

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 35

ISRAEL IN THE LAND, PART 2

Ezekiel 37 is a key prophecy concerning the regathering of Israel in unbelief; it begins with the prophet's vision of the valley of dry bones. However, Replacement theologians totally miss the truth of this Scripture; they must relate it to the church in some way in order to maintain their theology even though Ezekiel clearly identifies the bones as "the whole house of Israel" (Ezek. 37:11). One way they do this is to claim that Israel means the church. Replacement theologian Michael Horton says the vision of the valley of the dry bones is "a new Israel ... raised in the last days from death to life." [Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*, p. 590]. Most expositors claim this vision is a metaphor for understanding resurrection. This is not about individual bodily resurrection; it is about bringing Israel as a nation into a believing relationship with God. That involves a physical and a spiritual restoration of Israel and that's a process; it is not an event. For example, "Verses 1–14 portray a symbolic vision of exile and restoration as the national death and resurrection of Israel. However, the image proved too powerful to be restricted to that single, historical interpretation. [This is correct on its face, however, he actually means restoration from the Babylonian captivity which is not correct.] Indeed, the resurrection of the dead becomes the dominant mode for understanding life beyond this life in Judaism and Christianity." [Steven Tuell, "Ezekiel" in *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series*, p. 253]. Others believe this is only about the return of Israel into the land from the Babylonian captivity. "This passage does not therefore teach a doctrine of resurrection from the dead, either general, national or individual. Nor does it even imply a belief in resurrection on the part of Ezekiel or his hearers. All that can be said of it is that Ezekiel uses the language of resurrection to illustrate the promise of Israel's return to a new life in her own land from the deathlike existence of the Babylonian exile." [John B. Taylor, "Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary" in *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, p. 229]. Shedd calls Ezekiel 37:1-14 a parable. "The parable of a spiritual resurrection implies a bodily resurrection." [William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 3rd ed., p. 869]. The point is, the real meaning of Ezekiel 37 has been lost in most of the contemporary church because most of the contemporary church does not believe God still has a Kingdom program that includes Israel.

The vision God gives to Ezekiel reveals that God will bring Israel back to life as a nation in a physical sense but at some point in the future, He will also see to it that Israel is spiritually restored. Immediately prior to this vision, Ezekiel had reiterated part of the New Covenant that was revealed through the prophet Jeremiah. None of what God is doing with Israel should surprise anyone and it should not be casually disregarded because it doesn't happen to fit neatly into some modern concept of what Israel is supposed to be today. The New Covenant is connected with the vision.

Ezekiel 36:24–28 ²⁴“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ²⁵“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. ²⁸“You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

The important fact I want noted here is the Bible clearly and explicitly relates this vision to Israel; it is not about the church. It is about Israel coming back to life first in unbelief and then in belief and being restored to the land promised them in the covenants.

Ezekiel 37:11 ¹¹Then 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.’

The next issue Ezekiel 37 addresses is the reunification of Judah and Israel. As noted before, this cannot be referring to the return to the land and to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. That return involved Judah only.

Ezekiel symbolized this reunification by using two sticks; one represented Judah and one represented Israel. By making them one stick, Ezekiel symbolized the two becoming one nation again.

Ezekiel 37:19–22 ¹⁹say 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.”’ ²⁰“The sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes. 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; ²²and 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.

The final prophecy of Ezekiel 37 concerns the Kingdom. David will be king over Israel and they will be living in the land with God’s sanctuary located there. The New Covenant will be in effect; Ezekiel called it an “everlasting covenant.”

Ezekiel 37:24–28 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. 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. 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. ²⁷“My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. ²⁸“And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””

The fact of the Kingdom is clearly predicted by God through the prophet. For those who use literal hermeneutics, the only question here is whether or not the David identified here is the Messiah or is the resurrected King David. Constable believes it refers to Messiah. “They would live in the Promised Land forever, and the Lord’s servant David would be their appointed ruler forever. In view of God’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, this must refer to the Son of David, Messiah.” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constables Notes on the Bible*, 4:486]. Dyer believes it refers to the resurrected King David and that is the position I tend hold as well, but I wouldn’t be dogmatic about it. “However, nothing in Ezekiel 34:23 [and in 37:24-28] *demands* that Ezekiel was not referring to the literal King David who will be resurrected to serve as Israel’s righteous prince. David is referred to by name elsewhere in passages that look to the future restoration of Israel. Also Ezekiel indicated that David will be the prince of the restored people (Ezek. 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.” [Charles H. Dyer, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 1295]. Both Ezekiel and Jeremiah seemed to indicate a distinction between God and David the servant prince.

Ezekiel 34:23–24 ²³“Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. ²⁴“And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

Ezekiel 45:22 ²²“On that day the prince shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. [see also Ezek. 46:4]

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

Hosea 3:5 ⁵Afterward 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.

Ezekiel 38-39 reveals the Gog of Magog attack against Israel. For purposes of this lesson, the important thing to note is that an attack against Israel necessarily requires Israel’s existence in the land; exactly when it happens is immaterial in terms of this lesson. The attack will occur during the time of regathering in unbelief or during the Tribulation. If Israel isn’t back in the land, this prophecy cannot be fulfilled.

Ezekiel 38:8 ⁸“After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them.

Ezekiel 38:16 ¹⁶and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.”

The timing of this Gog of Magog invasion is disputed. Dr. LaHaye believes it occurs immediately prior to the Tribulation and precipitates the peace treaty that marks the beginning of the Tribulation. Others believe it occurs at the midpoint of the Tribulation. Dr. Fruchtenbaum teaches that this battle must be at least 3 ½ years before the Tribulation because the Jews will burn the fuel as spoil for seven years after God wins the battle on their behalf (Ezek. 39:9) but there is nothing that says this period cannot extend into the Kingdom. There is also nothing that says the Jews being protected at Petra could use it, however, they will be supernaturally provided for by God while there so they might not have need of fuel in that place. Since the Jewish people are dispersed from Jerusalem at the midpoint of the Tribulation, they must, according to Fruchtenbaum's theory, begin burning the fuel prior to the beginning of the Day of the Lord the time of Jacob's trouble in order to fulfill a seven-year prophecy (3 ½ years prior to the Tribulation and through the first half which is another 3 ½ years for seven years in total). Still others teach this battle is the battle of Armageddon. This cannot be correct since the methods the Lord uses to win those wars [meaning the God and Magog war and the final war at Armageddon] greatly differs between the two. Both battles are supernaturally won by God, but the method He uses differs between the two so they cannot be the same. Comparing Ezekiel's Gog of Magog battle with the battle of Armageddon in Revelation reveals the differences.

Ezekiel 38:21–22 ²¹“I will call for a sword against him on all My mountains,” declares the Lord GOD. “Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²²“With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.

Revelation 19:21 ²¹And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

The Gog and Magog battle is won by the supernatural intervention of God through physical phenomena; Armageddon is ended by the Word of the Lord.

Zionism is the movement the purpose of which is to establish the Jews in the land and to create a Jewish state. Zionism and the fact of Israel's present existence are intimately connected. Christian Zionism, that is, Christian support for Israel is hated by anti-Semitic, liberal “Christians” who detest Israel and would like to see the nation destroyed one

way or another. That's what the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) movement among liberal denominations is all about; the economic destruction of Israel. While some Jews have been in the land since the beginning of the dispersion, the latter part of the nineteenth century marks the point where a powerful movement was established in order to accomplish this task. In other words, there has always been Jewish people living in the land but the numbers were insignificant before the Zionist movement began.

The man most responsible for establishing the Zionist movement was an eastern European Jew from Hungary named Theodore Hertzl. He was a journalist working in Paris during the trial of a Jewish French army officer named Alfred Dreyfus in 1894. The trial was over a false accusation of treason. This is known in history as the Dreyfus Affair. Dreyfus was retried in 1899 on more false charges and cleared in 1906. Dreyfus was accused of treason the nature of which was passing military secrets to the Germans. The charges were entirely false and during the trial a huge amount of anti-Semitism was exhibited. Even though many people knew he didn't commit the crime and they knew who did commit it; anti-Semitism kept him from being cleared for twelve years. But that really was nothing new; France was a hotbed of anti-Semitism at the time and most of the rest of Europe has always been anti-Semitic as well. Hertzl was also aware of the pogroms in Russia at the time. A pogrom is an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group. Hertzl's work would eventually result in many Russian Jews immigrating to Israel. During the Dreyfus Affair, Hertzl came to the conclusion that the only way the Jewish people would ever be truly safe was back in their land as their own nation. "The Dreyfus trial was a watershed in Jewish history. Jews everywhere asked themselves what had gone wrong with Jewish life. Why was there anti-Semitism? Three ways out of the trap seemed to present themselves: to become assimilated into the nation with whom one was living, to fight for a revolutionary socialism that would cure all the evils of the world including anti-Semitism, or to seek a 'normal' Jewish life in a Jewish land with a government. Herzl was drawn to the last option." [Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, p. 10]. In 1896, Herzl published a book, entitled *The Jewish State*, that was very influential in the Zionist movement. If the Jews had known their own Scriptures, specifically Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, they never would have asked these questions because they would have understood what was happening to them and why. The rabbinical interpretations they are told today are not accurate which keeps the Jewish people bound in spiritual darkness. Right now, they are partially hardened to the truth, they don't seek the truth, and they don't seem to care about the truth. One of their options was assimilation into the people groups of the other countries in which they lived, but God supernaturally prevented them from doing that in order to preserve them as a distinct people.

Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization in 1896. His belief was that once the Jews were back in their own land another dispersion, or diaspora, could never happen again unless the whole world were to collapse. That actually is going to be proven correct; when they are dispersed again during the Tribulation, the world will be on the verge of collapse. Herzl's vision was for a secular Jewish state modeled after European civil forms

of government and it was to be a government with church and state separated one from the other. He wanted a totally secular state. Herzl wanted Israel to be just another nation in the world which the Jews have longed for since the days of Samuel when they wanted a king to lead them like all the other nations (1 Sam. 8:5). They will never be just another nation in the world; they were specifically created to be a nation set apart and they will never be reckoned among the nations (Num. 23:9). Many Jewish people resisted the idea of a Jewish nation and discouraged Hertzl's efforts. Orthodox Jews didn't like the secular nature of Herzl's concept. They thought the only way they would be restored to the land was through the appearance of Messiah and men could not bring that about. Of course, they are correct, only God will bring it about, but they have no understanding of a regathering in unbelief for the purpose of divine discipline. Secular Jews believed the prospects of a peaceful future were to be found in the nations in which they were then living. Herzl talked to the Chief Rabbi of Vienna who thought the future of the Jews was "in being dispersed throughout the world." [Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, p. 12]. The ignorance the Jewish rabbis have of their own Scriptures is just appalling. We have to remember that at the time these things were being said, the World Wars and the Holocaust were all still in future.

1 Samuel 8:5 ⁵and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."

Numbers 23:9 ⁹"As I see him from the top of the rocks, And I look at him from the hills; Behold, a people who dwells apart, And will not be reckoned among the nations.

From our vantage point, we know that will happen during the Tribulation but Hertzl, of course, had no knowledge of this although if he had known the Jewish Scriptures, he could have figured at least some of it out. Despite numerous obstacles, Hertzl persisted and he became convinced that the Jewish state had its beginnings during his lifetime. He was right. The regathering in unbelief began in earnest and Theodore Herzl deserves much of the credit.

After the first meeting of the Zionist Congress, Herzl, on 3 September 1897, wrote in his diary, "Were I to sum up the Basle Congress in a word—which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly—it would be this: At Basle I founded the Jewish state. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will know it." [Martin Gilbert, *Israel: A History*, p. 15]. Less than fifty-one years after Herzl wrote those words (fifty years, eight months, and eleven days), the nation of Israel was established in unbelief. When researching the history of this period of time, it is very apparent how these things fit right into all the Bible has to say about the diaspora and the regathering of Israel in unbelief.

The final regathering in belief.

After being returned to the land in belief, the Jewish people will also return not only to the God of the Word but to the Word of God. Judaism as we know it today is not biblical Judaism; it is rabbinical Judaism. Jews do not study the Old Testament much; they study the Rabbis and their writings. After being regathered in belief, they will listen to His voice and keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in the book of the law. Among the promises of the New Covenant is the fact the Jewish people will know God's law. This seems to be an instinctive God-given blessing to the Jewish people. All Jewish people living during the Millennium will be believers; they will all know Him and they will all know His laws. This will not be the Mosaic Law; that has been done away. There will be some sort of law administration during the Kingdom. There will be a grace orientation to living under the Kingdom Law just as there is a grace orientation to living under the law of Christ in this dispensation of grace.

Jeremiah 31:33–34 ³³“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Isaiah predicted this restoration in Isaiah 11:11-12. As noted in the last lesson, this Scripture not only proves the restoration in belief but it confirms the restoration in unbelief which is the first period of restoration. There are only two of them.

Isaiah 11:11–12 ¹¹Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea. ¹²And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.

Jesus predicted the regathering in belief during His presentation of the Olivet discourse.

Matthew 24:31 ³¹“And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Mark 13:27 ²⁷“And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven.

God predicted this event as far back as the formation of Israel into a nation.

Deuteronomy 4:29–31 ²⁹“But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. ³⁰“When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. ³¹“For the LORD your God is a compassionate

God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

If God can break His Word to Israel, then He has violated the very essence of who He is and He simply cannot do that. Replacement theologians have a very low, blasphemous view of God. God cannot do any less than keep His promises to Israel. If He cannot or will not keep His promises to Israel, then what assurance do these people have He will keep His promises to them?

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 presents what we refer to as the Land Covenant. This is an amplification of the land promise God made to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant. In Leviticus 26:40-45, one of God's stated purposes for bringing the Israelites back into the land as their permanent possession is due to the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Abrahamic Covenant.

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 ¹"So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, ²and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, ³then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴"If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵"The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. ⁶"Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. ⁷"The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. ⁸"And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. ⁹"Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; ¹⁰if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

The Land Covenant confirms the final curse to be invoked against Israel would be dispersion from their land and it actually was invoked. Of course, the historical record now bears witness to the diaspora that has been ongoing since 70 A.D. The blessings for obedience were intimately connected with the land; therefore, being banished from the land was the ultimate curse from which all the terrors of persecution would follow. As was noted in the discussion of the Zionist movement, the Jews do not understand the diaspora and the context of the blessings and the curses that preceded it. But sometime during the Tribulation, the spiritual light is going to come on and they are going to

understand. Whether that is the result of the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists or of the two witnesses or of the persecution as they stare annihilation right in the face or of a combination of all these factors, they are going to come to the knowledge of the truth. The nation is going to be restored; the covenants promise it. The Land Covenant will result in the final restoration, in belief, of the Jewish people from wherever they are in the world. The Land Covenant is not being fulfilled right now; fulfillment awaits the faithful generation that is going to believe in Messiah. At the end, there will still be individual Jewish persons who refuse to believe (Zech. 13:8-9), but they will be dealt with by the Lord and they will not enter the Kingdom. The Jewish leadership during the Tribulation is going to lead many Jews to recognize the Messiah when He returns. The Lord is going to gather them into the land by means of sending forth His angels to bring them to Israel (Mt. 24:31). The Land Covenant promises judgment on Israel's enemies. The Abrahamic Covenant promised curses on those who cursed Abraham and His descendants; the Land Covenant confirms that will happen. The enemies of Israel will experience all the curses that God once visited upon Israel. The difference is, the Gentile nations and their unbelieving citizens will be destroyed before the Kingdom begins. Once Israel returns to the Lord in belief, they will again be blessed.

Leviticus 26:40–45 ⁴⁰If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me— ⁴¹I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, ⁴²then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land. ⁴³For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes. ⁴⁴Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.'"

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