

EZEKIEL

Cry Me a River

*By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down,
yea, we wept When we remembered Zion
Psalm 137:1*

Text

Ezekiel 36 & 37

Topic

In their darkest hour, the LORD illuminated the future regathering & regeneration of Israel to the Promised Land using two figures: A valley of dry bones & two sticks.

Title

***“Sticks & Bones, He’ll Bring Us Home,
God’s Word Can Never Harm Us”***

Uninhabitable is too tame a label for some sites.

The reactor explosion in 1968 at Chernobyl rendered the area uninhabitable for humans for at least one thousand years - *if ever*.

In the sixth century BC, Israel’s homeland was made uninhabitable.

It wasn’t nuclear. It was worse. For their insubordination, immorality, and idolatry, the LORD exiled His people to Babylon for 70yrs. **He** made the Promised Land uninhabitable **for them**.

In their grief, Ezekiel delivered prophecies as words of comfort from the LORD.

Ezk 36:1 “And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, ‘O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD!’

Go Tell it **To** the Mountains works as a title here. Ezekiel was not addressing the people; He was addressing the Promised Land. Israel is the single nation that has

been given & guaranteed land. Not to be unpatriotic, but *This Land is Your Land*... Not true biblically. If you research it, you will find Woody Guthrie meant it as a criticism of land ownership.

Ezk 36:2 Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because the enemy has said of you, 'Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession,' " "

Ezk 36:3 therefore prophesy, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because they made you desolate and swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you are taken up by the lips of talkers and slandered by the people" -

Ezk 36:4 therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around -

Ezk 36:5 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy and spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country." "

Ezk 36:6 "Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne the shame of the nations."

"The LORD made an [unconditional] covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...' "¹ That's over 300,000sq miles. How much does Israel occupy? 8,500sq miles.

Beginning with their exile, Gentile nations have mocked the land and opposed Israel's claim to it.

Ezk 36:7 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame.

Ezk 36:8 But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.

Ezk 36:9 For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.

¹ Genesis 15:18

Ezk 36:10 I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.

Ezk 36:11 I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

Ezk 36:12 Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children."

The Jews *did* return to their land after the 70yrs. It should be obvious that these verses are talking about a far greater, global restoration later on.

Ezk 36:13 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because they say to you, 'You devour men and bereave your nation of children,'

Ezk 36:14 therefore you shall devour men no more, nor bereave your nation anymore," says the Lord GOD.

Ezk 36:15 Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore, nor shall you cause your nation to stumble anymore," says the Lord GOD."

You've heard Prime Minister Netanyahu say, "Never again." That is what the LORD said to the land. The Jews would return and "never again" be exiled.

Ezk 36:16 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

Ezk 36:17 "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity.

Ezk 36:18 Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it.

Ezk 36:19 So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds.

Ezk 36:20 When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name - when they said of them, 'These are the people of the LORD, and yet they have gone out of His land.'

In 70AD the Romans razed the Temple & Jerusalem. For the next almost 1900 years the Jews were dispersed, distressed, despised.

Ezk 36:21 But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

Ezk 36:22 “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.

Ezk 36:23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

Ezk 36:24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.

God would first restore Israel physically by regathering her from all nations to her own land. Here in brief is how it happened:

- In 1896, Theodor Herzl published *Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State)*, arguing that Jews needed a sovereign homeland due to rising antisemitism in Europe. **It was God stirring his heart.** The Zionist Movement to establish the state was born.
- In the late 19th century, Jews began returning to their ancestral home. **Again only explainable as a stirring from God.**
- In 1917, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour issued the Balfour Declaration, supporting a Jewish homeland.
- After WWII and the Holocaust, global support grew. David Ben-Gurion led the effort to establish Israel, declaring independence May 14, 1948.
- Immediately the surrounding Arab nations attacked. With an untrained army of 19,000, no tanks, two outdated planes, and few weapons, Israel won the war and secured its statehood.

Numerous documented reports and testimonies describe miraculous events on Israel’s side during the Arab-Israeli War. These stories come from soldiers, rabbis, historians, and enemies.

Ezk 36:25 Then [in the future] I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

Ezk 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezk 36:27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Ezk 36:28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

Temple rituals sometimes involved the sprinkling of blood. One day there would be a once-and-forever *inward* sprinkling, at which time they would receive the in-dwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the unconditional promise of the New Covenant made to the Jewish people. When Israel rejected Jesus' offer of the Kingdom, it opened the door for the blessings of the New Covenant to be extended to the Church. When Peter preached to Cornelius, a Gentile and head of a Gentile household, he witnessed them receiving the Holy Spirit, just as the Jewish believers had. Gentile believers partake in the blessings of the New Covenant during the Church Age.

Ezk 36:29 I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you.

Ezk 36:30 And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations.

Ezk 36:31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.

Ezk 36:32 Not for your sake do I do this," says the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!"

Ezk 36:33 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.

Ezk 36:34 The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by.

Ezk 36:35 So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'

Ezk 36:36 Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it."

Israel is remarkably fruitful; it's land an agricultural miracle. But it is not yet comparable to the Garden of Eden." Nations which are left" are those who survive the Great Tribulation.

Ezk 36:37 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock.

Ezk 36:38 Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the LORD."

What we are reading is more than 2500yrs old. Let that sink in.

Chapter 37 assures that God will *restore* and *reunite* His people, using two illustrations:

1. Ezekiel witnesses a valley of dry bones in a vision. The bones come to life, symbolizing God's promise to *revive* and *restore* His nation.
2. God instructs Ezekiel to unite two sticks, one representing Judah and the other Ephraim, which was the name for the ten northern tribes. It symbolizes the reunification of divided Israel under a single king.

These are not my interpretations. God tells us explicitly what these are symbolic for. Let's take a look at 'Dem Bones.

Ezk 37:1 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.
Ezk 37:2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, *there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.*
Ezk 37:3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

We sometimes flippantly say, "the Lord knows." He does, but that's no guarantee He's going to tell us what we want to know. The idea that the Lord knows has more to do with complete surrender no matter our circumstances. He knows; ***we don't need to.***

Ezk 37:4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!

*Your toe bone connected to your foot bone
Your foot bone connected to your heel bone
Now I hear the Word of the LORD*

Ezk 37:5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.

Ezk 37:6 I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD." ' "

Ezk 37:7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.

Ezk 37:8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but *there was no breath in them.*

Ezk 37:9 Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' "

Ezk 37:10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

The "bones" represent the nation as a whole. It is restored in two phases:

1. First, national Israel will be brought back to *physical* life as bone came to bone and sinews and flesh comes upon them and skin covers them.
2. Second, national Israel will be brought back to *spiritual* life as "the breath," meaning the Spirit, gives them eternal life.

Jews who were dispersed all over the Earth have miraculously been regathered to their Promised Land. *They do not have the Spirit. They have been re-gathered in unbelief, just as predicted here.*

Ezekiel 37:11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'

Ezk 37:12 Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Ezk 37:13 Then you shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.

Ezk 37:14 I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says the LORD.' "

Even Christians considered Israel a 'dead' nation. Bringing them "up from [their] graves" is the LORD giving them life as a nation again.

Ezk 37:15 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Ezk 37:16 "As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.'

Ezk 37:17 Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

Ezk 37:18 "And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you *mean* by these?' -

Ezk 37:19 say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand." '

Ezk 37:20 And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

Ezk 37:21 "Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

Ezk 37:22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

Centuries prior, national Israel had split into two separate nations:

- Ten tribes in the north were called Israel, or sometimes Ephraim.
- The two southern tribes, where Jerusalem was located, were called Judah.

Ezk 37:23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God.

Ezk 37:24 "David My servant *shall* be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them.

Ezk 37:25 Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David *shall* be their prince forever.

King David will rule Israel as a prince, under Jesus Christ, the King of Kings over all nations.

Ezk 37:26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore.

Ezk 37:27 My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Ezk 37:28 The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.” ’ ”

When the Babylonians breached the walls of Jerusalem, they murdered, tortured, raped and looted. The Temple was destroyed. Jerusalem was in ruins. Every family felt loss. Those who survived were either already in Babylon or dispersed. And don't forget the northern Kingdom of Israel had been decimated by the Assyrians about 150 years before this. There was no human reason to think that they would continue as a nation.

“Throughout the Bible, God's greatest encouragement for my present is His promise of my future.”

Psalms 3:3 reveals the Lord as “the lifter of my head.” What are some of the reasons our heads can hang down? Shame or Guilt... Sadness or Grief... Defeat or Failure... Embarrassment or Humiliation... Exhaustion or Depression.

You have heard Bible teachers use the expression. “God had to hit me over the head with a 2 x 4 to get my attention.” Well, maybe. But who He really is, what He really wants to do, is gently lift your head so that you can look into His wonderful face.