

Survey of the Bible Ezekiel 33-36

Chapter 33 deals with man's unrighteousness and God's justice. It compares the wickedness of men with the mercy of God. It also states that one who practices wickedness will die while one who practices righteousness will live.

Ezekiel 33:12-16 ¹² "And you, son of man, say to your fellow citizens, 'The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day of his transgression, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he will not stumble because of it in the day when he turns from his wickedness; whereas a righteous man will not be able to live by his righteousness on the day when he commits sin.' ¹³ "When I say to the righteous he will surely live, and he *so* trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die. ¹⁴ "But when I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness, ¹⁵ *if a* wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶ "None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live.

What righteousness is being spoke of here in verses 12-13?

What righteousness is spoken of in verses 14-16?

This is the theme we see throughout the book of Ezekiel; a righteousness that man brings to the table and the righteousness that emanates from God and is accepted by a humble faith in God and His promises that in turn shows the fruit of that righteousness.

Chapter 34 addresses the false shepherds and the true shepherd.

Ezekiel 34:2-5 ² "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ³ "You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat *sheep* without feeding the flock. ⁴ "Those who are sickly you have not strengthened, the diseased you have not healed, the broken you have not bound up, the scattered you have not brought back, nor have you sought for the lost; but with force and with severity you

have dominated them. ⁵ "They were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and they became food for every beast of the field and were scattered.

Where do we see this same dilemma with the Jewish leaders in the N.T.?

Matthew 23:13-15 ¹³ "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. ¹⁴ *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you will receive greater condemnation.* ¹⁵ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

But God in his mercy will deliver the sheep.

Ezekiel 34:10 ¹⁰ "Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will demand My sheep from them and make them cease from feeding sheep. So the shepherds will not feed themselves anymore, but I will deliver My flock from their mouth, so that they will not be food for them.""

Ezekiel 34:11-15 ¹¹ For thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹² "As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. ¹³ "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴ "I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord GOD.

Who is the flock that Ezekiel refers to here?

Those sheep whom the Father has given to the Son from both Jew and Gentile.

John 10:14-18 ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me and I

know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock *with* one shepherd. ¹⁷ "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. ¹⁸ "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

John 10:26-30 ²⁶ "But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. ²⁷ "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ "My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ "I and the Father are one."

John 21:15-17 ¹⁵ So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him again a second time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.

One shepherd over one flock.

Ezekiel 34:22-25 ²² therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another. ²³ "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. ²⁴ "And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken. ²⁵ "I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

By the way, who is this David that God speaks of as being the one shepherd over His sheep?

This is the same one identified as the son of David whom every Jew knew to be the Messiah.

Matthew 21:9 ⁹ The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David; BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Hosanna in the highest!"

Matthew 22:42 ⁴² "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "*The son* of David."

This is the same son of David that John records for us in Revelation.

^{NAU} **Revelation 7:17** for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

It is this Shepherd that goes on to say this in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 34:29-31 ²⁹ "I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. ³⁰ "Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," declares the Lord GOD. ³¹ "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

If we limit these words written by Ezekiel, being delivered by the Holy Spirit, to only the nation of Israel then we miss the redemptive implications that the eternal kingdom of God is being spoken of here that encompasses all men from every tribe, tongue and nation.

And so when Ezekiel says in Eze.34:30 "Then they will know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people," we must place that in the context of the next verse

. ³¹ "As for you, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are men, and I am your God," declares the Lord GOD.

We must juxtapose that with what we saw in **John 10:14-15** ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, ¹⁵ even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

What sheep is Christ talking about?

The same sheep that Ezekiel speaks of; those being all men from every part of the world in all times as they embrace Christ by faith.

Chapter 35 Ezekiel returns to a judgment on Mount Seir.

Ezekiel 35:14-15 ¹⁴ "Thus says the Lord GOD, "As all the earth rejoices, I will make you a desolation. ¹⁵ "As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you. You will be a desolation, O Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

And then God says an interesting thing here regarding the judgment on all the enemies of God in chapter 36.

Ezekiel 36:2-3 ² 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because the enemy has spoken against you, 'Aha!' and, "The everlasting heights have become our possession,' ³ 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.'"

Here God is agreeing that Israel and Judah were judged by God justly as He used the enemies of Israel to carry out His judgment. But we then read that God will one day reverse the curse and the people of God will share in an amazing thing regarding the enemies of God.

Ezekiel 36:12 ¹² 'Yes, I will cause men-- My people Israel-- to walk on you, (the enemies of God mentioned in Eze.36:2), and possess you, so that you will become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.'

This is a parallel passage that we hear from the lips of Jesus Himself. Any thoughts on what those words are?

Matthew 5:5 ⁵ "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Does anyone know where Jesus quoted those words?

Psalms 37:9-11 ⁹ For evildoers will be cut off, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land. ¹⁰ Yet a little while and the wicked man will be no more; And you will look carefully for his place and he will not be *there*. ¹¹ But the humble will inherit the land And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

Who wrote this psalm?

David.

Did Israel live in the land that was promised as an inheritance during the reign of David?

Yes, they did.

So, how can David say that the after the wicked are cut off and will be no more, the humble will inherit the land?

Because David is speaking of a future land where the wicked will not exist is this land.

In the teaching that is prevalent today regarding the millennium, if it is a literal thousand years on this present world, will the wicked have been cut off?

No. In fact the wicked will rise up, according to this teaching, and will make an attempt to overthrow the rule of Christ. So, David cannot be talking about a future where Israel, the nation, will be back in the land where the wicked will be no more. Only the meek will live in this land.

The meek are all of those who have humbled themselves before the Lord Jesus Christ and their reward shall be an inheritance that includes a new earth and new heavens. And that's what David and Jesus speak of.

And so, when we read through Ezekiel it is essential to understand that what God is doing is speaking to an Israel in name only and an Israel that has the same faith as Abraham that includes all men from every corner of the earth. Two different Israel's.

And this is clearly seen in this same chapter as God compares a people, who claim His name who are judged, with a people who will not simply wear the name of God but whom God personally cleanses from their sin as He gives them a new heart.

Ezekiel 36:20-27 ²⁰ "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; yet they have come out of His land.' ²¹ "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went. ²² "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. ²³ "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst.

Let's stop here for a second. Notice verse 23. Is it Israel, who has received God's judgement, who is being vindicated here?

No. The vindication is directly and squarely on the holiness of God's great name. And it is for this reason and this reason only that God continues in verse 24...

24 Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight. ²⁴ "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ "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. ²⁶ "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. ²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

By the way, what Israel is God speaking of here in these last verses?

All of those in the Israel that is being judged and all of those in the future Israel that will include all nations of whom we are told God will give a new heart. These are the same one's spoken of in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 5:8-10 ⁸ When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.

This same Israel that is promised to inherit the earth is the same Israel being shown reigning in this earth in the last part of chapter 36.

Ezekiel 36:33-36 ³³ "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. ³⁴ "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by. ³⁵ "They will say, "This desolate land has

become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified *and* inhabited.' ³⁶ "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."

If we mistake this land as a land where present day Jews are to receive these blessings then we have once again missed the point of what Jews we are talking about and what land is promised to them when they are given new hearts and new spirits by God for His namesake.

And so as to make clear what people are being spoken of Ezekiel gives us a vision in chapter 37.

Ezekiel 37:1-6 ^{NAU} 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. ² 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. ³ He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." ⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.'" ⁵ "Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause breath to enter you that you may come to life. ⁶ 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.'"

What God is doing in this vision is teaching some very important truths about man and about God.

The first thing we must acknowledge is who is in complete control of all that transpires in this vision?

In this vision do any of these dry bones have any control over their futures?

Why?

Because the implication is that these are dead men with no life.

But then the Lord asks a question of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 37:3 ³ He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

Now, if God Himself was not asking this question what would be the normal response?

Of course not. But because Ezekiel knows God and the power of God he does not want to answer in this way, but so as to hedge his bets as to answering correctly he simply says this.

Ezekiel 37:3 And I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."

That's a safe answer and always the right answer.

But again, keep in mind, that this entire vision is on the heels of what we were told previously in chapter 36 where there was a people in need of new hearts, and a new spirit, with the implication being that they need a new life that only God can give as He takes out the heart of stone and gives His people a heart of flesh.

And so, as we come back here next week we will see how hearts of flesh will be put into dry bones that are dead and unable to bring themselves back to life without God's direct intervention.