

The Visions of Ezekiel

Lesson 28

Looking to the future, even past our time today, the LORD revealed the cleaning of Israel. At the time of the giving of this promise, Israel was filthy because of her great sins against the LORD that caused Him to send her into exile. We see the LORD begin His message by restating Israel's sin and mentioning the wrath that He had already laid upon her before He sent her into exile.

Ezekiel's Fifty-fifth Assignment from the LORD

5. The Way of the Cleansing of Israel (36:16-38)

a) By the LORD's Wrath (36:16-18)

36:16 Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 36:17 "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. 36:18 "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.

The year of this vision was still 585 BC and the exiles of the Southern Kingdom had been out of the Promised Land less than a year. This assignment for Ezekiel begins with a reminder. *"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"* (36:16-17). Previously in Ezekiel, the LORD had prosecuted the Israelites for their sins against Him of idolatry and adultery. In their idolatry they had offered human sacrifices to carved images of false gods. In particular, they had offered their children to the belly of Moloch and had beaten their drums to drown out the cries of the children as they burned to death in the fire. In their adultery, they had trusted in ungodly relationships with the nations that surrounded them instead of trusting and being faithful to the LORD their God. With that as a reminder to Ezekiel, the LORD said, *"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"* (36:18). The deed was done. The LORD's wrath had been poured. The blood of the sinners had been spilt. The wrath of the LORD had been felt. The people who were to die because of their sins had died.

b) By the LORD's Scattering (36:19)

36:19 "Also I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them.

But not all were sinners to the extent that they felt the wrath of the LORD. The LORD said, *"I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed throughout the lands"* (36:19), meaning those under the control of Nebuchadnezzar. When the LORD says, *"According to their ways and their deeds I judged them"* (36:19), He simply means that those who were to die for their sins died and those who were to be saved were scattered as exiles to the nations of the Babylonian Empire for safety. Nebuchadnezzar was far from being through with his war campaign in the region. Had those people been left behind, they would have been in the bullseye of Nebuchadnezzar's wrath.

(1) In Spite of the LORD's Heritage (36:20)

36:20 "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.'

In spite of the LORD's heritage with the Israelites, His people were not out of the way of the disparaging remarks from the others living in the Babylonian Empire. They said of these Israelites, "*These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land,*" (36:20). The Babylonians were questioning why the Israelites would have been removed from their Promised Land if they truly belonged to the LORD. They understood that Nebuchadnezzar had taken them out of the land, yet, they profaned the LORD's holy name by chiding the Israelite people for what the LORD had done with them. The Israelites were His people. He put them in Babylon to protect them. The Babylonians, who did not believe in the LORD, used Israel's relationship with Him to chide them.

(2) In Spite of the LORD's Concern (36:21)

36:21 "But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations where they went.

But in spite of the heritage of the Israelites with the LORD, the Babylonians had a right to say such a thing about the *house of Israel*—specifically, the exiles from the Northern Kingdom. These exiles were not the original humans taken from the north. These were the children and grandchildren of those taken in exile more than 137 years before. We must not forget that the Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC and that was when the saved exiles were removed from the northern part of the Promised Land to the old Assyrian Empire. Some of them were stationed on the *Chebar River* where Ezekiel was taken from the Southern Kingdom in 597 BC. At the time of the delivery of this part of the vision it was 585 BC and the children of those who had been exiled from the Northern Kingdom were guilty of falling back into some of the old practices that caused their ancestors to be removed from the north years before. Throughout this book, when the LORD speaks about the *house of Israel* or the *elders of Israel*, it is always to correct their thinking and behavior. However, when the LORD speaks about the *house of Judah* or the *elders of Judah*, it is always edifying, uplifting and informative. The eyes of the Babylonians were on the *house of Israel* and they were not impressed with the testimony the *house of Israel* was displaying as exiles of the Promised Land. Simply, their lives were a poor testimony for the LORD.

(3) In Spite of the LORD's Action (36:22)

36:22 "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.

In spite of the LORD's action with the *house of Israel*, in spite of the fact that the LORD had taken them into exile and allowed them to live while profaning His name among the Babylonians, the LORD was going to take action to prove to the Babylonian Empire that His name was a holy name over all creation.

(4) In Spite of the LORD's Name (36:23)

36:23 "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.**

In spite of what the *house of Israel* had done to profane the name of the LORD, the LORD was going to take action to prove Himself in the sight of the Babylonians. May we not forget that Daniel was still second in charge of the Babylonian Empire and the LORD would use him in the life of Nebuchadnezzar to impact the thinking of the Babylonians.

But in spite of all this, the whole house of Israel was scattered throughout the known world which was controlled by the Babylonian Empire. In Acts chapter two we can see a glimpse of many of the nations controlled by Babylon where the Israelites had been scattered. In the following passage we include the modern-day descriptions.

And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? Parthians (*northwestern part of Iran*) and Medes (*near the Caspian Sea to the west of Parthian - Iran*) and Elamites (*the land east of Parthian – Iran*), and residents of Mesopotamia (*all of the land of the old Assyrian Empire that included the Tigris and Euphrates, the Arabian Desert, Syria, Armenia and Turkey*), Judea (*the Promised Land originally deeded to the tribes of Judah*) and Cappadocia (*northwestern Turkey*), Pontus (*central Turkey*) and Asia (*western Turkey*), Phrygia (*south of Pontus*) and Pamphylia (*southern Turkey bordering the Mediterranean Sea*), Egypt (*Egypt*) and the districts of Libya around Cyrene (*west of Egypt*), and visitors from Rome (*Rome in Italy*), both Jews and proselytes, Cretans (*island in northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea*) and Arabs (*the land with the Red Sea on its west and the Persian Gulf on its east*)-- we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. *Acts 2:8-11*

On the day of Pentecost, after the resurrection of the LORD in 30 AD, Jews from all the listed countries were present in Jerusalem, had heard the Gospel, accepted the LORD as their Savior and took the message back to their homelands and started new Churches. It was to all of these countries that the Israelites of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were scattered before the time of this prophecy in 585 BC. An important point to remember concerning the start of these new Churches - the believing people were all Israelites, not Gentiles.

The record of the return of the Israelite exiles to the Promised Land and afterward beginning with the order of Cyrus the Great in 536 BC is found in Ezra, Nehemiah and the Chronicles and it indicates that not all of the Israelites chose to return to the Promised Land. Large populations of Israelites remained where their ancestors were exiled. Their lives had been established there and returning to the Promised Land would have meant starting over in a unfamiliar land. Esther's family had made the decision not to return. That decision literally saved the lives of every Jew listed in the countries mentioned in the Acts 2 passage. All those countries were part of the Persian Empire which absorbed the Babylonian Empire on the night of the handwriting on the wall found in the book of Daniel.

Upon looking at the history in this Acts 2 passage, it is clear that it was the will of the LORD that many Jews not return to the Promised Land with Cyrus' decree. Had they returned, the Church of the LORD Jesus Christ would not have been able to spread to the known world in just 90 days after the day of Pentecost.

To this day, Israelites are still scattered across the world. In 2017, if the population records are correct that are provided by the Jewish Data Bank (Table 4)⁶³, the major populations of Jews are as follows.

Country	Jewish Population	% of Total (World)
Israel	6,451,000	44.5%
United States	5,700,000	39.3%
France	456,000	3.1%
Canada	390,000	2.7%

⁶³ ["Jewish population - world 2017" \(PDF\)](#). www.jewishdatabank.org. Jewish data bank. Retrieved 25 April 2019.

United Kingdom	289,500	2.0%
Argentina	180,500	1.2%
Russian Federation	176,000	1.2%
Germany	116,500	0.8%
Australia	113,200	0.8%
Brazil	93,800	0.6%
South Africa	69,300	0.5%
Ukraine	53,000	0.4%
Hungary	47,500	0.3%
Mexico	40,000	0.3%
Netherlands	29,800	0.2%
Belgium	29,300	0.2%
Italy	27,300	0.2%
Switzerland	18,700	0.1%
Chile	18,300	0.1%
Uruguay	16,900	0.1%
Turkey	15,300	0.1%
Sweden	15,000	0.1%

The table indicates the major concentration of the Jewish population in the world; however, Jews can be found living throughout the world in places not mentioned in the table. Furthermore, there are those of Jewish blood scattered through the world who do not know they are Jewish because they have lost knowledge of their heritage. This point was mentioned in Nehemiah 7.

And these *were* they who came up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer; but they could not show their fathers' houses or their descendants, whether they were of Israel: the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, 642. And of the priests: the sons of Hobaiah, the sons of Hakkoz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and was named after them. These searched *among* their ancestral registration, but it could not be located; therefore, they were considered unclean *and excluded* from the priesthood. *Nehemiah 7:61-64*

In an article printed in the Los Angeles Times newspaper by Mary Rouke, February 7, 1997, Rouke wrote the following concerning Madeleine Albright, the first female Secretary of State of the United States of America from 1997 – 2001.

How could Madeleine Albright not know until she was 60 years old of her Jewish heritage? To ask about her life requires asking about the thousands of other Jews who have lived a similar experience.

2017 Jewish Data Bank (Table 4)
Total Jewish Population for 2017 14,346,900

Many, including Albright's parents, denied their heritage during the Nazi era in Europe. Others made the same choice as far back as the Spanish Inquisition of the 15th century or even earlier. For protective covering in the face of near certain death under Adolf Hitler, untold thousands of

European Jews converted to Christianity. Many never returned to Judaism, although some continued to practice in secret. Some--still--keep the faith under cover. "The scope is quite vast," says Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean and founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. "The experience of Madeleine Albright is not unique."

Secretary of State Albright discussed her personal story this week after Washington Post researchers uncovered information concerning her family's experiences in her native Czechoslovakia. In 1939, when she was 2, her father, Josef Korbel, whisked the family out of the country. The family converted to Catholicism and Albright's parents never told her about her Jewish roots. Relatives who stayed behind died in concentration camps.

More typically, Hier says, the Nazis rounded up any Jewish men and women they could find. Often, the children were left behind. Some parents placed their babies on the steps of a church or convent, hoping for asylum. "Those children were taken in and raised Christian," Hier says. "Many did not know their real identity. Some adoptive parents later told them, others never did."

Trudi Alexy, a psychotherapist who lives in Tarzana, lived an experience similar to Albright's. She was born a Jew in Romania but at age 11 her family converted out of fear to Christianity. She was raised a Roman Catholic in Barcelona, Spain. At 60, having married, moved to California, raised two children and started a late-blooming career, Alexy went back to Spain to search for a deeper understanding about her past. She wrote a book, "The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot," (Simon & Shuster, 1993); the title refers to a practice by Jews who embraced Christianity in Spain and kept a statue of the Virgin Mary in the house but hid inside it a mezuzah, a Jewish ritual container. Her book proved to be a beginning, not an end. Since it was published, Alexy has lectured regularly and continues to meet people with similar stories. Many still live as hidden Jews in the U.S., Spain, Portugal and South America, particularly Brazil. From the Middle Ages, they have been called Marranos, "swine" in Spanish. Some Jews cannot understand why they continue to live a double life, but Alexy is sympathetic. "If your family went through what went on in Europe in the late 1930s and 1940s, you could understand. It was a question of survival." Of Marranos she has met, one case made a particularly strong impression. "I know a Catholic priest who keeps a Kosher Jewish house," she says. His family embraced Christianity centuries ago but continued to practice Judaism in secret. Now about 50 years old, he still preserves Jewish traditions. "To him, being a Catholic priest is a job," Alexy says. "He sees it as a mitzvah, a good deed." Alexy has seen a number of mature adults who only recently discovered their Jewish heritage. She can accept them, but many faithful Jews cannot. "Some of my friends who lived through the Holocaust were shocked that Madeleine Albright did not come out and volunteer her story," Alexy says. "How could she when she didn't know? I feel a tremendous compassion for her."

Hier knows other families who made the same choice as Albright's parents. "I don't criticize her parents," he says. "They thought it was a matter of life and death. And I cannot fault Madeleine Albright. She knew nothing about this, it was not her decision."⁶⁴

With the enlightenment of that story we can understand that the LORD will gather the Jews from all over the world, even those who do not know they are of Jewish blood.

c) By the LORD's Gathering (36:24-32)

(1) Removed from the Nations (36:24)

36:24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

The Israelites are scattered throughout the world today and, yet, one day, from all over the planet, the LORD will gather all those of Jewish blood to the Promised Land. But there, they must be sanitized, they must be cleansed in order to enter into His 1,000-year kingdom.

(2) Cleansed with the Water (36:25)

36:25 "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.

First, the LORD will clean the Israelites with water. Here we struggle for the meaning. It could not have meant water baptism in this context because of how the LORD's describes their uncleanness in verse 36:17. *"Son of man, when the house of Israel was living in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their*

⁶⁴ Mary Rouke, *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1997.

way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity." This kind of cleansing required a ceremonial ritual pictured in the books of Leviticus and Numbers.

And anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. And whoever touches anything on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. *Leviticus 15:21-22*

Then for the unclean *person* they shall take some of the ashes of the burnt purification from sin and flowing water shall be added to them in a vessel. And a clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, and sprinkle *it* on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the persons who were there, and on the one who touched the bone or the one slain or the one dying *naturally* or the grave. Then the clean *person* shall sprinkle on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify him from uncleanness, and he shall wash his clothes and bathe *himself* in water and shall be clean by evening. *Numbers 19:17-19*

We do not have a clear picture of how the LORD will do this when He gathers the Israelites back into the land because the Scripture does not give any indication. However, looking down through history at how the LORD has fulfilled many of His other promises, we are always quite surprised at His ways of fulfilling prophecies. It might be that He gave us the unexpected answer in the Revelation.

And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman (Israel) who gave birth to the male *child* (Jesus). And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. *Revelation 12:13-17*

In the timeline of the Revelation 12 passage above, the nation of Israel, the woman, had not accepted the LORD as Savior at that point, but she will shortly after she has run for her life from the great dragon. Perhaps the water spewed at her will shake her sins to the core, scare her to death and turn her eyes to the LORD – but that is pure speculation. We will have to wait and see how the LORD will ceremonially cleanse Israel with water! From being cleansed with water, Israel will undergo surgery for a new heart.

(3) Surgery for a New Heart (36:26)

36:26 "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.

Here we must address an important point. Why will the LORD give Israel a new heart and put a new spirit in her, removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh? At this point in the storyline in 585 BC, the LORD had the attention of all twelve tribes of Israel who were dispersed in the exile. Why did He not accomplish this task at this point in the story rather than waiting for it to happen in the time of the end? It was because the omnipotent LORD still knew what the whole nation of Israel would do in the future. It had to be that He knew that she would reject Him when He came to earth to be the final offering for her sins.

At this point in the life of all the Israelites, as awful as they were, they were still looking for the coming Messiah. The way to salvation was clearly stated in the Mosaic Law and, in general, the nation followed many of the laws. Even in exile, the Israelites knew the way to the LORD. When they returned to the Promised Land in 536 BC, Ezra would read to them from the Mosaic Law and their system of faith would be established anew with the rebuilding of the Temple. On down through time the Jewish system would

progress until the right moment arrived for the Messiah to be born. After reaching the age of 30, He would be baptized, begin His ministry, be arrested, put on trial, crucified by the leaders of the whole house of Israel. He would be rejected by His own nation. That is the point of death for Israel. That is the point when Israel will become dead dry bones to the LORD. At that point, the nation of Israel will need to be cleansed, she will need a new heart because hers had become a heart of stone. It is still a heart of stone today. She is still looking for her Messiah, but she missed Him. She did not need a new heart until 33 AD when she killed Him. Therefore, the LORD will deal with her in the end times.

(4) *Invaded by a New Spirit (36:27)*

36:27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

With the new heart, the whole nation of Israel will also receive a new spirit. While this may seem like a special event for the nation, it has actually been part of the salvation process for everyone throughout all time. When you and I accepted the LORD as our Savior, He placed in us a new heart and a new spirit. When we belong to the LORD and He belongs to us, we want to follow His laws, both statutes and ordinances. In the end, Israel will be invaded by the spirit to follow the LORD Whom she missed in 33 AD.

(5) *Heirs of a Promised Land (36:28)*

36:28 "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

In the end times, when the nation of Israel accepts the LORD as Savior, it will occur on the Promised Land. There on the land, Israel will be the LORD's people and He will be their God as He reigns on His throne in Jerusalem. It was a promise to Israel's forefathers that the LORD intends to keep.

(6) *Saved from Future Famine (36:29-30)*

(a) *The Multiplied Grains (36:29)*

36:29 "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.

When the LORD cleanses the nation of Israel and gives her a new heart and spirit, that action will save her from her uncleanness. The major uncleanness of Israel began in 33 AD with her rejection of the Messiah and she will continue to be unclean as a nation until the middle of her time of tribulation when she finally turns to Him as Savior, LORD and King. At that point, she will shortly enter into the 1,000-year kingdom and never want for food and supplies again. The LORD will speak, and the land will provide grain enough for all.

(b) *The Multiplied Fruit (36:30)*

36:30 "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.

Not only will the grain be brought forth for Israel but also the fruit of the trees and the vegetables the field. No famine will be in sight for Israel ever again. But what about her past sin?

(7) *Sick of the Sinful Past (36:31-32)*

(a) *The Memory of the Evil Ways (36:31)*

36:31 "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.

To be cleansed from past sins is one thing; to forget about them is another. Remembering what we have done wrong is a good thing in our lives. Even in the 1,000-year kingdom of the LORD, Israel will

remember what she did wrong and the cause of her evil ways. Remembering helps people not to repeat a wrong that they have done in the past. Israel had committed a lot of wrongs. In the future, she will need to remember her wrongs so she will do right.

(b) The Shame of the Past Ways (36:32)

36:32 "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!"

A memory of wrong is good; a feeling of shame is good. If we had no shame when we did something that was wrong, we would do it again and again, never feeling the pain of sin. Remembering our sin keeps us in line. With that, throughout the 1,000-year reign of the LORD, Israel will remember all she did against the LORD and in her shame she will abide in His presence and follow His will and way.

(8) By the LORD's Blessings (36:33-38)

(a) Cities Built for Believers (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."

Blessings beyond all imagination are awaiting the redeemed nation of Israel. The LORD promises her many things in the future. Here we catch a glimpse of just a few things. First, Israel will have great cities for homes in the 1,000-year kingdom on the Promised Land. The land that will seem desolate and completely uninhabitable, which will include the sands of the deserts that are part of the Promised Land, will blossom forth with everything needed to facilitate cities for the Israelites to live in.

(b) Land Cultivated for Believers (36:34)

36:34 "The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by."

Second, food will not be an issue for Israel during the 1,000-year kingdom. The land will provide all that is needed for the inhabitants and the visitors on their way to worship the LORD on His throne in Jerusalem – all those *"who pass by."*

(i) The Talk of the Neighbors (36:35)

36:35 "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'"

We know from the description by Moses of the Garden of Eden in the book of Genesis that it was perfect and beautiful in every way. Even the neighboring countries that surround the Promised Land will look at what the LORD made it into in His kingdom and say, "It looks like the Garden of Eden."

(ii) The Talk of the LORD (36:36)

36:36 "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."

The rebuilt, perfect Promised Land will be a witness to the nations of the world that the LORD will do what He promised He would do. They, too, will know that He is LORD when He has cleansed the whole nation of Israel, given her a new heart and spirit and a new place to live in His Promised Land.

(c) Children Born to Believers (36:37-38)

36:37 '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. 36:38 "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."'"**

Now catch this! During the 1,000-year reign of the LORD, babies will be born to increase the multitude of Israelites in His kingdom. How amazing! Babies will be born to a world where Satan is bound, Israel is the pristine and revered nation of nations and the LORD is LORD of everyone in the world – a one-world government. Imagine, a whole host of babies who, for up to 1,000 years never know the struggle of a famine in their lives. We must wonder what kind of human adults they will grow to be. Actually, the LORD knows, and He has made plans for them too.