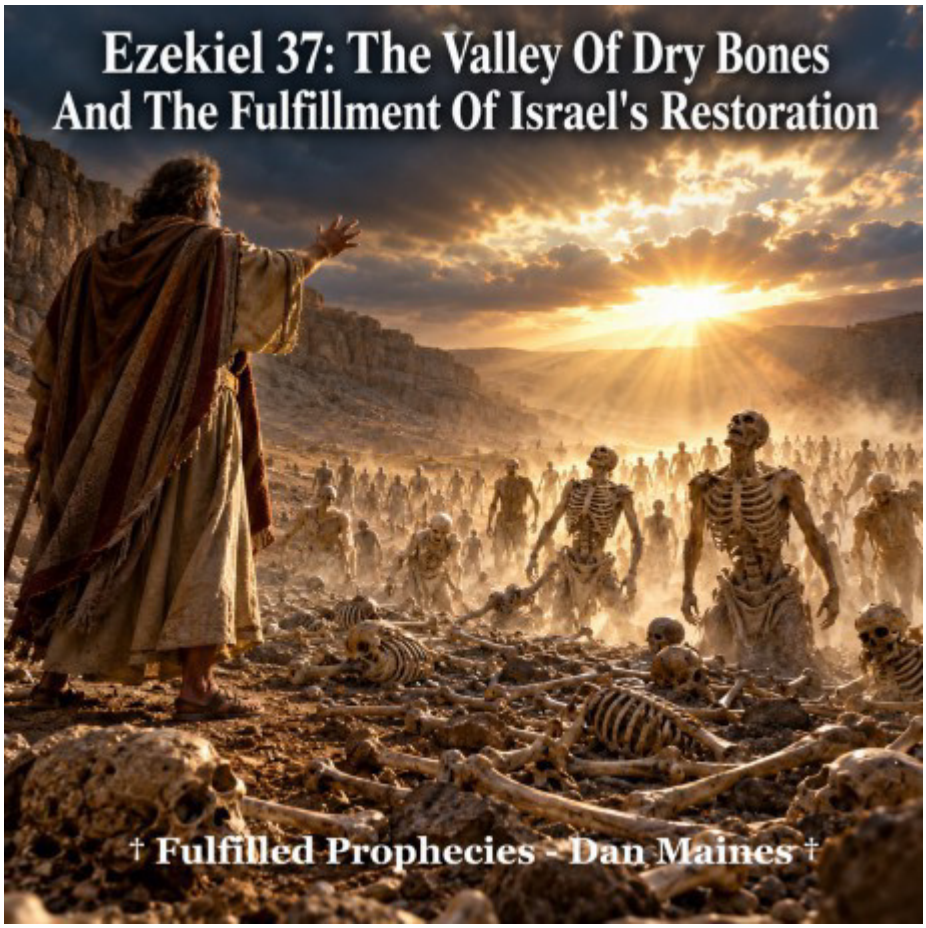
Fulfilled Prophecies

Ezekiel 37: The Valley Of Dry Bones And The Fulfillment Of Israel's Restoration



By Dan Maines

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Introduction

† Ezekiel 37 is one of the most misunderstood chapters in biblical prophecy. Futurists frequently claim that the valley of dry bones predicts the modern nation of Israel, a future national conversion, and an earthly kingdom that Jesus will establish thousands of years after His first coming.

† But Ezekiel wasn't describing the political establishment of a modern nation. He was revealing God's promise to restore His

covenant people, reunite them under one King, give them His Spirit, and establish an everlasting covenant of peace (Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:21-28).
† The New Testament identifies Jesus Christ as the promised Son of David, the Good Shepherd, and the mediator of the New Covenant. His kingdom wasn't postponed, and His reign didn't depend on a future political restoration (Luke 1:32-33; John 10:16; Hebrews 8:6-13).
† To understand Ezekiel 37 correctly, we must allow the prophet to explain his own vision and then examine how Jesus and His apostles revealed its fulfillment.

The Valley Of Dry Bones Was A Vision Of Israel's Restoration

Ezekiel 37:1-3
The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He had me pass among them all around, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and behold, they were very dry. Then He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "Lord God, You Yourself know."
† Ezekiel saw a prophetic vision, not a prediction that dead bodies would physically rise from graves in the twenty-first century (Ezekiel 37:11-14).
† The dry bones represented Israel's hopeless condition following national judgment, exile, and the apparent collapse of its covenant promises (Jeremiah 25:11; Lamentations 3:17-20).
† God was demonstrating that restoration depended entirely on His power. Israel couldn't restore itself through military strength, political independence, or human achievement (Zechariah 4:6).
† The vision begins with a spiritually and nationally devastated people, not a prediction about the boundaries of a modern political state (Ezekiel 36:24-27).

Ezekiel Explains What The Bones Represent

Ezekiel 37:11
Then He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the entire house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.'
† God explicitly identified the bones as the whole house of Israel. He didn't identify them as a modern government or a future army (Ezekiel 37:1-10).
† Their problem was hopelessness and separation, and God's promised solution was restoration through His covenant faithfulness (Isaiah 49:14-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34).
† The phrase whole house of Israel is important because Ezekiel later describes the reunification of Judah and Joseph under one King (Ezekiel 37:15-22).
† Futurism frequently begins with modern Israel and reads that assumption backward into the prophecy. Biblical interpretation must begin with Ezekiel's original audience and God's explanation of the vision (Ezekiel 33:21; 37:11).

The Opened Graves Represent Restoration From Exile

Ezekiel 37:12-14
Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'This is what the Lord God says: "Behold, I am going to open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and done it," declares the Lord.'"
† The opened graves picture Israel's recovery from a condition resembling national death. The language belongs to the vision's symbolic portrayal of restoration (Hosea 6:1-2; Isaiah 26:19).
† The promise contains two connected themes, return to the land and the gift of God's Spirit. We shouldn't ignore either

theme or assume both must occur in a modern political restoration (Ezekiel 36:24-27).
† The historical return from Babylon began under Cyrus, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple followed under Persian rule (Ezra 1:1-4; Nehemiah 6:15-16).
† Yet the deeper promise of spiritual renewal reaches its fulfillment through Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-18, 32-33; Titus 3:5-6).
† Ezekiel's vision therefore connects Israel's historical restoration with the greater covenant renewal accomplished through the Messiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13).

The Two Sticks Become One Under One King

Ezekiel 37:21-22
And say to them, This is what the Lord God says: Behold, I am going to take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I 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 will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.
† The two sticks represented Judah and Joseph, the divided covenant people who had been separated following the reign of Solomon (Ezekiel 37:15-20; 1 Kings 12:16-20).
† The prophecy promised reunification under one King, not the permanent restoration of two competing national kingdoms (Ezekiel 37:24).
† Jesus came to gather God's scattered children into one people. John specifically connects His approaching death with gathering those children together (John 11:51-52).
† Christ also declared that He had other sheep who would become one flock under one Shepherd, revealing the unity accomplished through His ministry (John 10:16).
† Paul explained that Christ made Jews and Gentiles one, breaking down the dividing wall and creating one new humanity through the cross (Ephesians 2:14-18).

† The unity promised through the Messiah is covenantal and spiritual. It isn't dependent on restoring the territorial divisions of ancient Israel (Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 4:4-6).

David Would Be Their King Forever

Ezekiel 37:24-25
And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes and follow them. And they will live on the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and My servant David will be their leader forever.
† David had already died centuries before Ezekiel delivered this prophecy. The promised Davidic ruler therefore points beyond David himself to the Messiah from his royal line (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7).
† Gabriel announced that Jesus would receive David's throne and reign over the house of Jacob forever, with no end to His kingdom (Luke 1:32-33).
† Peter declared that God raised Jesus from the dead in fulfillment of His oath to David and that Christ had been exalted to God's right hand (Acts 2:29-36).
† Jesus didn't fail to receive His throne at His first coming. His resurrection and exaltation established Him as the reigning Davidic Messiah (Acts 13:32-34; 1 Corinthians 15:25).
† The promise of an everlasting reign can't be reduced to a temporary earthly administration lasting one thousand literal years (Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 1:8).
† The land language belongs to Israel's covenant promises, while the New Testament reveals the greater inheritance secured in Christ, an enduring heavenly country and kingdom (Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:22-28).
† Futurism postpones the reign that the apostles proclaimed as already established through Christ's resurrection and exaltation (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:5-6).

The Everlasting Covenant Of Peace

Ezekiel 37:26
And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and set My sanctuary in their midst forever.
† Ezekiel didn't promise another temporary covenant built around animal sacrifices. He announced an everlasting covenant of peace (Isaiah 54:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34).
† Jesus identified His blood as the blood of the covenant poured out for forgiveness, establishing the promised covenant relationship through His sacrifice (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:15).
† The New Covenant isn't awaiting a future national inauguration. Christ is already its mediator, and His completed sacrifice provides permanent access to God (Hebrews 8:6; 10:19-22).
† Paul explained that Christ Himself is our peace, reconciling those who were separated and bringing them near to God (Ephesians 2:13-18).
† The everlasting covenant of peace is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, not in a future political treaty involving the modern nation of Israel (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:19-22).

God's Sanctuary Would Be Among His People

Ezekiel 37:27-28
My dwelling place also will be among them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.
† God's promise wasn't merely to construct another physical building. The ultimate purpose was His permanent dwelling among His redeemed people (Leviticus 26:11-12; 2 Corinthians 6:16).
† John declared that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, revealing God's presence in Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

† Paul identified believers as God's temple, with the Holy Spirit dwelling among them (1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:19-22).
† The New Jerusalem contains no physical temple because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Revelation 21:22).
† Revelation uses Ezekiel's covenant dwelling language to describe God's completed relationship with His people (Revelation 21:2-3).
† A future temple with renewed animal sacrifices would move backward toward the shadows after Christ had accomplished the reality to which they pointed (Hebrews 10:1-18; Colossians 2:16-17).

Jesus Is The Shepherd Ezekiel Promised

John 10:14-16
I am the good shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to My voice; and they will become one flock, with one shepherd.
† Jesus directly identified Himself as the Good Shepherd, fulfilling the promised leadership of God's people (Ezekiel 34:23-24).
† His death brought salvation and reconciliation, creating the foundation for one united flock (John 11:51-52; Ephesians 2:16).
† The gathering wasn't postponed for thousands of years. Jesus announced that He was accomplishing it through His own ministry (John 12:32; John 17:20-23).
† The Messiah's sheep are identified by their relationship with Him, not merely by national ancestry or geographic residence (John 10:27-29; Romans 9:6-8).

Peter Declared That David's Throne Was Occupied

Acts 2:30-33
So because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. It is this Jesus whom God raised up, a fact to which we are all witnesses. Therefore, since He has been exalted at the right hand of God, and has received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He has poured out this which you both see and hear.
† Peter connected God's promise to David directly with Christ's resurrection and exaltation (Psalm 132:11; Acts 2:34-36).
† Jesus had already received the promised Spirit and poured Him out upon His people, demonstrating His messianic authority (John 16:7; Acts 2:16-18).
† The apostles didn't preach that Jesus had failed to establish His kingdom and would return thousands of years later to begin His reign (Acts 17:6-7; Colossians 1:13).
† Christ's heavenly enthronement is the fulfillment of the Davidic kingship, not a substitute for a failed earthly kingdom (Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 10:12-13).

The New Covenant Replaced The Old Covenant

Hebrews 8:13
When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is about to disappear.
† Hebrews identifies the Old Covenant as obsolete and approaching its final disappearance in the first-century covenant transition (Hebrews 8:6-12).
† Jesus established the New Covenant through His blood, making the former sacrificial system unnecessary (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 10:9-14).
† The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in AD 70 publicly demonstrated the end of the old covenant order that had already been rendered obsolete through Christ (Matthew 24:1-

3, 34; Hebrews 10:37).
† Restoring the former covenant system would contradict the finality of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood (Hebrews 7:11-28; 10:18).

The Promise Includes Those Who Belong To Christ

Galatians 3:28-29
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.
† Paul identified belonging to Christ as the basis for participation in Abraham's promised inheritance (Galatians 3:7-9, 16).
† This doesn't mean the church replaced Israel as though God's promises had failed. It means those promises reached their intended fulfillment through Israel's Messiah (Romans 15:8-12).
† Jews and Gentiles who belong to Christ share one covenant inheritance rather than separate salvation programs (Ephesians 3:4-6).
† The promise is fulfilled through faith in Christ, not through the establishment of a modern political nation (Romans 4:13-16; Philippians 3:3).

The Promised Dwelling Is The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:2-3
And I 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 the throne, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
† Revelation repeats Ezekiel's promise that God would dwell among His people, identifying its ultimate fulfillment with the New Jerusalem (Ezekiel 37:27).

† The New Jerusalem represents the completed covenant relationship between God and His redeemed people, not a future political capital (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22-24).
† John was told that the prophetic events were near and must soon take place, locating their fulfillment within the first-century prophetic horizon (Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-10).
† The earthly temple was removed in AD 70, but God's spiritual dwelling with His people remains forever through Jesus Christ (John 4:21-24; Ephesians 2:19-22).

Historical References
† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 11, chapters 1-4, records the return from Babylonian exile, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of Jewish worship under Persian rule. This establishes the historical background for Israel's return from captivity.
† Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 6, chapters 4-5, records the destruction of Jerusalem's temple in AD 70. The removal of that sanctuary provides historical context for the New Testament's teaching about the passing of the former covenant order.
† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, chapter 5, describes the departure of Jerusalem's Christian community before the Roman destruction, connecting the first-century crisis with the warnings of Jesus.
† These historical writers confirm important events surrounding the return from exile and the destruction of Jerusalem. The fulfillment of Ezekiel's spiritual promises, however, must be established from Scripture rather than historical testimony alone (Luke 24:44-47; Acts 3:18-24).

Why The Futurist Interpretation Fails
† Futurism separates Ezekiel's promised King from the reign Jesus already received through His resurrection and exaltation (Acts 2:30-36).
† It postpones the promised Shepherd even though Jesus identified Himself as that Shepherd and gathered His flock (John 10:14-16).

† It expects a future covenant restoration even though Christ has already established the everlasting New Covenant through His blood (Hebrews 8:6; 13:20).
† It looks toward another physical sanctuary even though believers are God's temple and Christ is the fulfillment of the sacrificial system (Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 10:1-18).
† It treats national identity as the controlling issue even though the apostles identified Christ as the fulfillment of God's promises and united believers in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20; Galatians 3:28-29).
† The modern State of Israel was established in 1948, but Ezekiel 37 doesn't identify that event, provide that date, or teach that a modern government would inaugurate the everlasting covenant (Ezekiel 37:24-28).
† The return from exile addressed Israel's historical captivity, while the promised Davidic King, Spirit, covenant, and divine dwelling find their greater fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Ezra 1:1-4; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:33).
† Scripture provides no reason to postpone these accomplished realities into a future earthly millennium (Hebrews 12:22-28; Revelation 1:5-6).

How It Applies To Us Today
† We aren't waiting for dry bones to become a future political nation. We're living in the New Covenant established through Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:5-6; Hebrews 8:6).
† We don't need a rebuilt temple because God's Spirit dwells among His people, and we have direct access to the Father through Christ (Ephesians 2:18-22).
† We don't need another Davidic king because Jesus reigns forever as the promised Messiah (Luke 1:32-33; Hebrews 1:8).
† We aren't divided into separate covenant peoples. Everyone who belongs to Christ shares the promised inheritance through faith (Galatians 3:26-29).
† We don't need to wait for a future New Jerusalem. Believers have already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† Ezekiel's message remains powerful today because the God who restored hope to His people has given us lasting life, peace, and fellowship through His Son (John 10:10; Romans 5:1-2).
† The kingdom isn't waiting to begin. Christ reigns, His covenant stands, and His people are His dwelling place (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 21:3).

Q & A Appendix
Q: Does Ezekiel 37 predict the establishment of modern Israel in 1948?
A: No date or modern government is identified in the chapter. The prophecy addresses Israel's restoration, reunification, and everlasting covenant under the promised Davidic King. The New Testament identifies Jesus as that King (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Luke 1:32-33).
Q: Doesn't Ezekiel say Israel would return to its land?
A: Yes. The historical return from Babylon addressed the land promise in its immediate setting. The greater covenant promises of the Spirit, Messiah, and everlasting peace are fulfilled through Christ (Ezra 1:1-4; Acts 2:33; Hebrews 8:6-13).
Q: Are the dry bones a prophecy of a future bodily resurrection?
A: The immediate vision identifies the bones as the whole house of Israel in a condition of hopelessness. Its opened graves symbolize national restoration, while the New Testament reveals the greater spiritual life given through Christ (Ezekiel 37:11-14; John 5:24-25).
Q: Is David supposed to return physically and reign over Israel?
A: No. The promised Davidic ruler is Jesus Christ, the descendant of David who was raised and exalted to God's right hand (Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:29-36).
Q: Does the prophecy require a future rebuilt temple?
A: No. God's promised dwelling is fulfilled through Christ and His people. The New Jerusalem has no physical temple because God and the Lamb are its temple (Ephesians 2:19-22; Revelation 21:22).
Q: Has the everlasting covenant already been established?

A: Yes. Jesus established the New Covenant through His sacrifice and is its mediator. Its blessings aren't awaiting another covenant inauguration (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6; 13:20).
Q: Did God's promises to Israel fail?
A: No. God's promises reached their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah. Jews and Gentiles who belong to Him share the promised inheritance (Romans 15:8-12; Galatians 3:26-29).
Q: Why does Ezekiel say forever if the physical temple and ancient nation came to an end?
A: The everlasting realities are the Messiah's reign, the covenant of peace, and God's dwelling with His people. These endure in Christ beyond the temporary institutions of the Old Covenant (Daniel 7:14; Hebrews 12:27-28; Revelation 21:3).
Q: What is the central mistake in the futurist interpretation?
A: It treats the Messiah's accomplished covenant work as though it remains unfulfilled. Jesus already reigns, has gathered His people, established His covenant, and made them God's dwelling place (Acts 2:30-36; John 10:16; Hebrews 8:6; Ephesians 2:19-22).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †
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Source Index
† Ezekiel 37:1-3; Ezekiel 37:11; Ezekiel 37:12-14; Ezekiel 37:21-22; Ezekiel 37:24-25; Ezekiel 37:26; Ezekiel 37:27-28; John 10:14-16; Acts 2:30-33; Hebrews 8:13; Galatians 3:28-29; Revelation 21:2-3
† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 11, chapters 1-4; Josephus, The Jewish War, Book 6, chapters 4-5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, chapter 5

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