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# THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL

## DON'T Interpret the Interpretation

By Arlen L. Chitwood

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones:

And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry.

And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?...

Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.

Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves,

And shall put my spirit ['breath' (*cf.* vv. 5-11)] in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord...

After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them...

And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates" (Ezek. 37:1-3a, 11-14; 38:8, 11).

Bible students are often quick to take current events in the world and see a connection between these events and Biblical prophecy, especially if these events involve Israel. And that is particularly true when it comes to Ezek. 37-39.

Ezekiel 37 begins with Ezekiel placed in the midst of a valley filled with (human) bones, which were not only lifeless but very dry. And that which the Lord wanted Ezekiel to see, a prophecy pertaining to Israel, continues with the bones coming together, sinews, flesh, and skin covering the bones, with God then breathing life into the untold numbers of individuals whom He had brought forth in this manner. And these individuals are then seen standing upon their feet, "an exceeding great army" (vv. 1-10).

So that there can be no mistake in interpretation, God's Own interpretation of the scene is then given in the next four verses (vv. 11-14). That shown to Ezekiel had to do with God breathing life into "the whole house of Israel," removing the Jewish people from the nations where they had previously been scattered, and placing them in a healed land.

The remainder of the chapter then has to do with the unity of the nation (no longer divided as seen following Solomon's death) and the theocracy restored to Israel under a new covenant, with David their king raised up to reign over them (vv. 15-28).

Then — textually, contextually, anyway one wants to look at the matter — chapters 38, 39 simply continue from where chapter 37 leaves off, showing another aspect of the matter, showing the destruction of Gentile world power following Israel's restoration.

The restoration seen in chapters 38, 39 (38:7, 11, 12; 39:23-28) CAN ONLY BE the same restoration previously seen in chapter 37.

The entirety of that seen in these two chapters can occur ONLY FOLLOWING CHRIST'S RETURN at

the end of the Tribulation. These events occur "in that day," in the Lord's Day, NOT during the present day, during Man's Day (38:14, 18; 39:8, 11).

### An Overview of Six Chapters

This article thus far has dealt only succinctly with material in three chapters, chapters 37-39. But these three chapters are a continuation from three previous chapters, chapters 34-36. And all six of these chapters form a unit in Ezekiel's prophecy and should be studied together.

Chapters 34 and 36 deal, in a preliminary respect, with that seen being enlarged upon and dealt with more in detail in chapter 37, forming commentary for these two previous chapters.

And chapter 35 deals, in a preliminary respect, with that seen being enlarged upon and dealt with more in detail in chapters 38 and 39.

### Chapters 34, 36, 37

Chapters 34, 36, 37 all deal with one central thing pertaining to future events surrounding Israel and the nations. These chapters have to do with a succinct history of "the whole house of Israel," ending with the Jewish people being removed from the nations of the earth in a healed condition and placed in a healed land.

Then, it is not just part of the nation but the complete nation, every Jewish person alive in that day, "the whole house of Israel" (37:11). And that seen in this respect in these three chapters CANNOT occur until a time yet future.

Events pertaining to Israel's restoration in these three chapters can occur only in the order seen in the Jewish festivals (Lev. 23), Biblical typology (e.g., Ex. 12:1ff), or just a plain reading of a section such as Matt. 24:30, 31.

That is to say, the restoration seen in chapters 34, 36, 37 is A COMPLETE RESTORATION having to do with "the whole house of Israel," which can occur ONLY following Messiah's return at the end of the Tribulation.

There is NOTHING in this section of Scripture

about any type return prior to this time (*e.g.*, the Jewish people in the land today). *EVERYTHING* has to do with this future restoration, followed by both Israel and the nations possessing a type knowledge not heretofore known prior to this time (36:35, 36; 37:13, 28; 38:14, 23; 39:21-29).

And the restoration in chapters 34, 36, 37 is *EXACTLY THE SAME RESTORATION* spoken of in chapters 38, 39 — a restoration occurring at the end of the Tribulation, following Messiah's return, involving the healing of "the whole house of Israel," *both the people and their land*.

(Note something not dealt with in this article — *the place which O.T. saints occupy in the matter*.

Both O.T. typology and the order seen in *the seven Jewish festivals* place the resurrection of O.T. saints at a time preceding Israel's restoration to the land; and the dead [resurrected] return with the living. In this respect, "the whole house of Israel," as seen in Ezek. 37-39, could ONLY be understood as "complete" when BOTH are present.

For additional information, refer to the author's book, "By Faith," Ch. XV, *The Resurrection of Israel*.)

## Chapters 35, 38, 39

These chapters, as chapters 34, 36, 37, all deal with one central thing pertaining to future events surrounding Israel and the nations. These chapters have to do with *an invasion by Gentile powers once "the whole house of Israel" has been removed from the nations of the earth in a healed condition and placed in a healed land*.

At this time, unlike today or during the Tribulation, the restored Jewish people are seen at this time as *a people at rest, dwelling safely, without walls, bars, or gates, with their Messiah present* [38:11, 20-23; cf. Joel 2:27-32; 3:1ff]. It is simply NOT POSSIBLE to place this scene at any time other than *following the Tribulation, following Christ's return*.

Material in chapter 35 — the base chapter, the chapter upon which chapters 38, 39 rest, forming commentary for that seen in chapter 35 — has to do with the destruction of Gentile world power im-

mediately following the time matters are brought to a conclusion regarding the future history of Israel, as detailed in the other three chapters (chs. 34, 36, 37).

Thus, events seen throughout all six chapters occur at the same general time and place — *following Messiah's return at the end of the Tribulation*.

"Mount Seir" is referenced beginning chapter thirty-five, which was *the home of the Edomites* (*cf.* vv. 2, 15; *cf.* Deut. 2:5). And, comparing Scripture with Scripture, note in Isa. 34:1ff that "Edom" is used in a parallel text to represent *all of the Gentile nations* (vv. 1-8), which come under God's judgment "in the day of the Lord's vengeance," because of "the controversy of Zion ['the cause of Zion']."

"Zion" is a synonym for *Jerusalem*, or is used referring to *the Jewish people* (Ps. 76:2; 126:1; Isa. 1:26, 27). Thus, as clearly seen elsewhere in Scripture, God's future judgment of the Gentiles at this time will center around *their attitude toward and treatment of the Jewish people*, something clearly seen in the chapters under discussion in Ezekiel (*cf.* Gen. 12:1-3; Ezek. 35:4-15; 38:3, 18; Matt. 25:31-46).

This destruction of Gentile world power at the end of Man's Day is seen over and over in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets (*e.g.*, Gen. 11:1ff; 14:1ff; 19:1ff; Ps. 2:1ff; 83:1ff; Jer. 30:1ff; Dan. 2:37-45; Joel 2:1ff; 3:1ff; Zech. 14:1ff). This is the destruction seen in Isa. 34:1ff, leading into the Messianic Era seen in the following chapter (35:1-10). As well, this is the same destruction seen in the parallel passage in Ezek. 35:1ff, leading into the Messianic Era (chs. 40-48).

And this destruction, dealt with throughout Scripture, can clearly be seen, both textually and contextually, as *the same destruction depicted in Ezek. 38, 39, leading into the Messianic Era* (chs. 40-48).

And there could be no possible problem seeing *all nations represented by only certain powers mentioned in Ezek. 38:2-6*. Note, for example, in Isa. 34:1ff and Ezek. 35:1ff, that *all nations are represented by one nation, Edom*; and in Ps. 83:1ff, *all nations are represented by ten named nations*.

Also, in line with the preceding, "Gog, the land of Magog" (Ezek. 38:2) — with "Magog" re-

ferring back to the descendants of Japheth, who was to be *enlarged* (Gen. 9:27; 10:1, 2 [as well, note "Meshech" and "Tubal"]) — is used in Rev. 20:8 referring to "nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," *i.e.*, *ALL nations*.

Then note Joel 2:20 where reference is made to God destroying the "northern army" (an evident reference to Ezek. 38, 39, where the main, lead power comes from the North), seen contextually in Joel as a *reference to the destruction of all nations* (2:1ff; 3:1ff).

And this destruction in Joel, as in Ezekiel, occurs following Man's Day, following Christ's return (3:16), in the Lord's Day (3:14 [which begins at the end of Man's Day, with the Tribulation comprising the last seven years of Man's Day]).

## The Problem Today

The preceding is far from the way material in these chapters is invariably handled by Bible students today, particularly the three chapters dealing with explanatory material (chs. 37-39) on the three previous chapters (chs. 34-36).

*The interpretation of Ezek. 37:1-10 (vv. 11-14) is quite clear*, but numerous Bible students over the years (particularly since May 14, 1948) have looked at current events and *have been quick to interpret the interpretation, seeking to align current events with Biblical prophecy*. And this has created all types of interpretive problems regarding Israel and the nations.

If an individual adds to the Lord's Own interpretation, interpreting the interpretation in order to align things seen in Ezek. 37-39 with events surrounding the existing nation of Israel in the Middle East, he might as well forget about properly understanding events pertaining to Israel and the nations in the end time. *One simply CAN'T follow error and arrive at truth. Following error CAN ONLY result in additional error and misunderstanding.*