

## October 17

**Scriptures:** Read Ezekiel 36 & 37

**Key Verse:** “I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live...” (Ezekiel 37:14)

### Overview

The exiles are comforted to know that although the surrounding nations, especially Edom, were anxious to possess the hilly and fertile land of Judah, now made desolate and almost uninhabited, the Lord would not allow an overall takeover of the land, since in His plan Israel was to return and become a nation once again. The nations that mocked Israel because of the shame she had borne would themselves meet the same shame (36:6-7), but Israel would again be honoured (36:35). God would cause the mountains of Israel to be fruitful, rebuilt, and repopulated very soon (36:8-10, 30). The often repeated sentence, “Then you shall know that I am the Lord”, has until this point been used in the context of God’s judgment. But now it comes in relation to the Lord’s salvation, grace, goodness, and faithfulness (36:11).

Ezekiel’s prophecy was to be directed toward the hills of Judah (36:1-15), upon which there had been many high places of idolatrous worship that had contributed to the defilement, downfall, destruction, and deportation of the nation (36:12-15). Although the Lord had vindicated His holy name when His apostate people were justly punished, the Gentiles, devoid of understanding, were saying that the God of Israel could not save His people. In the past, the Lord had mercifully withheld their punishment to avoid this very accusation (cf. 20:9, 22), for His desire was that the Gentiles would come to serve and hallow Him. The children of Israel, however, had set a bad example and had profaned God’s name before the nations. Ezekiel stressed that it was for His own name’s sake, and not for the sake of Israel’s reputation, that He would give them a miraculous restoration (36:21-22, 32). After seventy years, the people did return in fulfillment of prophecy, but the complete fulfillment is to be found in the Gospel age, when God’s people from every country (Jew or Gentile — the spiritual seed of Abraham) will be cleansed and regenerated with a new spirit and a new heart which will yield to the will of God. Only then, with the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, will God’s people be enabled to keep God’s commands and do them (36:27).

With chapter 37, we come to the familiar vision of Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones, which symbolized the “whole nation of Israel” — not only those from Judah who were with Ezekiel but those from the Northern Kingdom who had gone into captivity earlier under the Assyrians. After the fall of Jerusalem, Judah’s capital, the exiles’ hopes of return were crushed (37:11). They felt as though Babylon was their grave. This vision of the dry bones coming to life proclaimed to the despondent people that their nation, which had been slain, would one day be resurrected.

Knowing that all things are possible with God (37:3), Ezekiel obeyed God and with faith spoke to the dry bones. Even after the bones had taken on flesh, there was no life in them, for without the working of the Spirit of God, there is truly no life. God told Ezekiel that He would cause breath to enter them. The Hebrew word *ruah* is translated as “breath”, “wind”, or “spirit”, depending on the context. All of them signify life, and the “four winds” signify the universal working of the Spirit of God to give life (cf. Jer. 49:36; John 3:5-8). This was purely an act of

God's grace to be fulfilled through Jesus Christ, "who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1:10).

The sign of the two sticks joined together signified that Israel would no longer be divided into a Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) and a Southern Kingdom (Judah), but there would be a future prosperous union under one king, David (37:16-25; see John 11:50-53; Isa. 11:12-13). This is clearly a Messianic reference, the fulfillment of which will come when the Lord Jesus returns to establish His glorious Kingdom. Because of the regeneration of the Lord Jesus Christ, the inhabitants of the new Israel will all be cleansed and freed from the bondage of sin (37:23). God will establish an everlasting covenant of peace (37:26a; cf. Jer. 31:33; Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32-33) and dwell in their midst (37:26b-28). They will have wonderful peace under the Good Shepherd who will reign forever (37:24-25).

The prophetic message in 37:27-28 would have encouraged those who returned from The Exile to rebuild the Temple of the Lord with Zerubbabel (Ezra 5:2), but its actual fulfillment was to begin with the incarnation of the Lord Jesus (John 1:14). It is not speaking of a literal tabernacle, for as verse 27 reads from the Hebrew: "My tabernacle also shall be over [or on] them", indicating a reference to the presence of the Lord in their midst, which believers can experience today in a very real way by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). The complete fulfillment of this prophecy will be in heaven when the tabernacle of God (Jesus, the Lamb) is with His people (Rev. 21:2, 3, 22; Lev. 26:3, 11-12).

## **Prayer**

Dear Father, thank You for cleansing us and setting us free from the bondage of sin and for the regeneration of our souls that You provide through Your Son Jesus. We rejoice in Your promise of eternal life with You in heaven!