



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Ezekiel 36:22-32 **English Standard Version** **September 24, 2017**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, September 24, 2017**, is from **Ezekiel 36:22-32**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Ezekiel 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 the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

Ezekiel was taken to Babylon after the first deportation in 597 BC. Ezekiel prophesied in Babylon both before and

after more Israelites were taken into exile in 587/586 BC. Before 586 BC, Ezekiel warned that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed because the Israelites refused to repent of their immoralities and idolatries. After 586 BC, the LORD encouraged the Israelites and said through Ezekiel that He would return them to their land. The LORD reminded them that because of their idolatry and sinfulness they had profaned His name among the nations both before and after they were taken into exile; therefore, He was not blessing them for their sake, but for the sake of His holy name. They did not deserve to be rescued from their exile in Babylon or have their nation restored to prosperity. After the house of Israel had gone into exile, the surrounding nations had mocked both the LORD and the Israelites, calling the LORD a weak tribal god who could not save His people from their enemies. Because the nations mocked and profaned the name of LORD, the LORD would restore the Israelites physically to their land as well as morally and spiritually; thus, the nations would learn that the sovereign LORD was indeed holy and Almighty, and He had punished the Israelites for their sins. God also declared that He would punish the nations around Israel for their sins and unnecessary violence against His people, which He later did with the fall of Babylon seventy years later and the nations that surrounded Israel.

(Ezekiel 36:23) And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among

the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, the LORD said once again that the Israelites had profaned His name among the nations where they had been sent into exile when the northern kingdom fell in 722 BC and the southern kingdom fell in 587/586 BC. God would act in history and restore the house of Israel so these nations would know that He was the LORD over all. God would show the nations and prove that He was right, reasonable, and justified when He sent the house of Israel into exile as punishment for their sins, and then later graciously restored them to their land and made them spiritually new people, a holy people dedicated to serving the LORD alone, a people who would never serve pagan idols again (though they did continue to sin in other ways).

(Ezekiel 36:24) I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

God fulfilled this prophecy partially seventy years later when many Jews returned from exile in Babylon and eventually rebuilt the kingdom, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple. Jerusalem and the rebuilt temple were destroyed once again and the Jews were dispersed among the nations in 70 AD, when the Romans destroyed the

nation because of the people's rebellion as they followed a false Messiah. Some Bible teachers believe this prophecy was fulfilled once again in 1948 when the nation of Israel was restored.

(Ezekiel 36:25) I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

It seems the house of Israel never fell into idolatry again after returning from exile in Babylon, though by the time of Jesus many of the religious leaders and the elite among them were totally corrupt. Ezekiel spoke of the time of the Messiah. John the Baptist baptized to prepare people for the coming of Jesus the Messiah, but only by the shedding of the blood of Jesus and by faith in Him can anyone be clean from all their uncleannesses. Ezekiel's prophecy teaches that cleansing must come before God will fill anyone with His Holy Spirit. John wrote: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Ezekiel's prophecy refers to what the Messiah would do when and after He came. Only after Jesus comes again will He take the house of Israel from all the countries and bring them to the Promised Land.

(Ezekiel 36:26) And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give

you a heart of flesh.

After we have been cleansed (see above), God will give us a new heart and a new spirit within us. This specific messianic promise has been fulfilled with the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus has removed the heart of stone within believers, and He “has freed us from our sins by His blood” (Revelation 1:5). Jesus Christ has put a new heart and a new spirit into all who have placed their faith in Him. Jesus has renewed their minds, given them new thoughts and desires, and strengthened their wills to follow and obey Him wherever He leads. Jesus has given His followers a new inclination and motivation to love His Father and Him supremely, to obey them in all things, to be God-centered instead of self-centered and selfish. God has removed the stubborn and rebellious attitude that characterizes unrepentant sinners, and has given the followers of Jesus a teachable mind eager to know the will of God for their individual lives so they can glorify and honor the LORD who has saved them by grace through faith.

(Ezekiel 36:27) And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

The LORD has done more for the followers of Jesus Christ than just give them a new attitude and motivation for all they do. God has put His Holy Spirit within all those He has drawn to Jesus for salvation. By His Spirit within those

who trust in Jesus, believers earnestly desire and choose to walk according to the Scriptures, the commandments of God, and the teachings of Jesus. They have a tender conscience and carefully try to avoid temptations and obey all that Jesus has commanded. If they sin, they are quick to repent, take responsibility for their wrong choices, ask God's forgiveness, and seek to serve Christ faithfully in the future, the Lord being their Helper. Peter described the condition of true Christians and wrote to God's elect: "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you" (1 Peter 1:2).

(Ezekiel 36:28) You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

After speaking about the land in the first verses of Ezekiel chapter 36, the LORD once again reaffirmed that the house of Israel would dwell once again in the land that He had given to their fathers. Having been carried into exile, during the next seventy years, they would need continued reassurance that the LORD had not abandoned them but considered them His people and that they would be in a relationship with Him where He would be their God and they would consider Him their God. He would prove that He was their God by what He would do in returning them to their land and spiritually transforming them in the future.

(Ezekiel 36:29) And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.

More important than returning them to the land, which would be a sign to them and to the nations that the LORD was God Almighty, the LORD promised that He would deliver them from all their uncleannesses. The LORD would deliver them from all the uncleannesses that they had become slaves to, even as the LORD had delivered their ancestors from physical slavery in Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land. After the house of Israel returned from exile to Judea, they and the nations that surrounded them would see the power of Almighty God as He gave them an abundance of food.

(Ezekiel 36:30) I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

History has shown that this verse will only be fulfilled with and after the second coming of Jesus the Messiah. It was fulfilled substantially for many years after the house of Israel returned after their exile, but because of their disobedience they did suffer disgrace again. The nation of Israel today also seems to be substantially receiving this blessing from God.

(Ezekiel 36:31) Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations.

Repentant sinners who come to saving faith in Jesus Christ still remember many of their evil ways and deeds that were not good. They sometimes loath themselves for their iniquities and abominations. The Apostle Paul wrote this about Christians: “What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!” (Romans 6:21). If Christians remember those things that they are now ashamed of, that will help them avoid doing those things once again when tempted. Paul wanted all Christians to live in ways that they would never be ashamed of and have the courage to exalt Christ by all they did: “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” (Philippians 1:20). Sometimes becoming ashamed of what we have done will help us do right in the future. Paul told his fellow Christians what they can do to help those who have turned back to their iniquities so they might repent: “Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed” (2 Thessalonians 3:14). And finally, especially to those of us who teach the Bible, Paul wrote: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved,

a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

(Ezekiel 36:32) It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.”

Christians are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. God does not save us for our sake, but because He loves us despite all the evil we have done. God saves us because God is loving and merciful, and God provided a way to justly save us through the gift of His Son, who died in our place. It is not because of any good we have done that God acts in our behalf. We should be ashamed of our previous ways, and we are confounded (bewildered; confused; perplexed) when we think about the many unreasonable ways we have acted in the past (which demonstrates that before Christ saved us we were previously slaves of Satan and sin: only Jesus Christ could free us). Therefore, Christians rejoice and thank God that He has saved us in spite of ourselves, that He has cleansed us from our iniquities, filled us with His Spirit, and given us a new heart and empowerment to love and obey His commands in the service of Jesus Christ and others. Christ has freed us, transformed us, and we gratefully rejoice in Him. Furthermore, we have become lovingly concerned for others, and we want them to come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior too.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. For whose sake and why did the LORD say He would restore the house of Israel to their land?
2. Do you think the house of Israel deserved to have their land restored to them? Give a reason for your answer.
3. What are some of the other blessings God promised the house of Israel in this lesson?
4. Do you think God has fulfilled some of His promises through Ezekiel? If you do, when and how?
5. Do you think it is helpful or harmful for Christians to be ashamed of their sins? Give a reason for your answer.

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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