

## Ezekiel 36-37 • The Signs of the Times

### Introduction

There are generally 2 categories of prophecy: Plain and obscure. This isn't a criticism of the Word as much as it is about how we as humans focus our attention on things. "Plain" prophecy states in clear, undisputed terms an event that will happen, such as "I will return Israel from all the nations." An example of "obscure" prophecy is "the mark of the beast is 666." Both types of prophecy will come true but we tend to focus on the more mysterious "obscure" category than the plain indicators God has given. Have you noticed that the "obscure" type seems to be the focal point of most controversies and the most widely disagreed upon?

I believe the "obscure" category represents things which will reveal themselves almost at the moment they occur, often without a lot of warning time in which to digest their significance. The "plain" category are the more "dull" and obvious activities by which, I've come to believe, are the ones which not only give us the biggest lead time in terms of warning, but are the very things which will open our eyes to the fulfillment of the more difficult and mysterious prophecies as they're finally identified and fulfilled.

Ezekiel 36 & 37 provide the general framework by which all other End Times prophecy must fit together correctly in order to be fully and completely understood. If they deviate in the least respect from this framework it does not mean it was not an act of God's will, but that it was not yet the fulfillment of His specific prophecy. For instance, at least twice there have been sacrileges committed in the Holy of Holies; but because they didn't occur in the right context under all God's prescribed conditions, we know that there is still to come the final abomination of desolation that will mark the End Times.

<sup>1</sup>"And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because the enemy has spoken against you, 'Aha!' and, 'The everlasting heights have become our possession,' <sup>3</sup>therefore prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "For good reason they have made you desolate and crushed you from every side, that you would become a possession of the rest of the nations and you have been taken up in the talk and the whispering of the people.'""

<sup>4</sup>"Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD. Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the forsaken cities which have become a prey and a derision to the rest of the nations which are round about, <sup>5</sup>therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and with scorn of soul, to drive it out for a prey." <sup>6</sup>Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and to the valleys, "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I have spoken in My

### [Read 36:1-3]

**Q: The pronoun "you" that God is using in this passage refers to whom?**

A: To the physical land of Israel.

**Q: In v.2, who believes the land has finally come into their possession?**

A: The nations around Israel.

**Q: And why would they think the land can become theirs now? Is it simply because Israel's been conquered?**

A: The nations around Israel are all familial relations who have also had more or less successful spiritual relationships with God at one time or another. They know that to possess the land that Israel must turn her back on God and experience spiritual separation, and then in turn physical separation of the land will ensue. These nations understand this is all, in reality, a **spiritual** issue as to whether or not Israel follows God.

### [Read 4-7]

**Q: So what issue is God making with the nations around Israel?**

A: That their joy in Israel's spiritual downfall in order to get the land is **also** sin. If they lived by the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment there would be no joy in Israel's downfall. Their rejoicing in Israel's spiritual downfall is, in itself, their **own** spiritual downfall.

jealousy and in My wrath because you have endured the insults of the nations.’

<sup>7</sup>“Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘I have sworn that surely the nations which are around you will themselves endure their insults.

<sup>8</sup>But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come. <sup>9</sup>For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown.

### [Read 8-9]

**Q: What is the biggest contrast of this passage from the many times elsewhere in Ezekiel where God has uttered similar words?**

A: Every other time God has stated, “I am against you”, this is the first occurrence of “I am for you.”

**Point:** Is everyone aware of how much the physical landscape of Palestine has changed since 1948, being transformed from barren desert into a garden?

<sup>10</sup>I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited and the waste places will be rebuilt. <sup>11</sup>I will multiply on you man and beast; and they will increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first. Thus you will know that I am the LORD. <sup>12</sup>Yes, I will cause men—My people Israel—to walk on you and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.’

### [Read 10-12]

**Q: To whom is God speaking as He promises restoration?**

A: To the land. God is promising that what will happen will happen in that specific place.

Note the sequence of the conversation in v.3-12 God has with the land:

- (v.3) “...For good reason they have made you desolate...” Israel is vacated.
- (v.5) “...appropriated My land for themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy...” Occupation of the land by the surrounding nations.
- (v.7) “...the nations which are around you will themselves endure their insults.” Judgment will come on those nations for their actions.
- (v.9) “...I am for you and I will turn to you, and you will be cultivated and sown.” The land will attain its originally intended purpose.
- (v.12) “...you will become their inheritance...” Israel will be restored to its original position as heirs.

In other words, there is a **SPIRITUAL** connection between Israel and God of which the land is a physical manifestation or witness thereof.

<sup>16</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, <sup>17</sup>“Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. <sup>18</sup>Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. <sup>19</sup>Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them. <sup>20</sup>When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD;

### [Read 16-21]

**Q: So if prosperity in the land was a spiritual witness of God through Israel, what was Israel’s removal from the land?**

A: A **BAD** spiritual witness of God.

**Q: So if Israel is PHYSICALLY restored to the land, will that be the good, spiritual witness God desires?**

A: Not in and of itself. It will have to be accompanied by spiritual revival, a return to **HIM**. The evidence is in the condition of the heart.

yet they have come out of His land.’<sup>21</sup> But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

<sup>22</sup>“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 My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. <sup>23</sup>I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

<sup>24</sup>For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. <sup>25</sup>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.

<sup>26</sup>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. <sup>27</sup>I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. <sup>28</sup>You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

<sup>29</sup>Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. <sup>30</sup>I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations. <sup>31</sup>Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.

<sup>32</sup>“I am not doing this for your sake,” declares the Lord GOD, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!”

### **[Read 22-23]**

**Q: So the real sign or work is not just physical restoration by itself. What must it be combined with?**

A: Clear demonstrations of the holiness and sovereignty of God.

**Q: So is the re-gathering of Israel in 1948 (and that continues to this day) enough in and of itself?**

A: No, because the *real* sign is *spiritual* awakening, not just physical re-occupation.

### **[Read 24-28]**

**Q: So the sprinkling of clean water on them in v.25 could be compared to what?**

A: Baptism in Christ.

**Q: The giving of a new heart described in v.26 could be compared to what?**

A: Salvation in Christ.

**Q: The personal indwelling of the Spirit in v.27 could be compared to what?**

A: The indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a deposit of our guarantee in Christ.

**Q: And does v.28 state that Israel becomes His people again simply because they've re-occupied the land?**

A: No. They don't become His people again until they return to God through Christ.

### **[Read 29-32]**

**Q: What does this spiritual renewal lead to?**

A: The opening of Israel's eyes to their behavior and the true work of God.

<sup>33</sup>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 will be rebuilt. <sup>34</sup>The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. <sup>35</sup>They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’ <sup>36</sup>Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.”

<sup>37</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD, “This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. <sup>38</sup>Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts, so will the waste cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they will know that I am the LORD.””

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

And I answered, “O Lord GOD, You know.”

<sup>4</sup>Again He said to me, “Prophecy over these bones and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.’ <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, ‘Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.’”

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and skin covered them; but there was no breath in them.

<sup>9</sup>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 come

### **[Read 33-38]**

**Q: We focus on all these wonderful things that will happen but what is the “trigger” or event that will signal the actual fulfillment of all these things?**

A: In v.33, “...On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities...”

**Point:** The real sign isn't possessing the **land** but possessing the **Lord**.

### **[Read 37:1-14]**

**Q: Was it enough to just restore the flesh and sinews and physical bodies to the bones?**

A: No, they were merely transformed from bones into corpses. They are still dead.

**Q: When were they actually made alive and therefore the resurrection completed from death to life?**

A: When the breath of life was breathed into them.

**Point:** First physical re-gathering to the land—the equivalent of restoring the bones to corpses—then spiritual awakening—the breath of life that completes the work of bringing Israel back to life. Right now, at this point in prophetic history, Israel is just a bunch of corpses. The sign we're waiting for that we can all plainly see is their spiritual revival, a wholesale commitment to accepting Jesus as the Messiah.

to life.””

<sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

<sup>11</sup>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 has perished. We are completely cut off.’ <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. <sup>14</sup>I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,” declares the LORD.””

### ***Application***

***Q: What is the point of knowing and even witnessing these events for those that already believe in Christ? What exactly are we supposed to do with this information?***

A: It's supposed to change our behavior. The earlier we become aware the “signs of the times” the sooner we're to live according to this knowledge. Some ways this should affect us:

- Prayer life
- Dedication to His Word
- Rejection of all things worldly to embrace all things heavenly
- Increased desire and seeking of opportunities to share the Gospel
- Add here what the Spirit is speaking to your heart at this instant.