

Ezekiel

*The Valley of Dry Bones
and the Temple of Glory*



by Robert J. Neral

A Study of Ezekiel

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: The Prophet in Exile and the God Who Restores

Section One: The Valley of Dry Bones — a Nation Brought Back to Life

Section Two: The Gog and Magog War — Judgment in the Latter Days

Section Three: The New Temple — Where the Glory Dwells Forever

Conclusion: God Finishes What He Starts

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INTRODUCTION: THE PROPHET IN EXILE AND THE GOD WHO RESTORES

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There are moments in Scripture when a prophet receives a vision so startling, so far-reaching, that it defies immediate explanation. The Valley of Dry Bones is one of those visions. The temple that Ezekiel sees — measured in meticulous detail, filled with the glory of God, named THE LORD IS THERE — is another.

These are not visions given to a man sitting comfortably in Jerusalem. They are given to a man in exile. A captive. A priest who has no temple to serve in, no altar to tend, no congregation gathered in the city of David. Ezekiel stands among the ruins of everything his people once knew — their land taken, their capital destroyed, their holy place reduced to rubble by the armies of Babylon.

And into that darkness, God speaks.

He speaks not with rebuke alone, though there is rebuke in the book of Ezekiel. He speaks with promise. With assurance. With a vision that reaches far beyond the immediate crisis and shows what God intends to do — not just for one generation, but for all generations to come.

This is where we begin. Not in a place of triumph, but in a valley. Not in a rebuilt city, but in the middle of exile. And what we will see is that the God who speaks to Ezekiel is the same God who spoke at creation — the God who breathes life into what is dead, the God who builds what has been torn down, the God whose plan for mankind has not changed since the beginning.

Let us read together.

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SECTION ONE: THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES — A NATION BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE

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The vision begins with a question no human can answer.

"The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?'" (Ezekiel 37:1-3)

Can these bones live?

Ezekiel is standing in a valley. Not a battlefield where the fallen still have flesh on them. Not a graveyard where bodies have been recently buried. A valley filled with bones — scattered, exposed, very dry. These are not people who died yesterday. These are bones that have been there so long that every trace of life has left them. The flesh is gone. The sinews are gone. Even the hope is gone.

And God asks: Can these bones live?

Ezekiel's answer is the only answer a man can give when faced with something that seems humanly impossible: "O Lord GOD, You

know." He does not say yes. He does not say no. He says: this is beyond me. If it can happen, You are the one who knows.

And then God tells him what to do.

"Again He said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, "O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'"" (Ezekiel 37:4-6)

Prophesy to the bones. Speak to what is dead. Declare the word of the LORD over what has no capacity to hear.

This is not a natural process. This is resurrection. And it happens in stages.

First, the bones come together — bone to bone. Structure appears where there was only scatter. Then sinews and flesh come upon them. The framework of life is built back up. Then skin covers them. They look like bodies again. But — and this is critical — there is no breath in them yet. They have the appearance of life, but they are not yet alive.

"So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them." (Ezekiel 37:7-8)

Then God speaks again. And now the word is not to the bones — it is to the breath.

"Also He said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, "Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army." (Ezekiel 37:9-10)

Breath came into them. They lived. They stood. An exceedingly great army.

Now — before we go any further — we need to ask: What is this vision about? Who are these bones?

God tells us plainly:

"Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!" Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."'" (Ezekiel 37:11-12)

The bones are the whole house of Israel. Not just Judah. Not just the remnant in Babylon. The whole house. Both kingdoms — north and south — scattered, broken, seemingly finished. And God is declaring that He will bring them back. He will open their graves. He will cause them to live again. He will bring them into their own land.

This is not a vision about individual resurrection — though individual resurrection is certainly taught in Scripture. This is a vision about national restoration. About a people who were dead as a nation being brought back to life as a nation. About Israel.

And then God says something that ties this vision directly back to the very beginning of human history:

*"I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it."
(Ezekiel 37:14)*

I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live.

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GOD'S PLAN HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE CREATION

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Let us go back to the garden.

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." (Genesis 2:7-8)

God formed man from dust. Then He breathed into him the breath of life. Structure first. Then breath. Then life.

This is the same pattern Ezekiel sees in the valley. Bones, sinews, flesh, skin — then breath. Then life.

The vision of dry bones is not just about Israel's future. It is about God's original design. It is evidence that God's plan for mankind has not changed since creation. He formed Adam from the dust. He will reform Israel from the scattered bones. He breathed life into Adam. He will breathe life into Israel again. What He did at the beginning, He

will do at the end.

And there is something else we need to see here — something about glory.

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Genesis 2:25)

Adam and Eve were naked before the fall — and they were not ashamed. Why? Because they were clothed with something greater than physical garments. They were clothed with the glory of God.

"Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, who cover Yourself with light as with a garment." (Psalm 104:1-2)

God is clothed with light. And when He created man in His own image, that image included being covered with His glory. Adam and Eve had no need of physical clothing because they were already clothed — in the radiance of the One who made them.

But then came the fall.

"Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings." (Genesis 3:7)

The glory was gone. And they knew it immediately. They felt exposed. Ashamed. They covered themselves with fig leaves — a temporary, inadequate solution to a permanent problem. They had lost the covering that mattered.

But God's plan was not finished.

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." (Matthew 17:1-2)

Jesus temporarily laid down His glory from heaven and took upon Himself a robe of humanity. But at the transfiguration, the disciples saw what had always been true underneath — He was clothed with light as with a garment. The glory He had with the Father before the world was, the glory He would take up again after His death and resurrection.

And here is the promise for every believer:

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John 3:2)

We shall be like Him. The glory that was lost in Adam will be restored in Christ. We will be clothed again — not with fig leaves or human effort, but with the very glory of God.

"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one." (John 17:22)

This is the purpose and plan for mankind, revealed by God in the garden as He created Adam in His image, and it remains intact throughout Scripture. From the dust to the breath. From the breath to the glory. From the fall to the restoration. All of it pointing to one great truth: God finishes what He starts.

The vision of dry bones is part of that story. Israel scattered, dead, hopeless — and then raised up, given breath, clothed again in

relationship with the God who never stopped pursuing them.

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THE TWO STICKS — ONE NATION UNDER ONE KING

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The vision does not stop with the bones standing on their feet. God continues speaking, and now He addresses the long division that has plagued Israel since the days of Solomon.

"Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: "For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions." Then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions." Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.'" (Ezekiel 37:15-17)

Two sticks. One for Judah — the southern kingdom. One for Joseph and Ephraim — the northern kingdom, often called Israel. For centuries, these two halves of God's people had been divided. Different kings. Different capitals. Different trajectories. The north fell to Assyria. The south fell to Babylon. And by the time Ezekiel receives this vision, both kingdoms are scattered among the nations.

But God says: take two sticks and make them one.

"And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' — say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his

companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand."''' (Ezekiel 37:18-19)

In My hand. That is the key phrase. Human hands could not bring these two kingdoms back together. Human diplomacy had failed. Human kings had led them into division in the first place. But in God's hand, what was broken will be made whole.

And then God describes what will happen when He does this:

"Then say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again."''' (Ezekiel 37:21-22)

One nation. One king. No longer divided. This is not just a promise of political reunification. This is a promise of something much deeper — a return to God's original intent for His people. One people under one God, led by one anointed king.

And who is that king?

"David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them." (Ezekiel 37:24)

David My servant. But wait — David was already dead when Ezekiel spoke these words. David had been dead for centuries. So what does this mean?

It means that God is speaking of a king from the line of David — a descendant who will sit on David's throne forever. It means that God is speaking of the Messiah. The one the prophets called the Son of David. The one the angel told Mary would reign over the house of Jacob forever, whose kingdom would have no end.

Jesus.

And this leads us to a critical interpretive question: when will this happen?

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WHEN DOES THIS VISION COME TO PASS?

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There are two phrases in this passage that tell us we are not talking about something that happens during the present age or even during the millennial reign of Christ alone. We are talking about something that extends into the eternal state — the new heaven and the new earth.

First, look at this verse:

"They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 37:23)

They shall not defile themselves anymore. Whenever you read a scripture that declares that people will not sin anymore, you know we are not in the current world. We are in a world different from the fallen state of man. We are beyond the millennium, because even during the thousand-year reign of Christ, there will still be rebellion at the end —

Satan will be released, and he will deceive the nations one final time.

Second, look at the language of permanence:

"Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; I will establish them and multiply them, and I will set My sanctuary in their midst forevermore." (Ezekiel 37:25-26)

Forever. Everlasting covenant. Forevermore.

These words could not apply only to the millennium, because the millennium has an end. After the thousand years, Satan is released. After the final rebellion is crushed, the present heaven and earth pass away, and the new heaven and new earth appear.

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea." (Revelation 20:7-8)

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea." (Revelation 21:1)

The vision Ezekiel saw points beyond the millennium to the eternal dwelling of God with His people. And the final verses of the vision make this unmistakably clear:

"My tabernacle also shall be with them; indeed I will be their God, and they shall be My people. The nations also will know that I, the LORD, sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forevermore." (Ezekiel 37:27-28)

My tabernacle also shall be with them. And where do we see that language again?

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.'" (Revelation 21:2-3)

The tabernacle of God comes with the new Jerusalem. It is a post-millennial reality. And the vision of dry bones that began in a valley of death ends in the city of God — where the dead have been raised, where the divided have been reunited, where sin is gone, where the King reigns forever, and where the glory of God fills His sanctuary forevermore.

This is not a vision about one moment in history. It is a progressive vision. We can see some of it forming now — Israel regathered in the land, a nation again after two thousand years of exile. We can see the next stages building — the reunification still to come, the King still to be acknowledged. And we can see the final fulfillment ahead — the eternal dwelling, the everlasting covenant, the city where God Himself is present and His people live in the light of His glory.

God's plan has not changed. What He promised to Adam in the garden, what He showed to Ezekiel in the valley, what He fulfilled in Jesus on the cross and will complete in the new creation — it is all one story.

One purpose. One God finishing what He started.

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SECTION TWO: THE GOG AND MAGOG WAR — JUDGMENT IN THE LATTER DAYS

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We move now from the vision of restoration to the vision of a great battle. Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe a war unlike any other — a war that involves multiple nations, led by a ruler named Gog from the land of Magog, coming against Israel in a final attempt to destroy God's people.

This is one of the most studied and debated passages in all of Bible prophecy. And before we walk through it, I want to say plainly: we need to hold this with humility. The details are clear. The timing is less so. And we would not be well served to form a belief so rigid that when this war does or does not happen on our timetable, the enemy can use our errors to divide us.

Let us read what God showed Ezekiel.

"Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of

Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. "" (Ezekiel 38:1-3)

Magog. Rosh. Meshech. Tubal. These are ancient names, and scholars have debated their modern equivalents for centuries. Most agree that Magog refers to the regions we now know as Russia and the republics of the former Soviet Union — or perhaps Turkey. The names point north, and the prophecy itself will confirm that the invader comes "from the far north."

God continues:

"I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops — many people are with you." (Ezekiel 38:4-6)

Notice that God is the one who brings Gog out. "I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out." This is not a war that happens because Gog decided to invade on his own. This is a war that God orchestrates for His own purposes — to display His glory before the nations and to defend His people Israel at a moment when they are vulnerable.

Persia is named — modern-day Iran. Ethiopia and Libya. Gomer and Togarmah from the far north. This is a coalition of nations, many of which surround Israel geographically even today.

And then God gives Ezekiel the timing markers:

"After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought

back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely." (Ezekiel 38:8)

After many days. In the latter years. After the people have been brought back from the sword — meaning after a time of war and exile. After they have been gathered from many people — meaning from the nations where they were scattered. After the land has been desolate for a long time. And after they are dwelling safely.

This cannot be a battle that took place in ancient history. Israel was not regathered after many years of desolation until the twentieth century. The return from Babylon brought only a remnant of Judah back to the land — not the whole house of Israel. The northern tribes remained scattered. Only in modern times have we seen Jews returning to Israel from every nation on earth — exactly as the prophets said they would.

And the phrase "dwelling safely" — this is critical. Israel today is not dwelling safely in the full sense. They are surrounded by enemies. They live under constant threat. But there may come a time — perhaps through a false peace, perhaps through a temporary alliance — when Israel believes it is safe. And that is when this invasion will come.

"You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you." (Ezekiel 38:9)

A storm. A cloud. A massive force descending on Israel from the north, accompanied by many nations. And what is their motive?

"On that day it shall come to pass that thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having

neither bars nor gates' — to take plunder and to take booty." (Ezekiel 38:10-12)

Plunder. Booty. Silver and gold. Livestock and goods. This is not an ideological war. This is a resource war. The invaders look at Israel and see wealth — a people gathered from the nations who have acquired prosperity in the midst of the land. And they come to take it.

But then — something happens that they do not expect.

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GOD HIMSELF DEFENDS ISRAEL

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"And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord GOD, "that My fury will show in My face. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that creep on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence." (Ezekiel 38:18-20)

God's fury will show in His face. A great earthquake. All creation shaking at the presence of the LORD. This is not Israel's army defending the land — this is God Himself stepping into the fight.

"I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains," says the Lord GOD. "Every man's sword will be against his brother. And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples

who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD." (Ezekiel 38:21-23)

Confusion among the invaders — every man's sword turned against his brother. Pestilence. Bloodshed. Flooding rain. Hailstones. Fire and brimstone raining down from heaven. This is divine intervention on a scale that has not been seen since the plagues of Egypt or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And the purpose? "Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations."

This war is not just about defending Israel. It is about revealing God to the world. When the armies of the north are destroyed — not by Israel's military, but by the hand of God — the nations will have no choice but to acknowledge that the God of Israel is real, and that He fights for His people.

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SEVEN YEARS OF BURNING — SEVEN MONTHS OF BURYING

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The aftermath of this war is described in extraordinary detail in Ezekiel 39. And some of those details give us clues about when this battle takes place.

"Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the

javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years." (Ezekiel 39:9)

Seven years of burning weapons. Think about what that means. The weapons left behind by the defeated armies are so abundant that they provide fuel for Israel for seven full years. They will not need to cut wood from the forest or gather wood from the field — the weapons themselves will be enough.

This tells us something important. This battle cannot be the battle at the end of the millennium — because after the millennium, there is no seven-year period. The new heaven and new earth appear immediately. So this war must happen before the millennium begins. Most likely at the end of the tribulation period, or possibly just before it.

And then there is the burial detail:

"For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them, in order to cleanse the land. Indeed all the people of the land will be burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 39:12-13)

Seven months to bury the dead. The devastation is so complete, the number of fallen invaders so great, that it takes the entire nation seven months to finish the task. They will set apart men regularly employed to search for any remaining bodies and mark them for burial.

"The search party will pass through the land; and when anyone sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog." (Ezekiel 39:15)

Hamon Gog — the name means "the multitude of Gog." The valley itself will become a memorial to the judgment that fell on those who came against Israel. And the city nearby will be named Hamonah —

another witness to what God did.

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THE BIRDS AND THE BEASTS

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And then God speaks to the birds and the beasts of the field:

"And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field: Assemble yourselves and come; gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal which I am sacrificing for you, a great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood. You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of the princes of the earth.'" (Ezekiel 39:17-18)

A sacrificial meal. The fallen warriors of Gog's army become food for the scavengers. This is the same imagery we see in Revelation 19 — the great battle at the end of the tribulation, when Christ returns with the armies of heaven and destroys the nations that have gathered against Jerusalem:

"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.'" (Revelation 19:17-18)

The parallels are unmistakable. The birds gathering. The flesh of the mighty. The great slaughter. This is why many Bible students believe

the war of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel is the same event as the battle at the end of the tribulation described in Revelation 19.

But there are also differences. And this is where we must be careful.

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THE TIMING QUESTION

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There are verses in Ezekiel 39 that seem inconsistent with the first half of the tribulation period — the time when the Antichrist is deceiving the world and most of Israel is following him.

Listen to this:

"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward." (Ezekiel 39:22)

From that day forward. That sounds final. Permanent. But during the first three and a half years of the tribulation, Israel does not know the LORD — they are deceived by the Antichrist. They believe his lies. They accept him as their messiah. It is only in the second half of the tribulation, after the abomination of desolation, that the deception is broken and Israel begins to turn back to God.

And then this:

"And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 39:29)

I will not hide My face from them anymore. That is forever language. And the pouring out of God's Spirit on Israel — that is past tense. It has already happened, God says, by the time this statement is made.

These verses suggest that the Gog and Magog war happens at a time when Israel's spiritual restoration is complete. When the deception is over. When God's Spirit has been poured out and His face is no longer hidden.

That points to the end of the tribulation — not the beginning. That points to a time after the great turning, after the remnant of Israel has called on the name of the LORD and been saved, after the veil has been lifted and they have seen the One they pierced.

But here is what I want to say plainly: we do not know for certain. The details are clear. The timing is debated. Good men and women who love the Lord and study His Word carefully have different views on when this war happens. Some believe it happens before the tribulation. Some believe it happens at the midpoint. Some believe it happens at the end, overlapping with the battle described in Revelation 19.

And here is my encouragement to you: do not build your faith on a rigid timeline that could be proven wrong. Build your faith on the certainties. God will defend Israel. God will judge the nations that come against His people. God will be known in all the earth. The invaders will be destroyed. The glory will go to God alone. These things are sure.

The precise sequence and the exact moment on the prophetic calendar? We would not be well served to form a belief so rigid that when this war does or does not happen on our timetable, the enemy can use our errors to divide us. Hold the truth firmly. Hold the details humbly.

God knows the times and the seasons. We do not need to know everything. We need to trust the One who does.

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SECTION THREE: THE NEW TEMPLE — WHERE THE GLORY DWELLS FOREVER

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We leave the prophecy of war and now enter something entirely different. A vision of a temple. A temple more glorious, more detailed, more permanent than any temple that has ever stood on the earth.

This vision came to Ezekiel in the twenty-fifth year of captivity — fourteen years after Jerusalem was destroyed. The city was still in ruins. The walls were rubble. The great temple of Solomon, where God's glory had once dwelt, was a pile of stones. And into that darkness, God gave Ezekiel a vision of hope so detailed, so precise, that it took nine chapters to describe.

This was not just about rebuilding. This was about something entirely new. Something that had never existed before. A temple where God's presence would dwell forever — not for a season, not until the next rebellion, but forever.

Let us read together how the vision begins.

*"In the twenty-fifth year of our captivity, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was captured, on the very same day the hand of the LORD was upon me; and He took me there. In the visions of God He took me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain; on it toward the south was something like the structure of a city." (Ezekiel 40:1-2)*

A very high mountain. A structure like a city. Ezekiel is not in Jerusalem as it was — he is seeing Jerusalem as it will be. And standing with him is a man whose appearance was like bronze, holding a measuring rod.

*"And the man said to me, 'Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you; for you were brought here so that I might show them to you. Declare to the house of Israel everything you see.'" (Ezekiel 40:4)*

Look. Hear. Fix your mind. Declare. Ezekiel is being given a responsibility — to see this vision clearly, to record it faithfully, and to declare it to the house of Israel so that they would know what God intended to do.

And what follows is one of the most meticulous descriptions in all of Scripture. The man with the bronze appearance measures every gate, every wall, every chamber, every threshold, every pillar. The measurements go on for three full chapters — chapter 40, chapter 41, chapter 42. Cubits and handbreadths. Lengths and widths. Inner courts and outer courts. Gates facing east, north, and south.

I will be honest with you. I cannot explain to you the significance of every one of these numbers. I am sure, however, that this is both literal and deeply significant in every aspect. These are not arbitrary measurements. God does not waste words. Every cubit matters. Every detail has meaning. And we will wait until eternity to fully see the magnificence and purpose of this design.

But what we can understand now — and what we must understand — is when this temple will be built.

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## WHEN WILL THIS TEMPLE STAND?

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Let us move to chapter 43. This is where the vision shifts from measurements to meaning. And this is where God Himself speaks and tells us what this temple is.

*"Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory." (Ezekiel 43:1-2)*

The glory of the God of Israel. Coming from the east. This is the same glory that departed from the temple in Ezekiel's earlier visions — the glory that left because of Israel's sin, because the temple had been defiled. And now, in this vision of the new temple, the glory returns.

*"And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple." (Ezekiel 43:4-5)*

The glory filled the temple. Not just present in the Holy of Holies. Filling the entire structure. The same glory that filled the tabernacle in the wilderness when Moses dedicated it. The same glory that filled Solomon's temple when the priests could not even stand to minister because the weight of God's presence was so overwhelming.

And then — God Himself speaks:

*"And He said to me, 'Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel*

*forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places.'" (Ezekiel 43:7)*

This is the place of My throne. Where I will dwell forever.

That word — forever — is the key. This cannot be any temple that has already been built, because every temple built up to this moment in history has been destroyed. Solomon's temple was destroyed by Babylon. The second temple, rebuilt after the exile, was destroyed by Rome in 70 AD. And if a third temple is built during the tribulation period — as many believe it will be — that temple will be defiled by the Antichrist when he sets up the abomination of desolation in the middle of the seven years.

None of those temples can be what Ezekiel saw, because God says plainly: I will dwell here forever. No more shall they defile My holy name.

This leaves us with only one possibility. This is a temple that will be built after the great tribulation. A temple that stands in the age to come — either in the millennium, or in the new earth, or perhaps in both. A temple where God's presence is not temporary, not conditional, but permanent.

Let us continue and let the text itself guide us.

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## **THE EASTERN GATE — SHUT BECAUSE THE LORD ENTERED**

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In chapter 44, Ezekiel is brought back to the outer gate of the sanctuary — the gate that faces east. And God gives him a startling instruction:

*"Then He brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces toward the east, but it was shut. And the LORD said to me, 'This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.'" (Ezekiel 44:1-2)*

This gate is shut. And it will remain shut. Why? Because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it.

Now stop here for a moment, because this is one of the most remarkable prophetic details in the entire book. The Eastern Gate of Jerusalem — the gate that faces the Mount of Olives, the gate through which pilgrims would enter the temple mount — is shut to this day.

In 1530 AD, the Ottoman Turks — the Muslim rulers of Jerusalem at that time — walled up the Eastern Gate. And they planted a cemetery in front of it, because they knew the Jewish belief that the Messiah would one day enter through that gate. They believed that if they made the area unclean — if they filled it with graves — then no Jewish priest could pass through without becoming ceremonially defiled. They thought they could stop the prophecy.

But they did not stop it. They fulfilled it.

Ezekiel said the gate would be shut. And it is shut. Ezekiel said no man would enter by it. And no man has entered by it for five hundred years. But Ezekiel also said that the Prince — the Messiah — would enter it again.

*"As for the prince, because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by*

*way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way." (Ezekiel 44:3)*

The Prince. The one whom Daniel called "Messiah the Prince." The one whom Jesus identified Himself as when He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowds shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Jesus entered Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate around 30 AD — long before the Ottomans shut it. He rode down from the Mount of Olives, passed through the gate, and entered the temple. And then He said something that still echoes through history:

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"*  
*(Matthew 23:37-39)*

You shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

The gate is shut. But it will not be shut forever. The day is coming when the Prince — the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ — will return. He will stand on the Mount of Olives, just as Zechariah prophesied. The mount will split in two. And He will enter the city through the Eastern Gate, which will be opened for Him alone.

And when that happens, Jerusalem will say what it did not say the first time: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD."

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## THE RIVER OF LIFE

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The vision continues, and in chapter 47, Ezekiel sees something that takes his breath away.

*"Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar."
(Ezekiel 47:1)*

Water. Flowing from under the threshold of the temple. Not a trickle.
A river.

The man with the measuring rod takes Ezekiel out and measures the depth of the river at intervals of a thousand cubits. At first, the water is ankle-deep. Then knee-deep. Then waist-deep. And finally —

"Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed." (Ezekiel 47:5)

A river too deep to cross. And what does this river do?

"Then he said to me: 'This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.'" (Ezekiel 47:8-9)

The waters are healed. Everything lives wherever the river goes. Fish multiply. Trees grow along the banks, bearing fruit every month, and their leaves are for medicine.

"Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine." (Ezekiel 47:12)

Now hold that description and turn with me to the last chapter of the Bible:

"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Revelation 22:1-2)

Do you see it? The river flowing from the sanctuary. The trees on either side. The fruit every month. The leaves for healing. Ezekiel saw what John saw. They are describing the same place. The same time. The same reality.

The new Jerusalem. The dwelling place of God with men. The place where the tabernacle of God is with men, and He dwells with them, and they are His people, and God Himself is with them and is their God.

This is not the millennium alone. This is the eternal state. This is the new heaven and the new earth, where there is no more sea, no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain — for the former things have passed away.

And the temple Ezekiel saw — the temple with the Eastern Gate shut, the temple filled with the glory of God, the temple from which the river of life flows — this is the temple that stands forever in the presence of the One who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

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THE LORD IS THERE

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The book of Ezekiel closes with a name. And the name is everything.

"All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from that day shall be: THE LORD IS THERE." (Ezekiel 48:35)

Not "The Lord will be there." Not "The Lord was there." The Lord IS there.

Present tense. Permanent presence. From that day forward and forevermore.

This is what Ezekiel saw in the valley of dry bones — life breathed into death. This is what he saw in the vision of the two sticks — division healed, one people under one King. This is what he saw in the temple — the glory returning, the sanctuary filled, the river flowing, the city named for the eternal presence of God.

And this is what we are waiting for. Not just as Israel waits, but as the church waits. Because the promise given to Ezekiel was not for one people alone — it was a vision of the dwelling of God with all His people. Jew and Gentile. One new man in Christ. One bride. One city. One King.

The Lord is there. And because He is there, we will be there. Because He lives, we will live. Because He has promised, it will come to pass.

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CONCLUSION: GOD FINISHES WHAT HE STARTS

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We have walked through visions that span from a valley of death to a city of eternal life. From bones scattered in a field to a nation standing on its feet, breathing the breath of God. From judgment falling on invading armies to the glory of God filling a temple that will never be destroyed.

These are not disconnected prophecies. They are one story.

The story of a God who does not abandon what He creates. Who does not forget what He promised. Who does not change His mind about His people or His purpose. Who brings life out of death, unity out of division, glory out of exile, and dwelling out of distance.

Ezekiel ministered to a people who had lost everything. Their land. Their temple. Their king. Their identity as a nation. They sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept. They hung their harps on the willow trees because they could not sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land. They asked the question that every suffering believer has asked: Has God forgotten us? Is the promise over? Are we finished?

And into that darkness, God sent a prophet named Ezekiel. A priest with no temple to serve in. A teacher with no congregation gathered around him. A man who stood in the ruins and declared what God had

shown him: It is not over. The bones will live. The nation will be restored. The King will return. The glory will fill the temple. The Lord will be there.

And here is what we need to carry with us from this study: God's plan has not changed since creation. What He did in the garden — forming man from dust, breathing life into him, clothing him in glory, walking with him in the cool of the day — that is what He will do again. Not just for Israel. For all who are His.

We were formed. We fell. We were scattered. We lost the covering of glory. We sewed fig leaves and hid from the presence of the One who made us. And God has been pursuing us ever since — through prophets and priests, through law and sacrifice, through exile and return, through judgment and mercy, and finally through His own Son, who came to dwell among us, who laid down His glory to take up our humanity, who died and rose again so that the breath of life could be restored to what was dead.

The vision of dry bones is our story. The promise of the temple is our destination. The name of the city is our hope: THE LORD IS THERE.

And because He is there, we will be there. Not because we earned it. Not because we rebuilt ourselves from the dust. But because He spoke the word. Because He breathed the breath. Because He kept the promise. Because He is the God who finishes what He starts.

To Him be all the honor and the glory.

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END OF A STUDY OF EZEKIEL

By Robert J. Neral

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