



“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

A New Spirit

Central Truth: Spiritual renewal comes only when God transforms people's hearts.

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Topic: Israel: Redemption of; New Covenant; Redemption: Of Israel.

Meet Ezekiel, prophet of the Most High God. His name means” God strengthens” and is an excellent summary of the message he preached.

Ezekiel was taken captive from Jerusalem at the time Nebuchadnezzar overthrew King Jehoiachin of Judah (597 B.C.). He was about twenty-five years old at that time. He was of the tribe of Levi and would have become a priest at the age of thirty if he could have stayed in his homeland and if the temple had not been destroyed. Instead of becoming a priest in Jerusalem, God called Ezekiel to become a prophet in Babylon upon reaching his thirtieth year.

Ezekiel ministered to the Hebrews in their Babylonian captivity. His ministry lasted as a prophet of God for twenty-two years (593 B.C. to 571 B.C.). His ministry was very influential, as indicated by the elders of the Jews seeking him out repeatedly (8:1; 14:1; 20:1).

Ezekiel's book is a very practical and spiritual book. The lesson text for this week's study deals with a very wonderful insight into the theme of salvation. Ezekiel speaks of God saving the Hebrews from their Babylonian captivity. His words have a dual application and make a wonderful study on salvation.

I. GROUND OF REDEMPTION

(Ezekiel 36:22, 23, 32)

What is your concept of salvation? Is it manward, or is it Godward? A man-centered concept of salvation is concerned with the benefits it brings to man. A God-centered concept of salvation is concerned with the glory it brings to God. The Bible presents an understanding of salvation which stresses the benefit to man and the glory of God.

A. The love of God for mankind is the manward ground of redemption. He said to Israel, “*For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth*” (Deuteronomy 14:2; see also 7:6). Why did God choose them out of all the nations of the earth? He explained, “*The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you*” (Deuteronomy 7:7, 8). God's dealings with men have always been motivated by love on His part, not by merit on man's part. Salvation is always by grace.

B. The honor of God before men and angels is the Godward ground of redemption. Man was made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-28). Sin marred that image and dulled that likeness. God resolved to restore man to his original and glorious condition. The way to do that was to be in such a fashion as to manifest the glory of His grace and the extent of His power. That way, He would be honored even through the fall of man.

The ultimate end of all things is the glory of God. “*In the dispensation of the fulness of times*” God will “*gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth. . . . That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:10, 12). That is the goal and glory of all creation. Christians must take care that they think Godward. It is not enough to get a person to trust Christ for salvation. That keeps him out of hell and gets him to heaven, but there is something more significant than that. The new convert must be disciplined and matured so he can become a productive reproducer of believers. That works to the good of man and the glory of God, and is far better. The prophet Ezekiel stated very plainly the purposes of God: “*And I will sanctify my great name . . . and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes*” (Ezekiel 36:23).

II. METHOD OF REDEMPTION (Ezekiel 36:24-26)

A. God calls the sinner to himself (verse 24). He draws the wayward one just as He gathered ancient Israel after she had been dispossessed and

scattered in the Babylonian captivity. The sinner can no more be saved without that calling of God than Israel could have been replaced in Palestine without the sovereign work of God.

Jesus said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him”* (John 6:44). Man's will is in rebellion against God. He cannot come because he will not come. Jesus said further, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”* (John 12:32). And yet, all will not come. Jesus' most severe condemnation of His peers was in the words, *“Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life”* (John 5:40).

Opportunity came for Israel to return from her Babylonian captivity. Some chose to return to the homeland; some chose to remain in Babylon. Each was free to choose. Even so, God calls sinners and they exercise a choice in whether to come to Him for forgiveness and eternal life.

B. God cleanses the sinner who comes to Him. That cleansing was illustrated in ancient religious rituals by the washing of the body or the sprinkling of pure water. God said to Israel, *“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you”* (Ezekiel 36:25).

That concept of cleansing was brought into New Testament religion. The Bible speaks of the believer in Jesus Christ being washed (Titus 3:5), cleansed (I John 1:7, 9), and made clean through the word spoken by Jesus (John 15:3). The symbolic washing in the immersion of Christian baptism might be a reflection of that spiritual truth.

As a soiled garment is washed in water and made clean, so the repenting and trusting sinner is washed from his sins by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5). That is the cleansing received by everyone who comes in response to God's call.

C. God creates anew the sinner who comes to Him (verse 26). He spoke through Ezekiel of giving “a new heart” and “a new spirit” to him who responds. That means more than a mere change of mind in the sinner. He said He would take out the old heart and give a new heart. The one who receives that new heart and spirit is a new person. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (II Corinthians 5:17).

That miracle is called being born again (John 1:11-13; 3:3-6), being recreated (II Corinthians 5:17), being resurrected from death into life, (Ephesians 2:1-19), etc. Each is an act of God, beyond the power of man. The precept as well as the illustration teaches a basic Bible truth: *“Salvation is of the LORD”* (Jonah 2:9).

III. ESSENCE OF REDEMPTION **(Ezekiel 36:27, 28)**

Both God and man have a part in salvation. God gives; man receives. Ezekiel recognized the Godward aspect of salvation, the manward aspect of salvation, and the mutual relations established in salvation.

A. God's part of salvation in this: *“I will put my spirit within you,”* (verse 27). That is what it means to be saved. Eternal life is not something God gives apart from himself. It is God living the life of eternity in time. It is the life of God being lived in a human body. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit here and now in the Christian (I John 3:24). To be saved is to have His Spirit and to have His Spirit is to be saved. God saves sinners by causing them to be born into spiritual life by the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit within their human spirits. That is what God meant when He said, *“I will put my spirit within you.”*

B. *Man's part in salvation is this: “Walk in my statutes . . . keep my judgments, and do them”* (verse 27). It can be summarized in one word: obedience! (Man is not saved by obedience, but his obedience is proof that he is saved.) Ancient Israel had disobeyed the Lord so much that it was a way of life for her. What a change it would be if the nation could be turned to full obedience to God. Yet, it was less a miracle than the spiritual change that has come to multiplied millions who have placed personal faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. They, too, have been brought into a life of glad obedience to God. There is no substitute for Christian obedience: *“Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”* (I John 2:3).

C. *Reciprocal parts in salvation are these: “Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God”* (verse 28). What does that mean? It means more than nominal relationship. God said “You shall be to me all that a God ever desired in His people and I will be to you all that a people ever desired in their God” What a promise! God is absolutely satisfied in His own; His people are absolutely satisfied in Him.

IV. BLESSING OF REDEMPTION **(Ezekiel 36:29, 30)**

Who could count the number of blessings God has provided those who are saved! In Ephesians 2:7 they are called “the exceeding riches of His grace” Various translators have spoken of those blessings as “boundless wealth, transcendent riches, tremendous generosity, surpassing richness, immense resources.” Those various wordings show that human language is

taxed beyond its capacity to describe all those blessings which God has in store for those who love Him. In view of the impossible task to list, Ezekiel wrote of three great blessings.

A. There is safety in God (verse 29). It is illustrated by the once captive nation of Judah dwelling safely in her land as the purified people of God. (See verses 28 and 29.) The sin problem forever settled (for she was saved from all her uncleanness) and a new heart for obedience within her assure her of God's protection. It reminds the Christian that he has no condemnation now because he is in Christ (Romans 8:1) and will never come into condemnation in the future (John 5:24). There could be no greater guarantee of safety.

B. There is supply in God (verses 29, 30). Spiritual purity does not guarantee material prosperity, but God often blesses materially the people who are with Him spiritually. Examine the promise made to those in Judah who honored God by their tithes and freewill offerings (Malachi 8:8-12), A common form of discipline for waywardness is a lack of material resources. God's promise to increase the produce of the fields and orchards is an indication of the spiritual blessings He showers on believers in Jesus Christ as He “*daily loadeth us with benefits*” (Psalm 68:19). “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

C. There is sanctification in God (verse 31). Blessings of God will bring remembrance of rebellions against God. That will lead to a spirit of true repentance in turning from all kinds of sin and exercising a true holiness toward God. Remembering evil ways will bring a loathing of iniquities. That is a repentance which leads to true sanctification.

Let every Christian know his inheritance in Christ: “*Ye are washed . . . ye are sanctified . . . ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” (I Corinthians 6:11). Dear Christian, live in the light of your salvation!

1. What do you know of the man named Ezekiel?
2. What do verses 22, 23, 32 teach about the ground of salvation?
3. How is Ephesians 1:12 related to them?
4. How are John 6:44 and 12:32: related to Ezekiel 36:24-26?
5. How does God call the sinner today?
6. What is the cleansing God exercises upon the sinner?
7. What is the “new heart” God gives the believer?
8. What do you know about the indwelling Spirit of God?

9. How is obedience a proof that one is saved?
10. What blessings did you receive in salvation?