

New Covenant — Prophecy of The New Heart and Spirit

One of the greatest passages in all the Bible is Ezekiel 36:25-38. It is the most important section in the book of Ezekiel because it reveals how a holy and righteous God can fulfill His numerous promises, prophecies, and His major covenants. It reveals how our God saves people. We could say that the passage is the key that unlocks our understanding as to how our righteous God can give the nation of Israel an eternal kingdom ruled by the Messiah, Jesus Christ. It is the key that helps us understand how our God will save every Israelite who is alive at the end of the tribulation (Romans 11:25-27). It is the key that reveals how the New Covenant merges together with both the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant resulting in God's grand, glorious, and eternal family called the body of Christ, which is God's inheritance (Ephesians 1:18).

A. C. Gaebelein said this about Ezekiel 36,

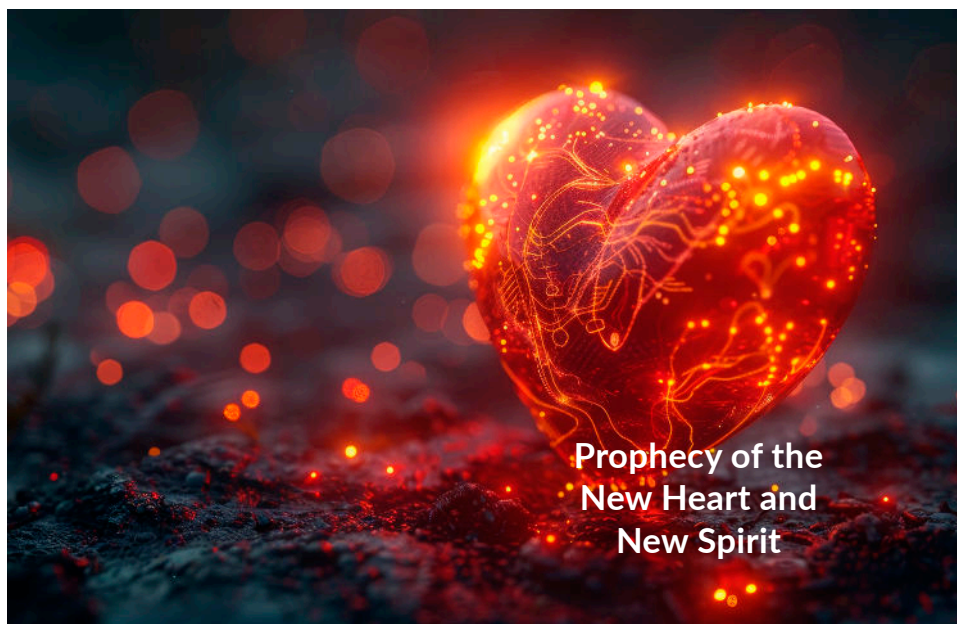
With this chapter the great prophetic utterances of Ezekiel begin concerning the future restoration and blessing of Israel.¹

Charles Feinberg made this insightful comment about the

passage we are going to study,

The next verses in the chapter are among the most glorious in the range of revealed truth on the subject of Israel's restoration to the Lord and national conversion.²

Gift of The New Birth (v 25-28). So, I pray that you will enjoy our study. It is from Ezekiel 36:25-28. It is a prophecy about the new birth and the spiritual blessings connected with it. In our last study, Yahweh told us that He would act in order to protect His holy name. Throughout Israel's history, they had demonstrated that they were wicked



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and rebellious toward Yahweh. They were examples of every unbeliever who has ever lived. So, He declared that He would sovereignly act. He alone would defend His holy name. His first act was described in verse 24. He

would unilaterally regather Israel back into their own land from the lands to which He had scattered them. Notice that He said, "into their own land." The land of Israel belongs to the Jews and to no one else, for God gave it to them. That is

1. A. C. Gaebelein. Prov-Ezek. The Annotated Bible. Publication Office of "our Hope." 1913., p. 315.

2. Charles Lee Feinberg. The Prophecy of Ezekiel. Moody Press. 1969. P. 209.

the introduction to our study.

Ezekiel 36:25-38 has four sections. Our study is about the first section which is verses 25-28. Verse 25 says,

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. Ezekiel 36:25 (NASB)

When we read this verse, we are immediately given the impression that verse 25 follows verse 24 in chronological order for it says, “Then I will sprinkle.” Notice the word “then” at the beginning of verse 25. That word appears to connect us back to verse 24. That is, Israel must return to the land first before Yahweh will sprinkle water on the Jewish people. But it is wrong to conclude that the timeline that is implied here is correct. It is in fact wrong. Therefore, I need to say two things so that we understand the correct timeline.

First, Deuteronomy 30:1-3 seems to give us a different timeline than the timeline described here in Ezekiel 36. In Deuteronomy 28, the chapter starts with a list of blessings in verses 1-15. These blessings are promises to Israel if they will obey Yahweh. Then Yahweh gave Israel a long list of curses in 54 verses. So, Deuteronomy 28 is a list of blessings and curses. Then in Deuteronomy 30:1 Yahweh said that “when all of these things have come upon you,” that is the list of curses, and when Israel returns to the Lord, then the nation would return to the land. Verses 2-3 explain what will happen.

... and 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, then 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. Deuteronomy 30:2-3 (NASB)

So, Yahweh promised that after Israel was scattered to the different nations, they would only be restored to the land when they obeyed Him “with all your heart and soul.”

Notice that they must obey Yahweh first and then they would be regathered to the land. That is the timeline in Deuteronomy 28-30. That is the first important point and is the correct timeline.

The second point that I need to make is that most modern Bibles do not start Ezekiel 36:25 with the word “Then” as the NASB does. “Then” is the key word. The reason other Bibles do not use the word “Then” is that the Hebrew word at the beginning of Ezekiel 36:25 could also mean “and” or “so.” It can also just be ignored. Therefore, verses 24 and 25 are just saying that Yahweh will do these two things without regard to which comes first. So, the correct timeline is found in Deuteronomy 30:2-3. All Israel will be saved at the second coming of Christ, and then Israel will be regathered to their own land.

Now verses 25-27 are a prophecy that reveals what happens to people when they are saved. We are going to learn about seven events that occur when someone is saved.

Saving Faith, Forgiveness, and Regeneration. Three events that occur in salvation are given to us in verse 25. Here Yahweh said that He will sprinkle clean water on Israel. When Yahweh does this, Israel “will be clean.” Sprinkling does not mean washing off dirt. It means much more than that. This is the act of regeneration and washing by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 says,

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5 (NASB)

The verse says we are saved by the washing of regeneration. The phrase “washing of regeneration” first symbolizes the forgiveness of sins and, second, the total regeneration of the spiritually dead sinner whereby he or she becomes spiritually alive resulting in eternal life.

Ezekiel 36:22 and 25 reveals that regeneration is solely the decision of Yahweh. He alone gives someone eternal life. This agrees with Ephesians 1:3-5 which teaches that God alone chooses who become believers in Jesus Christ.

In John 3:5 those who we are told that Jesus talked to a

Pharisee named Nicodemus and told him that he must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. The Greek word for “born again” literally means “born from above.” The point is that salvation is all an act of God. Ephesians 2:8 and 2 Peter 1:1 both teach that God gives us faith as a gift. We do not create faith by choosing to believe. We believe because faith is given to us as a gift by God. Then at the moment faith is given, the person is regenerated. I call this faith, saving faith because there is also a false faith or vain faith (1 Corinthians 12:2) that does not save. Vain faith believes some facts about Jesus but there is no repentance over sin. So, regeneration and saving faith are a gift. At that moment in time, a person’s sins are forever forgiven and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the sinner (2 Corinthians 5:21). The person is declared to be as righteous as God Himself.

This all connects with John 3:5 when Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God. Here is John 3:5-7,

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” John 3:5-7 (NASB)

So when Jesus told Nicodemus that he had to be born of water and the Spirit, we know Nicodemus, who was a teacher of Israel (John 3:10), knew about Ezekiel 36:25-27. He would have connected Jesus’ comments to Yahweh sprinkling clean water on Israel and giving them His Spirit. That is what Jesus was referring to by the water and Spirit. Forgiveness of sins and regeneration accompany saving faith. Then the believer is born from above.

Yahweh’s message in Ezekiel 36:25 is that He will forgive the sins of every Israelite. That will occur at the second coming of Christ which will happen at the battle of Armageddon (Zechariah 12:10-13:13:9).

Conversion and the Indwelling Holy Spirit. Then in verse 26, Yahweh promised to give Israel a new

heart and a new spirit. The prophecy now includes a fourth event that occurs in salvation. Regeneration is still discussed in this verse and now conversion is included. The verse says,

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. Ezekiel 36:26 (NASB)

Here Yahweh said that He will remove their stony hearts and give every Jew a new heart and spirit. A stony heart refers to a heart that is stubborn, self-willed, cold and unresponsive to the things of God. So, Yahweh will give them hearts of flesh.

In the New Testament we are told that every believer in Christ has become a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). When a person is born again, that is regenerated, the individual will have a new heart and a new spirit. They have new desires. A true believer will desire to turn away from sin and turn toward Christ. They will want to please the Lord in every way. That is called conversion.

Romans 10:9 captures the events.

... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. Romans 10:9-10 (NASB)

Now look closely at this verse. It connects everything together. It tells us that at the moment someone believes in Christ, they are saved. They are made righteous. They are regenerated. That is why they confess that Jesus is Lord. It is also the result of the indwelling Holy Spirit. All of these things occur at the moment someone believes in Christ. Instantly in a moment in time: faith, regeneration, and conversion occur.

Evidence of New Life. Verse 27 now describes the fifth and sixth events that accompany salvation. The fourth event is called obedience. It is the evidence of new life.

“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances . . .” Ezekiel 36:27 (NASB)

Here we are told the Holy Spirit will work within us to cause us to obey because we want to please God. A new heart, a regenerated heart, will desire to obey. This is an internal evidence of saving faith.

A fifth event that will occur in salvation is that repentance over sin will also occur because the new spiritual heart grieves over the failure to please God—to be holy as He is holy and failed to please God the Father. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says,

But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NASB)

The reason every Israelite will want to be as holy as God is holy at the end of the tribulation is that each one will be born again

Blessing of Adoption. Now Ezekiel 36:28 gives us the seventh event that accompanies salvation.

You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.
Ezekiel 36:28 (NASB)

Now Yahweh said that as a result of being regenerated, converted, and having the indwelling Holy Spirit, every Hebrew would finally live in the land. Notice the timeline. They are saved, and then they possess the land. But the most important part of the verse are the final words, “you will be My people, and I will be your God.” That refers to a family relationship. In the New Testament, this refers to being adopted into the family of God. In John 1:12 we are told that we can become the children of God. Ephesians 1:5 states that God has predestined believers to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.

Conclusion. So we have discovered a number of events that occur simultaneously at the moment of salvation. They are the gift of faith, forgiveness, regeneration, conversion,

and adoption. Also, the evidence of salvation is the desire to obey and repentance occurs due to the failure to obey. All of this occurs at the moment of saving faith.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote about Ezekiel 36:25-27 in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The passage is about the New Covenant. Notice what he said,

Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “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. “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.”
Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NASB)

Jeremiah did not use the same words that Ezekiel did, but the message is the same. Notice in verse 33 that Yahweh said, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” That connects with Ezekiel 36:28. In Jeremiah Yahweh said He will write His law within them. The Holy Spirit will indwell them. That is how He will put His law within them. Verse 34 says He will forgive their sins and never, ever remember their sins. But do not miss “all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.” All of this speaks of salvation.

Jesus also referred to the New Covenant on the night in which He was in the upper room with the disciples. On that night He established the Lord’s Supper and said this,

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” Luke 22:20 (NASB)

Yahweh's promise in Jeremiah and Ezekiel anticipated Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection for our sins. So, Ezekiel 36:25-28 is the most important passage in the book of Ezekiel for both Israel's future and ours.

Even though Ezekiel 36:25-28 is a promise to Israel about their salvation, Romans 9:25-33 tells us that it was prophesied that Gentiles will also be saved. In addition, Romans 11:11-24 adds that believing Gentiles are included into salvation. The point is that while Ezekiel 36:25-28 was given primarily to the nation of Israel, believing Gentiles can "hitch-a-ride" by believing in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and enjoy the blessings too! It is like having a birthday party. While the birthday party is primarily for the one who is celebrating their birthday, all of the guests who come will enjoy the event too!

We will have to leave the rest of Ezekiel 36 until the next study. We will discover the blessings that Yahweh has promised to the nation of Israel and the blessings promised to believing Gentiles.

I am thrilled to see once again that my salvation does not depend upon me being sinless or almost perfect. Salvation is truly a gift. Faith is a gift. Forgiveness, regeneration, the indwelling Holy Spirit, and adoption into the family of God are all gifts. He will never ever remember my sins again. I will never have to stand before Him and have sins reviewed. Every believer has every reason to rejoice! Praise the Lord.