

This chapter describes the LORD's plans to restore and bless Israel in the land that He had promised them as well as the beautiful promise to forgive and cleanse them from their sins. This promise foreshadows the blessings of the new birth that we enjoy today and is something Israel will experience in full when Christ returns.

Chapter 36 begins with the LORD commanding Ezekiel to prophesy to the mountains of Israel, which are representative of the land of Israel. The LORD declares that He will protect the mountains from the surrounding nations who have historically oppressed, invaded, destroyed and even attempted to claim them as their own. He declares His anger toward the heathen who have had ill will toward Israel.

⁸ But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. ⁹ For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown:

“But ye, O mountains of Israel” - The LORD will now declare His intentions for the mountains of Israel.

“ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel” - He will cause the land to bring forth abundant harvests for the people of Israel.

“for they are at hand to come” - The LORD is preparing the land for the arrival of His people. He will be setting things in motion for their return to the land.

“For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you” - The LORD will be favoring the land and turning His face toward it (an expression of favor).

“and ye shall be tilled and sown” - The land will no longer lay dormant and unproductive for the LORD will bring Israel back so that they can work the land.

¹⁰ And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded: ¹¹ And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

“And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it” - The entire nation of Israel will return to the land. That fact that the LORD repeats Himself by saying “all of it” emphasizes the fact that there will be no Jews remaining in the other nations for they will have returned to the land of Israel.

“and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes [desolate places; ruins] shall be builded” - The once abandoned cities will be filled again with people and the places that had lain in ruins after being destroyed by the enemies of Israel will be rebuilt.

“And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit” - Both men and their livestock will multiply and they will have many offspring (“fruit”).

“and I will settle you after your old estates [former state or situation], and will do better unto you than at your beginnings” - The LORD will cause the Jews to settle in the land as they had previously (the “old estates”) and they will treat the land better than when Israel first entered the land. The land was in disarray at this time but the LORD is saying that the land's best days are still ahead.

“and ye shall know that I am the LORD” - It will be obvious that the LORD is in control and is the source of these blessings.

Verses 12-16: The LORD declares that the people in the land will no longer have to bear the reproach of the heathen.

¹⁷ Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman.

The LORD now reminds Ezekiel of Israel's sins, which was the reason they were now in exile. They had defiled the land because they had followed “their own way” and the consequences of their sin was their own doing. He compares their sin to the “uncleanness of a removed woman” which refers to a menstruating woman who was set aside for uncleanness until her period was over (Lev. 15:19).

¹⁸ Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it: ¹⁹ And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

“Wherefore I poured my fury upon them” - God's holiness did not allow Him to ignore sin and so He had to express His anger at Israel's sin and put a stop to it since they had refused to repent.

“for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it” - The LORD had given them the land for an inheritance and Israel had defiled it with bloodshed and idolatry.

“And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries” - The resulting punishment was to be exiled from the land for a period of time. Even though this judgment was severe, notice that the LORD showed mercy in that He did not destroy them completely but merely scattered them throughout the nations of the world so that they could eventually be regathered.

“according to their way and according to their doings I judged them” - Israel could blame no one but themselves for the LORD's judgment on them because it was in the proper proportion to the severity of their sin.

Verses 20-21: The LORD points out how that His name was being profaned because the heathen could see His people being exiled from the land because of their sin. Thus, the LORD had pity on Israel for the sake of His name and will bring them back to the land.

²² Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

The LORD makes it clear that He is not showing mercy on them because they deserve it but in order to glorify His name among the heathen. We embarrass the LORD when we sin and suffer because of it because we represent the name of God among the world. Although we don't deserve it, He will show us mercy in order to show the world that He is a gracious and merciful God.

²³ And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

“And I will sanctify [to set apart as sacred] my great name” - The LORD will take steps to set His name apart as sacred once again.

“which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them” - Israel had defiled the name of the LORD among the heathen because of their poor testimony of having sinned against God and being cast out of their land.

“and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD” - The heathen will know that the LORD is unlike any other god of the heathens because of what they see the LORD do with His people.

“when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes” - The people who caused His name to be profaned before the heathen will be the same people that the LORD will use to bring glory to His name and restore its sacredness in the eyes of the heathen. The LORD will demonstrate His grace to sinful people who don't deserve His mercy and redeem them from their sins. He does this every time a sinner receives Jesus Christ as his/her Savior.

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

The first step in sanctifying His name that the LORD will take is to remove His people from among the heathen and place them back where they belong: in their own land that He gave them. When we come to Christ for salvation He takes us from the world and places us in His kingdom. **Col. 1:12-13** *“¹² Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³ Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”*

²⁵ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Next the LORD will do something that mere repentance could never do: cleanse them from their sin. No matter how sorry we are for our sins, we cannot cleanse ourselves from what we've done. Here, the LORD promises to cleanse Israel from the filthiness of their sins and from all the idolatry that they've committed over the years. He will totally remove the guilt of their sin.

²⁶ A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Even after being cleansed from our sin, we still have a problem. We still have a sin nature that wants to sin. The LORD promises to solve that problem for Israel by giving them a “new heart.” Before salvation our old stony heart is dead toward God but He promises to replace it with a “heart of flesh” that is living and will respond to the leading of the LORD. He also promised a “new spirit” which is the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. These verses foreshadow the new birth, which Jesus describes to Nicodemus in John 3:1-10. Nicodemus should not have been unfamiliar with the concept of the new birth because it had been promised in various places in the Old Testament, which is why Jesus asked Nicodemus “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:10). The prophet Joel also predicted the new birth and the coming of the Holy Spirit, which is why, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter declares to the crowd that what they were witnessing was a preview of what will happen during Christ's kingdom: *“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh...”* (Acts 2:16-17a).

²⁷ And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

“And I will put my spirit within you” - God gives us the Holy Spirit at the moment of the new birth, Who then leads and guides us to obey the will of God. The LORD will do this for the Jews in His kingdom.

“and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” - The result of the Spirit of God dwelling within us is that we will want to obey the will of God. The majority of Israel's history has been in rebellion against God, but the LORD is promising a day when they will no longer be in rebellion but will obey the LORD willingly.

²⁸ And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

“And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers” - The final and permanent fulfillment of what God had promised to Israel, starting with Abraham.

“and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” - Israel will finally be in perfect fellowship with their God. The fellowship will go in both directions, for they will be His people (indicating their desire) and He will be their God (His desire).

The promises of restoration, blessing, forgiveness, cleansing and the new birth are to Israel, but we are able to reap the benefits of these promises (particularly the new birth) by trusting in Jesus Christ as our Savior.