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## Ezekiel 36

(2019)

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## Ezekiel 36.

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### Topics.

- The LORD calls Ezekiel is to prophecy to Israel.
- Mountains and hills of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God.
- God speaks against all nations that took Israel for themselves.
- The LORD says, "O Mountains of Israel, my people, will come home."
- Israel defiled their land.
- Israel profaned God's Holy name among the nations.
- The LORD will vindicate the Holiness of his great name.
- The LORD will gather Israel from all nations.
- The LORD will cleanse Israel from all their iniquities.
- The glory of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ.

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### INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL

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Ezekiel, a prophet and priest, was exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. His ministry extended over at least twenty-three years. The book opens with his first dramatic vision of the "likeness" of the LORD". Ezekiel was keenly aware of God's presence and power in human affairs. He addressed both the exiles and the people left in Judah with messages of warning and judgment, predicting the fall of Jerusalem. After its fall (586), Ezekiel prophesied of hope and reassurance for the people of Judah, who had then lost the focus of God's covenant and the temple in Jerusalem. His vision of the valley of dry bones (chpt. 37) is a classic picture of God's ability to breathe new life into those who are spiritually dead. Ezekiel is prophesying about the Jews that did not go into captivity to Babylon, but remained against the word of the LORD in Jerusalem. Ezekiel's message is primarily directed to the people in the land of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes), but often it is difficult to separate the message from Judah and Israel (the ten tribes) because much of what the LORD says can be applied to both Judah and Israel because the two are so intertwined and both nations were guilty of the same gross sins. For a greater overview of the entire book, visit the introduction to the book of Ezekiel in chapter one.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

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### EZEKIEL 36:1-5

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#### The LORD calls Ezekiel is to Prophecy to Israel.

- **Ezekiel 36:1-3:** And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy said of you, 'Aha!' and, 'The ancient heights have become our possession,' <sup>3</sup>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.

"Aha!" In this context carries the idea of mocking and scorning others, it expresses pride and the hearts-desire to see others belittled. Today the same heart attitude would be expressed in the words, "Ha, Ha." The ancient heights refer to the city of Jerusalem and by extension the land of Israel and its people. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has destroyed the city of Jerusalem, pillaged the temple of God and taken Israel and Judah into captivity to Babylon, and Israel's enemies are mocking and gloating over their defeat, suffering and ruin. Because of this the LORD is going to judge Israel's enemies because:

- They supported Israel's enemies and aided Babylon in destroying Jerusalem and taking the people captive.
- They gossiped and spoke joyfully to others about Israel's suffering and defeat.

Even though God was using Assyria and Babylon to bring his Judgment on the people of Israel, that does not mean it is right to rejoice in their suffering and pain. God's desire is that all nations would repent and be saved to eternal life. God has no pleasure in the pain of His own people or the suffering of their enemies, but He is a God not only of love but also of justice so when the cup of iniquity is overflowing God is forced to Judge. The following verses show that the LORD takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked or in the death of His enemies.

- Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? (Ezekiel 18:23).
- I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live. (Ezekiel 18:32).
- As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die (Ezekiel 33:11).
- Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles (Proverbs 24:17).

Even though the LORD has to judge those who are corrupt He has no pleasure in doing it. This is why we should never mock our enemies when troubles come to them or rejoice over their suffering when the LORD'S judgment falls upon them.

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## **EZEKIEL 36:4**

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### **O Mountains and Hills of Israel, Hear the Word of the Lord God.**

- **Ezekiel 36:4:** 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 all around.

The entire focus of this chapter is the future restoration and blessings that God will bring upon Israel and the LORD'S judgment on their enemies. The people of Israel were in Babylon captivity for seventy years so their cities were deserted and the land laid waste because there were no farmers to till the ground, weeds flourished and wild animals made Israel's land their home.

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## **EZEKIEL 36:5-6**

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### **God speaks against all Nations that took the Land of Israel.**

- **Ezekiel 36:5-6:** 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 its pasturelands a prey. <sup>6</sup>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.

The LORD is going to punish Edom and all the surrounding nations because with great rejoicing and an attitude of utter disdain and hatred they took possession of the homes, farms and land of Israel while they were in captivity for seventy years in Babylon. The LORD in this prophecy is comforting Israel by telling them He is going to judge and punish all the nations that have taken possession of the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys of Israel.

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## EZEKIEL 36:7-15

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### **O Mountains of Israel, My People, will soon come Home.**

- **Ezekiel 36:7-15:** Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach. <sup>8</sup>"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. <sup>9</sup>For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. <sup>10</sup>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. <sup>11</sup>And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply 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.* <sup>12</sup>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 children. <sup>13</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they say to you (the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys of Israel), 'You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,' <sup>14</sup>therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord GOD. <sup>15</sup>And I will not let you hear anymore 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."

In this chapter the prophets, the priests and all the people of Israel are personified, as the mountains, hills, ravines and the valleys of Israel. The LORD is comforting the people of Israel by saying:

- Trees will again grow branches that will produce an abundance of fruit.
- All the people of Israel will soon return, multiply, and till the ground.
- The LORD will favour the land.
- The cities will be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt.
- The land will be fruitful and animals will multiply.
- The inhabitants of the land will do more good than ever before.
- The people of Israel will walk on their land again.
- The land of Israel will be the inheritance Israel.
- Children will play on Israel's land again.
- No longer will people say the land devours its people.
- The nations will not speak against the land of Israel.
- Israel's land will no longer bear the disgrace of its people.

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## EZEKIEL 36:16-19

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## Israel Defiled their Land.

- **Ezekiel 36:16-19:** The word of the LORD came to me: <sup>17</sup>"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. <sup>18</sup>So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. <sup>19</sup>I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them.

Israel defiled their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. Following are some of the sins that permeated the land of Judah and Israel.

- Gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land.
- Asherim worship was amongst the people, (she was a goddess of love and fertility her worship was indecent and sexual in an offensive way).
- Worship of Moloch and Israel's children were being sacrificed to him in the Hinnom valley.
- Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon, stars).
- Worship of idols at altars that had been built under shady trees on their hills.
- Innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice.
- Leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain.
- Drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality.
- The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property.

This idol worship and indiscriminate, indulgent and excessive luxurious living resulted in the decay of social unity in the land of Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem). Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (v17) and poured out His wrath upon both Judah and Israel.

**The LORD scattered Israel among the nations:** (v19) refers to Assyria and Babylon. The LORD often uses secular nations, kings, and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and other times to bring judgment. He used Assyria to bring judgment on Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) called the northern kingdom and Babylon to bring judgment on Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) called the southern kingdom. Many times, God through the prophets warned Judah and Israel of their impending doom, but they would not listen. When Assyria invaded the land of Samaria many Israelites fled into the surrounding nations to escape the cruelty of Assyria's armies. When Babylon attacked Jerusalem those who survived were scattered throughout the land and during the seventy-year captivity many established their home amongst foreign nations. In this way the LORD like a master craftsman used two mighty secular nations to bring about His punishment on Israel and Judah.

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## EZEKIEL 36:20-21

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### Israel Profaned God's Holy Name among the Nations.

- **Ezekiel 36:20-21:** But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, 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.' <sup>21</sup>But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.

The people of the surrounding nations (worshippers of idols and other gods) began to say, these are the people of the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and yet they had to leave their land. These nations would have considered the God of Israel a very weak God indeed, because all nations had gods of war and would pray for victory before they went to battle. Therefore, they would reason that because Israel had been defeated in battle and forced off their land by another nation that other nation's god must be far stronger than Israel's God. It is in this context that God says, "Israel had profaned His Holy name."

**God values His name:** when those who confess to believe in God, act contrary to His character as Israel did, and deliberately harm another human, physically, financially, sexually, emotionally or spiritually it reflects to those who do not know God that He is an unjust God that is one of the major reasons God values His Holy Name. God's desire is that all would come to repentance and be saved so when those who confess to be saved act deceitfully and oppress or use others for their own gain it turns those separated from God against God. The words, deeds, behaviour and actions of everyone who confesses to believe in God is either a good or bad testimony of Him and a reflection of who He is to those who do not know Him. Though our deeds, actions and behaviour are a silent witness they are the testimony that speaks the loudest to everyone who is watching and to those who know us.

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## EZEKIEL 36:22-23

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### **The LORD will vindicate the Holiness of His Great Name.**

- **Ezekiel 36:22-23:** 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. <sup>23</sup>And 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.

**The LORD says** He will vindicate the Holiness of His great name because Israel's irreverent words and wicked deeds, behaviour and actions have resulted in the surrounding nations speaking of the LORD with contempt and disrespect. It is not for the sake of Israel that God is about to act, but for His Holy name so that the nations will know that He is the Almighty and Holy God (v23) and not the God the nations believe Him to be, because of the corrupt behaviour of Judah and Israel. The expression: "Then they will know that I am the LORD" (v15) is an expression that is regularly repeated throughout the book of Ezekiel, God firstly judged and punished His people Israel and then turned His focus toward judging all nations that harmed Israel throughout history and who mocked and scorned Israel while they were led in chains to Babylon, the justice of the LORD is seen in God's actions of not judging Israel's enemies until He had firstly judged and punished his own people (Israel) and only then turning His judgment toward their enemies.

The absolute wonder and wisdom of God in all this is that at the final end of God's judgment on Israel and their enemies it brought about the same result in both groups. Both Israel and their enemies came to the same conclusion which was, "The God of Israel is the only Almighty true God," in contrast to all the false and illusionary gods the nations worshipped.

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## EZEKIEL 36:24-32

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### **The LORD will Gather Israel from all Nations.**

- **Ezekiel 36:24-32:** I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup>I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. <sup>26</sup>And I

will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup>You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. <sup>29</sup>And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. <sup>30</sup>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. <sup>31</sup>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. <sup>32</sup>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.

In (v22) the LORD said, He is about to act to vindicate His Holy name to do this God will:

- Gather Israel from all the countries they have been scattered into and bring them into their own land (v24).
- Cleanse Israel from all their idols and pagan gods (v25).
- Give Israel a new heart and put in them a new spirit and remove the heart of stone from Israel's flesh and give them a heart of flesh (v26). This means a heart that is flexible, pliable, compassionate, kind and merciful, contrasted to being dogmatic, legalistic and fixed.
- Put His Spirit within Israel and cause them to walk in His statutes (v27).
- Give Israel the land that He gave to their fathers (v28).
- Be Israel's God and they will be His People (v28).
- Deliver Israel from all their uncleanness (v29).
- Make the trees produce an abundance of fruit and the land increase in its crops and farm animals so they will never have famine again (v29-30).

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When God brings all these blessings on Israel, they will remember all their wickedness and loathe themselves and be ashamed (v31). Once again, the LORD says he is doing this not for Israel's sake, but for His Holy name (v32).

**NOTE:** Israel is a testimony to the reality of God and His word, because they are a miracle nation. On the map they are but a speck compared to the land area of many countries, their population is minimal when measured against most nations and they were completely scattered throughout the world, yet they remain a single nation focused on God and bonded to Jerusalem and a vast amount of global politics and the world news is constantly focused on this tiny nation of Israel and their beloved city Jerusalem.

**The LORD will put His Spirit within:** the LORD says, "He will put his Spirit within the people of Israel (v27), some might wonder, "How can we know if we have the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts? There are two answers to this question, firstly, look within and see if our hearts are filled with a passion for God and toward Christ and if love, kindness, compassion mercy and forgiveness etc., dwells in it and secondly, to examine if the lifestyle we are living honours God and brings a good testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (v27).

It is always a spiritually healthy exercise to examine our own heart to see if these things are dwelling within.

All of the above promises were partially fulfilled at the end of Israel's seventy years in captivity to Babylon (there are limitations). Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took its inhabitants (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. While in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar. They went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later Cyrus (king of Persia) who the LORD called His shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) gave permission to Israel to return to Jerusalem.

Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed. But the promises and blessings only pause for a moment at the completion of the temple, then the prophecy takes up wings and transcends through time and history until it arrives at a hill called Calvary. On this hill God put a new heart not only into thousands of Jews (the lost sheep of the house of Israel), but also the Gentiles by giving His beloved Son as a perfect sacrificing to atone for the sin (wrongdoing) on the bloodstained cross of Calvary for all mankind.

**A new heart;** when a person honestly becomes aware of how far they fall short of God's Holy glory, they are broken and left undone and without hope of eternal life but when they come to Christ in faith, his righteousness is imputed to them. Through their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they stand before God washed and cleansed of all their transgression, and their heart, emotions, purposes, goals, motivation and life are changed in a new direction that desires to serve God in love.

**The beauty of prophecy:** the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy is that it is not limited to one or even two periods of time, but is able to remain in a certain era partially accomplishing the prophecy and then again take up wings and continue to transcend time and history until the prophecy reaches its final destination which in this instance is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory when he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords ruling and reigning from God's Holy city Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign. In (v26) the LORD said He would give Israel a new heart and put in them a new spirit and remove the heart of stone from Israel's flesh and give them a heart of flesh and they would remember all their wickedness, and loathe themselves and be ashamed (v31-32). Zechariah tells us that the ultimate fulfilment of this will be when all the nations of the earth gather against Jerusalem and the LORD protects the inhabitants of the city by striking their enemies with panic and making their weapons of war useless (horses with blindness) when these events take place Israel will know that God has given them the victory (Zech. 12:3-9).

Then Zechariah tells us the LORD will pour out on Israel a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look 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 (Zech. 12:10). John on the isle of Patmos confirms the prophetic words of Zechariah with the following words: "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. (Rev. 1:1-20). After these events take place the blessings of Ezekiel's prophetic word (v24-32) will be completed steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, peace and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he

will be a faithful and compassionate King forever, and will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth, or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the lion and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## EZEKIEL 36:33-35

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### **The LORD will Cleanse Israel from all their Iniquities.**

- **Ezekiel 36:33-35:** Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. <sup>34</sup>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. <sup>35</sup>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.'

On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities refers to when the LORD gathers Israel from all nations and puts a new spirit in them (v24).

- **Ezekiel 36:36-38:** Then *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. <sup>37</sup>"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. <sup>38</sup>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."

The LORD will increase Israel's people like a flock and the waste cities will be filled with flocks of people (v37-38). This was partially fulfilled when Israel returned to Jerusalem after their seventy years in captivity to Babylon. The people of Israel flocked to the city of Jerusalem and multitudes of Jewish families returned to their land in Israel, but this is not the ultimate fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy. It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all

the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew) this means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called, a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God). The Apostle Paul said:

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup>remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the *COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL* and *STRANGERS* to the *COVENANTS OF PROMISE*, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). <sup>17</sup>And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). <sup>18</sup>For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone <sup>21</sup>in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

The practical application of what this means to you: If you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to you. The book of Revelation states:

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

This new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles is the ultimate fulfilment of the following prophetic words of Ezekiel: -

- 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. <sup>38</sup>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" (Ezekiel 36:37-38).

Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles' teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity. When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. It's beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building.

Peter wrote:

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him Will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when: -

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*