

From Rival Mountain to New Eden

A Judgment

1 35:1 The word of the Lord came to me: ²“Son of man, set your face against **Mount Seir**, and prophesy against it, ³and say to it, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, **Mount Seir**, and I will stretch out my hand against you, and I will make you a desolation and a waste. ⁴I will lay your cities waste, and you shall become a desolation, and you shall know that I am the Lord. ⁵Because you cherished perpetual enmity and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment, ⁶therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; because you did not hate bloodshed, therefore blood shall pursue you. ⁷I will make **Mount Seir** a waste and a desolation, and I will cut off from it all who come and go. ⁸And I will fill its **mountains** with the slain. On your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those slain with the sword shall fall. ⁹I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

¹⁰“Because you said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them’—although the Lord was there— ¹¹therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that

B Zeal for Name

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. ²Thus says the Lord God: Because the enemy said of you, ‘Aha!’ and, ‘The ancient heights have become our possession,’ ³therefore prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord God: Precisely because they made you desolate and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became the talk and evil gossip of the people, ⁴therefore, O **mountains of Israel**, hear the word of the Lord God: Thus says the Lord God to the **mountains and the hills**, the ravines and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted cities, which have become a prey and derision to the rest of the nations all around, ⁵therefore thus says the Lord God: Surely I have spoken in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave my land to themselves as a

C Restoration/Eden

⁸“But you, O **mountains of Israel**, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home. ⁹For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. ¹⁰And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. ¹¹And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the Lord. ¹²I will let people walk on you, even my people Israel. And they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no longer bereave them of children. ¹³Thus says the Lord God: Because they say to you, ‘You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,’ ¹⁴therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children, declares the Lord God. ¹⁵And I will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and you shall no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble, declares the Lord God.”

you showed because of your hatred against them. And I will make myself known among them, when I judge you. ¹² And you shall know that I am the Lord.

"I have heard all the revilings that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They are laid desolate; they are given us to devour.' ¹³ And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I heard it. ¹⁴ Thus says the Lord God: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. ¹⁵ As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

2 ¹⁶ The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁷ "Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity. ¹⁸ So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. ¹⁹ I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries. In accordance with their ways and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰ But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that people said of them, 'These are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.'

possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, that they might make its pasturelands a prey. ⁶ Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I have spoken in my jealous wrath, because you have suffered the reproach of the nations. ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach.

²¹ But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. ²² "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you

²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations. ³² It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

³³ "Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. ³⁴ And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. ³⁵ And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.' ³⁶ Then the

into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

3 ³⁷ The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord." ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.

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 may live." ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' ¹² Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you

nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the Lord; I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it.

³⁷ "Thus says the Lord God: This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them: to increase their people like a flock. ³⁸ Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

¹⁵ The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁶ "Son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.' ¹⁷ And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when your people say to you, 'Will you not tell us what you mean by these?' ¹⁹ say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰ When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹ then say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. ²² And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. ²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will

from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.”

save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

²⁴“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. ²⁵They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

Ezekiel 35:1-37:28

The Stakes are High

Reading the Bible carefully and correctly matters. That may be the most important thing you’ll hear me say today. **There’s a lot at stake** in **Ezekiel 34-39**, including the flyover we will do this week of **Chs. 35-37**. The **glory of God** is at stake. Will God be faithful to his own name, even when the people have failed? The **new covenant** is at stake. Will God keep his promises to cleanse, renew, and resurrect a dead

people? The [identity of his people](#) is at stake. Is the church the true fulfillment of these promises or are they still waiting for a future national fulfillment in Israel?

Some will say that [the way I read these chapters](#) is a denial of God's faithfulness to his covenants with Abraham and David. They will say our interpretation makes God a liar who changed his promises, that we are undermining the literal interpretation of prophecy, and that this all leads to at the very least the enabling of antisemitism in our present world.

In response, I would say that [some of those readings](#) end up separating what God has joined together, namely Israel and the church, in a way the NT never does. They postpone many of the greatest promises of the NT into a future millennial age when the NT says they are here now, at least in their consummated form. They turn the church into a kind of parenthesis in God's plan rather than the climax of his one people of God. And they risk making ethnic/national Israel the center of prophecy rather than the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is most important to remember what we said last time about the way Jesus taught us to read the OT. It is about him and his work in bringing the new covenant to pass—*now*. He is the King. He is the Shepherd. In this regard, you must

realize that **the NT itself** alludes to our passage on many occasions. When Jesus says, “**Unless one is born of water and the Spirit**” (**John 3:5**), he almost certainly has **Ezekiel 36:25-27** in mind with its **sprinkling** clean water and a new spirit. Jesus expected a Jewish teacher like Nicodemus to understand this. He didn’t. He wasn’t reading the OT correctly. When **Romans 8:1-11** discuss walking according to the indwelling Spirit in you, this strongly overlaps **Ezek 26:27**, “**I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes.**” When Hebrews says we have our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience (**Heb 10:22**), this directly alludes to the Ezekiel’s sprinkling of our hearts.

The **dry bones** story of **Ezek 37** appears in the spiritual and physical resurrections of **Eph 2:1-6**; **Col 2:12-13**; **John 5:24-25**; and **Rev 11:11**’s, “**Breath of life from God entered them**” directly alludes to **Ezek 37:5, 10**. The **two sticks parable** that comes right after is drawn upon in **Eph 2:11-22**’s one new man, Jews and Gentiles one in Christ, and in **John 10:16** and **11:52**’s, “**one flock, one shepherd.**” And what about Matthew’s Jesus will save his people from their sins (**Matt 1:21**)? All of these are present, not future realities, and they are all presently residing in Christ’s church as fulfillments of our passage.

A Little Context

I've decided that today I want to do a 40,000ft flyover of Ezekiel 35-37. The reasons why are [literary](#), [theological](#), and [practical](#). Literarily, these chapters form a clearly defined three-row, three-column weave, while 38-39 are a *two*-column, three-row, showing that they are distinct. That thought leads me to a very interesting [variant](#) I want to mention. Our oldest substantial Greek manuscript (Papyrus 967; late 2nd/early 3rd cent) as well as a 6th cent. Latin manuscript of Ezekiel (Codex Wirceburgensis) have [a different ordering of these chapters](#), putting the dry bones chapter *after* the Gog and Magog battle. Both also omit [Ezek 36:23c-38](#), which is some of the most beautiful gospel promises of the entire OT. This has led at least one scholar to conjecture that the Rabbis changed the original order of the text in order to put down a competing view of the interpretation of the dry bones chapter, including, possibly, because Christians were using it as proof of Christ's bodily resurrection.¹ Moving it from the chapter right after Gog and Magog to right before it, therefore had the effect of turning the dry bones from an

¹ [Johan Lust](#), "[Ezekiel 36-40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript](#)," *CBQ* 43.4 (Oct 1981): 532.

apocalyptic battle followed by a bodily resurrection to a *national* revival before we even come to the end of days.

While that is an interesting theory and certainly not something I would put past the Rabbis if it meant making it harder for Christians to demonstrate their theology,² I don't think it makes good sense. As for [the missing text](#), why would the Rabbis add stuff that Christians had already been using to talk about the gospel coming in the new covenant? But what about [the order](#)? This one is a little more difficult. I will admit that having Ch. 37 come after 38-39 actually makes the chiasm stronger.³ However, it also destroys the integrity of the 35-37 weave, which as we will see today is highly informative and deliberate.⁴ Whatever the case, this all goes to show that the difference of opinion that we have

² See [Douglas Van Dorn](#), *The Battle for the Bible's Truth: Genesis 6, Jesus, and the Second Century Plot to Deny the Messiah* (Dacono, CO: Waters of Creation, 2026).

³ A. Shepherd (34). B. Oracle against Edom (35). C. Israel punished (36:1-20). C'. Israel is restored (36:21-38). B'. Oracle against Gog and Magog (38-39). A. Bones, Plant, and Shepherd (37). You can obviously see how the shepherd part is out of order on the ordering we have in our Bibles.

⁴ **Going Deeper:** To account for why we have these discrepancies, perhaps the best solution is that there was a [long original form of Ezekiel](#) that maintained the order we have today, while there was a shorter form that perhaps a local community rearranged for later eschatological reasons. As for the missing text, it happened quite regularly that a leaf or two of the text being translated was simply missing. Because Christians were already using the so-called missing text, it is clear that it was original. The order in my opinion makes for two very different but complementary ways to read Ezekiel 37 that we will look into at a later time. Block has an excellent discussion and interaction with Lust's article. See [Daniel Isaac Block](#), [The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48](#), The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997-), 337-43.

today over these chapters have existed for ages, even amongst the Jews themselves.

That makes it all the more important to read these chapters correctly, *with the NT* and to try and understand exactly what they are trying to teach us. To that end, I think that **this week's weave** actually has a great power to help us. We discover that **35:1-36:15** make up the first row. **36:16-38** are the second. **37:1-28** are the third:

Weave of Ezekiel 35-37			
	A – Judgment	B – Zeal	C – Restoration
1 Mountains	Judgment on Mt. Seir/Edom (35:1-15)	God’s jealous Zeal (36:1-7)	Mountains of Israel and Adam multiplied and fruitful (36:8-15)
2 Land	Israel defiled land among nations (36:16-20)	CENTER: God acts for his Name’s sake, new heart, new Spirit (36:21-27)	They will be his people, Land like Garden of Eden (36:28-38)
3 Grave	Valley of dry bones, Death & hopelessness (37:1-8)	Bones to life, Ruach (spirit/breath/wind) in you (37:9-14)	Two sticks, everlasting covenant, one King and Shepherd (37:15-28)

Each section breaks into thirds in such a way that they all **begin with judgment** (Col A), and **end with restoration** (Col C), getting there through the middle column’s **zeal of God**, particularly for his holy name and Spirit (Col B). This zeal acts as a true middle—between Mount Seir (Row 1 Col A) and the mountains of Israel (Row 1 Col C), between a defiled Israel (Row 2 Col A) and a restored Israel (Row 2

Col C), between dead bones (Row 3 Col A) and two branches that are grafted together (Row 3 Col C).

Meanwhile, the rows progress from the **external** territorial conflict (Row 1), to the **internal** heart problem (Row 2), to the ultimate **resurrection/restoration of both** (Row 3). We also see a downward geographical progression from **mountains** (Row 1) to the **land** and valleys (Row 2) all the way down to the **graves** (Row 3) before they are raised from the dead and grafted together. Perhaps most important of all, the 3x3 grid gives us **a center square**, the one everyone always wants in Hollywood Squares. And its contents just happen to be God sprinkling clean water and putting a new Spirit within for the sake of his Holy Name alone. This was deliberate.

Between Two Mountains (Ezek 35:1-36:15)

It begins with the Word of the LORD coming to the son of man (**Ezek 35:1**), telling him to, “**Set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it**” (**2**). Let’s think about mountains first. Notice how **36:1** begins, “**And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord.**” Furthermore, we

see the same in **vs. 8**, “**But you, O mountains of Israel...**” Each column of the row begins with mountains. Why?

The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* says that besides being physical places of refuge and sometimes of slaughter, “**As sites of religious experience, mountaintops are places of pagan worship that God denounces and of true worship that he commands. The mountains and hills of the Bible are both physical phenomena and spiritual symbols.**”⁵ I believe this is precisely what’s going on in both the Mt. Seir and mountains of Israel references. Let’s look at the spiritual side of this a little more deeply.

First of all, **what is Mt. Seir**? Well, there is no single mountain in the ancient world called by this name. That means it is representing something; it is *figurative*. So what might that be? We first learn of the place Seir in **Genesis 14:6** and that the **giant tribe of Horites** (troglodytes/cave-dwellers) lived there. It appears next in **Gen 32:3**, “**And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.**” As we know, **Esau** (hairy) was also named **Edom** (red/ruddy; **Gen 25:30**), and he went to live in

⁵ **Leland Ryken** et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 572.

Seir (hairy/he-goat). So we have three words that are all interchangeable here. So why did he pick Seir? Why not one of the other two?

Recall that **Edom was already prophesied against** at the beginning of the Oracles Against the Nations (**Ezek 25:12-14**). So why is it being prophesied against again?⁶ That's the most obvious question we can ask. If the mountain represented a purely national idea, such as the actual place or its people, I'd choose Esau or Edom, depending on if Israel was also in view. However, Seir has *supernatural* overtones.

As I said a moment ago, it is first contextualized in the Bible as home of the **demonic Rephaim** *giant tribe* the Horites. Esau's descendants dispossessed them in (**Deut 2:12, 22**). Importantly, Esau himself marries a **Horite** woman named Oholibamah (**Gen 36:2**). Furthermore, this man has some wild stories about him in Jewish pseudepigrapha. The best known is probably how he sought out the **Nimrod** of Genesis 10 fame (where he is called a *gibborim/gigantes*), killed him, and stole from him the original garments of Adam and

⁶ Without even comprehending the weave, Taylor answers this question by noting the “close links with chapter 36,” particularly “in contrasting addresses to the mountains of Edom and Israel.” John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 219. So all the weave is doing is picking up what everyone who studies it already sees and putting into a visual form of comparison.

Eve from Eden. Another has one of his descendants, Zepho (**Gen 36:11**), killing a centaur or **satyr** he found in a cave eating stolen cattle.⁷

Is any of that real? Who knows. That's not my point. The point is that Esau has some very strange things associated with him and his line. This is epitomized, however, in the word Seir itself, which in its plural form, *se'îrîm*, actually means a **satyr**! Furthermore, those creatures are found in Isaiah 34's oracle against ... *Edom*! The LXX reads, "**And devils shall meet with satyrs**" (**Isa 34:14**), or the KJV/Geneva, "**Satyr shall cry to his fellow.**" The fact that this is parallel with the same creatures in the oracle against Babylon (**Isa 13:21**) and that most English translations make it all perfectly "natural" is telling, especially when St. John himself says these things are **demonic** (**Rev 18:2**).

I'm bringing this up to help you see something that Matthew Henry saw only faintly. He said, "**Mount Seir (that is, Edom) is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fitly put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for, as those all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so those all walked in the way of Esau who hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob, by virtue of a particular**

⁷ The garments story comes from midrash Jasher 27; the Zepho story comes from Ch. 61.

blessing, was to have dominion.”⁸ When Henry says “all” the enemies of the church, he seemingly has no idea *just how right he was!*

I’m going to prove this much more when we come to Gog and Magog, but it is vital that you realize that literarily, Edom and Gog/Magog are twin pillars of the start and end of the chiasm of the Oracles of Restoration. To give it away now, Gog and Magog are *supernatural princes* like the prince of Greece and the prince of Persia in Daniel 10. So when God tells Ezekiel to prophesy against *Mount Seir*, since this is its literary twin, and since “Seir” is already such a strange choice to use for the name, I think reading it in a supernatural light is significant. For there is no Mt. Seir. I believe Seir is chosen precisely because it is by far the most supernatural term of the three that one would use if one wanted to highlight this. Mt. Seir, I believe, refers to *the principality over the land of Seir*, directly paralleling Gog and Magog. The cosmic mountain is precisely where the deity would reside as he ruled over his territory, just as Baal did on Zaphon in the north; just as Yahweh does on Zion in Israel. Read in this light, suddenly the entire prophecy starts

⁸ *Matthew Henry*, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1408.

to read like an epic judgment against *both* human and supernatural enemies of Christ's church. We've seen Ezekiel do this many times before. Why not continue it here?

So what does the prophecy say? The *Sovereign* Lord, the Lord over all creatures, says that he is against Mount Seir—**Edom's cosmic mountain**. He will stretch out his hand against it and make it a desolation and a waste (**Ezek 35:3**), exactly what the counterpart in Isaiah says. Its cities will be laid waste, so that you will know that I am the LORD (**4**). There's **your human angle** now. It says, "**Because you cherished perpetual enmity**" and gave Israel over to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity and final punishment (**5**), God will prepare Seir for blood. Blood shall pursue them because they did not hate bloodshed (**6**).

The Lord will **cut off** all who come and go from it (**7**). Cutting off (*karat*) is **covenantal language** of judgment—the covenant of creation that binds both nations and their invisible principalities to it (**Isa 24:5, 21**). He will fill its mountains, its hills, its valleys, and its ravines **with slain** (**8**). It will become a perpetual cursed unclean desolation so that they will know that he is the Lord (**9**).

Vv. 10-12 have God saying the same thing, but now it is because Seir decided that they would "**take possession of**"

his two nations—northern Israel and southern Judah, even though God was still present there! How dare Seir do this! This is hostile takeover. Thus, because of their anger and envy and hatred against them, God will make himself known and judge them so that they will know that he is the Lord.

The final section of the oracle (12-15), has Mt. Seir uttering revilings against the mountains of Israel, saying they are given to Seir to devour and desolate, God has heard their words, and so while the whole earth rejoices, he will make them desolate. As they dealt with Israel, so God will deal with Mt. Seir *and all Edom* (“Edom” is actually used now in vs. 15)—all of it. Then they will know that he is the Lord.

Historically speaking, God in fact dealt with Seir and Edom. In the 4th-3rd centuries BC, Nabatean Arabs conquered it. By the time of the Maccabees in the 2nd cent BC, Edom as a distinct nation had largely disappeared. The region became desolate and remained largely uninhabited for centuries, just as predicted. But Edom with its evil demonic power and controlled enslaved hostile people ultimately represents *all* hostile powers, terrestrial and celestial, that hate God’s people, rejoice in their downfall, and try to seize what belongs to the LORD. And that’s something you will

want to remember until we see its pair with Gog and Magog in coming weeks.

Ezek 36 takes us away from one mountain to **many mountains** of Israel. Yet, it clearly still belongs to the same row of thought as Ch. 35, at least for its first half. So it is Col 2. These mountains are those supernatural **high places** that had been infiltrated by every form of religious evil worship, from Asherah to Baal/Zeus. But the tone now changes from that of judgment to that of **God's zeal to do something else**.

The LORD realizes what Mount Seir has been saying from its own high places. **“Aha!” “The ancient heights have become our possession” (2)**. In other words, they have **successfully infiltrated** as was their diabolical plan from the heights of their own cosmic mountain. When God's worship is replaced or perverted, that is invasion, infiltration, and hostile takeover—whenever it occurs. It is not benign, but malignant. It is not “cultural,” it is evil powers at work to attack God himself though his people.

Therefore, Ezekiel must prophesy that precisely because they made you desolate and crushed you on all sides, that they might be taken hostage and become the focus of evil gossip throughout the world **(3)**, the Lord God says to the mountains and hills, the ravines and valleys of Israel **(4)**, I

have spoken **in my hot jealousy** against the rest of the nations and Edom—who gave his land to themselves as a possession with joy and contempt that they might make its pasturelands a prey (5), that in his jealous wrath, because they suffered reproach (6), that he will swear to the nations that they shall all themselves suffer the same fate (7). This is the zeal of the Lord God that will accomplish this, and nothing else.

How does this play out? **Vv. 8-15** take us to the good news of Col 3 that now comes to **the mountains of Israel**. They shall shoot forth their branches and yield their fruit to my people Israel, for they will soon come home (8). **Trees** on the **mountains**! At first, this sounds entirely national—and it's not wrong to think it, for God in fact did return them back to the land, just seventy years later.

But the good news continues. “**I am for you, and will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown**” (9). “**Tilled**” is the same word used in Genesis 2 of “**working**” the ground (*abad*; **Gen 2:5, 15**). This is the same God who has for so long been against Jerusalem. Now he is *for* the mountains of Israel—those high places that were filled with such evil. Why?

Because he will “multiply people on you.” What people? The word is *adam*. This refers to *humans*. A very literal rendering would be “I will multiply humanity upon you — all the house of Israel, all of it.” The text isn’t saying I will multiply ethnic Israelites on the mountains. It is saying God is going to fill the restored mountains of Israel with humanity (sons of Adam), and this restored entity is the full house of Israel.

There is a clear wordplay on Edom (עֲדָם) in the choice of using Adam (אָדָם just adds a ם). The punishment against Edom will be reversed in Adam—humanity becoming the full house of Israel. Astonishingly, Amos has a very similar prophecy (the only good news in his entire book) that says, “In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name” (Amos 9:11-12). In the LXX, Edom becomes Adam (*anthropos*)! And guess what? James cites this from the LXX, not the Hebrew in Acts 15:16 as being fulfilled in the Gentiles coming into the church! Incredible!⁹

⁹ For more see the short discussion in Michael S. Heiser, “Ezekiel 35-36: Episode 150,” *Naked Bible Podcast Transcript* (Mar 18, 2017), 5.

It talks about how the “waste places” will be rebuilt (10). Isn't it interesting that in Luke 4:16-21, Jesus picks up the Isaiah scroll and reads from ch. 61. The very next verse after he says today this has been fulfilled in your hearing says, “They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations” (Isa 61:4). Identical concept.

Next it says they will “multiply and be fruitful” (11). More Genesis 1-2 language. God will “do more good to you than ever before” so that they will know that he is the Lord. But how? Because returning them to the state of Genesis 1-2—creation and Eden.

Vs. 12 reinforces this. I will let *adam* (humanity) walk on you. “Even my people Israel.” National Israel will be part of this reconstituted Eden, but not the totality of it. *Humans* shall possess you and you will be their inheritance and they will have many children (12b). This happens because the nations were devouring them, so they will no longer be devoured (13-14). God will not let you hear anymore the reproach of the nations, and they will no longer bear the disgrace of the peoples and no longer cause your nation to stumble (15).

As I said, this was **fulfilled in part** when God returned the Jews to their land in the days of Ezra. However, the rest of it is hardly fulfilled by them. Instead, as the NT teaches us, it is **fulfilled in the church**—the very thing that is called here “**All Israel**.” We will see more of this as we continue.

A New Heart and God’s Spirit (Ezek 35:16-38)

Vs. 16 takes us to the next row and back to the first column, the column of judgment, or perhaps better, **of being kicked out of Eden** because of our sin. This couldn’t be clearer from the prophecy. However, this time it is directed as “**the house of Israel**” when they lived in their own land and defiled it by their ways and their deeds (**17**). This puts the house of Israel squarely in the same sights *as Seir*! They were willing accomplices to their own doom.

Their ways were like **the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity** (*niddah*). That refers to the cultic, Levitical impurity of the flow of blood. And it is a strong **metaphor for sin**, even though this is of course not sinful. But it is exactly what Isaiah is saying when he proclaims that all our righteous acts are like *dirty* (*niddah*) rags (**Isa 64:6**). Those are the rags of menstrual impurity.

So God poured out his wrath upon them for *the blood* that they had shed in the land (“blood,” ironic, right?), for the idols with which they had defiled it (18). He scattered them among the nations in accordance with their own evil ways (19). But still this did not stop them. When they went into exile, their very presence caused God’s name to be profaned by the nations who said, “*These are the Lord’s people and he was too powerless to keep them in their own land?*” Israel was the cause of their profanity. This is Israel. It is just like Seir and Edom.

But the middle column again takes us to *God’s zeal*. “*But I had concern for my Holy Name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came*” (21). How God carries out his concern for his own name is stunning and is the central square of the story.

Therefore, Ezekiel is to say to the house of Israel, “*It is not for your sake, O house of Israel that I am about to act, but for the sake of my Holy Name, which you have profaned...*” (22). But just *what is this Holy Name?* Consider *Isaiah 30:27*, “*Behold, the name of the LORD comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke; his lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire.*”

The Name of the Lord is a person!¹⁰ And this is precisely why Jesus prays in his great prayer, “I have manifested *your Name* to the people whom you gave me out of the world” (John 17:6). “I made know to them *your Name*” (26). “Keep them in *your Name*, which *you have given me*” (11). And it is why John 20:31 says, “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have *life in his Name*.” So God will act ... for the sake of Christ!

How? “I will vindicate the holiness of my great Name” (23). And catch this. God will do this so that “*the nations will know that I am the Lord*” (23b). Does it get any better than this?

Next comes the part that some have argued the Rabbis added in order to smooth over the unnatural transition between 36 and 37. I’ve already explained to you all that, but I bring it up here because he never addresses just why a Rabbi would add such things, especially if they were doing this against Christians. For what comes next is *as Christian a theology as it gets*.

¹⁰ The Isaiah targum directly equates it with the Memra, the “Word.” “Behold, the name of the LORD *is revealed just as the prophets from of old prophesied concerning it*; his indignation is strong and too hard to bear. Before him a curse goes forth upon the wicked, and his Memra is like a devouring fire.” Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, eds., *The Aramaic Bible: The Isaiah Targum*, trans. Bruce D. Chilton, vol. 11 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), Is 30:27.

It seems to begin, as we saw before, with a statement about the nation returning. “I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land” (24). However, it is uncertain if this refers to the Jews, or just how that works. For what does it say next? “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you” (25). Hebrews has already used this language in the First Century of the new covenant with Christians having “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22).

So Ezekiel continues, “And I will give you a new heart...” It is no longer external; it is internal. Hebrews is combining these two verses into one thought. That same verse continues, “And a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules” (Ezek 36:26-27). Paul tells the Corinthians, “You are a letter from Christ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2Cor 3:3-6).

I do think we actually see the order of all this that has the Jews first. It is Pentecost, forty days after Jesus was raised. The disciples are gathered in an upper room and a “*mighty rushing wind*” comes (more on that in a moment). And they were all *filled with the Holy Spirit* (*Acts 1:1-4*). But then we learn, “*Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven*” (5). That’s Ezekiel language. These become the first converts. Who? Jews. Just like it says. God did not forget his people, nor are the promises spiritualized away in Gentiles. “*First to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*” But to the Gentile it will eventually go, as we’ve just seen with James’ citation and Paul’s at Corinth. How about another one? Paul in Romans 8 has all that talk about walking in the Spirit to obey God’s rules. It is in this way that the fullness of Israel comes to pass and how God taking any from the nations to gather them in their own land could in fact be read as God taking all of his sheep—even the Gentiles, and bringing them to Mother Jerusalem—Christ’s holy church. He takes them to the mountains, those places of former idolatrous worship and causes them to worship Him.

That takes us to the third column, the column of restoration, or as we are now calling it, the column of the return to *Eden*—just like we see at the end of Revelation, by the way. What glorious promises we read here.

“You will dwell in the land I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God” (28). Of course, reading this without the NT, this sounds purely nationalistic. But you have to remember that Paul literally quotes this exact same covenant formula—but uses [Hosea](#) to do it—in [Romans 9:25-26](#) of the church. And it is worth remembering that Abraham himself was never satisfied with just the land, for he was looking forward to a city whose foundations and builder was God ([Heb 11:10](#)). Is this not what the kingdom of God that Jesus brought and which is now populated with any who believe in Jesus—Jew or Gentile?

What Ezekiel does next is simply continue [the covenantal language](#) of prosperity found in the Torah, language that was always meant to go beyond the Israelites and their land. For that was all typological. He will deliver them from their uncleannesses. *All* of them. He will bring grain and not famine (29). He will make the fruit of the tree and field abundant, so that they will never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations (30).

This will cause them to [remember their evil ways](#) and deeds, and [loathe themselves](#) for their iniquities and their abominations. Is this not precisely what Christians think of

their own past and ongoing sin? Did Korah or Saul or Ahab or the unsaved Pharisees ever think that way? Of course not. They justified and loved their sin.

Yet of course the nation is still always in the background, just as it seems that they also have some kind of place in God's redemptive future ala Romans 11. However, in this passage, the only time this really comes out is when God is chastising them for their evil—and so that makes sense. “It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel” (32). God reminds them that it has never been because of them, but only because of himself. That is the way grace works. It is wholly unmerited, completely unconditional, and the sole act of a sovereign God upon those who do not deserve it.

Vv. 33-38 now return most explicitly to those themes of Genesis. God will cleanse them of all their iniquities and cause the cities to be inhabited and waste places built (33). We saw that in the row above it in the same column. The land that was desolate will now be tilled and cultivated (34). And people will say, “This land had become like the Garden of Eden” (35). Again we are in Genesis 2, just as Revelation takes us to at the end of its visions. God does this all so that

the nations that are left all around will know that he is the Lord, that he has rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. He is the Lord; he has spoken, he will and has done it! (36). Praise be to God in his church.

The last two verses will tie in nicely with the third row, as it brings up the metaphor of a flock (37). God's people will be so numerous and holy that they will be like the flocks for sacrifices during the feasts—the land teaming with them. And they will know that he is the LORD.

Bones and Branches (Ezek 37:1-28)

Now I want to briefly look at Ch. 37 (we'll go through it more in a couple weeks). It makes up the third row of this unified story. We return to the column of judgment or post-fall exile from Eden. What happened to Adam and all his descendants once they were kicked out of the Garden? They *died*.

Thus we read, “The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones” (Ezek 37:1). We get the interesting shift from Word to Hand and this Hand is accompanied by the Spirit. Hand is a military term (Right Hand; cf. Ex 15:6; 9; Isa 51:9; etc.). The

Spirit is the one who breathes life. We are now in a valley, but this valley is a **graveyard**. From mountains to land to the grave—down we’ve come. And who fills it? Recall that in Row 1, it was Edom itself that would become filled with “the slain” of their people. In row 2, it is spiritual deadness of the Jews. Row three would therefore be the totality of these—Jew and Gentile.

But the prophet needs to see it for himself and **we need to see God’s power** again as well. The prophet is walked around the valley of bones and they were very dry—they’d been here a long time (2). He’s asked a question, “**Can these bones live?**” The prophet wisely answers, “**Lord, you know**” (3). He is told to prophesy to the bones (4). The Sovereign LORD will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. “**Breath**” is the same word as “**Spirit**” in vs. 1 (*ruah*).

The Lord says he will lay sinews upon them and cause flesh to come upon them and cover them with skin (5). It’s a rather grotesque picture (and also, strangely, a Sunday School song we teach our kids), but one that moves in reverse from dry bones to corpse—the reversal of the death process. “**And I will breathe in you and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD**” (6). The prophet does what he is told. There was a great rattling sound. Bones

came together (7). Sinews. Flesh. Skin. But **there was no breath in them** (8). This finishes the column still at death.

We move to the second column. God commands the prophet to prophesy to the breath. **I'll talk about that more at a later time**. Tell the breath to come from the four winds (9). “**Winds**” is yet the same word again as breath and Spirit. Remember what we just saw at Pentecost? He obeys. He prophecies. And breath came into them. They came to life. They stood on their feet as a great army (10).

Then God explains what has happened. The zeal of the LORD has raised the bones, whom he calls “**the whole house of Israel**” (11). Not part of Israel. The whole thing. It is now complete, restored, and entire. He calls them “**my people**,” and tells them he will raise them from their graves (12-13). But the key here is that we get the identical language to the central square. “**And I will put my Spirit within you**” (14). That’s the language of the *new covenant*. So who is this army? National Jews in the future millennium? Or **should the NT be allowed to answer that question** for us?

We shift to our final column—the column of restoration, of Eden. The story shifts. The Word of the LORD returns. He tells the prophet to take a stick and write on it. “**For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him.**”

He must take another stick. “For Joseph and all the house of Israel associated with him” (16). We are obviously dealing at least on the symbolic level or the two divided kingdoms. Ephraim and the ten tribes up north and Judah and the two down south. He is then told to graft them together so they might become one stick (17). A tree of life!

Then the people inevitably ask what this means (18). So he is to tell them that the stick of Joseph is the tribes of Israel, while the stick of Judah is the tribes of Judah and God is making them one stick to be in God’s hand (19). *Hand*? Haven’t we seen that before? What is this Hand? It is the military commander from vs. 1, as the Psalm says, “You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand” (Ps 89:13).¹¹

In Exodus, it was God’s Arm and Hand that led Israel out through Moses (Ex 15:6, 9, 12). He was the invisible power upholding Moses. But here, it is something altogether more incredible even than that.

As the prophet takes the sticks before the watching eyes of the people (20), the sovereign LORD says that he will take the people of Israel from the nations and gather them

¹¹ For more see B. Becking, “Arm,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 89-90.

all around, bringing them to their own land (we've seen this already today and discussed Pentecost in light of it; 21). *Then* he will make them **one nation** on the mountains of Israel. The mountains (plural) return again—those high places where they worshiped the gods. The evil mountain worship is purified, the place of the divine council renewed with the human saved.

There they shall have “**one king**” over them, and they will no longer be divided (22). Their idols and sins will be removed and they will be saved from their backslidings and sins, cleansed, and they will be his people, and he will be their God (23). Again, the same language we've seen.

But you must continue reading. For **who is this king?** “**My servant David.**” This is Isaiah's servant language again. The military Hand, the King, will be the **LORD's Servant?** How? He will be *their Shepherd* (24). It returns to theme of Ch. 34. He will be their **Prince** forever (25). They will dwell there forever. And this will be because “**I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them**” (26). And he will dwell with them and be their God (27). And the nations will know that he is the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when his sanctuary is in their midst forever (28).

Do you understand that [there was never a national reunification of Israel](#) after the exile? In fact, it continued to be known as Judea from Judah, not Israel. The north was Galilee. Those looking for a national fulfillment all understand this, which is why they are looking for something in the future, perhaps in 1948's bringing back of the state of Israel.

But beloved, this is all in the context of [the Shepherd coming as King](#), who will make [a covenant](#) with them to [be their God](#), saving his people from their sins. That line back in [vs. 23](#), is it not cited of the coming of our Savior Jesus who will save his people from their sins? It's the same thing as Ezekiel, except Jesus now "[fills the God slot](#)," as Heiser puts it.¹² And is this not why the Apostle gave us the very same analogy of grafting in Romans 11, that Jews and Gentiles are [grafted together](#) into one great tree? God has one people and one king. For in Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile. But we are one in Christ Jesus. This is the column of Adam and of Eden and of the Shepherd. God deliberately wrote this text in such a way that theology is taught by its structure. Sure, we can understand these things without it, but having it before our eyes only reinforces it all the more.

¹² [Michael S. Heiser](#), "[Ezekiel 37: Episode 151](#)," *Naked Bible Podcast Transcript* (Mar 26, 2017), 22. Heiser notes the following article, [Nicholas G. Piotrowski](#), "[I Will Save My People From Their Sins: The Influence of Ezekiel 36:28a; 37:23b on Matthew 1:21](#)," *Tyndale Bulletin* 64.1 (2013): 33-54.

What an **amazing set of promises** we have before us today. Gospel galore. There are many other things we will unpack in coming weeks. But friend, today you have seen astonishing good news in Ezekiel. So many people look for future fulfillments of all this. And while, perhaps there is something future still here, the fact of the matter is, the NT overwhelmingly uses these chapters to tell us that **the future is here now**. We are the mountain-temple (**1Pet 2:4-5; Eph 2:19-22**) where God's presence dwells. He has put his Spirit on us through faith, giving us new sprinkled heart, removing the heart of stone. He has brought an army to life—first through the Jews, then to the Gentiles. He has saved his people from their sins.

The same Spirit that raised dry bones can raise you from spiritual death if you have not yet believed. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Look to him and understand these promises in your own life. And if you have? Then know that as the new mountain temple of God, you have **been bought with a great price**. Therefore, live like it. Fight like it. Worship like it—like a mighty army brought back from the dead to fight and obey and worship the Living Savior—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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