned to the land, but God has yet to awaken the Jews spiritually. One day, Jesus will breathe on the Jews the Holy Spirit, and cleanse them of their sin!

Verse 15, “Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, “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.’ Recall the nation Israel had divided into Judah and Joseph (or Israel).

“Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, ‘Will you not show us what you mean by these?’ 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.”’ And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. “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; 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.”’

When a government increases taxes it can cause trouble. In the days of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, increased taxes created a civil war. The nation split.

The northern ten tribes formed the new country of Israel. The southern tribe of Judah remained loyal to Rehoboam. Ezekiel lived under this divided monarchy.

It existed for 350 years. But when God restores the Kingdom in the future He'll unite north and south, Israel and Judah. One king will rule over them. Messiah, the son of David, will establish His Kingdom in Israel.

Today, modern Israel isn't a monarchy. It's a parliamentary democracy. But when Jesus returns He'll establish the throne of David and rule as King of kings.

Verse 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. "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." Again, this doesn't have to actually be David. Some folks take this to be a dynastic title - David as in head of the Davidic dynasty.

This happened in Rome with the name "Caesar," and in Egypt with the name "Pharaoh." Over time the name evolved into a title. I believe this "*David*" is actually "the son of David," or the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 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 (I believe Jesus) shall be their prince forever.

Moreover I will 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. My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” This “*tabernacle*” or “*sanctuary*” is probably the Millennial Temple about which Ezekiel has much more to say in chapters 40-44.

The chapter closes, “The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” One day God will again dwell in His Temple, with His people forever - what a hope!

It'll be a testimony to the nations that God is God.

In closing, notice the difference between the OT (or Jewish) hope - and the NT hope of the Christian...

The Jews are waiting for God to come to this earth and dwell among His people... whereas Christians are waiting to leave this world and dwell with Jesus...