

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

God used Ezekiel to warn of the destruction that would come upon Judah for rebellion and unfaithfulness. Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and the temple by God's authority. Ezekiel also prophesied of God's judgment upon other nations for their wickedness (especially Edom in **chapter 35**). However, the difference is that God gave a special message to Ezekiel about the restoration of Israel after their captivity (**Eze. 36:1-15**) and a greater prophecy with an application beyond a return to the land; it is a prophecy of a **spiritual** restoration in **Ezekiel 36-37**.

God would be the One to restore His people by bringing them from the nations (**36:24**). He would sprinkle clean water on them to cleanse them (**v.25**). He would put a new, soft heart in them (**v.26**) and a new spirit in them (**v.26-27**). The new spirit would be God's Holy Spirit. With God's Spirit abiding in them, they would be led to follow God's instructions willingly. Their relationship with God would be restored (**v.28**). In this relationship, their attitude toward obedience and sin would be in harmony with God's will. They would hate their sins and strive to follow God's commands (**v.31**).

The thought of spiritual restoration continues in **Ezekiel 37**, where we read about the famous vision of the valley full of dry bones. Twice (in **verses 4** and **5**), God mentions that He would put "breath" in the new bodies. "Breath" is the same word (RUACH) translated "spirit" in **Ezekiel 36:26-27**. After the bones were assembled and given sinews, muscles, and skin, God told Ezekiel to prophesy again to the breath to come from the four winds (**v.9-10**). When that happened the bodies came to life, and they stood as a great army. "Winds" is a form of the same word (RUACH) again. The application is obvious that God's Spirit makes God's people alive and powerful as a spiritual army as **verse 14** says.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 alludes to a fulfillment of **Ezekiel 36:26-27**. Certainly, the forgiveness God provides is fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and our baptism into His death for remission of sins (**Romans 3:20-26; 6:3-4, Acts 2:38**). The gift of the Spirit and the new life He gives (**Acts 3:32, Romans 8:2**) fulfill Ezekiel's prophecy.