

## Coming King 5 – Ezek 37.15-28 (with Rom 11.9-15, 25-27)

Clint Le Page

Main Point – Christ will unite and save Israel, so pray for Jews to be saved and us all to be united in living for King Jesus.

I think most of us like to be first.(**SLIDE**) We prefer to be first than last.

We like the security and success, or praise and power that coming first brings.

And for the 12 tribes of Israel, Judah had been first, and dominant.

King David was from Judah, and from him came a line of Kings, and the promise of a descendant who'd rule on the throne forever.

But today God gives a better vision, not of one winner and other loses, but of God's people Israel truly united.-----

And for we who aren't Jews, we're also, not first.

**Romans 1.16 says(SLIDE)** that God decided, salvation is for the Jew first, then the Gentile.

God wants us to not be proud or grumpy that that we're not first.

We should be thankful we're included at all, we should want Jews to come to Jesus, and us all to live in unity under his rule.-----

We're continuing in our series on the Coming King,(**SLIDE**) looking at OT prophecies that build expectation for the Messiah.

We've seen that the Messiah Jesus is the one who will crush Satan and bless the nations.

He'll be a King from David's line, rule over-all, forever, and return one day to judge.

He is God, will reveal God, and bring light to our darkness.----

And last week, from Isa 11, he'll be the Spirit-filled Messiah who'll bring justice, salvation to the nations and bring his people to the new heaven n' earth.

What a grand view of Jesus' greatness we're getting.

But there's more, as we come to Ezekiel 37.

First though, I'll set the scene and consider the **Previous Promises.(SLIDE)-----**

Before we consider Ezekiel's prophecies in ch37 it's important to understand the context and where this sits historically.

So as this **timeline shows(SLIDE)** King David ruled in 1000 BC, then his grandson Rehoboam allowed the Kingdom of Israel to split in 930 BC.

In Isaiah's day, the Northern Kingdom had already been exiled & carried off.

Soon after Isaiah, the southern Kingdom of Judah was exiled by Babylon.

Ezekiel himself was taken far from his homeland, and in Iraq he writes this.---

The book has words of judgment for Israel and their enemies, but also wonderful promises.

In chapters 34-37 there's been amazing promises, even about Jesus.

I quickly mention 3.

**First**, in **Ezek 34** God promised,(**SLIDE**) 'I will rescue' my flock/ my sheep, I will shepherd them (v11-16).

And yet, the shepherd will also be David, from David; which points us to Christ.----

**Secondly**, in **Ez 36** we get big promises which will be fulfilled in the new covenant.

God promises a future of cleansing from sin, people given new hearts and his Spirit; so they want and are able to obey God, and reject idols.

We'll think more about this today.

Then **third** promise in **Ezek 37**.

Ezekiel saw a valley of dry bones(**SLIDE**), and then the bones come together, they get covered with flesh and skin.

Then breath enters them and they live.

Remember in Hebrew, breath is the same word as Spirit.

And the meaning of this is explained in **v11,(SLIDE)**.

Dead bones coming to life symbolise new life for Israel.

The defeated and broken Israelites in Babylon are given hope.

The future restoration, return, and renewal by the Spirit, will be like a resurrection from the dead miracle.(**SLIDE**)

And it points to what the Messiah Jesus will achieve.-----

Hopeless people who now have hope. **(SLIDE)**

Dead people who now have life, resurrection life.

Exiled people who now come home.

Sin-dominated people now given God's Spirit.

And that is what God gives us too, through faith in Jesus.-----

With that exciting background we come to **point 2 and the promise of One People.(SLIDE)**

**V15**, God's word comes to Ezekiel, and he is told to take **two sticks**.

On one he writes 'Belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him'.

Remember, in 930BC the Kingdom of Israel split into north and south. **(SLIDE)**

The Northern kingdom, sometimes called Israel, with most of the tribes, came to be dominated by Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph.

And the Southern kingdom, dominated by Judah.-----

And for 350 years the northern and southern kingdoms have been divided.

The northern kingdom was exiled by Assyria; many were taken away, foreigners were brought in, and the Israelites intermarried.

Their descendants became the Samaritans, despised by Jews as half-bred Israelites, who refused to accept all the Scriptures and worship in Jerusalem.-----

And the people of Judah, In Ezekiel's day, were destroyed by Babylon;

mostly living in a foreign land, under a foreign king, and feeling hopeless.

And to these people Ezekiel speaks.-----

It's also helpful to know that after the exile, the people of Judah get called 'Jews'.---

So the descendants of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel, have been divided and separated for centuries.

But as the word 'Israel' is written on each of Ezekiel's sticks, God promises a time is coming when they will be re-united. **(SLIDE)**-----

Ezekiel is told to bring the sticks of Judah and Ephraim together .-----

The Hebrew word for 'one' is actually mentioned 11 times in vv16-24.

**v17** literally reads, 'combine them one to one in one wood so that they become one in your hand'.-----

God explains the skit in **v19**, He is going to unite the tribes of Joseph n' those with him, with those of Judah & those with him.

God will reunite his people, and bring them into their own land, v21.-----

God will make them one nation in the land – no more schisms, divisions & conflict.---

### **When and how is this fulfilled?-----**

In the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> century BC some of the Jews returned to the land of Judah, and the temple was rebuilt, but not in its former glory.

The Jews in Jerusalem were still waiting for the fulfilment of this promise.

Even in Jesus' day the Israelites were still scattered, still waiting for Ezek 37's fulfilment.

And we are not to wait for a future millennium, where Israel will occupy real estate in the Middle-east with a new temple.

No, it is only Jesus who will reunite the people of Israel.

Fulfilment comes and will come, as Jews believe in Jesus the Messiah.-----

In the New Testament we get glimpses of this.

Anna the prophetess in Luke 2(v36) was from the tribe of Asher, believed baby Jesus was the Messiah.

Same with Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, from the tribe of Levi.(Lk 1.5).

The apostle Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11.1).

The Samaritan woman in John 4, with some Israelite ancestry came to Jesus.

And at Pentecost over 3,000 Jews from many countries came to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ.

And there will be many more. Romans chapter 11 promises there will be more.-----

I don't know if you know about what Romans 11 promises, or if you're concerned about the salvation of Jews, but the apostle Paul says in **Rom 11v1(SLIDE)** –

God hasn't rejected his people Israel.

Israelites will be saved. Paul's an example.

And he says in **v11,(SLIDE)** Because they sinned and rejected Christ, salvation has come to the Gentiles, we non-Jews.

But v12 implies many more Jews will be brought back and be saved.-----

I don't know if you've **ever grafted trees, or seen it done.(SLIDE)**

But Paul says the Israelites are the root and cultivated olive tree (v17), and because of their unbelief they were cut off.

Then we non-Jews were the wild olive branch grafted in.-----

And as a side-track, us being grafted into God's people, Paul describes in **Ephesians 2,(SLIDE)** as the wall of hostility being broken down.

So we get reconciled to God and to his Jewish people.

All believers in Jesus making one people of God.

So we have unity with one another, whatever our racial, religious or cultural backgrounds.

Our relationship with Jesus unites us, and should keep us united.-----

Are you committed to unity with your brothers and sisters here?-----

So we Gentiles were grafted into, God's saved people.

But in Rom 11.23, how much more-easily will Israelites be grafted in again.

And then as we read in **Rom 11.25,(SLIDE)** when God's chosen Gentiles are saved, God will save more Jews.

Scripture says, God will mercifully save more Israelites, before Jesus comes again.

He will fulfill the promise he gave in Ezek 37.-----

This means **we should care about the salvation of the Jews.**

God cares about the salvation of Jews and so should we.

Honestly I was rebuked by this, last week.-----

Paul says he feels great sorrow and unceasing anguish about his fellow Israelites not being saved.

For the only way for anyone to be saved is to trust Jesus, the Lord & Saviour, who died and rose and rules.(Rom 10.1-11)

Jews are saved not by their obedience, only as they believe in Jesus the Messiah.

And Romans 11 suggests that more Jews are going to be saved, and united with one another through Jesus.-----

And friends, I wonder if this is beginning to be fulfilled in our day.

Just this last week I've been doing some research.

I know of ministries that are seeking to reach Jews with the Gospel of Jesus, like Jews for Jesus or Celebrate Messiah.

But I discovered that God seems to be doing a great work already drawing many him.

Estimates suggest there may be 350,000 Jewish believers in Jesus world-wide now.

But that likely only counts those in Messianic Jewish congregations.

The article in the transcript(**SLIDE**) reveals that there seems to be a spiritual awakening among Jews, especially in the US. (<https://allisrael.com/studies-reveal-there-are-now-1-million-followers-of-jesus-worldwide-of-jewish-descent>)

Some say that there's around 1 million Jewish believers in Jesus, 870,000 in the US.

And if one million of the 16 million Jews believe in Jesus, that's phenomenal, 1/16.

If God is bringing revival among Jews around the world, that's exciting, and may we say, praise be to God.

And that's how Paul responds at the end of Romans 11,(**SLIDE**)

Praising God for his rich wisdom and knowledge, and praying God will get the glory as he saves people like he promised.-----

We should praise him too, don't you think?

But may Jews coming to Jesus also be a reminder, if not a rebuke to us, that **we should care about the salvation of Jewish people.**

Do you ever pray for their salvation?-----

Praise God that we even some people at Bundy with Jewish heritage.-----

Paul even said if he could go to hell instead of his fellow Israelites, he would.(**Rom 9.3**)

(**SLIDE**)I'm not saying we all should wish the same, but we should care.

And I know there's so many Jews in our city, even Jews by birth, not following Judaism.

But when you have opportunities to speak with a Jew, take an interest, ask them questions about their life, culture, and upbringing. Love them, as God does.----

Ask them if they've read the Hebrew Scriptures, our OT.

Ask if they've heard much about Jesus.

You might find you know more about their Scriptures than they do.

But we have a great message of hope to share with Jews.

Could you add them to your weekly prayer list?-----

Pray confidently for God has promised that,(**SLIDE**) **the Israelites will be one people under one King, and a new covenant. Point 3.**

Ezek 37.22, one king will rule over them, one united kingdom. (Not British UK)

This king in **v24** is called 'my **servant** David'.

Interestingly, the Kingdom of Israel split when David's grandson Rehoboam became king,(**SLIDE**) and he wouldn't serve the people of Israel in the north, and treated them harshly.

He was not a servant-King, but Jesus is and was a servant-king son-of-David.

A King who'd humbly serve by even sacrificing his life to save sinful people, who'd treated him harshly.

How amazing!-----

But not only does v24 describe him as a servant king, but also a **shepherd**.

As Ezek 34 did.

And remember how Jesus describes himself as the shepherd in **John 10.(SLIDE)**

<sup>14</sup>"I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me,... I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd.

This one flock, one people and one shepherd language picks up the imagery and prophecy of Ezekiel 37, doesn't it?-----

And Jesus said, his sheep, his people, will listen to his voice, we 'other sheep' will listen to his word, n' do what he says.

And that's what Ezek 37 said too.

The Israelites will **obey the King's ordinances**, statutes; his commands & laws.-----

That hadn't happened in the past

Even when Israel had good kings like Josiah and Hezekiah, who obeyed God, the people still didn't.

And a return to the land of Judah wont fix this. They need a radical change.

A heart transplant,(**SLIDE**) a heart transformation was needed.-----

And that is what the **new covenant brings**.

Remember in Ezek 36.25 God promised cleansing from sin and the Spirit who'd cause people to obey.

Because we can't do it on our own.

We can't cleanse our sin or change our sinful hearts.

We needed King Jesus to live a sinless life in our place, then die in our place, so our sin could be taken and washed away.

Then the Spirit comes to live-in us and transform us to live for Christ.

This is a promise and a reality through the new covenant, which **v26** calls a permanent **covenant of peace**.-----

Remember a covenant is a formal binding relationship based on promises.

And through God's amazing grace, he commits to save sinners, n' bring permanent peace and relationship with him.-----

That word 'peace' in Hebrew is Shalom(**SLIDE**) – a word that speaks of everything being good, all being well.

It's about wholeness, completeness; peace, and fulness.

Jesus has and will bring this for God's people, his Jew and Gentile people.-----

And it's now and not yet for we followers of Jesus; **now and not yet**.-----

When we confess our sin, our need for Jesus and trust him, we are now cleansed of all sin.

**Titus 2.14 says(SLIDE):**

Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works.

Which Titus 3.5 says is enabled by the Holy Spirit.-----

This fulfils Ezek 37.24, and is a now and not yet experience.

Through Jesus we receive God's Spirit, who empowers and enables us to obey.

We Christians have new hearts and the Spirit, so we can say No to sin, and yes to obeying Christ.

But it's not perfect, and it won't be perfect until we get to glory.-----

But my question is, what does it look like for you to obey King Jesus, and live under his rule now?-----

Ezek 37.23 spoke of God's people not defiling themselves with idols any more.

**So what idol have you been defiling yourself with lately?-----**

Martin Luther once wrote, 'a god is whatever we expect to provide all good, and in which we take refuge in distress... Whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in, that I tell you, is your true god'.

Tim Keller says, 'our idols are those things we count on to give ourselves meaning. They are things of which we say, 'I need this to make me happy'.

What is it for you?----- And so what do you need to repent of and change?-----

**Tim Chester says in(SLIDE) 'You can change'**, that sin arises when we desire something more than we desire God.

And Sometimes a change can come by realising that sinful desires are sinful, and it is these things which are destructive to relationships, and the love n' unity in our relationships.

If you see yourself wanting to be first, like I asked at the start, or wanting others to put you first, that's a desire which ruins unity, and we should repent of.

And Chester shows us what repentance from our sin looks like:

- I feel myself getting bitter. Once I might have fed my desire by reflecting on all the wrongs I endure. But I now realise that bitterness is grumbling against God's goodness. And so in my best moments and with God's help I try to stop it before it grows.
- I feel myself getting angry. Once I might have fed my desire by reflecting on how I've been mistreated. But I now realise that I get angry because of my desire to justify myself instead of trusting in Christ's atoning work. And I try to stop.

What sinful desire and behaviour do you need to stop?-----

And we repent by believing that Christ is bigger and better than our sinful desire.-----

And by believing that the life he promises is better than anything temporary pleasure sin brings.-----

Having a strong future hope helps us flee sin now.

Ezek 37 finishes by helping us to think about the blessing of having God's **presence**.

The 'sanctuary' language in **vv26-28**, is a promise of enjoying God's holy presence. God being with his people, and them with him.

I will be their God and they will be my people.

We who trust Jesus have God's Holy Spirit with us now, but there's more.

The best is yet to come.

Because when Christ comes again he'll bring us into the new heavens and earth, as **Rev 21 describes.(SLIDE)** Into God's very presence.

God himself, Father, Son and Spirit, will be with us. Forevermore!-----

No temple needed in the New Jerusalem,(**SLIDE**) cos God will live with us.-----

It's beyond my imagination.

But thinking about what God has promised to give you, will help you obey him now.---

However, it wont just be us with God in the New Jerusalem.

It'll be all people King Jesus has saved and united together.

And God wants many Jews there too.

I close with this story,

**Yoel Ben-David** was an orthodox Jew raised in a traditional home, but found himself searching religions as a teenager.

But as a young adult, after diving into Judaism, he eventually turned to the Old Testament, and read it for himself for the first time.

He and his wife had a race to see who can read the Hebrew Bible first.

And when he read Isaiah 53 he was confused.

Then a Jewish believer in Jesus, who'd been building relationship with and praying for them for ages, explains it.

And he prays to Jesus the Messiah for the first time.

Soon after he comes home one day and his wife, Adelle was reading Matthew's Gospel, and she looks up with tears in her eyes, and says,

'He was such a good man. Why has no one ever told us this story before?'

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c2E33Y4Pwc&t=0>)

Jews need Jesus.

They do.-----

Let's pray.