

## 13. Restoration and reunion

March 20, 2014

Through the course of history, we've seen kingdoms, empires, and nations rise and fall over decades, centuries, and even millennia.

The Roman Empire is not just one of the most famous in history; it's also the longest-lasting. It spanned several different eras, but essentially lasted from 27 B.C. to 1453 A.D. – a grand total of 1,480 years.

However, no other kingdom, empire, and nation than Israel has ever been removed from its land and have come back into existence. From 586 B.C. till 1948, for 2,534 years, the land of Israel was ruled by various foreign kingdoms, empires, and nations. The Israel people were dispersed to all over the world.

There is a saying, "You can find two nationalities in every country around the world – the first one is Chinese by its sheer numbers, the other Israelis. When Israel declared her independence for the first time in 1948, there were still more Jews in New York City than in the land of Israel.

The Lord is faithful to fulfill His promise to the descendants of Abraham by restoring them from the desolate place to lush inhabited land and reunited them from all over the world.

### **A. NOT BECAUSE OF YOU, BUT BECAUSE OF MY NAME'S SAKE**

*Ezekiel 36:22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.*

In chapter 36 Ezekiel was commanded to prophesy to the mountains of Israel. This is the second time he prophesied to the mountains of Israel. The first time was back in chapter 6, and he was prophesying the desolations that would come to the mountains of Israel and to the cities because they had built the high places on the mountains and worshiped the false images, idols, and gods. But this time he prophesied to the mountains of Israel, but this prophecy has to do with a work of God in making now the desolate mountains inhabited.

Until now Ezekiel looked back and reproved the people because of their sins. But this time he looked ahead and encourages the people by telling them what the Lord will do for Israel in the future. These promises go beyond the ending of the Babylonian exiles and anticipate the end times.

If you go over to Israel today, you can surely see the fulfillment of these prophecies as the waste desolated places are now full of lives. As the Israelites have built so many cities, as they have planted so many beautiful orchards and cultivated and fruitful fields. As a matter of facts, Israel is one of the world's leading fresh citrus producers and exporters, including oranges, grapefruit, tangerines and the pomelit, a hybrid of a grapefruit and a pomelo, developed in Israel.

In the last days, when the Lord gathered His people back to their land, everything the Lord will do for them will be because of His grace and His faithfulness to fulfill His promise to Abraham and not because they deserved it. God in His grace gives us what we don't deserve, and in His mercy He doesn't give us what we do deserve. All that we have in Christ comes from God's grace and was designed for God's glory .

Lately I see God's love, mercy, and faithfulness for His people more than ever before in light of what is happening in our church with Cade Marion and Conner Nolen situations.

## **B. THE ARMY OF THE DRY BONES**

*Ezekiel 37:1-8 The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. 2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. 3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord God, You know." 4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6 I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord."'" 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. 9 Also 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 may live."'" 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. 11 Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' 12 Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. 14 I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it," says the Lord.'"*

Ezekiel has told the people the Lord's promise to restore the land and regenerate His people. But what about the nation itself, and without a king or a temple? The remnant would return to the ravaged land and rebuild the temple and the city, but none of the blessings Ezekiel promised would come to them at that time. They would be still under the full control of Babylon.

But the Prophet Ezekiel was looking far down the end of the age when Jesus the Messiah would return and claim His people. Ezekiel told the people that the dead nation would one day be raised to life, and the divided nation would be united.

In his vision, Ezekiel was standing in the midst of a dead Jewish army which was slaughtered in a battle. They were not buried, rather left there to become food for the vultures to eat and objects for the sun to bleach. The Lord warned them this would happen to them if they disobeyed Him:

*Deuteronomy 28:25-26 The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26 Your carcasses shall be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away.*

I like Ezekiel's answer in v3. It is the best to show our ignorance in the presence of the Lord. What is there for us to teach God? Is there anything that is hidden from the sight of God? None whatsoever.

By the way, how would you like to be Ezekiel while all these skeletons coming together? I bet all the hair on the back of your neck will stand straight up. You talk about a zombie movie here.

After the infamous Six Day War in 1967, Israel took the full credit of the decisive victory and it became increasingly prideful and forgetful of God's protective hand.

In October 6, 1973, during the time of Yom Kippur in Israel, the coalition forces of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria made a surprise attack against Israel. According to human logic, the Arab coalition should have wiped out Israel, but the result was the other way around. Arab lost again. Then, Israel realized that they didn't win the war because of their massive military capabilities, rather God intervened and saved them again. For example, it was reported that two Israeli tanks were able to destroy dozens of Syrian tanks at the Golan Heights. Within a week, the Syrians lost about 1,000 tanks.

Israel Defense Forces is the 10th ranking most powerful military in the world with nuclear weapon capability. And they have no problem dropping a nuke wherever they need to protect their country. Israel does not have one nation that stands with her. Obama says that America is an ally to Israel, but he is lying through his teeth as always.

In November 8, 2011 at the Group of 20 economic summit in the French resort of Cannes, French President Nicolas Sarkozy blasted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and said, "I can't stand him. He's a liar," during a talk with Obama. The private conversation was inadvertently carried by open microphones before an Obama-Sarkozy news conference. Obama replied, "You're tired of him; what about me? I have to deal with him every day."

Without the Lord, we have no life. Unless God breathed into Adam's nostrils, he was nothing more than a pile of dirt in Genesis 2; unless the Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples to receive the Holy Spirit in John 20, they would be nothing more than a bunch of coward wanted men. Without the Lord, Israel is nothing.

### **C. ONE NATION UNDER ONE KING**

*Ezekiel 37:15-17 Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 16 "As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.' 17 Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.*

*Ezekiel 37:22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again. 23 They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God. 24 "David My servant shall be*

king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. 25 Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. 26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 27 My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 28 The nations also will know that I, the Lord, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."''

It is almost laughable and it is so ridiculous and idiotic for Joseph Smith, the Mormon founder to claim that his name is in the Bible and he was prophesied in the Book of Ezekiel for the stick of Joseph was to be the Book of Mormon that God would give to him and joined together with the Bible would be the continuation of the Bible and God's Word for man in these last days. That is so completely farfetched.

The Lord clearly tells us what He meant in v22. Two kingdoms – Judah Southern Kingdom and Israel Northern Kingdom will be united together as one. And He will be their King.

Once you spiritualize the interpretation of the Bible, there is no limit what you can come up with. Before 1948, the Bible commentators struggled with Ezekiel 37, 38, and 39, because there was no picture of Israel coming back as a nation. So they spiritualized Israel of this portion of the Bible as the church. The result was the Replacement Theology.

At this time in Israel, the majority of the Israelis are secular. They go through religious motions for the sake of custom, tradition, and ritual, but they do not believe in God. There will come a day, the Israelis will come to worship Jesus whom they crucified as their Messiah and Lord.

*Isaiah 59:20-21 "The Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," Says the Lord. 21 "As for Me," says the Lord, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the Lord, "from this time and forevermore."*

#### **D. APPLICATIONS**

**1) Don't let your Christian life be in cruise control. Come alive, immerse yourself in the Word of God and live the life of Christ for the people around you to see.**

Too often God's people are like that standing army in Ezekiel's vision, lifelike but not alive. We need the fresh wind of the Spirit to give us new life from God and new love for one another.

**2) Don't fool yourself that you love God's people unless you are willing to spend time and resources with them.**

Many Christians think that they love God's people when they don't do squat for others. They may say, "I pray for them," which I doubt because they are spiritually lazy; they may say, "I don't have time," which I doubt that either because they always find time for themselves; they say, "I don't have money," which I might agree, but encouragement doesn't always cost anything other than their time. I am glad that our Lord and Friend Jesus doesn't come up with these lame excuses for us.