
EZEKIEL 36: 1 You, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the LORD's word.

The Edomites or Idumeans, during the Babylonish captivity, took possession of the mountainous parts of Judea, and the fortresses which commanded the country, intending to exclude the Jews if ever they should return from their captivity. The prophet therefore, by a beautiful personification, addresses the mountains of Israel; and, ascribing to them passions and emotions similar to those of his own breast, consoles them with the prospect of being soon rid of those usurping foes; of being freed from the dishonor of idols under which they groaned; and of flourishing again in their ancient glory under their rightful owners, Eze 36:1-15. The idolatry and other sins of the Jews are then declared to be the cause of their captivity and dispersion, Eze 36:16-20; from which however they are promised a deliverance in terms of great force and beauty, vv. 21-38. This chapter contains also, under the type of the happy condition of the Israelites after their restoration from the Babylonish captivity, a glorious prophecy of the rich blessings of the Gospel dispensation.

Verse 1

Prophesy unto the mountains of Israel - This is a part of the preceding prophecy though it chiefly concerns the Jews. In it they are encouraged to expect a glorious restoration, and that none of the evil wishes of their adversaries should take place against them.

EZEKIEL 36: 2 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy has said against you, Aha! and, The ancient high places are ours in possession;

Verse 2

Because the enemy hath said - The Idumeans thought they would shortly be put in possession of all the strong places of Israel; the ancient high places shall be ours.

EZEKIEL 36: 3 therefore prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Because, even because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that you might be a possession to the residue of the nations, and you are taken up in the lips of talkers, and the evil report of the people;

EZEKIEL 36: 4 therefore, you mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes and to the cities that are forsaken, which are become a prey and derision to the residue of the nations that are all around;

Verse 4

Therefore - thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, etc. - They shall neither possess mountain nor valley, hill nor dale, fountain nor river; for though in my justice I made you desolate, yet they shall not profit by your disasters. See Eze 36:5-7.

EZEKIEL 36: 5 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the nations, and against all Edom, that have appointed my land to themselves for a possession with the joy of all their heart, with despite of soul, to cast it out for a prey.

EZEKIEL 36: 6 Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and tell the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my wrath, because you have borne the shame of the nations:

EZEKIEL 36: 7 therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I have sworn, Surely the nations that are around you, they shall bear their shame.

EZEKIEL 36: 8 But you, mountains of Israel, you shall shoot out your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they are at hand to come.

Verse 8

For they are at hand to come - The restoration of the Jews is so absolutely determined that you may rest assured it will take place; and be as confident relative to it, as if you saw the different families entering into the Israelitish borders. It was near at hand in God's determination, though there were about fifty-eight of the seventy years unelapsed.

EZEKIEL 36: 9 For, behold, I am for you, and I will turn into you, and you shall be tilled and sown;

Verse 9

Ye shall be tilled and sown - The land shall be cultivated as it formerly was, when best peopled and at peace.

EZEKIEL 36: 10 and I will multiply men on you, all the house of Israel, even all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited, and the waste places shall be built;

EZEKIEL 36: 11 and I will multiply on you man and animal; and they shall increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited after your former estate, and you will do better than at your beginnings: and you shall know that I am the LORD.

Verse 11

I will multiply upon you man and beast - The agriculturalist and the beast of burden.

And will do better unto you than at your beginnings - I agree with Calmet, that it would be difficult to show the literal fulfillment of this prophecy from the days of Zerubbabel to the birth of Christ. The colouring is too high for that period; and the whole falls in better with Gospel than with Jewish times.

EZEKIEL 36: 12 Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance, and you shall no more henceforth bereave them of children.

EZEKIEL 36: 13 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they say to you, You are a devourer of men, and have been a bereaver of your nation;

EZEKIEL 36: 14 therefore you shall devour men no more, neither bereave your nation any more, says the Lord GOD;

EZEKIEL 36: 15 neither will I let you hear any more the shame of the nations, neither shall you bear the reproach of the peoples any more, neither shall you cause your nation to stumble any more, says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 36: 16 Moreover the LORD's word came to me, saying,

EZEKIEL 36: 17 Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their way and by their doings: their way before me was as the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity.

Verse 17

When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land - Had they continued faithful to me, they had never been removed from it: but they polluted it with their crimes; and I abhorred the land on that account, and gave both them and it up to the destroyers.

EZEKIEL 36: 18 Therefore I poured out my wrath on them for the blood which they had poured out on the land, and because they had defiled it with their idols;

EZEKIEL 36: 19 and I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them.

EZEKIEL 36: 20 When they came to the nations, where they went, they profaned my holy name; in that men said of them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone out of his land.

Verse 20

And when they entered unto the heathen - So bad were they, and so deeply fallen, that they profaned the Lord's name among the heathen; and, on their account, the true God was blasphemed. These, say they, are the people of Jehovah! O what an abominable people are these! and what a being must that God be who can have and own such for his people!

EZEKIEL 36: 21 But I had respect for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations, where they went.

EZEKIEL 36: 22 Therefore tell the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: I don't do this for your sake, house of Israel, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations, where you went.

EZEKIEL 36: 23 I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

Verse 23

I will sanctify my great name - By changing your hearts and your conduct, I shall show my hatred to vice, and my love to holiness: but it is not for your sakes, but for my holy name's sake, that I shall do you good in your latter days.

EZEKIEL 36: 24 For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.

Verse 24

I will take you from among the heathen - This does not relate to the restoration from Babylon merely. The Jews are at this day scattered in all Heathen, Mohammedan, and Christian countries. From these they are to be gathered, and brought to repossess their own land.

EZEKIEL 36: 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Verse 25

Then - At the time of this great restoration - will I sprinkle clean water upon you - the truly cleansing water; the influences of the Holy Spirit typified by water, whose property it is to cleanse, whiten, purify, refresh, render healthy and fruitful.

From all your filthiness - From every sort of external and internal abomination and pollution.

And from all your idols - False gods, false worship, false opinions, and false hopes.

Will I cleanse you - Entirely separate you.

EZEKIEL 36: 26 I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

Verse 26

A new heart also will I give you - I will change the whole of your infected nature; and give you new appetites, new passions; or, at least, the old ones purified and refined. The heart is generally understood to mean all the affections and passions.

And a new spirit will I put within you - I will renew your minds, also enlighten your understanding, correct your judgment, and refine your will, so that you shall have a new spirit to actuate your new heart.

I will take away the stony heart - That heart that is hard, impenetrable, and cold; the affections and passions that are unyielding, frozen to good, unaffected by heavenly things; that are slow to credit the words of God. I will entirely remove this heart: it is the opposite to that which I have promised you; and you cannot have the new heart and the old heart at the same time.

And I will give you a heart of flesh - One that can feel, and that can enjoy; that can feel love to God and to all men, and be a proper habitation for the living God.

EZEKIEL 36: 27 I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my ordinances, and do them.

Verse 27

And I will put my Spirit within you - To keep the heart of flesh alive, the feeling heart still sensible, the loving heart still happy. I will put my Spirit, the great principle of light, life, and love, within you, to actuate the new spirit, and to influence the new affections and passions; that the animal spirit may not become brutish, that the mental powers become not foolish. I will put my Spirit within you, so that as the new spirit may influence the new heart, so will My Spirit influence Your new spirit, that each may have a proper mover; and then all will be pure, regular, and harmonious, when passion is influenced by reason, and reason by the Holy Ghost.

And the cause shall be evidenced by the effects; for I will cause you to walk in my statutes - not only to believe and reverence my appointments relative to what I command you to perform; but ye shall walk in them, your conduct shall be regulated by them. "And ye shall keep my judgments;" whatsoever I enjoin you to avoid. And ye shall do them - ye shall not only avoid every appearance of evil, but keep all my ordinances and commandments unblamably.

Here is the salvation that God promises to give to restored Israel; and here is the salvation that is the birthright of every Christian believer: the complete destruction of all sin in the soul, and the complete renewal of the heart; no sin having any place within, and no unrighteousness having any place without. "But where are they that are thus saved?"

Ans. Wherever true Christians are to be found. "But I know many true Christians that have not this salvation, but daily mourn over their evil hearts?"

Ans. They may be sincere, but they are not true Christians; i.e., such as are saved from their sins; the true Christians are those who are filled with the nature and Spirit of Christ. But I will ask a question in my turn: "Do those you mention think it a virtue to be always mourning over their impurities?" Most certainly. Then it is a pity they were not better instructed. It is right they should mourn while they feel an impure heart; but why do they not apply to that blood which cleanses from all unrighteousness, and to that Spirit which cleanses the very thoughts of the heart by his inspiration? Many employ that time in brooding and mourning over their impure hearts, which should be spent in prayer and faith before God, that their impurities might be washed away. In what a state of nonage are many members of the Christian Church!

EZEKIEL 36: 28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Verse 28

Ye shall be my people - Wholly given up to me in body, soul, and spirit.

And I will be your God - To fill you with love, joy, peace, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, fidelity and goodness, to occupy your whole soul, and gratify your every desire.

EZEKIEL 36: 29 I will save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay no famine on you.

Verse 29

I will also save you from all your uncleannesses - I repeat it; "I Will save you from all your sins."

EZEKIEL 36: 30 I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations.

Verse 30

Ye shall receive no more reproach of famine - Ye shall be daily and hourly fed with the bread that endures unto eternal life. "But will not those get proud, who are thus saved, if there be any such? and will they not undervalue the blood of the covenant, for then they shall not need it?" Ans. Hear what the Lord saith: -

EZEKIEL 36: 31 Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

Verse 31

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways - Ye shall never forget that ye were once slaves of sin, and sold under sin; children of the wicked one; heirs to all God's curses, with no hope beyond hell. Such cleansed people never forget the horrible pit and the miry clay out of which they have been brought. And can they then be proud? No; they loathe themselves in their own sight. They never forgive themselves for having sinned against so good a God, and so loving a Savior. And can they undervalue Him by whose blood they were bought, and by whose blood they were cleansed? No! That is impossible: they now see Jesus as they ought to see him; they see him in his splendor, because they feel him in his victory and triumph over sin. To them that thus believe he is precious, and he was never so precious as now. As to their not needing him when thus saved from their sins,

we may as well say, as soon may the creation not need the sustaining hand of God, because the works are finished! Learn this, that as it requires the same power to sustain creation as to produce it, so it requires the same Jesus who cleansed to keep clean. They feel that it is only through his continued indwelling, that they are kept holy, and happy, and useful. Were he to leave them the original darkness and kingdom of death would soon be restored.

EZEKIEL 36: 32 Nor for your sake do I this, says the Lord GOD, be it known to you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, house of Israel.

EZEKIEL 36: 33 Thus says the Lord GOD: In the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be built.

EZEKIEL 36: 34 The land that was desolate shall be tilled, whereas it was a desolation in the sight of all who passed by.

EZEKIEL 36: 35 They shall say, This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.

Verse 35

This land that was desolate by sin, is become like the garden of Eden by righteousness - Satan's blast is removed; God's blessing has taken place.

EZEKIEL 36: 36 Then the nations that are left around you shall know that I, the LORD, have built the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, the LORD, have spoken it, and I will do it.

Verse 36

Then the heathen - They shall see how powerful Jehovah is, and how fully he saves those who come unto and worship him.

EZEKIEL 36: 37 Thus says the Lord GOD: For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock.

Verse 37

Thus saith the Lord God - In answer to the question, "Who shall have such blessings?" we say, they that pray, that seek earnestly, that strive to enter in at the strait gate. "Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel." Neither Jew nor Gentile shall be thus saved who do not earnestly pray to God; and for this thing; for this complete salvation; this setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon earth, and particularly in their own souls.

EZEKIEL 36: 38 As the flock for sacrifice, as the flock of Jerusalem in her appointed feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Verse 38

As the holy flock - The Church of Christ, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

The flock of Jerusalem - The Jerusalem that is from above, the city of the living God, the place where his Majesty dwells. As they came in ancient times to the solemn national feasts so shall they come when they have fully returned unto the Lord, and received his salvation by Christ Jesus.

I do not ask my reader's pardon for having considered this most beautiful chapter as relating, not to the restoration from the Babylonish captivity, but to the redemption under the new covenant by Jesus Christ. There is no period of the Jewish history from that time until now, to which it can be applied. It must belong to the Gospel dispensation, and if the Jews will still refuse, contradict, and blaspheme, let no Christian have any fellowship with them in their opposition to this Almighty Savior. Let none be indifferent to his salvation; let all plead his promises; and let the messengers of the Churches proclaim to the Christian world a Free, a Full, and a Present Salvation! And may great grace rest upon themselves, and upon all their flocks!