



# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 37

*Theme: Vision of the Valley of Dead bones,  
picturing the Resurrection of Israel*

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**Theme:** Vision of the valley of dead bones, picturing the resurrection of Israel.

**Missler Introduction:** We are going to discover that Chapters 36 and 37, and the Gog and Magog battle, are part of a panorama or scenario or a chronology, and God has some very specific purposes in this attack upon the land that will come in Chapters 38 and 39 and here, Chapters 36 and 37 set the stage for it.

Many people who read this superficially might think that here “Israel” is talking about the resurrection of the individuals. 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4 and 13; Isaiah 25 and 26; Daniel 12:2 and Hosea 13:14 all demonstrate both the teaching and awareness of the resurrection of the individual, and the resurrection of the body. However, here we will not be talking about the resurrection of individuals, but something different, something more specific. It will be presenting the resurrection of the nation as a nation.<sup>1</sup>

**Constable Introduction; An illustration of Israel's restoration 37:1-14**

This well-known apocalyptic vision of the valley of dry bones pictures the manner in which Yahweh would restore His people.<sup>507</sup> This may be the best-known section of the Book of Ezekiel.

Few other passages have suffered more from the extremes of interpreters who see either too much or too little in both meaning and application of the figures, symbols, and types.

The New Covenant involves a new heart and a new spirit, to be sure, but it is deeply rooted in history and land. The promise to Abraham was unconditional and included in its benefits a geographical inheritance—indeed, not just any territory but specifically the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:1, 7; 13:15-17; 15:18-19; 17:8). It is that land that is in view throughout Ezekiel's historical and eschatological purview, for unless that land is the focus of God's covenant fulfillment the ancient promises lose their intended significance.

The coalescence of the New Covenant and the renewed land is nowhere in the Old Testament better explicated than in Ezekiel 37.

On the surface, New Testament references to the realization of the new covenant in the present era are problematic, for Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke of this covenant being made with Israel, not the Gentiles. Some argue that the church is the new 'Israel' through which the Old Testament promise is fulfilled. Others, insisting on a sharp distinction between Israel and the church, propose that the new covenant mentioned in the New Testament is distinct from the one promised in the Old Testament. A better solution is to propose an 'already/not yet' model, which sees a present realization of the promises in the church and a future fulfillment for ethnic Israel. Only this mediating view does justice to the language of both the Hebrew prophets and the New Testament. Just because the Hebrew prophets mention only Israel as the recipient of the covenant does not mean that others could not be recipients as well; just because the New Testament focuses on a present realization through the church does not preclude a future fulfillment for Israel.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

**Adam Clarke:** This chapter treats of the same subject with the preceding, in a beautiful and significant vision. Under the emblem of the open valley being thickly strewn with very dry bones is represented the hopeless state of the Jews when dispersed throughout the provinces of the Chaldean empire. But God, contrary to every human probability, restores these bones to life, thereby prefiguring the restoration of that people from the Babylonish captivity, and their resettlement in the land of their forefathers, vv. 1-14. The prophet then makes an easy and elegant transition to the blessedness of the people of God under the Gospel dispensation, in the plenitude of its manifestation, when the genuine converts to Christianity, the spiritual Israel, shall be no longer under the domination of heathen and anti-christian rulers, but shall be collected together into one visible kingdom, and constitute but one flock under one Shepherd, vv. 15-28. The vision of the dry bones reviving is considered by some as having a remote view to the general resurrection.<sup>3</sup>

**Wycliffe:** By the vision of dry bones coming to life, the Lord, through Ezekiel, proclaims to Israel the coming resurrection of her national life (vv. 1-14). He foretells by the symbolic act of joining two sticks the future union of the two kingdoms under one head, David (vv. 15-28).<sup>4</sup>

**BKC:** Chapter 37 vividly illustrates the promise of chapter 36. God had just announced that Israel will be restored to her land in blessing under the leadership of David her king. However, this seemed remote in light of Israel's present condition. She was "dead" as a nation—deprived of her land, her king, and her temple. She had been divided and dispersed for so long that unification and restoration seemed impossible. So God gave two signs (37:1-14 and vv. 15-28) to Ezekiel to illustrate the fact of restoration and confirm the promises just made.<sup>5</sup>

**McGee:** In this chapter we have the vision of the valley of dead bones which served as the basis for a Negro spiritual written some years ago, entitled, "Dem Bones." The interpretation of this chapter concerns the future restoration of Israel. That restoration has to do both with the *national* entity of Israel as well as the *spiritual* revival or restoration which the Lord announced in the preceding chapter.

We have here a remarkable vision, and I would like to make it very clear that this vision does *not* have to do with the resurrection of the dead saints of the church. That is the giant leap in interpretation made by the many who spiritualize the prophetic section of the Old Testament. My friend, when we take prophecy *literally*, it will make sense. We are talking here about the nation Israel, and we are not talking about a spiritual or physical resurrection of individuals. In my notes I have labeled this chapter, "The Resurrection of Israel," and I think that is a good title, but it is sometimes misunderstood. Some think that I am referring to the raising of the dead from Abraham on. It has no reference to that, but it definitely refers to the *nation* of Israel.

God gives to Ezekiel a real living parable and to do so He takes him to the valley of dead bones.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

<sup>4</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 37:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>5</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 36:37-38). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>6</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 36:38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**ESV37 1–14:** The Vision of Dry Bones. This vision, Ezekiel's third in the book (see 1:1), is one of the most famous passages in Ezekiel. While it stands on its own as a powerful statement of God's power to re-create the community, the context is significant. The promised gift of new heart and spirit (36:26–27) left questions hanging (i.e., how can this be? and can it be true for us?). Chapter 37 addresses these questions. The vision itself is reported in vv. 1–10 with vivid power. The landscape is filled with bleached bones to which Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy. As he does, the bones are restored to life. The vision receives a double interpretation in vv. 11–14. The primary meaning relates directly to the exiles' despair (v. 11) and concludes the vision in v. 14. Verses 12–13 transpose the metaphor to a graveyard and contain one of the few hints of resurrection in the OT.

### **Ezekiel 37:1**

**The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones,**

Ezekiel taken now by the Spirit in this vision to this valley that was filled with these bones.

**[the hand of the LORD was strong upon me]** This means that he was strengthened by divine power for his mission, which at the easiest point would be difficult and hard on him (Ezekiel 3:14,22; Ezekiel 1:3; Ezekiel 8:1; Ezekiel 33:22; Ezekiel 37:1; Ezekiel 40:1).<sup>7</sup>

**Clarke: The hand of the Lord was upon me**—The prophetic influence was communicated.

**And carried me out in the spirit**—Or, And the Lord brought me out in the spirit; that is, a spiritual vision, in which all these things were doubtless transacted.

**The valley which was full of bones**—This vision of the dry bones was designed, first, as an emblem of the then wretched state of the Jews; secondly, of the general resurrection of the body.

**[in the spirit of the LORD]** By the Spirit (Ezekiel 37:1; Ezekiel 1:1,3; Ezekiel 8:3; Ezekiel 11:24-25; Ezekiel 40:2-3; cp. Rev. 1:10).

**Constable 1-2:** The Lord lifted Ezekiel up by His Holy Spirit and transported him in a vision to the middle of a valley full of dry bones (cf. 1:3; 8:1; Deut. 28:25-26). This may have been the same valley (or plain, Heb. *biq'a*) in which Ezekiel saw his vision of God's glory (cf. 3:22). In this vision, the prophet walked around among the many very dry bones that littered this valley. They represent the Israelites slain during the conquest of the land and now in exile for a very long time.<sup>8</sup>

**[valley]** Plain, as in Ezekiel 3:22-23; Ezekiel 8:4

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<sup>7</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

### **Ron Daniel; 1-10 The Valley Of Dry Bones**

The Lord took Ezekiel to a valley full of dry bones and asked him if they could live. Ezekiel's no dummy - he responds, "Lord, you know."

That seems to always be the safest answer to fall back on, doesn't it? Then God does the impossible: Dry skeletons begin to grow flesh, and breath enters them. They stand up, completely alive. Of course, this is something that only God can do.<sup>9</sup>

**LAN:** This vision illustrates the promise of Ezekiel 36—new life and a nation restored, both physically and spiritually. The dry bones are a picture of the Jews in captivity—scattered and dead. The two sticks (Ezekiel 37:15-17) represent the reunion of the entire nation of Israel that had divided into northern and southern kingdoms after Solomon. The scattered exiles of both Israel and Judah would be released from the “graves” of captivity and one day regathered in their homeland, with the Messiah as their leader. This vision has yet to be fulfilled. Ezekiel felt he was speaking to the dead as he preached to the exiles because they rarely responded to his message. But these bones responded! And just as God brought life to the dead bones, he would bring life again to his spiritually dead people.<sup>10</sup>

**Wycliffe:** This portion of the chapter constitutes the *haptarah* (reading from The Prophets) for the Passover and its Sabbath in the synagogue. The entire church has made use of this passage in public and private worship. A painting of the scene, dating from 244–245 A.D., appears on the remains of a synagogue at Dura-Europos (cf. RB 43 (1934), 117, 118).<sup>11</sup>

**The spirit of the Lord.** (cf. 1:12, 20; 3:14) takes Ezekiel, in a prophetic ecstasy (cf. 1:3; 3:14), to the **valley** (cf. 3:22, 23) strewn with the dried **bones** of human bodies.

### **BKC; *The vision of the dry bones revived (37:1-14)***

Most Israelites may have doubted God's promise of restoration. Their present condition militated against the possibility of that being fulfilled. So God stressed the fact of His sovereign power and ability to carry out these remarkable promises. Their fulfillment depended on Him, not on circumstances. Ezekiel reported the vision (vv. 1-10) and then interpreted it (vv. 11-14).<sup>12</sup>

**BKC 1-10.** God transported Ezekiel by the Spirit (cf. 3:14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5) to a valley ... full of bones. There he noticed that the bones ... were very dry, bleached and baked under the hot sun.

God asked the prophet a remarkable question: Son of man, can these bones live? Was there potential for life in these lifeless frames? Ezekiel knew that humanly speaking it was impossible, so his answer was somewhat guarded. O Sovereign LORD, You alone know. Only God can accomplish such a feat.

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<sup>9</sup> Ron Daniel, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3501.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Life Application Bible Notes

<sup>11</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>12</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures (Eze 36:37-38)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

God then directed Ezekiel to prophesy to these bones. The content of his message was God's promised restoration: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. "Breath" (*rûah*) could also be translated "wind" or "spirit." In 37:14 the same word is translated "Spirit." Possibly God had in mind Genesis 2:7. In creating man, He transformed Adam into a living being by breathing into his nostrils "the breath of life." Whether God was referring to wind, physical breath, the principle of life, or the Holy Spirit is uncertain. However, the results were obvious. God gave life to these dead bones. As Ezekiel was giving this prophecy, he saw a remarkable thing. The bones came together (Ezek. 37:7), flesh developed, skin covered them (v. 8), breath entered them, and they stood up (v. 10).<sup>13</sup>

**McGee:** Before Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel was transported to Jerusalem (see ch. 8), and I do not believe God had any difficulty doing that. If man today can make a jet plane which can carry him halfway around the world in half a day, I see no reason why God cannot do something which is commensurate with who He is. So I don't think that God had any difficulty getting Ezekiel up and taking him to Jerusalem.

Here again, I believe God literally moves Ezekiel. When Ezekiel says that He "carried me out in the spirit of the LORD," he is saying that the Spirit of the Lord carried him out to the valley which was full of bones.<sup>14</sup>

#### **OTS: Vision of Dry Bones (37:1–14).**

Ezekiel felt again the "hand of the Lord," i.e., the power of God, upon him. In the spirit, i.e., in a visionary experience, he was taken to the edge of a valley (37:1). There he not only saw a spectacular vision, he heard an authoritative explanation thereof.

*1. Presentation of the vision (37:2–10).* The valley to which Ezekiel visionally was transported was full of bones. As in his lengthy visionary trip back to Jerusalem (chaps. 8–11), Ezekiel was an active participant in the vision. Here the Lord caused the prophet to pass through the midst of the bones in his vision. He made two observations: (1) there were very many bones on the surface of the valley, i.e., unburied and open to public view; and (2) the bones were very dry, i.e., in an advanced state of decomposition. The Lord piqued Ezekiel's curiosity in the meaning of the bones by asking a question: "Son of man, can these bones live?" A man of lesser faith would have responded negatively. Ezekiel, however, wisely responded: "O Lord God, Thou knowest." For the Lord nothing was impossible. If he so willed, even those decaying bones could be resurrected to life (37:2–3).

The Lord then commanded Ezekiel to prophesy over those bones, to call upon them to hear the word of the Lord. God promised those bones that he would enable them by his Spirit to live again. He would put sinews upon them, and cover them with flesh. Those resurrected bones would know for certain that Yahweh alone is God (37:4–6).

Ezekiel carried out his instructions. With dramatic swiftness things began to happen. He first noticed a noise—a rattling—as bones came together "bone to its bone," i.e., each bone joined the appropriate bone in the skeleton. As he continued to look at this weird scene he noticed sinews coming upon the skeletons followed by flesh rapidly covering

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<sup>13</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary: An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 37:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>14</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

the bones. Still there was no evidence of life in these corpses for “there was no breath in them.” The double use of the word “behold” suggests Ezekiel’s amazement and shock at what he was witnessing (37:7f.).

Ezekiel was now directed to prophesy to the “breath” or spirit of these dead ones. He was to command their breath to come from “the four winds,” i.e., from four directions, and “breathe on these slain that they come to life.” Ezekiel did as he was told. The breath or spirit came into the corpses and they lived. When they rose to their feet Ezekiel could see that they were an exceeding great army (37:9f.).

2. *Explanation of the vision (37:11–14)*. Fortunately the explanation of the vision of dry bones is given in the text. The bones represent “the whole house of Israel.” As a nation the captives regarded themselves as dead and disjointed. In spite of the promises of restoration which Ezekiel had been making since the fall of Jerusalem, they were convinced that their nation could not live again. They felt that forever they were “cut off” from their land, their Temple and even one another (37:11).

God assured these discouraged captives that he would resurrect his people from this death-like captivity. He would open their graves and then cause his people to come out of their graves. Then the Lord would bring them back to their land. This miraculous transformation would be accomplished through the Holy Spirit of God which God would put within his people. When these glorious events transpired they would know that Yahweh was God, and that he was absolutely faithful to his word (37:12–14).<sup>15</sup>

**1-2** *the valley ... was full of bones ... very dry*. In chap. 37 Ezekiel predicts the political and spiritual revival of his nation (vv. 1-14) and the reuniting of its two divisions (vv. 15-28). The dry bones indicate an army slain in battle, a fitting description of the then hopeless condition of Israel.

**ESV:** The vast landscape of dry **bones** suggests the aftermath of battle, the ultimate outcome of the judgment of ch. 6.

**Ken Matto:** Keep in mind that Ezekiel, as John who penned Revelation, is in the Spirit. (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3 ) God is giving Ezekiel a vision. No specific valley is being mentioned therefore it is a spiritual not political nor historical truth being taught. If this was national Israel, then the valley in view would have to be big enough to envelop the entire nation of Israel. Notice the passage "midst of the valley." Notice it is "the valley" not "a valley." There are quite a number of specific valleys mentioned in Scripture such as: Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2); Eshcol (Deut. 1:24); Hinnom (Josh. 18:16). But in Ezekiel 37:1 there is no specific geographical valley in view.<sup>16</sup>

Yah is giving the Prophet Ezekiel a vision of a valley that is full of bones. These bones were once people, the people of Israel. Israel has been dead so long till they are now skeletons, their skeletons have been in this valley so long till the bones are now dry. There is no sign of life in these people. As we continue with this prophecy we'll see that what Yah is showing Ezekiel is not a physical death but spiritual one.

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 37:1–14). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.scionofzion.com/ezekiel37.htm>

## **Ezekiel 37:2**

**And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.***

[round about] On every side—this side and that side.

**McGee:** Back in 1849, Lewis Manly and his partner by the name of John Rogers crossed Death Valley in California to bring back supplies to the stranded Bennett-Arcane party. The Bennett-Arcane group had mistakenly wandered into Death Valley and would have perished if these two men had not crossed the valley to rescue them. They were actually the first white men to cross this valley and gaze upon its grand scene of death and desolation. Few men have seen such sights, but what Ezekiel saw some twenty-five hundred years earlier must have been even more bleak. He saw a vision of another “death valley,” more desolate, more fearsome, and more awesome than Death Valley, California.

The valley which Ezekiel saw was filled with dead bones, and the thing which characterized them is that they were very dry and they were scattered.<sup>17</sup>

**God, Power**—God has sovereign power over a dead nation (v. 11). No realm—even death—is beyond His control. He can save His people no matter what human judgment would say the possibilities are. All God’s actions seek to introduce Himself to all people as Lord.

**Humanity, Life**—The Hebrew nation was in exile—dead. God used the graphic symbol of dry bones to show how dead they were. Dry bones can live. God promised Ezekiel He would make the dead nation live again (v. 14). Jesus has shown us dead believers will rise again to eternal life.

## **Ezekiel 37:3**

**And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest.**

Is it possible that the persons whose bones these are can return to life?

**You know:** The prophet placed his faith completely in the living God. Ordinarily, one would say “no” to the question God posed. But Ezekiel did not limit God; he knew the Almighty could make bones live.

**Missler:** Now if you or I were faced with that question, we would view this parched desert littered with dry bones, which obviously could not normally live, what would we have answered? I think that Ezekiel handled it well, “Lord, thou knowest.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>18</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

**Constable 3-4:** The Lord asked Ezekiel if the bones could live again. The prophet replied that only the Lord knew (cf. Rev. 7:14); He could make them live, Ezekiel believed, but he did not know if that is what God would do. The Lord also instructed Ezekiel to prophesy over the dry bones and to tell them to hear His word.<sup>19</sup>

**McGee:** These bones scattered all over the place are human bones, and the question that is put to Ezekiel is, “Can these bones live?” Ezekiel answers, “O Lord GOD, thou knowest.” In other words, he said, “I don’t see how they could. It’s beyond me—You alone know whether these dead bones can live or not!”<sup>20</sup>

**ESV:** The question can these bones live? anticipates the exiles' own self-perception (v. 11): total hopelessness. It also introduces one of the key words in the passage: the verb “to live” appears in vv. 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 14. Ezekiel's response leaves the outcome to God's sovereignty.

### **Ezekiel 37:4**

**Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.**

**Prophecy to these bones:** Ezekiel’s prophecies had often been directed to people as deaf as these old, dry bones.

**[ye dry bones]** Israel is here symbolized under the figure of a valley of dry bones being brought back to life in the bodies of a great army of men. It pictures scattered Israel being brought back from the nations and living again as a nation themselves, in their own land, as explained in Ezekiel 37:11-28.<sup>21</sup>

**Clarke: Prophecy upon these bones**—Declare to your miserable countrymen the gracious designs of the Lord; show them that their state, however deplorable, is not hopeless.

**LAN 4-5:** The dry bones represented the people’s spiritually dead condition. Your church may seem like a heap of dry bones to you, spiritually dead with no hope of vitality. But just as God promised to restore his nation, he can restore any church, no matter how dry or dead it may be. Rather than give up, pray for renewal, for God can restore it to life. The hope and prayer of every church should be that God will put his Spirit into it (Ezekiel 37:14). In fact, God is at work calling his people back to himself, bringing new life into dead churches.

Ezekiel is told to **prophecy** to the bones the promise of life.

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<sup>19</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>20</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>21</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

**McGee:** This is something rather ironical and even humorous. I have always insisted that God has a sense of humor, and here is an illustration of that. If you can't see where it's funny, that's all right—just pass it by. But imagine Ezekiel now as God says to him, “Prophesy on these bones. Start out by saying, ‘O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.’” I have a notion Ezekiel said, “Now, Lord, you really don't mean for me to start *talking* to these dry bones here! The man with the white coat and the net will be out looking for me if I do that!” Really, that isn't a very good sermon introduction is it? No preacher would begin by saying to his Sunday morning congregation, “Oh, you dry bones!” A friend of mine (who also has a good sense of humor) said to me, “You know, I have a congregation with which I'd like to begin as Ezekiel did—the bones I speak to are as dry as Ezekiel's—but I don't dare do that.”

Ezekiel is looking out on this valley filled with dry bones, and he's to speak to them. Every congregation that a preacher speaks to includes those who are saved and those who are unsaved. Those who are saved may have ears to hear, but do not hear. And the ones who are not saved are dead in trespasses and sins—they haven't been redeemed yet. The preacher is just as helpless as Ezekiel, for any preacher who understands the real state and condition of those who are lost recognizes his own helplessness in speaking to them. Ezekiel is to say to these bones, “I want you to hear what God has to say.”<sup>22</sup>

**ESV 4–6:** God commands Ezekiel to do what seems pointless (prophesy over these bones, v. 4), and includes the promise that he will perform the impossible (vv. 5–6)—bring them back to life. The key to “resuscitation” is stated in v. 5: breath is the Hb. *ruakh*, the same word used for “the Spirit” in v. 1, and which appears seven more times in the vision.

Yah told Ezekiel to prophesy to these bones and hear his words. Now this shows us that the bones are not a physically dead people, because one does not prophesy to dead people or their bones. Dead people cannot hear, so we know this is symbolic. Yah is equating the condition of Israel with that of dead, dry bones in a valley. Before we continue with this chapter, we must examine how and when Israel became spiritually dead.

### **Ezekiel 37:5**

**Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:**

The Hebrew word for breath is *ruach*, the same word that is also translated as wind and as spirit.

**Constable 5-6:** The Lord told the bones that He would cause breath (Heb. *ruah*, wind, spirit, Spirit) to enter them and they would come back to life (cf. Hos. 6:2). The various occurrences of the Hebrew word *ruah* in this periscope sometimes mean breath (vv. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10) or wind (v. 9) or spirit or Spirit (vv. 1, 14). Context determines meaning.<sup>512</sup> He would also put sinews on the bones, make flesh grow back on them, cover them with

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<sup>22</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

skin, and put breath in them. They would come back to life and know that He is Yahweh.<sup>23</sup>

**Clarke: Behold, I will cause breath** (*ruach*) signifies both soul, breath, and wind; and sometimes the Spirit of God. Soul is its proper meaning in this vision, where it refers to the bones: “I will cause the SOUL to enter into you.”

**Wycliffe: I will cause breath to enter into you.** The Hebrew word *rû.ah* is translated “breath” in verses 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, “winds” in verse 9, and “spirit” in verses 1, 14. The context usually determines the translation. Breath is a sign of life, identical with wind or air, and becomes, in this prophecy, the living principle itself, spirit.<sup>24</sup>

**McGee:** God says, “I want you to speak to them and tell them I’ll be the One who will give them life.” That is our condition today—if God doesn’t move, no one has spiritual life. I receive letters from people who say, “You saved me.” My friend, I save no one. I just speak to dry bones, giving them the Word of God—that’s all I do. The Spirit of God is the One who has to bring life. That is the only way life can come. This is the *application* of these verses; we are going to see that they also have a tremendous *interpretation*.<sup>25</sup>

The word translated **breath** is translated in other places as *wind* or *Spirit*. The breath sent by God into the lifeless bodies symbolizes the Holy Spirit (see v. 14), who brings renewal, regeneration, and rebirth (see vv. 6, 9; John 3:5–8; 6:44; 7:37–39; 16:5–15; Rom. 8:9–11).

### **Ezekiel 37:6**

**And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.**

**[And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live]** Note the order of making a body here:

1. The bones or frame (Ezekiel 37:5-6)
2. The sinews
3. The flesh upon the bones and sinews
4. The skin or outer covering of flesh
5. The breath of life

This may give us the secret of how God made man originally, as in Genesis 2:7.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>24</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>25</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>26</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

**Clarke: I will lay sinews upon you**—Observe the progress:

1. Here are the bones.
2. The ligaments, called here sinews, are to be added in order to unite the bones, that the skeleton might be complete.
3. The flesh (the whole muscular system, the subjacent and superjacent muscles, including the arterial and venous system) clothes this skeleton.
4. The skin (the dermis and epidermis, or cutis and cuticle) envelopes the whole of these muscles or flesh; and now these bodies are in the state that the body of Adam was before it received the animal and intellectual principle from God.
5. There was no breath in them—they had not yet received their souls.
6. The wind, *ruach*, the soul, came into them. They were endued with animal and intellectual life; and they arose and evidenced a complete restoration to life, and began to perform its functions, verse 10.

**you shall live:** This passage is not about resurrection from physical death, but rebirth from spiritual death brought about by divine power. Psalm 87 is another text in the Hebrew Scriptures that speaks of spiritual rebirth. The point of Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:1–16 was that he should have known and understood the concept of a second birth.

### **Ezekiel 37:7**

**So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.**

**Missler:** This calls to mind the Negro Spiritual, the thigh bone connected to the hip bone, etc. Ezekiel 37 is what that was based on.<sup>27</sup>

**Constable 7-8:** Ezekiel spoke to the bones as the Lord had commanded him, and as he did he heard a rattling noise as the bones began to come together. The prophet saw sinew, flesh, and skin come back on them, but there was no breath in them; they were not yet alive.<sup>28</sup>

**McGee:** “So I prophesied as I was commanded”—this man Ezekiel obeys God. “There was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone.” This is the point where that Negro spiritual, “Dem Bones,” is really accurate—when the bones start coming together. I’m of the opinion Ezekiel had a rather funny feeling when in his vision he saw all these bones come together!<sup>29</sup>

The dramatic **noise** and then coming **together** of the bones with new flesh must have been chilling and thrilling to the prophet. This was a prophetic portrayal of the rebirth of Israel (see Rom. 9–11).

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<sup>27</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>28</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>29</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **Ezekiel 37:8**

**And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was no breath in them.***

You can imagine these scattered bones assembling and coming together and becoming clothed with flesh; but no spirit in them.

**McGee:** We have here a method which I want you to notice. The first state of the bones is that they are scattered, dry, and dead. Then gradually they come together, and the sinews and flesh come upon them. This is a process—it is not instantaneous at all. At this point in the vision all you have is a bunch of bodies, actually corpses; it is just an undertaking establishment down in that valley. They are no longer bones, but bodies with flesh upon them. They are human beings even, but they do not have any life in them.<sup>30</sup>

To be a restored people, God would have to breathe life into Israel just as he did with Adam (Gen. 2:7). To be a regenerated people the Holy Spirit would be involved.

The first phase of prophesying results in the rebuilt bodies, which lack breath. So far this activity only yields corpses—but it is still a necessary first step.

### **Ezekiel 37:9**

**Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.**

**Constable 9-10:** The Lord then told Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath and to command it in the name of the Lord to come from the four winds (i.e., every direction) and give life to the bones (cf. Isa. 43:5-6; Jer. 31:8). Ezekiel followed the Lord's instructions, and breath came into the corpses (cf. Gen. 2:7; Rom. 8:1-17). They came to life, stood up, and formed a very large group of people, as large as an army.

What is the significance of the two stages [vv. 4-8 and 9-10]? The difference between them is surely to be found in the *direction* of Ezekiel's prophesying; first to the bones, telling them to hear, and secondly to the spirit, invoking its inspiration. The first must have seemed to Ezekiel very much like his professional occupation, exhorting lifeless people to listen to God's word. The effect was limited: true, something remarkable happened, but the hearers were still dead men. The second action was tantamount to praying, as Ezekiel besought the Spirit of God to effect the miracle of re-creation, to breathe into man's nostrils the breath of life (cf. Gn. 2:7). This time the effect was devastating. What preaching by itself failed to achieve, prayer made a reality.<sup>31</sup>

**[these slain]** These slain—suggesting violent deaths of people who had once lived. Now they were being made to live again. Of course, the whole picture is symbolic of the

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<sup>30</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

nations of Israel who, once alive and in the grace and favor of God, had become dead because of sin, and now were being brought back into proper relationship with God to live again (Ezekiel 37:11-14).<sup>32</sup>

**Clarke: Prophecy unto the wind**—*ruach*. Address thyself to the soul, and command it to enter into these well-organized bodies, that they may live.

**Clarke: Come from the four winds**—SOULS, come from all parts where ye are scattered; and reanimate these bodies from; which ye have been so long separated. The four winds signify all parts—in every direction. Literally it is, “Souls, come from the four souls;” “Breath, come from the four breaths;” or, “Wind, come from the four winds.” But here *ruach* has both of its most general meanings, wind or breath, and soul.

The breath of life is breathed from the four winds of heaven (cf. Jer 49:36), a symbol of the universal life-giving Spirit of God (v. 14).

**McGee:** Ezekiel spoke, and life came into those bodies. What happened here resembles the creation of man at the very beginning. God took man of the dust of the earth; Ezekiel started with bones, but God didn't. God started with just the dirt of the earth, and then He breathed life into man.

Now what has happened to these bones has occurred in three stages: (1) they were scattered bones, just as dead as they could be; (2) then they came together, and flesh and skin came upon them—they were bodies, but *dead* bodies; and finally (3) they were made alive. We will find in these three stages a real key to understanding Bible prophecy concerning the nation Israel.

Now this verse explains the meaning of the vision.<sup>33</sup>

*Come from the four winds.* I.e., from the four quarters of the globe.

**ESV 9–10:** The second phase of prophesying is addressed to the breath (or wind or spirit/Spirit; Hb. *ruakh*, which can take all three meanings). The coming of the wind/breath/spirit that gives life powerfully alludes to God's creative work in Gen. 2:7. God creates, and God re-creates.

### **Ezekiel 37:10**

**So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.**

**an exceedingly great army:** The dead bones in the valley (vv. 1, 2) must have looked like the aftermath of a horrible military defeat in which there were no survivors even to bury the dead. But now the army **stood upon their feet.**

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<sup>32</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>33</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That was the vision, now he goes on to explain a lot of it.

### **Ezekiel 37:11**

**Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.**

This is idiomatically speaking of the whole House of Israel, a national prophecy, the united kingdom again, not a divided one. They were “cut off” for almost 2000 years.

**Constable 11-13:** The Lord explained to Ezekiel that the bones represented the whole house of Israel (cf. 36:10). The Israelites were saying that they were like dry bones: they had been dead for a very long time spiritually as well as physically. They had no hope of life in the future; they had lost all hope of becoming a nation again or of seeing God's promises to them fulfilled literally. The Lord had cut them off completely; the bones were separated from each other, and the Israelites were scattered over the earth. Consequently, Ezekiel was to prophesy to them that the sovereign Lord would open their graves, cause them to come up out of their graves, and bring them back into the Promised Land. Then they would know that He is God.

This chapter then does not deal with the doctrine of the personal bodily resurrection but with national resurrection.<sup>34</sup>

### **Ron Daniel; 11-14 The Bones Are Israel**

When the Jews heard that Jerusalem was destroyed, and that the last of the people were killed or removed from the land of Israel, they thought, "This is it. We have no more hope. We've been removed from the land, never to return." But God reassures them that He is able to do the impossible.<sup>35</sup>

**[Then he said unto me, Son of man ...]** Then—when the vision is completed, the interpretation was given so that there would be no misunderstanding of the true meaning.

**[these bones are the whole house of Israel]** The vision concerns Israel, not dead churches or Gentiles, as often taught. These bones are the whole house of Israel, not dried up churches.

**[they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts]**

Three things Israel said:

1. Our bones are dried.
2. Our hope is lost.
3. We are cut off.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>35</sup> Ron Daniel, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3501.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**Clarke: These bones are the whole house of Israel**—That is, their state is represented by these bones; and their restoration to their own land is represented by the revivification of these bones.

**These bones are the whole house of Israel** (both Israel and Judah, vv. 16, 22), whose survivors say, Our hope is lost. The prophet frequently quotes sayings of the people (e.g., 11:13; 12:22, 27; 16:4; 18:2; 20:49; 36:20).

**BKC 11-14.** To what did this vision refer? God said it was about the nation of Israel (the whole house of Israel) that was then in captivity. Like unburied skeletons, the people were pining away and saw no end to their judgment: Our hope is gone; we are cut off. The surviving Israelites felt their national hopes had been dashed. Israel had “died” in the flames of Babylon’s attack, and had no hope of resurrection.

The reviving of the dry bones signified Israel’s national restoration. The vision showed that Israel’s new life depended on God’s power, not outward circumstances: I will open your graves . . . I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Also when God restores Israel nationally, He will renew them spiritually. He will put His Spirit in Israel. The breath of life the corpses received symbolized the Holy Spirit, promised in Israel’s New Covenant (cf. 36:24-28).

The Israelites residing in Palestine today are not the fulfillment of this prophecy. But it will be fulfilled when God regathers believing Israelites to the land (Jer. 31:33; 33:14-16), when Christ returns to establish His kingdom (cf. Matt. 24:30-31).<sup>37</sup>

**McGee:** “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.” We are not talking here about the church; we are talking about *the house of Israel*.

“Behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.” You see, the people in captivity had gone from one extreme to another. As long as Jerusalem had stood and the false prophets continued to say they would return, they maintained a false hope. Now that Jerusalem has been destroyed, they go to the other extreme—they, have what psychologists call manic depressive psychosis. They are in a bad state: they were high up one day, but now they have hit the very depths. They say, “We have no hope.” This vision is being given to them to let them know they do have a hope, and it is for the whole house of Israel.<sup>38</sup>

**11-14** An interpretation of the vision. The *bones* represent hopeless and helpless Israel. The *graves* speak of her political demise. The *Spirit* is the Holy Spirit, who will effect the regeneration of the people. The vision does not depict the physical resurrection of individuals but the political (prior to the second coming of Christ) and spiritual (at the second coming of Christ) revivals of Israel.

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<sup>37</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 37:11–14). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>38</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Salvation, Renewal**—Israel’s coming restoration was to be like scattered dry bones being brought back together and given new life or like a resurrection from the grave. God would put His Spirit upon His people. See note on 11:17-21. They would have a new body as well as a new heart and mind. In fact, they would be a new creation of God’s making. This promise foreshadows the new birth (Jn 3) and the new creation of which Paul and John spoke. God takes people dead and hopeless because of their sin and recreates them to be His people. This is salvation.

**11-14** The **bones** symbolize the **whole house of Israel**. This identification picks up on imagery already used: (1) those identified as **dry** or spiritually dead (see vv. 2–5); (2) those identified as despondent and dejected, with no apparent **hope** of being “resurrected” as the people of the living God; and (3) those described as disassembled and dispersed before being rejoined and rebuilt (see vv. 6–10). The major thrust of this passage is the coming spiritual rebirth of God’s chosen people through the agency of His Spirit (see vv. 15–28; 36:22–32). The spiritual rebirth would miraculously revive and restore human beings to what God had intended them to be in the beginning. The same body-breath sequence occurs in the creation of Adam (see Gen. 2:7).

**Chuck Smith:** They've been cut off and separated from each other. Little bands of Jews in Germany and Europe, in France, in England, in the United States, in China, in Yemen, and all, in Russia, all over the world, little scatterings of Jews, but they've been scattered throughout the entire earth.

### **Ezekiel 37:12**

**Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.**

[**them**] The whole house of Israel, not a part of it; hence, there will be no division of the kingdom when this is fulfilled.

[**my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel**] The whole house of Israel are My people, and I will open their graves and cause them to come out of them, and I will bring them into the land of Israel again. See Future Regathering of Israel.

[**graves**] The nations where the Jews are scattered are the symbolic graves of Israel (Ezekiel 37:12-14). It is from these that all the tribes of Jacob will be gathered. At that time, God will save them and put the Holy Spirit in them, and they will live in His presence eternally (Ezekiel 37:14).

**I will open your graves**—Here is a pointed allusion to the general resurrection; a doctrine properly credited and understood by the Jews, and to which our Lord refers, John 5:25, 28, 29: “The hour is coming when they that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth.”

**Clarke:** And cause you to come up out of your graves—I am determined that ye shall be restored; so that were ye even in your graves, as mankind at the general resurrection, yet my all-powerful voice shall call you forth.

**Wycliffe:** The figure is altered from those slain on the battlefield to those dead in the grave. I will ... rise you from your graves ... and bring you back, out of the dark places of captivity, home into the land of Israel (RSV). See also verses 14, 21; 36:24. 14. And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live. The Spirit of the Lord gives life. Cf. verse 10; Ps 104:30. In 36:27, 28 He is the regenerating Spirit. Cf. Isa 49:8-12; 61:1.

The prophet is not here speaking of the bodily resurrection, though there are intimations of the doctrine in the OT, particularly in Isa 25:8; 26:19; Dan 12:2. It was “our Saviour Christ Jesus, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (II Tim 1:10).<sup>39</sup>

**McGee:** After reading this verse, someone is apt to say, “Wait a minute. You said this vision was not concerning physical resurrection.” I still insist upon that. Let’s drop down to verse 21:<sup>40</sup>

**Holy Spirit, Hope**—The valley of dry bones represented dead Israel in the Babylonian captivity. Ezekiel assured the people that God would restore Israel to life. Life would come through God’s Spirit. The language of the Spirit suggests life. The Hebrew word *ruach* may mean spirit, wind, or breath. Breath is the essential sign of life. So God calls the winds to put breath into the bones (vv. 9-10), and they live again. Only God can put spiritual life, or breath, into spiritually dead people. See Jn 3:5-6,

**ESV 12–13: I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people.** The vision of national revival is transposed into the metaphor of a cemetery, which seems to be related to the experience of exile (v. 12b). By using this language, Ezekiel also contributes to OT teaching on resurrection. Although clear statements of bodily life after death are not common in the OT, one of the clearest comes in Daniel (Dan. 12:2–3). In addition, there were hints in earlier texts that prepared the way. The influence of a number of these texts, including Isa. 26:19 and Hos. 6:1–2 and 13:14, is immediately apparent in the NT. Other passages include Job 19:25–27 and Ps. 17:15

**Chuck Smith:** So the promise that God would give them national life again, that which had been dead for nineteen centuries would come alive and they would be a nation once more. "I'll bring you back into the land." The marvelous prophecy of the rebirth of the nation Israel.

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<sup>39</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 37:12). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>40</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **Ezekiel 37:13**

**And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,**

**When I have opened your graves**—When I shall have done for you what was beyond your hope, and deemed impossible, then shall ye know that I am Jehovah.

### **Ezekiel 37:14**

**And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*, and performed *it*, saith the LORD.**

**Constable:** He promised again to put His Spirit within them, bring them back to life, and place them in their land (cf. vv. 9-10, 15-28; 36:22-32). This would teach them that He is God.

Notice that what God promised was both a spiritual and a physical restoration of the Israelites, and the end time is in view (cf. Matt. 24:30-31). So this is not a vision of the physical resurrection of all Israelites sometime in the future, nor is it a vision of the spiritual salvation of Jews and Gentiles in the future.<sup>515</sup> Old Testament passages teaching the resurrection of human beings include 1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4:13-37; 13:21; Isaiah 25:8; 26:19; Daniel 12:2; and Hosea 13:14.

This could genuinely be termed a 'rebirth' of the nation [cf. Rom. 11:26-27]. Just as the necessary elements of a nation were essential to the initial formation of Israel in Genesis through Joshua—a people, a government, and a land—so God would provide all three essentials once again in this rebirth of Israel in the future. The people of that day are brought together through restoration in 36:16—37:28. The land is provided in the prophecy of 35:1—36:15. The government of renewed Israel would be given in Ezekiel's apocalyptic vision revealed in chapters 40—48.

There is no finer *illustration* of the life-changing power of the preached word than what the prophet saw in his vision. It has the power to transform those who are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-22) and make them new, living creatures in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>41</sup>

**[your own land]** Your own land—the promised land of Israel.

**[then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it]** Then—when all this is fulfilled you (all Israel) will know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it. All this remains to be completely fulfilled. Of course it is now beginning to be fulfilled and a sufficient number of Jews have already gone back to their land to make a nation; they have had a nation since A.D. 1948. The prophecy will continue in fulfillment until the whole house of Israel is gathered back at the second coming of Christ to the earth. It is said that about 10,000 Jews or Israelites a month are returning to their own land. Israel is becoming a greater nation every year, but the complete fulfillment of

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<sup>41</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

these predictions will not be until the Millennium. The predictions of Ezekiel 34:11-31; Ezekiel 36:1-38; Ezekiel 37:1-28 and many other chapters remain to be fulfilled in the future.

**Clarke: And shall put my Spirit**— *ruchi*. Here *ruach* is taken for the Holy Ghost. They were living souls, animal and intellectual beings, when they had received their souls, as mentioned above: but they could only become spiritual, holy, and obedient creatures by the Spirit of God actuating their spirits. See the notes on Ezekiel 36:25-27 (note).

THREE degrees or processes have been remarked in this mystic vision.

When the prophet was commanded to prophesy—to foretell, on the authority of God, that there should be a restoration to their own land:—

1. There was a noise, which was followed by a general shaking, during which the bones became arranged and united.
2. The flesh and skin came upon them, so that the dry bones were no longer seen.
3. The spirit or soul came into them, and they stood up perfectly vivified.

Perhaps these might be illustrated by three periods of time, which marked the regeneration of the Jewish polity.

1. The publication of the edict of Cyrus in behalf of the Jews, which caused a general shaking or stir among the people, so that the several families began to approach each other. and prepare for their return to Judea, Ezra 1:2, 3. But though partially restored, they were obliged to discontinue the rebuilding of their temple.
2. The edict published by Darius in the second year of his reign, Ezra 4:23, 24, which removed the impediments thrown in the way of the Jews. Ezra 6:6, 7, etc.
3. The mission of Nehemiah, with orders from Artaxerxes to complete the building of the temple and the city, Nehemiah 2:7, etc. Then the Jews became a great army, and found themselves in sufficient force to defend themselves and city against all their enemies.

As to the spiritual uses of this curious vision, I must leave them to preachers. I have given the literal meaning, and what the different parts refer to; and if they found their observations on these, they may profit their hearers.

The fundamental lesson of the vision is repeated: when the **Spirit** is present, God's people are enabled to **live**. This is the only basis on which hope can be held out to the despairing community.

### **Ezekiel 37:15**

**The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,**

#### **Ron Daniel: 15-23 Two Sticks**

Ezekiel is instructed to take two sticks and join them together into one. When the people ask what this means, he is to explain the meaning to them. No longer are Israel and Judah going to be divided into two nations. When God brings them back to the land, they will be one.

Yet again, we must wonder if the Lord is talking about the return from Babylon, or a later time? I believe the answer is clear: in that day, they will have one king.

The Jews have not had a king over them since Zedekiah, who was blinded, bound with chains of bronze, and taken to Babylon (2Kings 25:7-8) where he died (Jer. 52:11). Even today, there is no king of Israel, but only a Prime Minister ,Benjamin Netanyahu.<sup>42</sup>

**Constable:** The Lord also commanded Ezekiel to take two sticks (or tablets; cf. Zech. 11:7-14). He was to write on one of them "For Judah and for the sons of Israel, Judah's companions." He was to write on the other stick "For Joseph and for the sons of Ephraim, Joseph's companions." One stick represented the Jews of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the other the Jews of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Ezekiel was then to join the two sticks together in his hand end to end so they appeared to be one stick. Mormonism teaches that the two sticks represent the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph), but the rest of the passage refutes this interpretation.<sup>43</sup>

### **BKC *The sign of the two sticks united (37:15-28)***

Ezekiel's second sign in this chapter visualized God's restoration of the nation. First the sign was given (vv. 15-17), then explained (vv. 18-28).

37:15-17. Ezekiel was told to take two sticks of wood and to write on one of them the name of Judah and on the other the names of Ephraim and Joseph. Ezekiel was then to hold them together like one stick.

Some have claimed that the two sticks represent the Bible (the stick of Judah) and the Book of Mormon (the stick of Joseph). However, this assertion ignores the clear interpretation in verses 18-28 and seeks to impose a foreign meaning on the sticks.

After Solomon died the nation of Israel split asunder, in 931 B.C. The Southern Kingdom was known as Judah because Judah was its larger tribe and because the country was ruled by a king from that tribe (cf. 1 Kings 12:22-24). The Northern Kingdom was called Israel, or sometimes Ephraim (e.g., Hosea 5:3, 5, 11-14) either because Ephraim was the strongest and most influential tribe or because the first king of Israel, Jeroboam I, was an Ephraimite (1 Kings 11:26). Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C., and Judah was taken into exile by Babylon in 605, 597, and 586 B.C.<sup>44</sup>

**Election, God's Purpose**—God seeks to create a unified people under unified leadership living in moral unity under His moral guidelines in His presence. Achievement of the purpose is a witness to all nations.

**ESV 15–28:** The Houses of Israel and Judah. The re-creative activity of vv. 1–14 included homecoming (vv. 12, 14). Although homecoming remains a minor element in the "dry bones" vision, it provides a link to this oracle (vv. 21, 25–26)—a symbolic action as in chs. 4–5 but much simpler than those Ezekiel performed earlier in his ministry. The instructions for this bit of street theater are given in 37:16–17. The reunion of Israel and Judah is another theme that Ezekiel shared with Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 30:3; 50:4; esp. 33:14–16, which joins the same themes as this passage). This action prompts

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<sup>42</sup> Ron Daniel, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3501.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 37:11–17). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

questions from the onlookers (Ezek. 37:18) and sets up two oracles: vv. 19–20 announce the reunification of old northern and southern kingdoms; vv. 21–23 give the renewed nation its moral and political shape. Verses 24–28 elucidate the second oracle. The closing verses, with their allusions to the temple, provide a bridge to chs. 40–48.

He took the two sticks and then joined them together so they became just one stick. One was to be marked Joseph, the other was to be marked Judah.

### **Ezekiel 37:16**

**Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:**

**Missler:** <sup>45</sup>In places like Numbers 17; 2 Chronicles 11 and 15, and some other places, you will find these sticks referred to as sceptres. In other words, one sceptre would represent the Northern Kingdom while the other sceptre would represent the Southern Kingdom.

**[one stick]** The symbolism here is that of taking two sticks, writing on them the names of the two divisions of the kingdom of Israel, and joining them together in his hand as one stick (Ezekiel 37:16-18). The application or truth symbolized is that both divisions of the kingdom will become one nation again upon the mountains of Israel as before the division in the days of Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 12). They will be one nation forever under the Messiah (Ezekiel 37:19-28).<sup>46</sup>

**[Israel his companions]** Note that both Judah and Ephraim, or both divisions of Israel, were called Israel, and that their companions were Israelites. The two divisions were called Judah and Ephraim.

**Clarke: Son of man, take thee one stick**—The two sticks mentioned in this symbolical transaction represented, as the text declares the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, which were formed in the days of Rehoboam, and continued distinct till the time of the captivity. The kingdom of Judah was composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with the Levites; all the rest went off in the schism with Jeroboam, and formed the kingdom of Israel. Though some out of those tribes did rejoin themselves to Judah, yet no whole tribe ever returned to that kingdom. Common sufferings in their captivity became the means of reviving a kinder feeling; and to encourage this, God promises that he will reunite them, and restore them to their own land; and that there shall no more be any divisions or feuds among them. To represent this in such a way as would make it a subject of thought, reflection, and inquiry, the prophet is ordered to take the two sticks mentioned above, to write on them the distinguishing names of the divided kingdoms, and then by a notch, dovetail, glue, or some such method, to unite them both before the people. He did so, and on their inquiry, showed them the full meaning of this symbolical action.

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<sup>45</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

<sup>46</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

**LAN:** The first stick was for Judah, being the leading tribe in the southern kingdom. The other was for Joseph, because he was the father of Ephraim, the leading tribe in the northern kingdom.

**A stick.** Hebrew “tree, wood, staff” (so vv. 17, 19, 20). Cf. Zech 11:7. Perhaps a wooden tablet. For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions, e.g., Benjamin, Simeon, Levi. Joseph or Ephraim represents the northern tribes.

**OTS: Parable of the Sticks (37:15–28).**

The Lord directed Ezekiel to perform his last action parable. This one would involve two sticks which had been appropriately labeled. On the first stick he was to write, “for Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions.” On the second stick he was to write, “for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and all the house of Israel his companions.” He was then to hold the two sticks together so that they appeared to be one stick in his hand (37:15–17).

The strange action of Ezekiel would provoke inquiry on the part of the captives. He was to explain that the sticks were being used as object lessons. The stick of Ephraim represented the former Northern Kingdom. The stick of Judah represented the Davidic kingdom. The joining of the sticks pointed to a time when all God’s people would be united in one kingdom (37:18–20). Certainly no basis exists in this text for the strange Mormon teaching that the sticks refer to two scrolls. According to the convoluted interpretation of this cult, Ezekiel was prophesying that one day the Book of Mormon (the stick or scroll of Ephraim) would be joined to the Bible (the stick or scroll of Judah) to form the complete revelation of God.

The parable of the sticks means just this: God will reunite his fractured people. The distinction between Ephraim and Judah, Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom, would no longer exist. God would gather the true “sons of Israel” from all the lands where they had been scattered over the years and bring them back to their own land. They would be “one nation” in the land, “on the mountains of Israel,” i.e., their unity would transcend any of the old geographical barriers. This reunited people would constitute one kingdom, ruled by one king (37:21–22). This prophecy was fulfilled over a span of years. God began to gather his people in 538 B.C.. The “one king” who would be king for all of them is an obvious allusion to the Messiah. Jesus announced that the kingdom was at hand. When he died, rose and ascended he began his kingdom rule over the new Israel of God.

Ezekiel cited several factors which either contribute to the national unity, or else grow out of it. (1) God’s people would share a common aversion to pagan practices. They would no longer defile themselves with their idols, with their “detestable things,” nor with their “transgressions.” (2) They would experience a common salvation. God would “deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned.” This may be an Old Testament way of saying that God would translate them out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col 1:13). (3) They would share a common cleansing and (4) a special relationship to God (37:23).

That unity of God’s people would be possible because (5) they would be united in loyalty to the rightful king. Ezekiel designated that king as “David my servant,” i.e., a king like David and from the line of David. This Davidic ruler would be the one shepherd

of the flock of God. (6) The kingdom would be governed by the ordinances and statutes of God to which every citizen would be committed.

(7) They would share a common inheritance, viz., “the land which I gave to Jacob my servant, in which your fathers lived.” They would live on that land “forever,” ruled by the Davidic prince “forever” (37:25). The close tie between the *land* and its ruler suggests that *land* in this and similar prophecies points to the kingdom of the future king. The geographical boundaries of that kingdom then must be defined by later revelation. A “forever” kingdom ruled by a “forever” prince points to a new order of things. Certainly no thousand year millennium can be read into this prediction. The New Testament expands on the land promise by affirming that Christ’s authority, i.e., his kingdom, is worldwide in scope (Matt 28:18). Actually Abraham and his descendants were heirs “to the world” (Rom 4:13), of which Old Testament Canaan was but the token and type. Those who follow King Jesus shall inherit the earth (Matt 5:5). New Testament Israel anticipates the ushering in of the new heavens and earth wherein dwells righteousness (1 Pet 3:12).

Still other factors would bind together the people of God in the future. (8) They would all live under the “covenant of peace” which is described as “an everlasting covenant.”<sup>4</sup> This is that new and better covenant of which Jeremiah prophesied (31:31). Jesus is the mediator and the Apostles are the ministers of this covenant (2 Cor 3:6). God would “place” (NASB) or “establish” (NIV) his people under this covenant. He would “multiply” them. The reference is probably to the influx of Gentiles who become part of the New Testament Israel of God (37:26).

(9) The unified people of God would worship at the “sanctuary” which God would set in their midst “forever.” Ezekiel further described this sanctuary as God’s “dwelling place.” The presence of this sanctuary “sanctifies Israel,” i.e., sets God’s people apart from the world at large. Nations, i.e., Gentiles, will come to have a better understanding of the nature of Yahweh when they observe the way in which he sanctifies his people (37:26–28).

Ezekiel focused on the messianic sanctuary in the closing chapters of his book. Indeed, the restoration of the sanctuary is the climax of all that this prophet had to say. Ezekiel had already demonstrated that the term *sanctuary* need not be restricted to the physical building constructed by Solomon and reconstructed after the exile by Zerubbabel. In 11:16 God himself is the sanctuary for his people. Here the announcement of the establishment of the sanctuary, followed immediately by the clause, “I will be their God and they will be my people” suggests that the *sanctuary* here is the presence of God among his people. In the person of Jesus, God dwelled in the midst of his people (John 1:14). Given the messianic thrust of the present passage, the *forever* sanctuary which will be in the midst of the new Israel of God is best interpreted as a reference to that spiritual temple described by New Testament writers.<sup>47</sup>

*Judah.* The principal tribe of the Southern Kingdom. *his companions.* I.e., Benjamin, Simeon, and Levi. The house of *Joseph* comprised the two powerful tribes of *Ephraim* and *Manasseh*, the main body of the Northern Kingdom.

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<sup>47</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 37:15–28). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**a stick:** This is Ezekiel's final symbolic drama employing an object (see 4:1, 3, 9; 5:1).

**Joseph**, as father of **Ephraim** (see Gen. 48:5, 8–20), here represents the northern kingdom of Israel. **Judah** represents the southern kingdom (cf. Ps. 78:67–68).

### **Ezekiel 37:17**

**And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.**

The reuniting of the two kingdoms. Just as the sticks were united into one, so Israel and Judah are to be reunited into one kingdom.

**Chuck Smith:** Now, very obvious what God is saying. Extremely obvious. In fact, it's about as obvious as any scriptures can be. What the Lord is seeking to say to the people, when the nation is reborn, re-gathered, rather than being a divided nation as it was when they went into captivity, the Northern Kingdom with the capital Samaria, and the Southern Kingdom with the capital Jerusalem, rather than being two nations, Judah and Israel, when they come back in the last days and are brought back into the land and made a nation again, rather than two nations there will only be one nation. Judah and Joseph, or Ephraim, the tribes of Israel will be gathered together as one nation, no longer as a double nation. Very obvious.

It is almost laughable it is so ridiculous and idiotic for Joseph Smith to claim that his name is in the Bible and he was prophesied in the book of Ezekiel for the stick of Joseph was to be the Book of Mormon that God would give to him and joined together with the Bible would be the continuation of the Bible and God's Word for man in these last days. That is so completely farfetched that a person would have to lay his brains on the shelf to accept any kind of an interpretation of the scripture that way. I mean, God told us what He was talking about. God said, "These two sticks are the two nations and when they come, join them together because there will only be one nation when they come back into the land." Now I would have to say that anybody that can interpret that into the scripture I would not want to be following their Biblical expositions or trust myself to their teaching. When you can gather that kind of stuff out of this scripture, you can make red read green. I mean, that's as farfetched as anything could ever be. And if you're a Mormon here tonight, it's just straight from the shoulder. Look at it and question in your mind the things that you're being taught. For you know that they have taught you that this stick with Joseph on it was actually a prophecy concerning Joseph Smith. But if you can find that in this verse or in this passage or in its context, then you can find snow in hell. I mean, it's just not there.

So God plainly declares, "I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

## **Ezekiel 37:18**

**And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou *meanest* by these?**

**Constable 18-19:** When Ezekiel's audience asked him what his symbolic act represented (cf. 4:1; 5:1; 12:9; 17:12; 20:49; 24:19), he was to tell them that the Lord said He would combine the two parts of Israel into one whole nation (cf. Isa. 11:12-13; Jer. 3:18; Hos. 1:11). This promise refutes the teaching of British Israelism and other groups who hold that the 10 northern tribes were lost and later became some other national entity (cf. Isa. 43:5-7; 49:5-6; Jer. 3:12-15).

We know comparatively little about the history of the exiled northerners, but there is no evidence of any return. There was Jewish awareness of northern tribes in Assyria: the apocryphal book of Tobit has such a setting.<sup>48</sup>

**BKC 18-28.** The uniting of the sticks pictured God's restoring *and* reuniting His people in the land as a single nation (cf. Hosea 1:11). Cleansed from their backsliding ... they will be My people, God said, and I will be their God (cf. Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:27).

When united, Israel will be led by King David himself (see comments on 34:23-24). As God's servant, he will be their one shepherd.

Then God repeated the blessings to be bestowed on the people in the land. They will have an eternal inheritance there and David ... will be their prince. God's covenant of peace (cf. 36:15; Isa. 54:10) will be established with them, and His presence will remain with them forever (in contrast with the departing of His glory, Ezek. 9-11). The visible reminder of God's presence will be His sanctuary, His dwelling place. Then again God added, I will be their God, and they will be My people (cf. 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23). These promises anticipate the detailed plans for God's new sanctuary (chaps. 40-43). This literal structure will serve as a visual object lesson to Israel and the nations of God's presence in the midst of His people.<sup>49</sup>

## **Ezekiel 37:19**

**Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.**

Now if you think of a stick not like a branch but like a sceptre, the flavor may be a little stronger.

**Clarke: The stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim**—Jeroboam, the first king of the ten tribes, was an Ephraimite. Joseph represents the ten tribes in general; they were in the hand of Ephraim, that is, under the government of Jeroboam.

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<sup>48</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>49</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 37:18–28). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**ESV: make them one stick.** Although the hopes for a reunion were alive at this time, Israel's deportation by the Assyrians was already 150 years in the past. It may be that the “dry bones” vision in vv. 1–14 allayed doubts as to the plausibility of this hope.

### **Ezekiel 37:20**

**And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.**

**Constable 20-22:** The prophet was to hold these sticks, on which he had written what the Lord told him, in the sight of the exiles. He was to explain that Yahweh promised to bring exiles from both kingdoms back into the land. He would make one united kingdom of them again and set up one king over all of them (cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 16:10; 17:7-9; 22:17-18; 28:4, 13-15). They would no longer be two nations, a divided kingdom.<sup>50</sup>

### **Ezekiel 37:21**

**And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:**

Ezekiel was writing this roughly in 586 B.C. It is amazing how this passage has been in existence for 2500 years. In 285 B.C. it was translated into Greek in the Septuagint Version.

For 2500 years God promised He would do this; and ever since the crucifixion, theologians have argued whether Israel was going to be regathered in the land. That seems kind of funny to us, because we can see that Israel is in the land.

**[Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land]** These words from "Behold" to the end of this verse were chosen to be put on the Zionist medal commemorating the National Federation in 1896—a landmark in the history of the Jewish nation.<sup>51</sup>

**McGee:** This is what God meant in verse 12 when He said, “I will cause you to come up out of your graves.” Israel is buried in the nations of the world, and they are to be brought back and become a nation again.

I want to say something very carefully now concerning the three stages of the bones Ezekiel saw. I have said they are the key to understanding the future of the nation Israel, and I now want to add that if there is any place we have fulfilled prophecy it is in these three stages. I don't go much for finding prophecy being fulfilled on every hand, but I do see it here. Follow me carefully: The nation Israel was buried and scattered in the nations of the world, and was dead to God, dead to the things of God—that's the first stage of the

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<sup>50</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>51</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

bones that we saw. Now since 1948 they have come back as a nation, but it is really a corpse over there today. They have a flag, they have a constitution, they have a prime minister, and they have a parliament. They have a police force and an army. They have a nation, and they even have Jerusalem. They have everything except spiritual life. If you walk from the old Arab section of Jerusalem where Islam dominates and come over into the Israeli section, there is no spiritual life. I want to say this kindly, but, as far as I am concerned, there is as much spiritual deadness on the one side as the other. There is a great deal more of that which is materialistic, which is intellectual, and which denotes civilization on the Israeli side, but there is no spiritual life whatsoever. This is symbolized by the second stage of the bones—bodies, but without life. That is where Israel stands today.

In verses 15–28 Ezekiel mentions two sticks. I will not go into any detail here other than to say that they typify the northern (Israel) and southern (Judah) kingdoms which will again become one nation. This means, my friend, that there must not be any “ten lost tribes of Israel”—at least, if there are, God knows where they are, and I am confident that it is not Great Britain which will be joined to them in that land!<sup>52</sup>

**21-28** Promises for Israel that will be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ include restoration to the land of Palestine (v. 21), unification of the two kingdoms (v. 22), purification from all idolatry (v. 23), Messiah’s ruling over them (v. 24; see note on 34:23), possession of the land forever (v. 25; cf. Gen. 15:18-21), and the presence of God and His sanctuary in their midst (vv. 26-28).

**ESV 21–22** This renewed national unity requires a secure national home (v. 21). The reunion takes concrete political shape under the rule of **one king**, which is not Ezekiel's usual title for the messianic figure (cf. “prince,” v. 25).

### **Ezekiel 37:22**

**And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:**

**[one nation in the land]** All the tribes of Israel will become one nation again. This means that all the Jews of the world, all from the tribes of Israel everywhere, will be gathered back to their own land to live forever under their Messiah (Ezekiel 37:22-28).

**[upon the mountains of Israel]** This again states plainly that all the tribes of Israel will live eternally upon the mountains of Israel—in their own land, Palestine. This is clearly emphasized in Ezekiel 37:25.

**[one king shall be king to them all]** The "one king" predicted here will be David, who will be over all the tribes of Israel in their national restoration under the Messiah. This is clear from Ezekiel 37:24-25; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5. Christ will be

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<sup>52</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

King of kings and Lord of lords over David and all other earthly kings in eternity, and even over all the resurrected kings and priests (Rev. 19:16).<sup>53</sup>

**Clarle: I will make them one nation**—There was no distinction after the return from Babylon.

**Clarke: And one king shall be king to them all**—Politically speaking they never had a king from that day to this; and the grand junction and government spoken of here must refer to another time—to that in which they shall be brought into the Christian Church with the fullness of the Gentiles; when JESUS, the King of kings and Lord of lords, shall rule over all.

**Wycliffe:** Five great blessings are promised here: (1) The people will be brought back home (vv. 21, 22). **One nation ... one king ... no longer ... two kingdoms.** The prophets regarded Israel of the north as still living (Hos 1:11; 8:3, 4; Jer 3:12-15; Isa 43:5-7; 49:5, 6). Note the disposition of the twelve tribes in the new kingdom (ch. 48). (2) They will be purified from idolatry (v. 23; cf. 36:25). (3) David will be installed as king over them (vv. 24, 25). He is called **king** (*melek*) here and in verse 22, but “prince” in other places. 25. Cf. 36:28. **Jacob my servant.** Jacob was an ancestor of Israel, as Abraham was (Hos 12:12; Isa 29:22). **Their prince for ever.** Cf. 34:23, 24. A David-like ideal ruler, rather than, a reference to a resurrected David ruling forever. (4) A covenant of peace will be established (v. 26a). Cf. 34:25. (5) God will dwell in their midst (vv. 26b-28).<sup>54</sup>

### **Ezekiel 37:23**

**Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.**

**Constable:** These Jews would no longer defile themselves with idols, other detestable things, or transgressions of the Lord's (Mosaic) covenant. The Lord promised to deliver them from the many places where they had gone and sinned and to cleanse them (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). Then they would enter into a proper relationship with Him. In the present State of Israel only about 5 percent of the population is actively "religious," and Jesus Christ is more firmly rejected there than almost anywhere else.

This verse addresses the fourth dimension of ancient perceptions of national identity—a healthy relationship between Israel and her patron deity.

Block called these four dimensions ethnic integrity (v. 21a), territorial integrity (v. 21b), political integrity (v. 22), and spiritual integrity (v. 23).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>54</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 37:21). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>55</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

**[shall they be my people, and I will be their God]** This truth is expressed twice in this chapter (Ezekiel 37:23,27).

God's cleansing is from idolatry. Saving and cleansing are synonymous in this text.

**ESV:** The life of this nation is consistently moral and pure. The people are enabled to live in this way by God (I will save them). The covenant formula appears here and in v. 27, one mirroring the other.

**Chuck Smith:** This, of course, goes into the future when Jesus Christ comes to establish the kingdom and He will sit upon the throne of David to order and to establish it in righteousness and in judgment from henceforth even forever.

### **Ezekiel 37:24**

**And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.**

**Missler:** God speaks of Jesus Christ as "My Servant David," the Dynasty of David, the House of David. I think we are talking here about none other than The Messiah, the *Meshiach*. (Although some believe that this is actually referring to David himself.)<sup>56</sup>

**Constable 24-25:** God's servant David would rule over the Jews and be their king (34:24; 2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5). They would have only one king who would shepherd them so that they would follow the Lord faithfully (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:18-19; 27:9; Jer. 30:22; 31:33; 32:38). They would live in the Promised Land forever, and the Lord's servant David would be their appointed ruler forever. In view of God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, this must refer to the Son of David, Messiah. In sum, Israel will enjoy three new realities: a new commitment to Yahweh's will (v. 24b), occupation of her hereditary homeland forever (v. 25a), and the rule of David forever (v. 25b).<sup>57</sup>

### **Ron Daniel; 24-28 A King Will Reign Over Israel**

One day, Israel will have a king over them. He is called "my servant David." As we saw in our previous study, this shepherd-king is a descendant of David, called "The Branch." He is Jesus Christ. God's sanctuary will be placed in the midst of Israel, and He will dwell with them there. And there will be no doubt among the nations that God is for His people Israel.<sup>58</sup>

**Clarke: And David my servant shall be King**—That this refers to Jesus Christ, see proved, Ezekiel 34:23 (note).

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<sup>56</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

<sup>57</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>58</sup> Ron Daniel, Notes on Ezekiel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel3501.pdf>

**LAN 24-25:** The Messiah was often called David because he is David's descendant. David was a good king, but the Messiah would be the perfect King (Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:16; Rev. 21:1ff).

**McGee:** That one Shepherd is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. When He came, He was born in the line of David. Read Matthew 1; Luke 1–2—both very carefully record that He came in the line of David. The One that came in that line is the Shepherd, and He will rule over them. I personally believe that God will raise up David to reign over Israel, either in the Millennium or in the eternal kingdom which will be ushered in immediately following the Millennium. Some commentators say he will reign in the Millennium; others say it will be the eternal kingdom. I believe he will reign during both, that he will serve as the vice-regent of the Lord Jesus Christ down here on this earth.<sup>59</sup>

**The Church, Covenant People**—God's people have a future because God plans and controls the future. The Jews in Babylonian exile did not appear to have much hope. God promised a new king, unity, obedience, and life in their land. This would center in a new worship place showing God was with them. All the promises to Abraham (Ge 12:1-7) would again be fulfilled. They would be holy and totally dedicated to God. Their holiness would be a testimony to all other peoples, fulfilling the mission first given Abraham (Ge 12:1-3). God continues to create a future for an obedient people.

**ESV 24–25:** The assignment of David as shepherd-**king** recalls 34:23–24, there in terms of **prince** (v. 25), as well as several passages in Jeremiah (e.g., Jer. 23:5; 30:9). Divine enabling to live rightly (Ezek. 37:23) does not exclude moral vigilance on the part of the people but enforces it.

God is going to dwell amongst His people. "I will tabernacle among them. My dwellingplace will be there." So Christ living here upon the earth in the Kingdom Age.

### **Ezekiel 37:25**

**And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.**

This is literal Israel; it is not some figurative, allegorical thing. And how long shall they dwell there? Forever!

**[even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever]** This statement, "even they, and their children, and their children's children forever" is another way of stating eternal generations of natural people on earth (cp. Isaiah 59:21)

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<sup>59</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Clarke: The land that I have given unto Jacob my servant**—Jacob means here the twelve tribes; and the land given to them was the whole land of Palestine; consequently, the promise states that, when they return, they are to possess the whole of the Promised Land.

### **Ezekiel 37:26**

**Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.**

**Constable 26-28:** The Lord also promised to make a covenant of peace with His people (cf. 16:62; 20:37; 34:25). He would plant them securely in the land and multiply their numbers (cf. Gen. 22:17-18). He would also set His sanctuary in their midst forever (cf. 20:40; 40:5—43:9; Zech. 6:12-13), not temporarily as He had done with the tabernacle and temple. His dwelling place would be with them forever, and He would also establish an intimate relationship with them. The people of the world would know that He is Yahweh who sets aside Israel as sacred for His glory and special purpose in the earth when He would set up His sanctuary in Israel's midst forever (cf. Exod. 19:5-6).

The words "forever" and "everlasting" occur five times in verses 25-28. The reestablished Israelites would live in the land forever and would have an everlasting king, an everlasting covenant, and an everlasting sanctuary. There are also 13 promises in verses 15-28 and 10 "I will" commitments.<sup>60</sup>

**[I will make a covenant of peace with them]** This will be done by Christ at His second coming (Ezekiel 16:60-62; Ezekiel 20:37; Ezekiel 34:25; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 55:3; Isaiah 57:8; Isaiah 59:21; Isaiah 61:8; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:16).

**[an everlasting covenant]** There are several everlasting covenants in Scripture.

**[set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore]** This refers to the millennial and eternal temple, which is described in detail in Ezekiel 40:5-47:12, and which is stated to be the eternal capital building of the Messiah in Ezekiel 43:7. It will be built by Christ at His second coming (Zech. 6:12-13).<sup>61</sup>

**LAN 26-27:** God's promise here goes beyond the physical and geographical restoration of Israel. He promises to breathe new spiritual life into his people so that their hearts and attitudes will be right with him and united with one another. This same process is described throughout God's Word as the cleansing and renewing of our hearts by God's Spirit (Titus 3:4-6).

**Wycliffe: My sanctuary** (*miqdāsh*). The Temple as the dwelling place of the Lord, made holy by his presence. 27. **My tabernacle** (*mishkān*) shall be with them. Literally, *over them*, i.e., on higher ground (see 40:2; Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1), protecting them or sanctifying

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable Expository Notes, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm>

<sup>61</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

them. I will be their God. See also 11:20; 14:11; 36:28. 28. I ... do sanctify Israel. God comes down to dwell with man, transforming earth into heaven (cf. 43:7, 9; 48:8, 10, 21). Verses 26-28 lead to the rebuilding of the Temple (ch. 40ff.).

This prophecy, like the preceding one, has not yet been fulfilled historically, for so far, Israel has failed to meet the conditions. Its fulfillment lies in the future ingathering of a converted Israel into the body of Christ. It looks forward to the time when the Tabernacle of God will be with his people (Rev 21:3).<sup>62</sup>

**26-28** The Lord had made an everlasting covenant with Abraham, the nation of Israel, and David (see 16:60, 61; see Gen. 9:16; 17:7; Num. 25:12, 13; 2 Sam. 7:13, 16; 23:5; Jer. 32:40). My sanctuary in their midst: The sanctuary or holy place of the living God is His dwelling place among His people (see Zeph. 3:15–18). My tabernacle: This term meaning “dwelling place” is a synonym for *sanctuary*. Both can be used of God’s dwelling in the midst of His people in the wilderness. Here they point to the future dwelling of the living God in the midst of His people forevermore. We may also compare the use Paul makes of these verses in 2 Cor. 6:16.

**ESV:** The **covenant of peace** (see 34:25) and **everlasting covenant** (see 16:60) appeared individually earlier in Ezekiel. Here they come together to provide the charter for the renewed nation. The joining of these covenants also combines political life and the natural world, as if people and land are in symbiotic unity.

### **Ezekiel 37:27**

**My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

**[My tabernacle also shall be with them]** This is different from the temple, and refers to the canopy over all dwellings in the Millennium when the light of the sun will be increased sevenfold and the light of the moon will be as the present light of the sun (see Three Things God Will Create). It no doubt also refers to the eternal city of God in the New Earth, the New Jerusalem, the capital city of God, when He personally will move with the city from the planet heaven to the earth after the Millennium, to dwell among men eternally (Rev. 21:3-5).<sup>63</sup>

**Clarke: By tabernacle**—Jesus Christ, the true tabernacle, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

**ESV 27–28: My dwelling place shall be with them.** The oracle's conclusion emphasizes the centrality of God's presence to the renewed people, the greatest of all blessings by far. The “dwelling place” (Hb. *mishkan*) recalls the wilderness tabernacle. The **sanctuary** (Hb. *miqdash*; see v. 26) points rather to the temple, in particular the renewed temple, which will occupy Ezekiel's attention in ch. 44.

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<sup>62</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 37:26). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>63</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

## **Ezekiel 37:28**

**And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.**

[**sanctify Israel**] Israel will then be set apart for holy uses and will be considered sanctified under the Messiah as He reigns over them and uses them as His missionaries to evangelize the world (Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 11:9; Isaiah 52:7; Isaiah 66:19-21; Zech. 8:23; Zech. 14:16-21).

**McGee:** This is going to come to pass—it has not yet come to pass.

“When my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.” There will be a millennial temple and an eternal temple down here on the earth. In Revelation where it speaks of there not being a temple, it is referring to the New Jerusalem, which is where the church will be and which is not to be upon this earth. The eternal home of the children of Israel will be upon this earth, and God’s temple will be in their midst. Although there is no doubt that Israel is the subject of Ezekiel, and especially of chapters 37–39, we can certainly make an application of it for our personal lives. The world that you and I live in today is a death valley, full of dead bones, dead people, if you please. Oh, people talk about being alive and say they are where the action is, but they are really dead in trespasses and sins. They have no spiritual life. That is the reason they have to have a drink or two, or take some sort of drugs, or do something to liven up the old corpse.

God has made it very clear that “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). If you have the Son of God, you have life. If you do not have the Son, you are dead. There are two kinds of people: live people and dead people. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). That means that the person without the Son is dead.

God is saying to you today that you are dead if you are not a Christian. Ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord. You can come to life. Accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. This is the application we can draw from this portion of Scripture, but the subject of the prophecy is the nation Israel.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 37:28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Missler:** Now, don't get the idea that this is all chronological. We have read some sweeping statements here in Ezekiel, but the main issue here in 37 is the regathering to the land. Notice that it first shows up without the spirit. The flesh is on the bones; you can go to Israel and see the flesh on the bones. You will see people, dedicated, committed, secular humanists, proud of their sacrifices and commitments to the land, wedded to the land, with maybe just a tiny inkling that God is real and is dealing with them.

What is going to rattle their cage to make them realize that they have been regathered in the land supernaturally? Now, they will ascribe to a cultural tradition, and they will talk Biblically; but not in the sense that they take it seriously in terms of being mystical, literal and that they are part of God's plan for all of humanity.

The event that will wake them is the one described in Ezekiel 38 and 39, that is where their will be an invasion of the land. The invasion is described in Chapter 38; the cleanup after the invasion is described in 39. The leadership, and the allies are described in great detail by their names out of Genesis 10, the so-called "Table of Nations," the generations after Noah. So we will have to do a little homework to find out what those quaint, ancient tribal names refer to in our day.

There are going to be some specific people who stand on the sidelines, and say, "Naughty, naughty. You shouldn't do that." And it is also going to be interesting who is mentioned and who is left out. When Russia moves into Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt are not with them, but Iran is...<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, [khouse.org](http://khouse.org)

## The Visions of Ezekiel

Vision	Reference	Significance
God	1:1–28	Ezekiel is called, commissioned, and empowered with an overwhelming vision of divine glory.
Abominations in the temple	8:1–18	Ezekiel is transported to Jerusalem where he sees pagan idols in the temple and Israelites worshipping these false gods. God reveals His anger to Ezekiel over such sinful behavior.
People slain in Jerusalem	9:1–11	Ezekiel witnesses a violent vision in which Israelites of all ages are judged and killed because of their rebelliousness and idolatry.
The temple and the cherubim	10:1–22	Ezekiel watches God's glory and the mysterious cherubim depart from the temple because of the sinfulness of the people.
Twenty-five wicked rulers	11:1–12	Ezekiel is transported to the East Gate where he sees twenty-five Israelite leaders plotting evil. He condemns them for their evil ways.
Valley of the dry bones	37:1–14	Ezekiel is transported to a valley where he sees dry, bleached bones come together, recover flesh, and come to life. This vision depicts God's power and promise to restore and revive a dead people.
The temple	40:1–43:10	Ezekiel sees a detailed vision of a new temple and the return of the Lord. This vision encourages the Israelites that God will return to bless His people.