

# Dr. Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 27, Ezekiel 36-37 – Dry Bones and Two Sticks, Prophecy/Fulfillment Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## 1. Abstract of Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 27, Ezekiel 36-37 – Dry Bones and Two Sticks, Prophecy/Fulfillment, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Vannoy's lecture examines Ezekiel 36-37, focusing on prophecies of restoration for Israel. He considers various interpretations, including fulfillment in the return from exile, spiritual fulfillment in the Church, and a future, literal fulfillment involving the return of Israel to their land. **Commentators like Aalders are presented who argue for fulfillment in the return from exile, while Ellison suggests a modern return to Israel needs the Spirit of God.** Taylor supports a futuristic, Messianic Kingdom interpretation. **Payne's complex, fragmented approach is critiqued for disrupting the passage's flow and continuity.** Ultimately, the lecture explores whether these passages describe blessings the Church enjoys or predict a future restoration of national Israel in their land.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 27 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Major Prophets.**



**Vannoy\_MP\_Session27.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 27, Ezekiel 36-37 – Dry Bones and Two Sticks, Prophecy/Fulfillment

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's lecture on Ezekiel 36-37:

#### Briefing Document: Ezekiel 36-37 – Restoration of Israel

##### Main Themes:

- **Future Restoration of Israel:** The primary focus of Ezekiel 36-37 is the future physical and spiritual restoration of Israel in their land. This includes the return from exile (though the lecture argues for a fulfillment beyond the initial return from Babylonian captivity), national reunification, spiritual renewal, and a renewed covenant with God.
- **New Covenant and Regeneration:** Ezekiel 36:25-27, describing spiritual cleansing, a new heart, and God's Spirit, is seen as descriptive of the New Covenant and the experience of regeneration, similar to Jeremiah 31.
- **The Relationship Between Israel and the Church:** The lecture grapples with how these prophecies relate to the Church. While acknowledging that Christians experience the spiritual blessings described, the primary interpretation leans toward a future fulfillment specifically for Israel as a nation.
- **Interpretational Challenges:** The lecture highlights the differing views of commentators, including those who see fulfillment in the return from exile, those who spiritualize the prophecies for the Church, and those who advocate for a future fulfillment in the land of Israel.

##### Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Ezekiel 33 Context:** Following the fall of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 33:22), Ezekiel shifts his focus from judgment to prophesying future blessings for Israel.
- **Ezekiel 36:25-27 – Spiritual Renewal:** This passage is central, describing God's promise to cleanse Israel, give them a new heart, and put His Spirit within them. Vannoy suggests it describes the "new birth."

- *"I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."*
- **Ezekiel 36:24 & 28 - Return to the Land:** These verses frame the spiritual renewal within the context of a return to the land of Israel.
- *"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land." And 28 says, "And you shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers, and you shall be my people and I will be your God."*
- **Ezekiel 36:8-15 & 33-38 – Land Restoration and Prosperity:** These passages describe the land becoming fruitful, rebuilt cities, and an end to war and famine. The lecturer argues that these conditions were not adequately fulfilled after the return from exile. The Land will no longer "devour men."
- **Ezekiel 37 – The Valley of Dry Bones (Resurrection):** This vision symbolizes the restoration of Israel. The lecturer cites Aalders, who sees this as fulfilled in the return from exile. The lecturer cites Ellison, who doesn't think the return from exile constitutes the fulfillment.
- *"O my people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them."*
- **Ezekiel 37 – The Two Sticks (Reunification):** This symbolizes the joining of the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel into one nation.
- *"Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand...I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms."*
- **The Davidic King:** Ezekiel 37:24, mentioning "My servant David will be king over them," is interpreted as a future Messianic kingdom, not fulfilled after the exile (John Taylor's view).
- **Commentator Divergence:** The lecture highlights the varied interpretations.
- **Aalders:** Sees fulfillment primarily in the return from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, emphasizing moral and religious improvement.

- **Ellison:** Argues for a future fulfillment, stating that the Church does not exhaust the promises, and the return from exile was not a true national restoration.
- *"Unless...he can give full weight to the transformed land of Israel in chapter 36, and to the national resurrection of Israel, chapter 37, the expositor has no right to banish the Israel and the Old Covenant from the picture in favor of the Church."*
- **Taylor:** Interprets Ezekiel 37:21-28 as describing the ideal Messianic Kingdom of the last days.
- **Payne:** Offers a complex, "divide and conquer" approach, assigning different parts of Ezekiel 37 to different time periods (return from exile, First Advent, New Jerusalem, Millennium), which the lecturer finds unconvincing.

#### **Interpretational Options Presented:**

1. **Return from Exile:** Primarily fulfilled with the return from Babylonian captivity.
2. **Spiritualization (Church):** Prophecies are fulfilled spiritually in the Church.
3. **Future Fulfillment (Israel):** Prophecies will be fulfilled in a future restoration of Israel as a nation in their land, with the Church experiencing the spiritual blessings described but not being the primary focus of the prophecy. This is the lecturer's preferred option.

#### **Key Questions Raised:**

- Has the prophecy in Ezekiel 36-37 been fulfilled, or is it yet to be fulfilled?
- How do these prophecies relate to the New Covenant and the Church?
- Is it appropriate to spiritualize the promises related to the land of Israel, or should they be interpreted more literally?

This briefing document provides a detailed overview of the themes, ideas, and differing interpretations discussed in the provided lecture excerpts. It emphasizes the challenges of interpreting these prophecies and the importance of considering the context, historical background, and various perspectives.

## 4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 27, Ezekiel 36-37 – Dry Bones and Two Sticks, Prophecy/Fulfillment

### Ezekiel's Vision of Restoration: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What event prompted Ezekiel to shift his prophetic focus from judgment to future blessing, according to the lecture?
2. What Old Testament passage does the lecturer cite to explain the phrase "devour men" in Ezekiel 36:14? What does this comparison imply about the land of Canaan?
3. How do commentators differ on the fulfillment of Ezekiel 36:25-27? Give at least two different interpretations.
4. What is the significance of Ezekiel 36:35, where the land is described as becoming "like the Garden of Eden"? What are the different views on the fulfillment of this description?
5. According to Ellison, why can't the promises in Ezekiel 36 be entirely fulfilled in the Church?
6. What is the significance of Jeremiah 31 in relation to Ezekiel 36? What does the lecturer say that Hebrews 8 and 10 reveals about the new covenant?
7. How does J. Barton Payne interpret Ezekiel 36:25, particularly in light of Judah's pre-exilic idolatry?
8. What are the two main prophecies discussed in Ezekiel 37? Briefly describe each.
9. How does Aalders interpret the prophecy of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37?
10. What is the main problem the lecturer has with J. Barton Payne's interpretation of Ezekiel 37?

#### Answer Key

1. The fall of Jerusalem, as mentioned in Ezekiel 33, prompted Ezekiel to shift his focus from prophesying judgment to prophesying future blessings for Israel. With the destruction of the city, the question of whether judgment would come upon Israel had been settled and Ezekiel could then point to the future.

2. The lecturer cites Numbers 13:32, where the spies describe the land of Canaan as "devouring those living in it" because the inhabitants were of great size and strength, implying they would be defeated if they entered the land. In Ezekiel, God says the land is no more going to devour men; there's not going to be war there anymore.
3. Some commentators, like Aalders, believe Ezekiel 36:25-27 was fulfilled in the return from the Babylonian exile, with the moral and religious improvement of the people as a work of God's Spirit. Others believe these verses describe regeneration, and the new birth experienced by Christians, but see it contextually as a future promise to Israel. Still others view it as a prophecy of the Church.
4. Ezekiel 36:35 describes the transformed land as being like the Garden of Eden, emphasizing its fertility, security, and beauty. Some interpret this literally as a future reality for Israel, while others spiritualize it as descriptive of the blessings experienced by the Church. Payne says verse 35 evokes hyperbole, "It says the land will become like the Garden of Eden, but as explained in the following lines, this means that the ruling cities are fortified and inhabited.
5. Ellison argues that while the Church enjoys the blessings of regeneration described in Ezekiel 36, the chapter's emphasis on Israel's return to the land and its national restoration cannot be fully spiritualized to apply to the Church. "Unless...he can give full weight to the transformed land of Israel in chapter 36, and to the national resurrection of Israel, chapter 37, the expositor has no right to banish the Israel and the Old Covenant from the picture in favor of the Church."
6. Jeremiah 31 contains promises of a new covenant that are very similar to those in Ezekiel 36, especially regarding a new heart and the indwelling of God's Spirit. The lecturer says that Hebrews 8 and 10 use Jeremiah 31 in terms of description rather than prophetic fulfillment, meaning that the Church experiences what is described, but the passage is specifically predictive of a future for Israel.
7. Payne interprets Ezekiel 36:25, with its promise to cleanse from idols, as fulfilled in the return from exile because idolatry was a problem for Judah before the exile, not after. This verse refers to God's removal of this pre-exilic idolatry.
8. The two main prophecies in Ezekiel 37 are the vision of the dry bones coming to life and the sign of the two sticks joined together. The dry bones vision symbolizes the restoration of Israel, while the two sticks represent the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms.

9. Aalders interprets the prophecy of the dry bones as referring to the return from exile, where the "grave" symbolizes the situation in which they find themselves in exile. God will open and cause them to rise out of it and bring them back to their land.
10. The lecturer's main problem with J. Barton Payne's interpretation of Ezekiel 37 is that it cuts up the passage into isolated units that have little connection to what precedes or follows, making it difficult to follow the flow and coherence of the prophecy. For example, Payne sees the return from exile up to 22a, then you go to First Advent of Christ at 22b, then you go back to return from exile in 23 where they abandon their idols.

## Essay Questions

1. Discuss the different interpretations of Ezekiel 36:25-27, focusing on the arguments for and against a fulfillment in the return from exile, the Church, or a future restoration of Israel.
2. Analyze the significance of the "Garden of Eden" imagery in Ezekiel 36:35. How does this imagery contribute to the overall message of restoration and what are the implications for understanding the fulfillment of this prophecy?
3. Compare and contrast the interpretations of Ezekiel 37 presented by Aalders, Ellison, and Taylor. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?
4. Critically evaluate J. Barton Payne's interpretation of Ezekiel 37, considering the lecturer's arguments against his "divide and conquer" approach. Is coherence more important than Payne's attempt to see multiple fulfillments of the same prophecies?
5. Explore the relationship between Ezekiel 36 and Jeremiah 31, particularly as they relate to the New Covenant. How do these passages inform our understanding of the future of Israel and the Church?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Exile:** The state of being barred from one's native country, typically for political or punitive reasons; in this context, the period when the Israelites were forced to live in Babylon.
- **Restoration:** The act of returning something to a former owner, place, or condition; in this context, the return of the Israelites to their land and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- **Regeneration:** The spiritual rebirth of a person, becoming a new creation in Christ.
- **New Covenant:** The agreement established by God with humanity through Jesus Christ, replacing the Old Covenant and offering forgiveness of sins and a new relationship with God.
- **Millennial Kingdom:** A future period of one thousand years during which Christ will reign on earth, as described in the Book of Revelation.
- **Messianic Kingdom:** The future reign of the Messiah, often associated with the restoration of Israel and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.
- **Hyperbole:** Exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally.
- **Spiritualize:** To interpret a text or concept in a non-literal, symbolic, or allegorical way.
- **First Advent:** The first coming of Jesus Christ to earth.
- **Second Advent:** The second coming of Jesus Christ to earth.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times or last things.
- **Hermeneutics:** The theory and practice of interpretation.
- **Allegorizer:** Someone who interprets the Bible allegorically (symbolically).
- **Typology:** A doctrine explaining that things in the Old Testament foreshadow things in the New Testament.



## 5. FAQs on Vannoy, Major Prophets, Session 27, Ezekiel 36-37 – Dry Bones and Two Sticks, Prophecy/Fulfillment, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Ezekiel 36-37

- **Question 1: What is the main focus of Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37, and what major themes are discussed?**
- These chapters primarily address the restoration of Israel, both spiritually and physically. Key themes include the return of the Israelites to their land, spiritual cleansing and renewal (a new heart and the indwelling of God's Spirit), reunification of the divided kingdoms, agricultural abundance, and a lasting covenant with God. The prophecies suggest a transformed land, security from enemies, and recognition of God's holiness among the nations.
- **Question 2: In Ezekiel 36, verses 25-27 describe God giving a new heart and spirit. How has this passage been interpreted, and what are the different perspectives on its fulfillment?**
- This passage is often interpreted as a description of spiritual regeneration or the new birth, closely resembling the experience of Christians. However, interpretations diverge regarding its context and fulfillment. Some believe it was fulfilled in the return from Babylonian exile, emphasizing the moral and religious improvement. Others view it as a prophecy fulfilled by the Church. Still others see it as pointing to a future, greater restoration of Israel in their land, where they will experience a deep spiritual transformation alongside their physical return.
- **Question 3: How does the context of Ezekiel 36, particularly verses surrounding 25-27, influence the interpretation of those verses?**
- The verses surrounding 25-27, especially 24 and 28, place the promise of a new heart and spirit within the context of Israel's return to their land. Verse 24 speaks of God gathering Israel from the nations and bringing them back to their own land, and verse 28 speaks of them dwelling in that land. This context suggests that the spiritual renewal is directly tied to the national restoration of Israel, influencing interpretations that favor a future fulfillment related to Israel's return.

- **Question 4: What are the arguments against interpreting Ezekiel 36 solely as a prophecy fulfilled in the return from Babylonian exile?**
- Several verses in Ezekiel 36, such as verse 14 (the land will no longer devour men) and verse 35 (the desolate land will become like the Garden of Eden), don't seem to have been fully realized after the return from exile. The land continued to experience warfare and disorder, and it didn't resemble the Garden of Eden. These verses suggest a more complete and future fulfillment than what occurred after the Babylonian exile.
- **Question 5: What is the "Church view" of Ezekiel 36-37, and what are the challenges to this interpretation?**
- The "Church view" interprets Ezekiel 36-37 as being fulfilled spiritually in the Christian Church, seeing the promises of spiritual renewal and covenant as applying to believers in Christ. However, this interpretation faces the challenge of the explicit focus on Israel and the land. Critics argue that it spiritualizes the text to mean something different than it would have meant to the original hearers, potentially overlooking the emphasis on Israel's national restoration. It's also argued that we already enjoy what this passage describes, as Hebrews confirms, but it is descriptive rather than prophetic.
- **Question 6: How does Ezekiel 37's vision of the dry bones contribute to the understanding of Israel's restoration?**
- The vision of the dry bones represents the spiritual and national revival of Israel. The bones symbolize the "whole house of Israel" in a state of hopelessness and being cut off (Ezekiel 37:11). The prophecy foretells God's power to bring them back to life, reunite them, and restore them to their land, giving them a new spirit. This further emphasizes the themes of resurrection and restoration.
- **Question 7: What is the significance of the prophecy of the two sticks in Ezekiel 37?**
- The prophecy of the two sticks symbolizes the reunification of the divided kingdoms of Israel (Judah and Ephraim/Israel) into one nation. God promises to gather the Israelites from the nations, bring them back to their land, and unite them under one king, a descendant of David. This signifies the end of division and the restoration of a unified Israel with a lasting covenant of peace and a sanctuary in their midst, forever.

- **Question 8: Considering the various interpretations, what is the prevailing view regarding the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies in Ezekiel 36-37?**
- While interpretations vary, the prevailing view leans toward a future fulfillment involving the national restoration of Israel in their land. This view acknowledges the spiritual blessings enjoyed by the Church but emphasizes that the explicit promises to Israel, including their return to the land, reunification as a nation, and lasting covenant with God, point to a future time when these prophecies will be fully realized. This aligns with passages like Romans 11:26, suggesting that "all Israel will be saved."