

# Ezekiel's Vision of Israel's Restoration

## Part 3

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Merrill F. Unger

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{Editor's note: Footnotes in the original printed edition were numbered 17–28, but in this electronic edition are numbered 1–12 respectively.}

### III. The Scope of the Restoration of Israel

Of this it may be said (a) *it embraces the whole house of Israel*. This bit of information that “these bones are the whole house of Israel” (v. 11) is the most important single statement given in the divine interpretation, and furnishes the key to the exposition of the whole passage. “The whole house of Israel,” of course, means all the twelve tribes, which are to be gathered back to their own land, and redistributed upon it in accordance with Ezekiel’s outline of the settlement in chapter 48. The term includes *only* Israelites living at the end of this age at the time of the nation’s rehabilitation, and does *not* include all or any Israelites who have physically died. That the godly of Old Testament Israel will be raised sometime before the Davidic Kingdom is set up is certain, for “many shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:11, Luke 13:28, 29); but it is a false invention to teach that all Israel, who have died physically, are to be raised before the kingdom age. If the Old Testament saints are not raised at the out-taking of the Church, as it seems certain they are not, they would assuredly not be resurrected until the decimating and destructive judgments of the great tribulation were over. The logical time for their resurrection would be at the second advent of Christ in glory, perhaps with the tribulation saints, who will have a resurrection at that time (Rev 20:4).

That “the whole house of Israel” will include the twelve tribes is evident. But a problem arises whether the national restoration of Israel will include *every* individual Israelite living in the end time, or just the preponderating majority, some perhaps remaining in national death among the nations and failing to return in the great end-time exodus to Palestine. Concerning this it may be remarked that, if it is correct to take Daniel 12:2 to refer to Israel’s national revival, then the “many of them” (Daniel’s people) “that sleep in the dust of the earth” (who are scattered among the graveyard of the nations) and who “shall awake” (shall be nationally restored), would naturally indicate that the many (the majority) would join in the trek to their homeland, but not *all*. The regathering, like the other events connected with it, would be national, but not necessarily individual. Whether this view is true or not, there is nothing in Ezekiel’s vision in conflict with it, as the scope of his imagery is clearly national and not individual.

Further, concerning the scope of Israel’s restoration it may be remarked (b) *it comprises the union of both Judah and Israel into one nation*. The last part of this thirty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel (vs. 15–28), while not an actual part of the vision of the dry bones, nor of the divine commentary upon it, is to be thought of as in the closest connection with it and as shedding abundant light on it. Verses 15–28 give the reunion of Israel as one nation under the future King David (Messiah). Jehovah directs the prophet to represent the reunion of the tribes of Israel by a sign of two sticks joined together (vs. 15–17), and to explain this symbolical action to the people

(vs. 18–21 ) and to show its connection with Israel’s national and spiritual reconstitution (vs. 22–28 ).

This section abundantly corroborates the interpretation of the vision of the dry bones as depicting Israel’s national and spiritual recovery. The prophet is directed to take “a stick” עץ אֶחָד (“a—or one—piece of wood”), and to write on it, “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions [associates]” (v. 16 ). The preposition ל before “Judah” and “children of Israel” is, as Keil notes, the sign of the genitive of possession. So it is “Judah’s stick” and “the children of Israel’s, his companions,” belonging to them and thus representing them. The action recalls Moses’ writing on the twelve rods of the Israelitish princes in the wilderness, when Aaron’s rod of the tribe of Levi budded (Num 17:1–10).

The action, however, is a different one here, and there is no evidence that the “sticks” were rods or sceptres denoting rulership, but simply flat pieces of wood upon which it was easy to write. The divine injunction to write upon one piece of wood not only “Judah,” but “the sons of Israel, his associates,” arose from the circumstances that the southern kingdom included besides “Judah,” the leading tribe, which accordingly gave its name to the kingdom, the greater portion of Benjamin and Simeon, the tribe of Levi, (because in the temple service), and many pious Israelites from the northern kingdom who fell away to Judah. The secession of the ten tribes in 922 B.C. was on *political* grounds, so that in the idolatry and apostasy of the northern kingdom many members of the ten tribes came over to Judah on *religious* grounds, when Jeroboam rejected the worship of Jehovah (2 Chron 11:14, 16, 17). In 941 B.C. when Rehoboam’s grandson, Asa, was King of Judah “they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that Jehovah, his God, was with him” (2 Chron 15:9).

In the reign of Asa’s son, Jehoshaphat, positions of honor and trust were occupied in Judah by “the chief of the fathers of Israel” (2 Chron 19:8). Likewise, there was a falling away to Judah under Joash, and particularly under Hezekiah’s godly reign in 726 B.C., about five years before the captivity of the ten tribes. Thus in the two centuries from the separation of the ten-tribed kingdom of Israel from Judah in 922 B.C. until its destruction as a kingdom by Sargon in 721 B.C., large numbers of the ten tribes proved their detestation of idolatry and their loyalty to Jehovah by going over to Judah.

Upon the second piece of wood Ezekiel was to write “For Joseph, and for all the house of Israel, his associates” (v. 16 ). “The stick of Ephraim עץ אֶפְרַיִם is an explanatory apposition to לְיוֹסֵף, “for Joseph,” and must not be thought of as actually written on the piece of wood, but only as given in the text by way of explanation.

The name “Joseph” is chosen because the house of Joseph (an honorable appellation) consisted in the two powerful tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and formed the “trunk of the kingdom of the ten tribes.”<sup>1</sup> This fact, too, explains “the stick of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim” (v. 19 ), inasmuch as the power and hegemony were with the tribe of Ephraim (Isa 7:17). The “whole house of Israel, his companions” are the remaining tribes belonging to that kingdom.

These two sticks, thus representing the house of Judah and the house of Israel in their entire constituency, were to be joined “one to another into *one stick*,” that they might become one in the prophet’s hand (v. 17 ). This symbolizes the end God will make of that sad division which

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<sup>1</sup> 1. C. F. Keil, *The Prophecies of Ezekiel*, II, 131, citing Kliefoth.

has harassed Jacob's posterity since the fateful schism of 922 B.C. Ezekiel performed the symbolic action before the people, and in response to the questioning concerning such a strange procedure (v. 18 ) explains it as prophetic of God's healing the ancient political breach at the time of the nation's restoration to the land (v. 21 ), when they are made "one nation in the land," "upon the mountains of Israel," with one king over them (v. 22 ) and enjoy spiritual conversion (v. 23 ).

From this vital passage the fact is ascertained that the whole house of Israel, that is the whole twelve tribes, are to take part in the national and spiritual reconstitution set forth in the vision of the dry bones. If all the twelve tribes are to be reinstated in the Holy Land, the question then resolves itself "Where are they now?" For the ten tribes never returned from their captivity in Assyria, but until this day remain "the outcasts of Israel" (Isa 11:12), while only a remnant of Judah came back in the restoration from Babyon in 536 B.C. The Jews are Israelites, but actually descendants of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. How are the ten tribes then to be identified?

It will not completely satisfy the demands of the problem to prove, as John Wilkinson<sup>2</sup> does in *Israel My Glory*, that the Jews today are representative of the whole twelve tribes. Says he: "Now what is our general inference from these wanderings...after the ten tribes from 975 B.C. to 521 B.C.? Simply this—that sufficient numbers of the ten tribes, while in the land, fell away to Judah on religious grounds, and a sufficient number returned from Babylon on political and religious grounds, to render the restored captives properly representative of the entire nation; so that should no other people in the world ever present a reasonable claim to Israelitish descent, the people known as the Jews may be regarded as fairly entitled to be representative of the interests and destiny of the whole twelve tribes."<sup>3</sup>

As Clarence Larkin succinctly summarizes the same historical evidence: "The conclusion therefore is that those who returned from the captivity were fairly representative of the whole twelve tribes. Now as the descendants of those who were restored from Babylon were scattered in A.D. 70 and A.D. 135, we may well ask 'The Ten Tribes? Where are they NOT?'"<sup>4</sup>

However, a careful examination of Ezekiel 37 will lead to the inevitable conclusion that these facts do not cover the entire question of the ten tribes, for the scope of this portion of prophecy comprehends the reassembling of the ten tribes as tribes of Palestine in the future. With this circumstance accords that famous and vivid passage of Isaiah, which evidently views the reinstatement to Canaan in the future of a people known as the descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, and styled "the outcasts of Israel" in contradistinction from the "dispersed of Judah" (Isa 11:12). Therefore the *ten tribes must be somewhere!* But the question is Where?

Some say they are in Ireland, some in Wales. Others in North America, in Afghanistan, or China. Say the British-Israelites, In England—the Anglo-Saxon race must be the descendants of the ten tribes! This latter view is so fantastic and ridiculous that it hardly merits any space or recognition. Scripture deals it four knock-out blows: *First*, Scripture says the people shall dwell alone, but shall not be reckoned among the nations (Num 23:9). This is true of the Jews, but emphatically untrue of the Anglo-Saxons. *Second*, Scripture teaches that Israel is to remain many

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<sup>2</sup> 2. John Wilkinson, *Israel My Glory*, pp. 94-101.

<sup>3</sup> 3. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> 4. Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth*, p. 65.

days without king, prince or sacrifice (Hos 3:4, 5). True enough of Israel, but in diametrical contrast to the Anglo-Saxons. *Third*, Israelites out of the land were to be few in number, and under a national curse (Deut 4:26, 27; 28:62–68). The exact state of Israel, but just the opposite of Anglo-Saxons. *Fourth*, the penalty of uncircumcision is excision (Gen 17:10–14). The Anglo-Saxons are uncircumcised, and therefore unentitled to Jewish privileges.

David Baron<sup>5</sup> exposes some of the ignorant and even blasphemous contentions of British-Israelism, and justly speaks of “discarding the whole heap of Anglo-Israel trash.”<sup>6</sup>

If then the Anglo-Saxons are not the ten tribes, and they have not been found in the many places where search has been made for them, Who, is the question, are they? And where are they? John Wilkinson laments the singular and humiliating circumstance “that the ten tribes have been sought in almost every other country but in the one into which they were taken captive.”<sup>7</sup> He would “search for a thing where it is lost,” and aided by the diligent research of Dr. Asahel Grant and enthusiastically concurring with the latter’s conclusions, he announces the location of the ten tribes in the Nestorians in the mountains of Kuristan, and by the Lake Oroomiah in Persia.

In support of this view, he first of all advances the evidence of sacred history—that the northern tribes were carried away thence into the very same district of Assyria proper.<sup>8</sup> Next, he adduces the testimony of prophecy. With history saying the ten tribes were carried to Assyria and prophecy predicting they are to be brought out of Assyria (Isa 11:11, 16), the plain inference to be made is, they are still there.

Next, John Wilkinson cites the confirmation of secular history. Josephus says the ten tribes were there in A.D. 70.<sup>9</sup> Jerome in his notes on Hosea says they were there in the fifth century.<sup>10</sup> Summarizing, John Wilkinson says: “No history or tradition at all reliable gives any account of their removal...the plain inference is—*they are still there.*”<sup>11</sup>

Wilkinson gives lingual and ethnological proofs which add to the weight of his argument. The Nestorians and Jews in Oroomiah and Kurdistan are not claimed to constitute the totality of ten-tribed Israelites over and above those mingled with Judah, but evidence is claimed to be ample and sufficient to establish them as a nucleus. Portions may be located among other peoples in that part of the world.

Lastly, to be noticed are

#### **IV. The Results of the Restoration of Israel**

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<sup>5</sup> 5. David Baron, *The Ancient Scriptures and the Modern Jew*, pp. 279-283.

<sup>6</sup> 6. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

<sup>7</sup> 7. John Wilkinson, *Israel My Glory*, p. 102.

<sup>8</sup> 8. *Ibid.*, pp. 103,104.

<sup>9</sup> 9. Josephus, *Antiquities*, b. XI, c. V., section 2.

<sup>10</sup> 10. Tom. VI, pp. 7,80.

<sup>11</sup> 11. John Wilkinson, *Israel My Glory*, p. 106.

These embracing as they do their national and spiritual rehabilitation, will include (a) *a land forever*. “And they shall  *dwell* in the land... forever” (v. 25 ). Jehovah will displace” (cause them to rest permanently and quietly) “in the land of Israel” (v. 12 ), and they shall “no more be pulled up out of their land” (Amos 9:15). They will return from their long night of sorrow to enjoy perpetual day, when the “Sun of Righteousness” arises with “healing in His beams” (Mal 4:2). Then they shall possess all that was promised to Abraham—the territory extending from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates (Gen 15:18), from Hamath on the north to Meribath-kadesh on the south (Ezek 48:1, 28). The long, barren, leafless winter will be past for Israel, and the fig-tree will be arrayed in the thick and splendid foliage of millennial summer (Matt 24:32) to give shade and refreshment to the Gentiles in the kingdom. Then the promise of the restoration to the land given in the Palestinian covenant (Deut 30:5) and confirmed so picturesquely by Isaiah (Isa 11:11, 12), by Jeremiah (23:3–8 ), and by Ezekiel (34:23, 24 ; 37:21–25 ), shall be realized.

Moreover, there shall not only be a restoration to the land, but also a restoration of the land. Palestine so long cursed because of the sins of its people (Deut 11:13–17) shall be converted, when the inhabitants are converted. “The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose” (Isa 35:1). The hillsides shall be covered with such prolific vineyards that the glowing words of the prophet are “The mountains shall drop new wine,” and the grass of the pastures will be so verdant and succulent, sustaining such prize milch cattle, that the hills are said to “flow with milk” (Joel 3:18). Harvests will be so rich and abundant that the ploughman will overtake “the reaper,” and treader of grapes him that “soweth seed” (Amos 9:13).

The curse on the earth shall be lifted to such an extent, at least (Gen 3:17, 18), that the “thorns” will give place to the “fir-tree” and the “briar” to the “myrtle tree” (Isa 55:13). Even the ferocity of the animal creation, also the result of man’s fall, at least shall be partially removed, if not fully, in the millennial earth (Isa 11:6–9, Rom 8:21f), although full reinstatement of Edenic conditions may not be expected until in the new earth (Rev 22:3). Nevertheless, patriarchal longevity shall be restored (Isa 65:20, 22, Zech 8:4), and men shall live as long as they did before the flood. There will be increase in the light and brilliance, too, of the sun and moon (Isa 30:26).

God’s vast and glorious purpose for His “earthly people” will be thus worked out in their earthly inheritance during the kingdom age, and then on into eternity. “A land forever” is an essential feature in the divine plan for Israel.

Another prominent consequence of the restoration will be (b) *a king forever*. “And my servant David shall be  *king* over them... and David, my servant, shall be their prince forever” (vss. 24, 25 ). Here is introduced Israel’s King and Prince, both in the same person. He shall be מלך, “King,” in the hereditary sense of the word, whose right it is to reign as David’s son and David’s Lord (Ps 110:1); but more than that He shall be גּוֹשֵׁיָא, the one lifted up and exalted or “elected by the free will of the people,”<sup>12</sup> and that “forever.” What a magnificent day that will be when the Jewish people see their colossal mistake of the ages, and their demon-inspired yell “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” merges into the soul-stirring, penitential strains of Isaiah 53 and the joyful refrain of “Blessed is He Who cometh in the name of Jehovah!” They will recognize His claim not only as the King whose legal right it is to rule over them, but spontaneously and exultantly they shall declare Him their גּוֹשֵׁיָא, their elected and exalted One!

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<sup>12</sup> 12. David Baron, *The Jewish Problem and Its Solution*, p. 43.

Then will be fulfilled the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:8–17) according to which the magnificent kingdom of Christ, “of the seed of David according to the flesh,” is to be set up. The Covenant, confirmed to David by the oath of Jehovah and announced to Mary by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:31–33), is unchangeable (Ps 89:30–37). It guarantees a house (posterity), a throne, and a kingdom “forever” to the thorn-crowned “King of the Jews” (Acts 2:29–32; 15:14–17).

One condition only was attached to the Covenant. Chastisement was to follow disobedience in the Davidic family, but not to the abrogation of the Covenant (2 Sam 7:15). The division of the nation into two kingdoms at the time of Rehoboam and the punishment of the captivities was the fearful price of Solomon’s apostasy. But the glorious work of Messiah will embrace the healing of the ancient breach. “They shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided [halved] into two kingdoms any more at all” (v. 22 ). “And they all shall have *one* Shepherd” (v. 24 ).

The kingdom shall not only continue through the millennial age, the earth being “filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14), but on into the new earth Israel will be glorified and exalted, and the “throne of God and of the Lamb,” the glorified Son of man, will be in the eternal state “to carry on the Davidic dynasty.”

Another salient issue of the restoration will be (c) *a covenant of peace forever*. “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them” (v. 26 ). This is the great covenant Jehovah shall make with His ancient people after they get back to their own land. It is denominated “a covenant of peace” because it will insure their undisturbed and complete quietude in the land. Considered as issuing in *inward spiritual tranquility*, it will involve Jehovah’s putting His “fear in their hearts that they shall not depart” from Him (Jer 32:40). It will embrace His placing His law “in their inward parts” and writing it in their hearts, forgiving their iniquity and remembering their sin no more (Jer 31:31–34, Heb 8:8–12). It will mean rest of heart as “the God of peace” makes them “perfect in every good work to do His will, working in them that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:20, 21). Considered in this aspect, it assures the future conversion of Israel, and embraces the spiritual blessings of the “new covenant.”

Regarded as effecting *outward* or *political* peace, it will guarantee not only Israel’s restoration to the land of Palestine under the provisions of the Palestinian Covenant (Deut 30:1–10), but will insure the cessation of all internal hostility and war between Judah and Ephraim, and the complete healing of the ancient breach in their being made one nation in the land, with one King and Prince over them, even the greater David—Christ—the one Shepherd-King (vss. 22, 24–26 ). With the benefit of a King, a throne, and a kingdom in perpetuity, established under the Davidic Covenant, the all-embracing “covenant of peace” will extend through Messiah-David to the ends of the earth. And as, of old, Jehovah had “cut-off” David’s “enemies” out of his sight (2 Sam 7:9), so the reigning Christ will rule the nations in absolute righteousness “with a rod of iron,” so that all iniquity and ungodly opposition shall be put down (Isa 11:4, 5), and an enduring and all-pervasive peace shall reach to the ends of the earth.

Even the brute creation shall not be able to mar this scene of calm and unmolested repose, for Ezekiel (34:25 ) speaks of this “covenant of peace” providing that even “evil beasts” shall cease out of the land. No doubt, as already noted, their wild ferocity will be divinely tamed (Isa 11:6–8) or they may, in some instances, be wiped out altogether, so that “they shall not hurt nor harm [destroy] in all my holy mountain” (Isa 11:9). In that day shall the “God of peace” through the

great resurrected Shepherd of the sheep (Heb 13:20), through Him who is also “the Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6), “fill the whole earth with peace,” for “of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end” (Isa 9:7).

The final result of the restoration of Israel will be (d) *a sanctuary forever*. “And I will set my *sanctuary* in the midst of them forevermore” (v. 26 ). “My *tabernacle* also shall be with them” (v. 27 ). “The nations shall know that I am Jehovah...when my *sanctuary* shall be in the midst of them forevermore” (v. 28 ).

The prophet’s prediction specifically comprehends the kingdom temple as the “dwelling place” of Jehovah “in the midst of the children of Israel forevermore,” but sweeps on into the eternal state and comprehends the time when this temple made with hands gives place to God’s own effulgent Presence itself—that Temple made without hands, God tabernacling with man, when no human temple will be needed.

The kingdom temple will be rebuilt in the land during the millennial age. In chapters 40–42 Ezekiel gives us a detailed description of that temple itself. In chapters 43–46 he sets forth the temple worship. At the second advent Christ will restore the Judaic system with far greater glory and spirituality than it ever had in the Old Testament period until its complete dissipation with the destruction of Herod’s temple in 70 A.D. The heart and centre of reestablished Judaism will be the millennial temple, in connection with which Judaism will enjoy its final state of development.

The Aaronic priesthood will be reinaugurated, with the sons of Zadok officiating and offering sacrifices (Ezek 44:15–31). The new temple will be in contrast to the old in that it will have no ark of the covenant, no pot of manna, no Aaron’s rod that budded, no tables of the law, no cherubim, no mercy seat, no golden candlestick or shew-bread or altar of incense, no veil or Holy of Holies, no high priest, unless Christ be thought of as performing the duties of highpriesthood in the joint office of King-priest (Zech 6:12, 13). Of offerings, with a memorial and retrospective character looking back to the finished work of Christ, will be the burnt offering, the meal offering, the sin offering, the drink offering and the peace offering (Ezek 25:17), and the trespass offering (Ezek 42:13). Two annual feasts, Passover (Ezek 45:21–24) and Tabernacles (Zech 14:16–19), will be observed; but there will be no passover lamb, as Jesus fulfilled that type. The Shekinah Glory which departed so reluctantly from the temple at the time of the Babylonian captivity (Ezek 10:18–20, 11:22, 23 ) will again return to the new temple (Ezek 43:1–5).

That the millennial temple does not belong to the new earth and the final state of sinless bliss, is shown by the fact that the land in which it is located is bounded by the sea, and the waters issuing from it flow into the “sea.” In the new earth, however, there is “no more sea” (Rev 21:1). This is further indicated by the prophet’s mention of the “desert,” the river Jordan and other localities, which will not be found on the earth after its renovation by fire.

That there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem of the eternal state is explicitly revealed in the Revelation (21:22 ), which is indicative that the system of temple worship outlined for the millennium by Ezekiel will be absent. Sin and all its reminders having been completely extirpated and abolished at the conclusion of the kingdom age, there will be no need for a temple or for Judaic ceremonies. A higher order of spiritual blessing will have been reached when God’s effulgent glory will dwell everywhere, unimpeded by the presence of sin, for there “shall be no more curse” (Rev 22:3). “The Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb” (Rev 21:22) will be the temple. Then the “tabernacle of God”—His own unveiled Presence—“shall be with men, and He

will dwell [tabernacle] with them” as He did in the Holy of Holies only in the Old Economy, “and they shall be His peoples” (Rev 21:3) and He shall be “their God.”

In the kingdom age God’s own unique presence with Israel in His government of them through David-Messiah, and in the Shekinah Presence connected with their temple worship, will convince the nations that it is Jehovah Who “sanctifieth Israel,” and Who has eternally set them apart for blessing and glory as His own. This will be especially true in the eternal sinless state, when “the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb” make their sanctuary with them forever, and through them reaching to all mankind.

Dallas, Texas