

Ezekiel 37 - Israel's Restoration

Illustrated: The Vision of Dry Bones; The Sign of the Two Sticks

III. Restoration of Israel (Ezek 33:1—48:45)

(5) Israel's restoration illustrated (37:1-28)

(A) Vision of the dry bones (37:1-14)

(a) Vision (37:1-10)

(b) Interpretation (37:11-14)

(B) Sign of the two sticks (37:15-28)

(a) Sign (37:15-17)

(b) Interpretation (37:18-28)

The Vision of Dry Bones

This, obviously, is not referring to the Church.

The Lord, through Ezekiel, proclaims to Israel the coming resurrection of her national life (v1-14). In v1-6, Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy over the dry bones scattered all over the valley. The bones come together in v7-10 with sinews and skin, and the breath of life is given to them so that they become alive again. God interprets the vision in v11-17, stating that the bones represent the whole House of Israel, which became spiritually dead and dispersed (v11). In v12-13, God will regather them and they will again possess the Land. At the time of the regathering and possession of the Land (v14), Israel will be regenerated by the Spirit of God to live in a right relationship with Him.

This 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. Ezekiel foretells this by the symbolic act of joining two sticks, one named Judah and one named Joseph, prophesying the future union of the two kingdoms under one head, David. In v18-20, the interpretation of the miracle is given, that the two kingdoms will one day be reunited into one nation. Verse 21 indicates that when they are regathered, it will be as one nation, with One King, in one Kingdom (v22). At that time, they will be thoroughly cleansed of their sins (v23), which was the root cause of the original division.

Ezekiel 37

(5) Israel's restoration illustrated (37:1-28)

(A) Vision of the dry bones (37:1-14)

(a) Vision (37:1-10)

1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of **the valley**; and it was full of bones.

1 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

1 The LORD laid his hand on me and brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD to the middle of a valley that was filled with bones.

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,

- "The hand of the LORD was upon me" - this figure of speech is used repeatedly by Ezekiel (Cf. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 40:1). It refers to prophetic ecstasy, a heightened spiritual state in which the prophet is intensely aware of God's presence and purpose.

- "...He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down" - God intentionally positioned Ezekiel to see this vision: the "hand of the LORD" brought him "by the Spirit of the LORD" to witness a gruesome sight: a valley full of dry bones.

— This wasn't necessarily a physical transport, but rather a visionary experience (Cf. 11:24).

- "...the valley" - *habbikah*, definite article in Hebrew indicates a specific valley. It is likely the same valley mentioned in 3:22 where Ezekiel had previously seen the vision of the Shekinah Glory of God.

2 He had me pass among them all around, and behold, **there were very many** on the surface of the valley; and behold, **they were very dry**.

2 He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, *there were* very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, *they were* very dry.

2 He led me here and there throughout the valley, and I was amazed to see that the surface of the entire valley was covered with myriads of very dry bones!

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.

- "...*there were* very many" - an exceedingly large number of bones were scattered throughout the valley

- "...dry" - communicates death, hopelessness, decay. Death and decomposition had long since removed all vitality, life, and hope. Whatever these bones once represented had been dead for a significant amount of time and had never received a proper burial.

3 Then He said to me, "**Son of man, can these bones live?**" And I answered, "**Lord GOD, You Yourself know.**"

3 He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

3 The LORD asked me, "Son of Man, will these bones ever live?" "Lord GOD," I replied, "you know the answer to that!"

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

- "...Son of man" - God recognizes Ezekiel's humanity

- "...can these bones live?" - to emphasize the hopelessness of the situation from the human point of view, the Lord asked Ezekiel whether the dry bones could live. The obvious answer from a human perspective is No.

- "...Lord GOD, You Yourself know" - Ezekiel's answer recognized God's deity and acknowledged that it would require a power beyond his own for these bones to come to life again. It was an answer of reverence.

— John gave a similar answer to a question posed by one of the 24 Elders in heaven (Rev 7:13-14)

Rev 7:13-14:

13 Then one of the elders responded, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"

14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

4 Again He said to me, "**Prophecy** over these bones and say to them, 'You dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.'

4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.'

4 Then the LORD told me, "Prophecy to these bones. Tell them: 'You dry bones, listen to the message from the LORD:

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" - God works when His Word is proclaimed

- Ezekiel was instructed to address the dry, bleached bones directly. Although dead, from God's perspective they were still capable of hearing prophetic words.

5 This is what the Lord GOD says to these bones: 'Behold, **I am going to make breath** enter you so that you may come to life.

5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life.

5 This is what the Lord GOD says to you dry bones! 'Pay attention! I'm bringing my Spirit into you right now, and you're going to live!

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

- "...I am going to" - this is a divine promise, assuring that God's breath will enter these bones, bringing them back to life. This declaration also answers the question in v3 of whether these bones can live.

— The answer to that question (v3) is obviously Yes, but only through the power and will of God.

— It is critical to understand that this vision does not depict a physical resurrection; rather, it serves as a symbolic representation of Israel's national restoration.

- "...breath" - *rûah*, used many times in Scripture to describe the Holy Spirit. It's translated "breath" in v5-6,8-10; "winds" in v9; "spirit" in v1,14. The context usually determines the translation.

— Breath is a sign of life, identical with wind or air, and becomes, in this prophecy, a reference to the Holy Spirit.

6 And I will attach tendons to you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin, and put breath in you so that you may come to life; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

6 I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

6 I'm going to grow tendons on you, regenerate your flesh, cover you with skin, and make you breathe again so that you can come back to life and learn that I am the LORD.'""

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.

- God now describes the four stages that He will take to bring about this restoration:

- "...I will attach tendons to you...[I will] make flesh grow back on you...[I will] cover you with skin" - these stages represent a regathering of Israel before the breath of God enters these newly formed bodies. In other words, the regathering will take place while Israel is still spiritually dead. Although the individual parts are reconnected, forming bodies, they remain without life. The breath of God enters only in the fourth stage.

— This imagery supports the doctrine of Israel's two worldwide regatherings. The first regathering is in unbelief, preparing the nation for the judgment of the Tribulation. This is followed by a second regathering, this time in faith, which will prepare the nation for the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom.

— The blending of these two regatherings in symbolic form reinforces that this vision is not about a physical resurrection of OT saints but rather the restoration of Israel as a nation, progressing in distinct stages until her spiritual renewal is fully realized.

- "...[I will] put breath in you" - the final stage, the regeneration of Israel when God will fulfill His New Covenant promises.

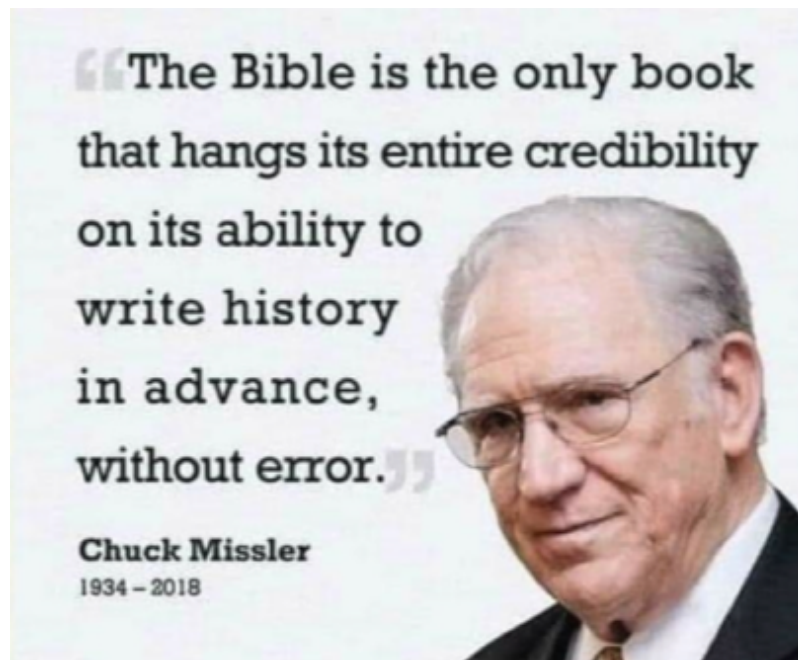
— The result of these steps is that Israel will "come to life" spiritually and "know that I am Yahweh".

- "...you will know that I am the LORD" - they will recognize God's sovereignty and His role in their restoration.

— The primary way we know that the Bible is true is that God speaks things in time past, and those things come true with 100% accuracy. God does things that only God can do to confirm His Word is true.

John 13:19: From now on I am telling you before *it* happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe that I am *He*.

John 14:29: And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it happens, you may believe.



The Bones Come to Life

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a ***loudnoise***, and behold, a **rattling**; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

7 So I prophesied, just as I had been ordered to do so. Immediately there was a noise and a rattling—and then all of a sudden the bones came together by themselves! Each bone came together, all of them attached together!

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.

- It probably seemed absurd for Ezekiel to address a bunch of dry bones in a valley, but Ezekiel was obedient to God's command.

- "...loud noise" - *kol*, a loud noise/sound and quaking (as in an earthquake) occurred in response to the prophecy given by Ezekiel to the bones.

- "...rattling" - *ra'ash*, signifies "quaking" or "shaking" and likely refers to an earthquake.

— Some Jewish scholars (Fruchtenbaum) believe that the *kol* and the *ra'ash* describe World War I and World War II.

— World War I prepared the land for the people: at the San Remo Conference post-WWI, the whole legal framework was put in place by the UN for Israel to re-inhabit the land legally. Unfortunately at that time, the people (Jews) didn't understand that they needed the land.

— World War II prepared the people for the land: once the Holocaust happened and one-third of Jews were killed, it became obvious to Jews that they could no longer be dispersed around the world and needed to occupy their own land. The Holocaust gave Jews the psychological impetus that made 1948 possible.

— When God begins reconstructing the skeleton of Israel from these dry, disjointed bones, which refers to God bringing Israel back into the Land in unbelief, it's not something that will go unnoticed.

— People may be able to deny the hand of God in doing this, but the reconstitution of Israel as a nation in 1948, after ~1900 years, will not go unnoticed.

8 And I looked, and behold, tendons were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

8 And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

8 As I continued to watch, I saw tendons growing on the bones, and muscles growing and covering them, and then skin covered the flesh from above. But the bodies weren't breathing.

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.

- The bones were rejoined together (v7b), the tendons were attached, and the skin was applied, but there was no breath (life) in them.

- At this point, three of the four stages of Israel's restoration (v6) have been fulfilled. However, Ezekiel noticed that while the body was reconstructed, it was not alive. The newly formed bodies were still dead.
- This portrays Israel's regathering in its current unregenerate state in preparation for the judgment of the Tribulation. Thus, the two events—the noise and the earthquake—represent Israel's initial regathering in unbelief.
 - "...but there was no breath in them" - they are in unbelief; the "breath" (Holy Spirit) does not yet indwell them. If Israel was in belief at this time, it's difficult to see how they would make a national covenant with the Antichrist (Dan 9:27).
- The general tenor of Scripture points to a two-fold regathering (Cf. Is 11:11; Zech 13:8-9)

Some view the two-fold regathering as odd and confusing, however God previously has created a body without breath: Adam (Gen 2:7). God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Ezekiel is saying the same thing about Israel in the last days.

ISRAEL'S TWO REGATHERINGS	
THE PRESENT (FIRST) REGATHERING	THE PERMANENT (SECOND) REGATHERING
Return to part of the land	Return to all the land
Return in unbelief	Return in faith
Restored to the land only	Restored to the land and the Lord
Sets the stage for Tribulation (discipline)	Sets the stage for Millennium (blessing)
Adapted from: Price, <i>Jerusalem In Prophecy</i> , 219	

9 Then He said to me, "**Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'The Lord GOD says this: "Come from the four winds, breath, and breathe on these slain, so that they come to life."**

9 Then 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 come to life.'""

9 Then he ordered me, "Prophecy to the Spirit, Son of Man. Tell the Spirit, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Come from the four winds, you Spirit, and breathe into these people who have been killed, so they will live.'""

9 Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, 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.

- The first work of God is complete: the bones have been regathered and reconstructed into a body, with tendons, muscles and flesh. Now God sets out on His second work: regeneration by giving the body breath, symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

- "...Prophecy" [2x] - now God asked Ezekiel to prophesy again, a second time (Cf. v7)

- The first prophecy was putting the bones back together, and adding tendons, muscles and flesh to them. However, they were still dead. This symbolizes Israel first regathering back into the Land.

- Now Ezekiel is asked to prophesy a second time for the "breath" of the Holy Spirit to come upon them

- God could've easily done this work without Ezekiel prophesying, but God chose to work in the environment of a proclaiming prophet. God works this way also in the Church Age: when God's Word is consistently proclaimed and preached, God works.

- God doesn't call pastors to analyze needs and address them; He calls pastors to preach the Word! (Cf. 2 Tim 4:2). Then God, in His own mysterious way, takes His Word and applies it to His people.

- "...breath" [3x] - *rûah*, usually translated as "spirit" but here it's translated as "breath" or "wind"; refers to the Holy Spirit

- "...from the four winds" - God ordered the breath of life to come from all four corners of the earth and breathe upon the reconstituted bones.

- "...these slain" - indicates that these bones did not belong to people who died of natural causes, but rather to those who had been killed.

- This distinction further supports the view that the passage is not describing the resurrection of OT saints since not all Jews were slain throughout history. Even during the most tragic periods of Jewish suffering, most died from natural causes rather than being killed.

10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath entered them, and **they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.**

10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

10 So I prophesied as I had been ordered, breath entered them, and they began to live. They stood on their own feet as a vast, united army.

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.

- When Ezekiel was commanded to do in v9 is fulfilled in v10...

- This is a word picture for what Ezekiel prophesied in 36:25 about the two-fold work of God: first, to regather Israel back into the land (in unbelief), *then* (Cf. 36:25) cleanse them and give them the Holy Spirit.

— In addition to the gift of a responsive heart, the Lord will grant the gift of His Holy Spirit to willing ones in Israel. This is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Israel in the future, not at Pentecost. [Feinberg]

- "...they came to life" - regeneration; they became spiritually alive

- "...stood on their feet" - demonstrating they were no longer lifeless bodies scattered on the ground, as they were in v7-8

- "...an exceedingly great army" - the three steps outlined in this verse correspond to those outlined earlier (36:24-27), where the basic stages were a worldwide regathering, a regeneration, and a final restoration.

ISRAEL'S TWO REGATHERINGS	
THE PRESENT (FIRST) REGATHERING	THE PERMANENT (SECOND) REGATHERING
Return to part of the land	Return to all the land
Return in unbelief	Return in faith
Restored to the land only	Restored to the land and the Lord
Sets the stage for Tribulation (discipline)	Sets the stage for Millennium (blessing)
Adapted from: Price, <i>Jerusalem In Prophecy</i> , 219	

In the first regathering, Israel returns to part of the land promised to Abraham (from 1948 to present). The second regathering (at the end of the Tribulation), after the Antichrist has scattered them, Israel will return to *all* of the land promised to Abraham.

(b) Interpretation (37:11-14)

11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, **these bones are the entire house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished.** We are completely cut off.'

11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'

11 "These bones represent the entire house of Israel," the LORD explained to me. "Look how they keep saying, 'Our bones are dried up, and our future is lost. We've been completely eliminated!'

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.

- "...these bones are" - plain literal denotative language; God said to Ezekiel exactly what the bones represent. The vision of the valley of dry bones is an illustration that is meant to communicate a point, which God declares here.

- "...the entire house of Israel" - contrary to what many pastors and theologians teach today, these bones are not the Church!!! The first reference to the church in the entire Bible is Matt 16:18, ~600 years later.

— This is yet another reason why these bones are symbolic of the entire nation of Israel, not the literal remains of deceased OT saints.

- "...behold, they say" - the fact that the bones are able to speak in this condition demonstrates again that this passage is not about individual resurrection, but rather the national restoration of Israel.

- "...Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished" - the dryness in the bones refers to Israel in a desperate state, without hope, leading the people to feel severed from their future.

— When Israel is at her darkest point (at the end of the Tribulation), God will move His hand.

— When we are at the depths of our darkest days, with no solution in sight, we're actually in a pretty good position because that's where God begins to work. God was not going to work in and through Israel as long as they were living high and prospering. They first had to be brought to a state of desperation in order to see His hand. If God moved His hand while they were prospering, they would take credit for what God did, and God will not share His glory with another.

— So God has orchestrated history in such a way that He will not move His hand in fulfillment of His Word until Israel is at their most desperate place

12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, I am going to open your graves and cause you to **come up out of your graves**, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.

12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.

12 "Therefore prophesy to them, and tell them, 'Watch me! I'm going to open your graves, lift you out of those graves, and bring my people back into the land of Israel.

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.

- "...come up out of your graves" - symbolizes Israel's national rebirth, *not* the physical resurrection of individuals (Cf. v21). The nation of Israel was buried amidst the nations of the world.

— God will regather them and they will again possess the land. This promise is a summary of v7-8, which speaks of Israel's initial return to the land in unbelief (beginning in 1948), preceding the Tribulation.

13 Then you will know that I am the LORD, **when** I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, **My people**.

13 Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people.

13 Then you'll learn that I am the LORD, when I've opened your graves and caused you to come up out of them, my people.

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" - the timing of this event is important. Israel will only come to know the Lord after having been returned to the land. This further supports the interpretation that the regathering in v12 is the first worldwide regathering of Israel in unbelief, which began in 1948.

- "...My people" - mentioned in both v12 and here...the Jews are God's people both when they are in unbelief and when they believe. Israel always has been and always will be the "people of God"...earthly circumstances cannot change that fact.

14 And I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on **your own land**. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD."

14 I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it," declares the LORD."

14 I'm going to place my Spirit in you all, and you will live. I'll place you all into your land, and you'll learn that I, the LORD, have been speaking and doing this,' declares the LORD."

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.

- This verse summarizes the physical and spiritual restoration of Israel, which will occur at the end of the Tribulation in preparation for the millennial kingdom

- "...I will put my Spirit within you" - Israel will be regenerated, as prophesied by Joel and others (Joel 2:28; Cf. Is 32:15; 44:3; Ezek 36:27-28; 39:29; Zech 12:10).

- "...your own land" - following Israel's regeneration, they will be regathered a second time, this time in belief, in preparation for the millennial kingdom. Thus, the vision of dry bones (v1-14) encapsulates both worldwide regatherings of Israel.

- "...Then you will know" - God is attaching His reputation to His ability to predict the future and have it come to pass just as He said it would. Jesus did the same thing in the Upper Room Discourse (Cf. John 13:19; 14:29).

(B) Sign of the two sticks (37:15-28)

This passage (v15-28) continues to outline God's future plans for Israel, focusing on the reunification of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This is symbolized by the two sticks becoming one in God's hand. The symbolism of the passage is interpreted once again as referring to a literal future event during the millennial kingdom, where Israel will be restored to her rightful land and unified under one ruler—King Messiah. At that point, the nation will enter into a new covenant relationship with God. This restoration is part of God's distinct and unfulfilled promises to the nation of Israel.

(a) Sign (37:15-17)

15 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying,

15 The word of the LORD came again to me saying,

15 A message came to me from the LORD, and this is what it was:

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

- New subject (Cf. v1); now God, through Ezekiel, will give us a second metaphor (word picture) of the prophecies of Ezek 36

16 "Now you, son of man, take for yourself **onestick** and write on it, 'For **Judah** and for the sons of Israel, **his companions**'; then take **anotherstick** and write on it, 'For **Joseph**, the stick of **Ephraim** and **all the house of Israel, his companions**.'

16 "And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, 'For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel, his companions.'

16 "Now as for you, Son of Man, grab a stick of wood for yourself and write on it these words: 'FOR JUDAH AND THE ISRAELIS, HIS COMPANIONS' "Then grab another stick and

write on it: 'FOR JOSEPH, THE STICK OF EPHRAIM, AND ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL, HIS COMPANIONS'

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:

- Ezekiel once again received a command to perform a sign act. God instructed him to take up one stick and

- "...one stick...another stick" - the Hebrew word translated "stick" ['ēš] is simply a stick of wood and never refers to a scroll in the Bible, either literally or symbolically.

- "...Judah" - the leading tribe of the Southern Kingdom

- "...his companions" - refers to the tribes associated with Judah: Benjamin (Joshua 18:11-28) and Simeon (Joshua 19:1-9).

- "...Joseph," - used a synonym for the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom, headquartered in Samaria. The reference to Joseph here obviously does not refer to Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon church, as the Mormons believe.

- Mormons believe the name Ephraim refers to the Mormon people, and the two sticks refer to two scrolls, the Bible and the Book of Mormon. This interpretation is shredded by v18-20.

- "...Ephraim" - Joseph was the father of Manasseh and Ephraim (Gen 48:1-5; 49:22-26), the two leading tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Ephraim was the largest tribe of the Northern Kingdom.

- Ephraim, the younger son, played a central role in shaping Israel's political direction (Gen 48:1-5; 49:22-26), eventually becoming the most prominent tribe in the north.

- "...all the house of Israel, his companions" - refers to the other nine tribes alongside Ephraim

17 Then put them together for yourself **one to another into one** stick, so that they may become one in your hand.

17 Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.

17 "Then join them together end-to-end so that they become a single baton in your hand.

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

- "...one to another into one" - *echad 'ēl echad 'ēs echad*, the multiple use of the Hebrew word *echad* in this verse [4x] suggests a compound unity, where two or more distinct entities are united as one.

- God instructed Ezekiel to take the two sticks that represented the northern and southern kingdoms and put them together into one stick. The symbolic meaning is the reunification of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah into a single nation.

Israel's Judgments

1. **Division of the kingdom (931 BC; 1 Kings 12; Cf. Deut 17:14-17)**
2. Assyrian judgment (722 BC; 2 Kings 17)
3. Babylonian Captivity (586 BC; 2 Kings 25)
4. Roman *Diaspora* (70 AD; Luke 19:41-44)

(b) Interpretation (37:18-28)

18 And when the sons of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?'

18 When the sons of your people speak to you saying, 'Will you not declare to us what you mean by these?'

18 When the descendants of your people ask you, 'Would you please explain to us what you mean by this?'

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

- God told Ezekiel ahead of time that when he carried out God's command to join the two sticks together in his hand, the people who saw this sign act would begin asking questions (v19).

- Ezekiel is referencing denotative (literal) language here; he's going to explain what the metaphor of the two sticks becoming one stick means...

19 say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, I am going to take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, **his** companions; and I will put them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand."

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

19 you are to tell them, 'This is what the LORD says: "Watch me! I'm taking the baton that represents Joseph, which Ephraim is holding in his hand, along with his companions the tribes of Israel, and I'm going to join them with the baton that represents Judah. I'm making them a single baton, that is, a complete baton in my hand."

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.

- God now gives Ezekiel instructions on how to answer the questions from the people who witnessed his sign act...

— Ezekiel is instructed to change the sequence; he was directed to address Israel, then Judah, reversing the order from v16.

- "...his" - refers to Ephraim, the largest tribe in the Northern Kingdom

- The interpretation of the sign of the two sticks is that the two divisions of Israel, which were divided after the reign of Solomon, will one day be put back together into one nation.

20 The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

20 The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes.

20 "The batons on which you engrave your writing are to remain right in front of them in your hand.

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

- Ezekiel was to hold the two sticks in his hand while explaining the meaning of this sign act. Although they appeared as one, the "sticks" (plural) remained separate. No miracle had occurred yet, but Ezekiel held the sticks together in such a way that, in the eyes of the people, they appeared to be one stick.

— At this point, God chose not to physically merge the sticks; they remained distinct, but in Ezekiel's hand, they symbolized the future unity of the two kingdoms.

Ezek 37:21-28: Five Blessings Resulting from Unification

1. The people will be brought back home (v21-22)
2. They will be purified from idolatry (v23; Cf. 36:25)
3. David will be installed as king over them (v24-25)
4. A covenant of peace will be established (v26a; Cf. 34:25)
5. God will dwell in their midst (v26b-28)

21 And say to them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Behold, **I am going to** take the sons of Israel **from among the nations** where they have gone, and **I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;**

21 Say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

21 Then tell them, 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "Watch me take the Israelis out of the nations where they've gone and return them from every direction. I'm going to bring them back into their own land.

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:

- The Lord goes on to explain the process by which this reunification of the divided kingdom will take place...
- "...I am going to" - future tense; this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.
- "...from among the nations" - God will do this work after Israel has been dispersed among the nations; this is a post-70 AD reference because that was the only time in history when Israel was dispersed to many nations (the *diaspora*).
- Considering the context, this is truly divine sarcasm: the prophets predicted Israel would be taken into captivity for 70 years, then migrate right back into the land. That happened to Zechariah's readers!
- Now God tells them that some day future (at the midpoint of the Tribulation), they will again be dispersed all over the world, to many nations, but that God would again regather them a second time and restore them both first physically, then spiritually, to the land He promised Jacob.
- Israel will again become so much like the other nations that God will disperse them into the other nations so they could live among them. But after this time of discipline, God says He will bring them back into their homeland, but this time they will be in belief. And God stakes His entire reputation on the fact that this will happen (Cf. v14).
- "nations" - plural; this is key because many teach that this prophecy describes the return of the exiles from Babylon; however, this is a prophesy of Israel being restored to the land from many "nations," not one nation (Babylon). Ezekiel is obviously referencing a future restoration to the land.
- The interpretation that this passage refers to Israel's return from Babylon doesn't make much sense considering Zechariah prophesied ~20 years after the first return from Babylon.
- "...I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land" - the second regathering of Israel from the nations (first regathering began in 1948); the regathering referred to here will happen after the Second Coming, in preparation for the inauguration of the millennial kingdom.

22 and **I will make them one nation** in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and **one king** will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

22 I'm going to make them a united people in the land, on the mountains of Israel, and I'll set a single king to rule over them. They'll never again be two separate people. They'll never again be divided into two kingdoms.

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:

- "...I will make them" - future tense; this prophecy has not yet been fulfilled
- "...one nation" - *goy echad*, typically refers to Gentile nations, but in this context it is used to describe the reunified Israel.
- God's promise is to bring Israel back together, no longer two kingdoms with two different kings, but one nation in the land, with one king over them (Cf. Jer 3:18).
- "...one king" - doesn't refer to Jesus, it refers to David (Cf. v24)
- David will serve as the "king" of Israel, but in God's eyes he will be a "prince." Ultimately, Jesus Christ will reign as the true King over Israel (Zech 14:9).

23 They will no longer defile themselves with their **idols**, or with their **detestable things**, or with any of their **offenses**; but I will rescue them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will **cleanse them**. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

23 They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

23 They will never again defile themselves with their idols, with other loathsome things, or with any of their sins. Instead, I will deliver them from all of the places where they have sinned, and then I'll cleanse them. They will be my people and I will be their God.""

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.

- This verse makes it clear that this is both a physical regathering, a reuniting of the northern and southern kingdoms, and a spiritual regeneration that Israel will experience
- "...idols" - *gillulehem*, refers to idols in the broadest sense; household idols (*teraphim*) (Cf. Zech 10:2)
- "...detestable things" - violations of the Mosaic Law, such as consuming unclean foods
- "...offenses" - refers to specific breaches of the law
- "...cleanse them" - the above defilements will be removed through a cleansing process, previously outlined in 36:25,33. The result of this salvation and cleansing is a restored relationship with God.

Center of Gentile Attention

A major characteristic of Israel's final restoration (in the Messianic Kingdom) is that they will become the center of Gentile attention: Is 14:1-2; 49:22-23; 60:1-3; 61:4-9; Micah 7:14-17; Zeph 3:20; Zech 8:23. In fact, Israel will become the head of the Gentiles during the Kingdom, fulfilling God's promises to Israel in Deut 15:6; 28:13. Leadership over the Gentiles was to be (and one day will be) part of Israel's reward for obedience according to Deut 28:1. Such obedience and headship awaits Israel's national regeneration.

In Is 14:1-2, after Israel's regeneration and restoration, Gentiles will align themselves with Israel in order to worship the God of Israel. In fact, as Israel is being regathered, not only will this be accomplished with the help of angels, but Gentiles will be conducting Jews back into the Land. Finally, the Gentiles will be possessed by Israel and will become their servants. A similar statement is made in Is 49:22-23 where, again, the regathering of Israel is said to be with the aid of the Gentiles, who will conduct the Jews into the Land. Miracles will also accompany the regathering (Micah 7:14-17). When the Gentiles see these miracles, they will cease reproaching the Jews and will have reverential fear of them. The Jews will then submit to the God of Israel.

At that time, the Gentiles of every social stratum will become the servants of Israel, and Israel will never again be shamed by them. Then, according to Is 60:1-3, the reason Israel will become the center of Gentile attention is due to the fact that the Shekinah Glory will abide over Israel. Is 61:4-9 states that when the regathering takes place, Israel will rebuild all the desolate cities of the Land. At that time, the Gentiles will become servants to Israel, and will feed the flocks and plow the fields.

As for Israel, they will be the ministers of the Word to the Gentiles and will receive the wealth of the Gentiles for their enjoyment. Israel will never again be shamed by the Gentiles, rather they will receive a double portion of all blessings and possessions. This will be the result of the New Covenant. The Jews will be known among the Gentiles and they will acknowledge that it is the Jews who have been chosen by God for special blessings.

David the Prince

24 "And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have **one shepherd**; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes and follow them.

24 "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.

24 ""My servant King David will be there for them, and one shepherd will be appointed for them. They will live according to my decrees, keep my regulations, and practice them.

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.

- This verse addresses Israel's obedience under David's leadership. They will faithfully follow the commandments that will be in effect during the millennial kingdom, which is

commonly referred to as Millennial Law (Cf. Ezek 40-48), which will govern Israel's practices and faith during this period.

- "...My servant David" - many commentators drift from their literal interpretation here and believe that David = Jesus

— However, nothing in the text indicates that David is to be taken symbolically. If the prophets wanted to refer to the Messiah in connection with David, they would use terms such as "Root of Jesse," "Branch of David," "Son of David," or "Seed of David." These are the clues that a metaphor is being used, and each refer to Jesus Christ.

— David is referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel (Cf. 37:24-25; Jer 30:9; Hosea 3:5). Ezekiel also indicated that David will be the prince [*nāśîʾ*] of the restored people (34:24; 37:25). This same 'prince' will then offer sin offerings for himself during the millennial period (45:22; 46:4). Such actions would hardly be appropriate for the sinless Son of God, but they would be for David. So it seems this is a literal reference to a resurrected David. [Dyer]

— In keeping with a consistent literal interpretation of Scripture, it is best to take the text as it reads, meaning the literal David, who, in his resurrected body, will function as king over Israel and as a "prince" under the delegated authority of King Jesus.

— OT Saints and Tribulation Martyrs will be resurrected at the beginning of the millennial kingdom (Dan 12:2-3). David will be among that group. David's body currently resides in his tomb in Jerusalem (Acts 2:29).

- "...one shepherd" - many see this reference as an allusion to Christ, the Good Shepherd (Cf. John 10:11-18), who descended from the line of David to be king over Israel (Cf. Matt 1:1). However, nothing in the text demands (or even hints) that Ezekiel was not referring to the actual King David.

Millennial David (Hosea 3:5; Jer 30:9; Ezek 34:23; 37:24)

In v22-24, all we see is "David" and none of the common referents that point to Christ. The language of the text does not allow for David to refer to Christ in this passage or any of those below.

Other references to David as a future king of Israel:

Hosea 3:5: Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and **David their king**; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days.

Jer 30:9: But they shall serve the LORD their God and **David their king**, whom I will raise up for them.

Ezek 34:23: "Then I will appoint over them **one shepherd, My servant David**, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.

25 And they will live on **the land that I gave** to My servant **Jacob**, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and My servant David will be their leader **forever**.

25 They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever.

25 They will live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob and on which your ancestors lived. They will live in that land, along with their children and grandchildren, forever. David my servant will be their everlasting leader.

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.

- "...the land that I gave" - the Israelites historically have only inhabited a portion of the Promised Land. They have never inhabited all of the land given to Abraham and his descendants.

— The focus of this passage is on the restoration and enduring possession of the entire plot of real estate God gave them, as well as on the enjoyment of dwelling there continuously throughout the 1000-year millennial kingdom.

- "...Jacob" - only Jacob is mentioned here because both Abraham and Isaac had sons who did not inherit the land (Ishmael, et al; Esau).

- "...forever" - *le olam*, meaning "for an age"; the Hebrew language does not have a word that directly translates to "eternity." It does have terms, such as *le olam*, that denote long yet finite periods, such as here.

— Thus, throughout the 1000-year millennial kingdom, David will reign over Israel as "prince" under Jesus' delegated authority.

26 And I will make a **covenant of peace** with **them**; it will be an **everlasting covenant** with **them**. And I will **place them** and **multiply them**, and set **My sanctuary** in **their midst forever**.

26 I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever.

26 I'll make a secure covenant with them, one that will last forever. I will establish them, make them increase in population, and will place my sanctuary in their midst forever.

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.

- "...covenant of peace...everlasting covenant" - refers to the New Covenant as a "covenant of peace" (Cf. 34:25; Is 54:10) and an "everlasting covenant" (16:60; Is 55:3; Heb 13:20).

- "...them...them...them...their" - the nearest antecedent is "the children of Israel" (v21)
- Three provisions of the New Covenant are specified:
- "...I will place them" - God will place Israel in the Promised Land, granting them not only the right of possession, but also the experience of dwelling throughout the entire territory.
- "...[I will] multiply them" - second He will oversee a significant increase in the Jewish population within the land.
- "...set My sanctuary" - *mikdash*, the millennial temple; also referred to as "My dwelling place" (v27) and "My sanctuary" (v28). The fact that this will be Yahweh's personal sanctuary highlights the holiness of this new Temple.
- Many deny that this refers to a physical building, but that belief seems pointless in view of the last nine chapters of this book (Ezek 40-48). Just as it pleases God to dwell in a tabernacle when Israel departed from Egypt, so He will tabernacle among them in their regenerated condition (Cf. Ex 25:8). [Feinberg]
- "...forever" - *leolam*, "for an age" meaning throughout the duration of the millennial kingdom. Rev 21:22 states that there will be no temple in the Eternal State.

27 **Mydwelling place** also will be **among them**; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

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

27 I will pitch my tent among them and will be their God. They will be my people,

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

- "My dwelling place" - *mishkani*, tabernacle. The previous term *mikdash* ("My sanctuary," v26) emphasized the holiness of the Temple, while the focus here is on the Temple as the dwelling place of God.

— It will be the Shekinah Glory of God that will reside within the millennial Temple

- "...among them" - *alechem*, literally translates "over them"; this term means that the *Shekinah* Glory of God will act as a canopy over Israel (Cf. Is 4:5-6). It will "rest over them."

28 And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst **forever**.""

28 And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.""

28 and the nations will learn that I, the LORD, am the sanctifier of Israel when I place my sanctuary in their midst forever.""

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.

- This verse addresses the implications of the New Covenant for the Gentiles
- All Gentile nations will come to acknowledge that Israel's restoration, accompanied by the presence of God's *Shekinah* Glory, will serve as a testament to the singular truth of the God of Israel.
- "...forever" - *leolam*, once again, refers to a specific age. The millennial Temple will stand in Israel throughout the Messiah's 1000-year reign over the earth.

In Ezek 37:15-28, God made 14 promises to Israel that will be fulfilled in the future:

1. God will gather Israel from all the nations (v21).
2. He will bring them to their own land (v21).
3. Israel will be one nation (v22).
4. David will be their king (v22,24).
5. The Kingdom of Israel will never be divided again (v22).
6. YHWH will cleanse His people and save them (v23).
7. Israel will never again fall into idolatry (v23).
8. David will not only be king but also Israel's shepherd (v24).
9. He will also be a prince over Israel (v25), while the supreme ruler will be God Himself in the Person of Jesus the Messiah (Cf. 34:23-24).
10. Israel will dwell in the land until the end of the Messianic Age (v25).
11. YHWH will establish the New Covenant with Israel. This covenant is an everlasting covenant of peace (v26).
12. God will multiply the Jewish people in the land (v26).
13. He will establish the Millennial Temple in the midst of His people (v26-27).
14. This restoration will be a testimony to the Gentile nations (v28).