

## LONG OUTLINE EZEKIEL CHAPTER 37

P. Phillips

8 May 2022

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Chapter divides into two parts (following D. Stuart)
  - a. Vss. 1-14: Valley of Dry Bones
    - i. Vss. 1-10: the vision
      1. Vss. 1-2: Ezek goes to the valley of the bones
      2. Vss. 3-6: receives the command to prophesy to the bones
      3. Vss. 7-10: speaks to the bones and they are resurrected as living, breathing humans
      4. Vss. 11-14: explanation of the prophecy
    - ii. Vss. 11-14: the interpretation
  - b. Vss. 15-28: Reunification of the tribes back in their homeland
    - i. Vss. 15-17: two sticks enactment
    - ii. Vss. 18-23: explanation of reunification and cleansing
    - iii. Vss. 24-25: messianic rule

Vss. 26-28: New sanctuary (temple)

### CHAPTER 37: DETAILS (Bible quotes ESV)

1. The *hand of the LORD* was upon me, and he brought me out *in the Spirit of the LORD* and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones.
  - a. “Hand of the Lord” and “in the Spirit of the Lord” show up in the beginning of Ezek's ministry (1.3; 3.14 cf. 8.1; 40.1)
  - b. Similar to the Spirit's lifting Ezek and taking him to see the abominations in JS (chap. 11)
  - c. The bones
    1. Vision of all the slain after the battle w/ the Babylonians?
    2. They are in “the valley” (or plain). Maybe the same as in chap. 1?
      - a) The initiation of Ezek's message *in the valley* in chapter 1 is a message of doom, destruction, depredation, and deprecation.
      - b) Here *in the valley* is a message of renaissance, resurrection, repentance, and restoration.
    3. Not “kosher” to be among bones
      - a) Especially for a priest
      - b) The Lord wants to make a point: Just as the unclean bones will be restored, so will the unclean nation of the descendants of Israel/Jacob be restored.

2. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.
  - a. Characteristics of the bones:
    1. “Very many “=> a great slaughter, carnage, that fits in w/ the promise that the Lord will scatter the bones of the idolaters on the ground by their false altars (6.2). Here’s a symbol of all those bones gathered together; and as we will see, there is hope even for these bones.
    2. On the surface: Great indignity: Unburied bones picked over by wild animals was part of the curses for covenant disobedience:

And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away (Dt 28.25-26)

And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me ... I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their lives. Their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth (Jer 34.17-20)

3. “Very dry”: The bones have been sitting around for a long time, picked clean by the vultures and thoroughly bleached by the sun.
    - b. “Led me around among them”: Lit. “*around, around*” in the sense of “back-and-forth.” Ezek is making a close inspection of the bones so their state sinks in thoroughly—ALL HOPE FOR ISRAEL'S RETURN IS GONE FOR GOOD! PERIOD! END OF STORY!
3. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”
  - a. The most reasonable answer is, “Are you kidding?”
  - b. Yet Ezek knew resurrections had occurred in Israel, but very soon after death while there were sinews, flesh, and skin present (Cf. 1 Kgs 17.17-24; 2 Kgs 4.18-37; 13.21).
  - c. Even Lazarus was not just dry bones!
  - d. So Ezek hedges his bets w/ “O Lord GOD, you know.”
4. Then he said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.
5. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.
  1. “Breath”: The Hebrew word is *ruach*, which is used for:
    - a) *Breath*, as we have in this verse and in vss. 6, 8, 9 (3), 10
    - b) *Spirit*, including God’s Spirit, as used in vss. 1, 14
    - c) *Wind*, as used in vs. 9

2. Here either “breath” or “spirit” works.
  3. Note how in Greek the word *pneuma* also has the wind/spirit duality. Jn 3.8 can be “The wind blows where it wishes,” or “The Spirit breathes where it/he wishes.
6. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.
    - a. The process of reconstitution is in reverse of the order of decay: skin, flesh, sinews, bones.
    - b. “You will know I am the Lord.”
      1. Generally, before, this expression followed a condemnation, but now a promise.
      2. Only the Lord has the power to pull this off.
  7. So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.
  8. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.
    - a. The component elements of the bodies come together, but there is no *ruach* in them, so only the first part of the prophecy is fulfilled.
    - b. This parallels the first part of the creation of Adam.
  9. Then 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.”
  10. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.
    - a. Now the second aspect of the resuscitation: the *ruach*
    - b. “Army”: (Heb *Chayil*) means a *fighting force*. I.e., this is a strong group of people ready to do what they are ordered to do.
    - c. Note how this parallels the second aspect of the creation of Adam. First the body, then the “breathing in” of the breath of life, and Adam becomes a “living being.”
  11. Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’
    - a. Explanation:
      1. The bones represent the house of Israel, now in captivity.
      2. The vision represents the viewpoint of the exiles
        - a) The *bones are dried up* ==> they have been around a long time, just as the exiles have, picked over and humiliated by their vulturous enemies
        - b) *Cut off*: Exiled from the land of their forefathers never to return. (Same word used in Is 53.8: “He [the servant] was *cut off* from the land of the living.”

- c) *Hope is lost*: If the Lord has not brought us back by this time, what hope is there for the future?
      - d) IN SHORT: UTTER DESPAIR!
    - 3. But it is just at times as these that the Lord acts and shows his power!
  - b. Note *OUR* condition before God renews us w/ his Spirit:
    - 1. Before that we were:
      - a) “Dried up” –i.e., dead!  
Eph 2.1, 5: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins; even when we were dead in our trespasses,
      - b) “Cut off”  
Eph 2.12a-c: remember that you were at that time without Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise
      - c) “No hope”  
Eph 2.12d: having no hope and without God in the world.
    - 2. BUT GOD “saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the *washing of regeneration* and *renewal* of the *Holy Spirit*, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Tit 3.5-6).
12. Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel.
  - a. The scene shifts from a valley w/ fallen soldiers to a cemetery.
  - b. The last part of vs. 12 may imply that those good as dead (the exiles) will be returned to the land of Israel.
  - c. Return to the land: For the exiles, this would be difficult to believe. It would be as though someone today were to tell us that the Austrian-Hungarian Empire would be reestablished. [MORE ON THIS LATER.]
  - d. But the term “graves” points to an individualized burial—whether individual or family—and points to the idea of a resurrection from the dead for individuals. That is, these passages are not simply alluding to a national reconstitution but also to a personal return to life.
13. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.
  - a. Emphasis on the raising from the graves, as though to emphasize the individual nature of the raising
  - b. Note the acknowledgement formula as per vs. 6.
14. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.
  - a. Restatement of resurrection and return to the land of Israel.

1. The commencement of this prophecy was Cyrus's decree in 539/8 (Cf. 2 Chr 36.22-23).
  2. Bringing exiled Israel back to its own land is a common theme in Ezek: 20.42; 34.13; 36.24; 37.21
  3. Whatever is meant (personal resurrection, return to the land, both), it is the Spirit of the Lord that will accomplish this.
  4. We are reminded of Zech 4.6: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit."
    - b. Perhaps the best way to see this is that both personal resurrection is in view AND eventual return to the land of Israel, yet in the future, although IMHO, return to the land has been going on for some time.
15. The word of the LORD came to me:
16. Son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.'
- a. Another "sign-action" that we have called "street theatre."
  - b. Note that Judah and Ephraim were the dominant tribes in the Israelite commonwealth.
  - c. The split in the kingdom was in 930 B.C. The N tribe was called "Israel," "Ephraim," "Samaria."
  - d. The sticks will be joined together even though the exile of the northern kingdom (Ephraim) was exiled about 150 years prior to the exile of Judah.
  - e. Israel (Jacob) was the father of Judah, but Joseph was the father of Ephraim. (Joseph was declared the first-born after Rueben defiled Jacob's concubine and got the two-fold inheritance (Gen 35.22; 48.5ff for double portion).
17. And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand
- a. "Become one": Lit. "Bring them close together one to one."
  - b. Joins the sticks together as a symbol that the two tribes
    1. Sometimes at war w/ each other (e.g., Rehoboam and Jeroboam [1 Kgs 14.30; 15.6; 2 Chr 12.15] and Asa and Baasha [1 Kgs 15.16],)
    2. But eventually the tribes will live in harmony in the land of their forefathers.
18. And when your people say to you, 'Will you not tell us what you mean by these?'
19. say them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand.
- a. Note that now the Lord allows Ezek to enquire, something prohibited before (Ezek 20.3, 31).

- b. Ezek explains to the people basically what the Lord explained to him in the previous verses.
- c. The reunification of Israel and Judah is envisioned as well in Ezek 33:23, 29; Jer 3:18; 23:5-6; Hos 1:11; Amos 9:11.
- d. As we will see below, the envisioned restoration is *ethnic* (vs. 21a); *territorial* (21b); *Political* (22); and *spiritual* (23-24a) [EXCURSUS 1]

## EXCURSUS 1: THE ETHNIC, TERRITORIAL, POLITICAL, AND SPIRITUAL RESTORATION OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL

### *Vs. 21a: Ethnic Component:*

Ezek mentions Judah and Ephraim, but here he expands that to “the sons of Israel,” which emphasizes the ETHNIC INTEGRITY (Block’s term) of the regathering by going back to Israel’s “eponymous ancestor, Israel/Jacob.” This ties in w/ vs. 11: “the *whole* house of Israel.”

In short, the Lord will gather remnants of Israel from a greater extent than merely what the tribes of Ephraim and Judah have experienced. This is world-wide, esp. since the northern tribes (Ephraim) were dispersed by the Assyrians into many lands (2 Kgs 17.6; 18.11: Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes; [\[SHOW MAP\]](#))

### *Vs. 21b: Territorial component*

In Gen 13.15 God promises Abraham that his descendants—and by implication “the sons of Jacob/Israel”—would inherit the land. Note especially the *mountains* (6.2, 3), for they are especially mentioned as being totally vacated as a result of idolatry. Now they will be full of returning exiles.

### *Vs. 22: Political Component:*

Note Ezek’s mention of “king” instead of “prince.” For complete fulfilment of political (or civil) restoration, Israel must have a king, not just a leader. The king will be David.

### *Vss. 23-24a: Spiritual Component:*

True worship of the LORD—Israel’s covenant God—will be restored since the Lord himself will cleanse the people of their sins and restore his relationship w/ the people where they will be his people” and he will be “their God.”

Note how the *ethnic*, the *territorial*, the *political (civic)*, and the *spiritual* are tied together in a bond that will last *forever (le’olam)*. This sure looks like a restoration of a *future, “land-based” Israel!*

20. When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, then say to them,
21. Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land.
- a. "Hold before their eyes" ==> make it clear to them. "I really mean it!"
  - b. The gathering of Israelites in the time of Cyrus does not fulfil the promise of gathering "from among the nations where they have gone ... *from every side* and bring them into their own land." The Israelites returning to the land in Cyrus's time they came from Babylon.
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, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.
- a. Again, emphasis on one nation, BUT ON THE MOUNTAINS OF ISRAEL. The importance of the mountains is that now they will see the true worship of the Lord and not the idolatry on the mountains spoken of before. (Cf. 6.2, 3, 13.)
  - b. 22b. There will be one *king* over them.
    1. Here and in vs. 24, is "king" used in a messianic context?
    2. Other times, including the Messianic period (chaps. 40-48), Ezek uses the term "prince."
    3. Since the king is named later on (David), who was king over all of Israel, it makes sense to use "king" here to describe the future leader of the unified tribes.
- [EXCURSUS 2]

#### EXCURSUS 2: WHAT CONSTITUTES A GOOD KING

The duties of a king (à la Block, II, p. 413, n. 101: "In ancient times kings fulfilled three primary functions:

- (a) to provide leadership in the administration of justice, the conduct of war, and the maintenance of the national cult;
- (b) to serve as an ideal of courage, dignity, justice, and piety for the citizens;
- (c) to embody the collective aspiration of the people."

(Cf. Dt 17.14-20)

23. They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the \*backslidings\* in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

- a. God will bring complete redemption of the nation, including from their idolatrous past history.
  - b. "They shall be my people" (cf. 11.20; 14.11; 36.28, etc.).
    - 1. This is covenantal language.
    - 2. We see this from the get-go in Ex 6.7: "I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."
  - c. \*\* The MT here has "dwelling places." The LXX has "backslidings."
    - 1. The words are dwelling places: *moshavim*; backslidings: *meshuvim*.
    - 2. Scribal error? But when one thinks about it, both readings make sense if "dwelling places" is the idolatrous structures.
24. "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes.
- a. Ezek names David as the future king.
    - 1. Not the first time Ezek refers to David as the leader of the reconstituted nation (Cf. 34.23-24).
    - 2. David also called a "shepherd" (Cf. 34.23).
    - 3. He will be a true shepherd, not like the evil shepherds described in chap. 34.
  - b. Of course, we refer to Jn 10 for Jesus as the true shepherd-king.
25. They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever.
- a. Repeat of vs. 24, but now David called a "prince" as in 34.24.
  - b. The rulership of David will be "forever" (Heb. *le'olam*).
  - c. This advances what we find in 2 Sam 7 re: the *eternal rule of David* as promised to him by the Lord.
26. I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore.
- a. THE SOURCE OF ISRAEL'S RENAISSANCE: the LORD himself who will reestablish his "Covenant of peace." (Cf. Elaine's material for 34.25-31.)
  - b. The return to the land follows Lev 26.40-45 except that the change of heart will be the Lord's doing not the people themselves.
  - c. "Covenant of peace" also appears for Noah (Gen 9.16); Abraham (Gen 17.7, 13, 19); David (2 Sam 23.5); and "new covenant" (Jer 32.40).
  - d. David will rule over the descendants of Israel/Jacob, in the land of promise *le'olam*, with an everlasting (*le'olam*) covenant.
  - e. The Lord will set his sanctuary in the midst *forevermore (le'olam)*.
    - 1. The sanctuary (Heb. *miqdash*) is the temple in JS, not the tabernacle. The sanctuary becomes a central object of attention in chaps. 40-48, esp. chap. 44.



2. Here and in vs. 28, God's sanctuary will be amongst his people, unlike the departing of the glory of the Lord in chap. 10.
  3. Instead of *two sanctuaries* as w/ the split, there will be only *one sanctuary* in the future.
  4. Importance of the sanctuary: like the buildings in DC. They represent the health/prosperity/significance of the nation.
  5. The establishment of the temple is the final crown to the reestablishment of national Israel.
- f. Looks to me, IMHO, this will be a physical structure as was his dwelling place was in the past in Jerusalem. (Cf. the number of times the Lord says he chose Jerusalem as a place "to put his name." That structure was destroyed; this one will last *le'olam*.)  
[EXCURSUS 3]

### EXCURSUS 3: THE USE OF THE WORD "TEMPLE" IN THE NT

The structure in Jerusalem (many references)

Jesus calls his body a temple (Jn 2.20-21)

Xns are the temple of God (1 Cor 3.16-17; 6.19; 2 Cor 6.16)

The church (in general; not a specific building) (Eph 20-22)

The building in which the antichrist will declare himself to be God; called "the temple of God" in 2 Thess 2.3-5.

The future "temple of God" coming down from the heavens (Rev 3.12)

An earthly temple (Rev 11.1-2)

The heavenly temple (Rev 7.15; 11.19, *etc.*).

God almighty and the Lamb (Rev 21.22)

27. My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people

- a. Repeat of what we've seen before for emphasis
- b. Reminds one of Zech 8.7-8):

<sup>7</sup>The Lord of armies says this: 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; <sup>8</sup> and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'

28. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

- a. Before "they will know I am the Lord" applied to Israel, but now it applies to the world at large.

- b. The permanence of the sanctuary will be God's sign *to the nations* that he is the one that has sanctified Israel.
- c. "Sanctuary in their midst forever" (*le'olam*)" points to Rev 21.3: Lit. "the *tabernacle* of God is w/ humanity."
- d. The mention of the sanctuary is the "jumping off" point for chaps. 40-48. Ezek says much more re: the sanctuary in chaps. 40-48.