

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 151

Ezekiel 37

March 26, 2017

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Episode Summary

Ezekiel 37 is one of the most familiar in the entire book, but that familiarity really extends only to the first fourteen verses. The chapter actually contains two oracles which telegraph the same ideas and work in tandem. This episode discusses the vision of the dry bones, particularly the debate over whether it provides information on a theology of individual bodily resurrection, and the prophecy of the two sticks representing the rejoining of the two halves of Israel. Both parts of the chapter relate to the restoration of the entire nation and return to the land. The question of fulfillment for these prophecies is also taken up in this episode.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 151: Ezekiel chapter 37. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike, how are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. We're at a good chapter here. This is an interesting one!

TS: Yeah. And also what's interesting is your *Reversing Hermon* book is out.

MH: That's true.

TS: I got it a few days ago, so don't tell me how it ends. Don't give it away! Don't spoil the ending for me.

MH: I won't. You can send me a picture of it like other people are doing because I haven't actually gotten one yet.

TS: (laughing) They got it before you got it! So you don't even know how it ends, do you?

MH: I know how it ends. I was there when it was made. I just don't have any of my own, so what can I say? Just trying to get the publisher to send me some copies. I'm sure they're in the mail. They've already said I'm getting a case, but I have not seen it yet.

TS: It is fun to see all the pictures that people have taken with it. One person took a picture with their dog. That was cute. They've had some funny memes with skeletons looking out windows looking for it. That's funny.

MH: (laughing) My wife showed me that one! That was not me, although it could have been because (like I said) I haven't seen one yet.

TS: That's how I am. It's on deck to read, so I haven't read it yet. So don't spoil it for me. Don't let me know.

MH: I won't, I won't. (laughing) How it ends... It ends with footnotes, how's that?

TS: It ends with a lot of footnotes. I can guarantee that. Well, Mike, you also just got back from Dallas. You want to tell us what's going on? Is there anything you want to announce about that?

MH: Well, I'll say a little bit about it. If you subscribe to the newsletter, you sort of know something about it already because we posted some pictures in the newsletter. We were setting up a studio to do a TV show, which will basically be a YouTube channel that will become a Roku channel and all these other channels. It's not my wheelhouse, so I can't really explain too much more than that because I'd mess it up. But basically, we're going to be starting a TV show called *FringePop321*. It's a show that is basically a response show to lots of crazy stuff—lots of weird peripheral topics. I've been asked many times to do something like this—to respond to *Ancient Aliens*, to respond to myths about lost races coming over to North America that left this or that inscription... Just fill in the blank. It's a lot of paleo-babble kind of stuff—just strange things that you hear or read or see on video somewhere else on YouTube about the ancient world. The aleph-tav stuff... There's hundreds and hundreds of topics.

So we're actually going to start doing that, and it's a joint partnership between the nonprofit that I have (Miqlat) and allaboutgod.com. We're pooling resources to do this. All the content will be available for free. It's going to take a lot of work. Just setting up the studio was actually a lot of work. But it's something that's going to debut in 2018. We have a studio. It's a real studio. We're going to try to queue 50 or 60 episodes this year, so I'll be making trips to Dallas to film periodically the rest of this calendar year. If we get the episodes queued, we'll launch it in 2018 and it'll be on YouTube or on Roku or whatever else they want to put it on. My job is more or less just to show up. I storyboard the episodes. I teach and narrate through the episodes.

5:00

The studio is kind of cool. We have some pretty fun, crazy props in there. I have my own alien now (laughing). For those who have read *The Facade*... We haven't named him Adam. We're actually going to let viewers name the alien and name some of the other props in the studio. It'll be fun because I think this kind of thing is long overdue. We're trying to provide credible information on all these topics, so it's not a strict debunking kind of show, but it takes a topic and asks, "Is there anything to this? Here's the nonsense part, here's the stuff you can dismiss, here's the bad research. But over here there is something to think about." We'll talk about that. Every episode will have a corresponding web page where people can go to for sort of a write-up about the topic, and then links to good information. Our emphasis here is on peer-reviewed material. It will be a response effort, both in video and then the companion website that goes with it. That's beginning now. If you subscribe to the newsletter, you'll get more about it. I'll give you updates when we have them about the studio or the details of this or that episode. I'm not going to be posting about it on my website. You're going to have to go to the part of the website where it says to subscribe to Mike's newsletter, and you subscribe and you'll get more information as we proceed.

TS: Now your alien you have in the studio... it is legal, correct?

MH: (laughing) I don't know... is he?

TS: I don't know!

MH: He didn't go through customs, okay? But he did go through the mail, so maybe he's both. Who knows?

TS: He's vetted...

MH: He's vetted by the US Postal Service!

TS: Well, that's good to know. And then also, Mike, you've got to be getting excited because baseball season is around the corner.

MH: I have my first fantasy baseball draft today, which I really have not done any research for. Maybe that's a good thing. The last time I won a league, I couldn't show up for the draft. It's the only draft I've missed in about ten years and I wound up winning the league. So maybe that tells me something about my drafting skills (laughs). I really had to manage that team because the draft was just horrible, so maybe that's the key. Maybe just pay more attention during the year and be a little more of a wheeler/dealer and come up with something better than what I got last year anyway.

TS: Do you remember who won the fantasy football league last year?

MH: You know, I don't. Did you win?

TS: Oh yeah! My bad... I did! I totally forgot! (laughter) Yes, I did. Thank you for mentioning that, Mike. I am the champion. Thank you. I appreciate that.

MH: I put that out of my mind as soon as it happened.

TS: I appreciate the shout-out.

MH: You didn't have the courage to play baseball, though. That's day-to-day, not week-to-week.

TS: I can't stay awake long enough to play fantasy baseball. (laughter) I don't know what that means.

MH: You watch soccer to keep you awake, is that it?

TS: Every four years I watch soccer. I do enjoy the World Cup. I love it. That's once in four years, so it's kind of like the Olympics. I get into it. I like that. I wonder if Ezekiel was a ball player, Mike. I wonder if there were any ancient games back then.

MH: We're going to start now because you're angling for some kind of Dallas Cowboys thing here. I already know this is...

TS: No, I just want to know what kind of games they played back in the day. Did they have some kind of pig on a stick?

MH: (laughing) I don't know. I know the Egyptians had board games and games with balls, but I don't know. Ancient game theory isn't something I've actually looked into.

TS: Maybe we should do a whole show on that. That would be interesting.

MH: Maybe not. But anyway...

Ezekiel 37. This is arguably (other than the first chapter and maybe chapters 38 and 39) the best known chapter in the book. If you've ever heard a sermon on Ezekiel it was probably on this chapter. I've been looking forward to it. There's some good stuff in here. It's not terribly complex, but it is somewhat controversial. We'll get into two areas of controversy as we go through. But let me just start off by reading something from Taylor as preparatory, and then I'll read the first fourteen verses. Taylor, in his little Tyndale commentary, summarizes the chapter this way. At least, these are some of his summative comments. He writes:

10:00

The familiarity of this most well-known chapter of all in Ezekiel can easily blind readers to its real meaning. The vision of the valley of dry bones has been taken by some as teaching an Old Testament doctrine of bodily resurrection, and by others it has been seen simply as an analogy for spiritual regeneration. The symbol of the two sticks [MH: the second half of the chapter] has been used both to advance and to refute the theories of the British Israelites. But the key to understanding this chapter aright is to see it in its context. Ezekiel had been promising his people a change in their fortunes: new leadership, a restored land, rebuilt cities, and many of the features of the Messianic era. It is not surprising that he was met with skepticism: the fall of Jerusalem had meant the break-up of their faith and it was not going to be restored as easily as that. They looked at the shattered remains of their people in exile and they could only say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost. Can these bones live?' The answer appeared to be unmistakably 'No'. Ezekiel, however, believed that it could happen. If God's purpose was to restore Israel, he would do it by however great a miracle. Both the vision and the oracle of the two sticks conveyed this message.

I'll just stop there for a moment. That's an important thought. Both of the halves of this chapter are related and they convey the same message. That'll be a factor in some things we say a little bit later on. Back to Taylor:

In the case of the first oracle (1–14), the nation was shown that God's Spirit had the power to turn what looked like a host of skeletons into an effective army of men, a picture of Israel restored to life again and filled with the Spirit. In the second oracle (15–28), Ezekiel shows that the old divisions between Israel and Judah will pass away: the new nation will unite the remnants of both peoples in one land under one king, and without their traditional animosity.

That's the end of the quote. That's a good summary of what we have here in the 37th chapter. Let's just jump into the first fourteen verses. I want to comment primarily on the resurrection controversy as it relates to this chapter. That's kind of where we're going to spend our time in the first fourteen verses. Starting with verse 1, we read:

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you,

and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, 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.”¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. [MH: That’s an important phrase: “the whole house.”] Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ ¹²Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

These first fourteen verses are very familiar to most readers who have ventured into the Old Testament. If you ever heard a sermon on Ezekiel, it's probably this or the first chapter. Maybe something else prophetic from Ezekiel 38 and 39, but this is a fairly well-known chapter of Ezekiel. It's pretty clear in the vision of the valley of the dry bones that the bones are the Israelites in exile. Verse 11 basically point-blank says that:

¹¹Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel...”

15:00

So you have, at the very least, the exiles that he's been preaching to in Babylon (which, of course, is the southern kingdom of Judah). This "whole house of Israel" language is going to become important when we get to the second half of the chapter, where the two houses (the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom) are rejoined again into a united confederacy of twelve tribes. So I think "whole house of Israel" here is significant. What we're dealing with here is a

vision of national resurrection of all the tribes—the whole unified nation. Of course, as Taylor mentioned in that paragraph that I read, there's a question of, "Should we read this chapter and extract from it an Old Testament doctrine of individual bodily resurrection?" And most scholars are going to say no because of verse 11 ("these bones are the whole house of Israel"). In other words, this is a vision or an episode where Ezekiel sees these bones and sees this happening to the bones, and even though you get this individual language in verse 13 ("I open your graves, raise you from your graves, O my people"), most scholars are going to say this is very clearly given not to teach the individual resurrection of the believer, but to give a picture of what God is going to do to the nation—to essentially bring it back from the dead because both halves of Israel (northern kingdom and southern kingdom) by this point are history. Jerusalem has been destroyed; the temple has been destroyed. So this is a picture of the national entity coming back from the dead, as it were. So it shouldn't be used to teach a doctrine like individual bodily resurrection. Most scholars—even those who aren't evangelical—are going to say that idea is taught elsewhere, most notably in between the testaments and obviously in the New Testament. But some will also say there are other passages in the Old Testament that sort of hint at the idea that every individual believer is going to be resurrected in the Last Day, or some sort of eschatological future time. So they don't say it to deny resurrection language that might occur elsewhere.

Typically, if you're taking this position, your point is that the chapter itself is very clearly a picture of national, political restoration of the united twelve tribes and is not trying to articulate a doctrine of individual bodily resurrection—sort of post-death and having to do with individual salvation. That's the consensus view. It's fair to say that. What do we do with that? Most who have heard a sermon on this chapter are going to be thinking in the other terms: that this is useful fodder for individual resurrection, so on and so forth. We'll get into that specifically in a few minutes. I have my own questions about the consensus view (let's just put it that way), but you need to understand how scholars typically think about the passage and why. It's really verse 11 and the flavor of the whole thing about this national restoration.

This isn't a major item, but there are also some who say that the reference to the Spirit (that occurred a couple times in the first fourteen verses) should be understood as breath or wind because *ruach* (the Hebrew word for "spirit") can, of course, be translated either of those ways: "breath" or "wind." We don't really have a reference to the Holy Spirit here. We have very clearly (like back in verse 9) instances where *ruach* or the plural, *ruchot*, are used of wind. "Come from the four winds (the four *ruchot*), O breath (*ruach*), and breath on the slain that they may live." The Holy Spirit doesn't live in the four corners of the earth, so this is a geographical reference that scholars see (and I think rightly so) as *ruach* speaking of wind, of air. They're breathing again is the point, and this is not a reference to the Holy Spirit. I also question whether you can say *that* through the

whole chapter, as well, and that's related to this idea of individual vs. national resurrection. Block says here:

It is difficult to decide whether *ruach* should be interpreted as "spirit" or "breath." In any case, *ruach* represents the divine animating force, without which no life is possible. Only God, from whom all life derives, can revive these bones.

20:00 Now I think that's a legitimate point for Block. He's like, "Who cares how you would really translate it, because the animating force either way is God. Either it's the Holy Spirit or it's God putting wind or air into these embodied beings and making them live again." It's God either way, and I think that's a good point. It's also something that factors into this whole resurrection discussion. The reason why the spirit is an issue here is the question of whether we have an individual indwelling of the Spirit in this episode, or is Israel raised as a national entity and then God comes to sort of be with his people again. Is this a reference to the presence of God generally among his people, or is it a reference to the Spirit of God inhabiting individuals in a very New Testament sense? Is this what we're getting in this chapter?

To summarize all of this, you've got a number of issues and these are going to be clarified by the second half of the chapter as we talk about that when we get there. But do we have national resurrection as a picture here? Is the whole point of the first fourteen verses the picture of the national revival, bringing the nation back from the dead, as it were? Or do we have something more? Is this a passage to which we can go to learn about an Old Testament doctrine of individual resurrection at the end of days? Do we have that? Do we have something going on here that sort of foreshadows or typifies the idea that we're going to see in the New Testament with the New Covenant of the Spirit of God inhabiting each believer? How would you really know?

I'm bringing this up because there are just people (commentators, scholars, other people you might read or hear) that takes sides on this, and I want listeners to know why people take the sides that they do. If someone says that this has nothing to do with individual resurrection, this has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit indwelling people later on, this has nothing to do with New Covenant language here... They're not doing that because they're trying to deny something supernatural necessarily. Obviously, there are some who do deny the supernatural and, of course, they would be very comfortable with saying things like, "This is just a picture of national restoration and it has nothing to do with the individual soul." They'd be very comfortable with saying that. But there are still a number of others who gravitate away from seeing Spirit indwelling and individual resurrection here and are just fine with those ideas found elsewhere. Just so that we don't caricature someone for taking this or that view. It is hard to decide, but I appreciate what Block says here because it makes you wonder if it really matters

because either way it's God doing something. God is the animating force here, so does it really matter how we translate these things?

Let's drill down a little bit here on this question of whether this passage teaches the doctrine of a bodily resurrection in general. Again, most scholars are going to say, "not really because the focus is clearly corporate." Block says this, for instance:

While Ezekiel is contemplating the sight of the dry bones, he is addressed directly by Yahweh as "son of man" and asked a question: Can these bones live again? The question is ridiculous, of course. Ezekiel's own tradition knows of people coming back to life, but only in cases of recent death.

And Block references things like the miracles of Elijah here (1 Kings 17:17-24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37) and 2 Kings 13:21, when someone touches the bones of a corpse and a person is made alive again by touching a certain prophet's bones, that sort of thing. So Block says that in the Old Testament you have this idea, but it's only really in context of recent death. And he argues that the question is rhetorical. It's supposed to be absurd because only God can do this and God is specifically going to do this with the nation. This is a national restoration. He goes on further and says:

Any hope for [the individual Israelite] would need to be tied to belief in a general eschatological resurrection, like we find in Daniel 12:1-2. The prophet's response suggested such notions had not matured in Israel.

25:00 Now that's a key sentence and I'm going to stop there. Block is going to be with the consensus that says, "Well, this idea of a specific individual resurrection wasn't really a fully formed idea yet in Old Testament theology by this time. I know a lot of listeners are thinking at this point, "You just brought up Daniel 12:1-2. Block just referenced that verse. That's at the same time as Ezekiel." Well, again, the date of Daniel is pretty controversial, but let's assume that the book's written at the same time Ezekiel is. Well, how would Ezekiel know about it? How would we have any evidence of that? Even if Ezekiel did, what about the rest of the people? It's not like these are being printed and handed out. So Block's point, and the point of others, is that you can't really use a passage like Daniel to be a commentary on Ezekiel 37. You can't use that as indicative generally, that most Israelites would have been thinking about an individual bodily resurrection. You're going to have to wait until Daniel is a book and lots of people have read it and accepted it as canonical, and that's going to take decades or centuries for that to happen. That's why, when you get into the Second Temple period you have this idea more fully talked about and developed and—frankly—speculated on, as well, in intertestamental Jewish literature. That's just sort of a real-time kind of picture of what would have to happen, so we can't presume that the individual Israelite might have been fully informed or even well-informed of this

idea. That's true, but again, I'm going to have a few objections to that—or at least things I think need to be thought of that, in my judgment, are a bit neglected here. But back to Block:

[Israelites] had begun to grasp the idea, as Job 14:14 seems to imply.

That verse says:

**¹⁴If a man dies, shall he live again?
All the days of my service I would wait,
till my renewal should come.**

That seems to suggest pretty clearly an afterlife in a positive sense, but Block adds that in the end, this hope of Job is sort of aborted. It sours in his mind, as we keep reading in the book of Job. He writes:

Ezekiel's answer to Yahweh's question is cautious.

This is another thing that scholars will hop on. When God asks, "Can these bones live?" he doesn't say, "Well, sure!" He doesn't say, "Of course, because we have this teaching over here and you said before in this book or to this prophet or..." In other words, Ezekiel doesn't reflexively answer, "Of course!" and he doesn't reference anything that could be brought to the discussion. So Block and other scholars look at this and say that Ezekiel kind of answers like, "I don't know, but I guess *you* know, God. You know the answer to that question and I don't." That would suggest that we don't have in Ezekiel's mind or in the minds of most Israelites this idea of an individual bodily resurrection. You could question if that's legitimate because Ezekiel is shown something that's pretty bizarre. Because of its bizarre nature, would his mind really be thinking of this doctrine, or is he thinking, "There's something kind of crazy going on here and I don't really know the relationship of this thing to this other thing, so I'm just going to choose my words carefully." I think that's possible, too.

What we're doing here is I'm trying to inform you as to how scholars think about this—even evangelical scholars when it comes to using Ezekiel 37 in relation to the idea of bodily resurrection. So back to Block:

Ezekiel's answer to Yahweh's question is cautious. "Oh, Lord Yahweh, only you know." And then he tosses the ball back into Yahweh's court. He neither rules out the possibility (after all, with God all things are possible and Yahweh exercises control over life and death), nor does he betray the hopelessness of his contemporaries.

So he doesn't deny it and he doesn't lapse into pessimism is Block's point.

Instead, Ezekiel casts himself entirely upon the will and the power of God. Yahweh responds by returning the ball, demanding that the prophet be personally involved in providing the answer.

30:00 That's where you get this statement, "Son of man, prophesy this, that, and the other thing to these bones and then watch what happens." So I think Block (who is very obviously an evangelical and affirms the bodily resurrection and all that stuff) is kind of representative. He's very hesitant here to say that the passage certainly or certifiably teaches the doctrine of a bodily resurrection generally to any believer—or really, generally to humans to be judged (like the Great White Throne judgment in the book of Revelation, where there's the ones who are raised to eternal life and the ones who go into the Lake of Fire). Block is just saying that we don't really get that kind of individual idea from this passage, and that reflects the consensus thinking.

So what do we do with that? Well, I would agree that you can't necessarily appeal to Daniel. That's not a slam-dunk appeal because even if it's a contemporaneous book with Ezekiel, we have no idea who would have read it. If Daniel's sitting there in his room writing a book... You have to put yourself in the real-life circumstance. In these days, books were not printed. They weren't disseminated. Everything had to be done by hand. So there's no guarantee that *any* Israelite is going to read Daniel 12:1-2 for a century. There's just no guarantee of it. So that's a legitimate point. The reference to Job, as well. Even if we look at Job 14:14 optimistically, discarding the fact that Job kind of drifts off and by the end of the book you can't really tell if he's that positive. Let's just take the verse at face value.

**¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again?
All the days of my service I would wait,
till my renewal should come.**

Let's just take it optimistically. When was Job written? Everybody assumes Job is the earliest book of the Bible because that's what preachers tell them. And they tell them that because, "Well, there's no reference to the law. There's no reference to the covenants. There's no reference to the tabernacle and all this kind of stuff, so it must have been written before these things." I got news for you. You can make all those arguments for a book written *after* the temple is destroyed, *after* the covenant people are in exile and there's a question of these things. Or you could have a book written in which we don't bring those things into the book because there's no point in it. The book isn't about those things, so the author isn't required to mention those things and whether they were around or not. It's kind of an argument from silence when people try to date the book of Job along these lines. You could say, "There's some stuff in there that sounds like the

patriarchal era." That's true. I could write a book *today* and make it sound like it was contemporaneous with the patriarchal era. That's called historical fiction and people do it today. It's just a matter of research. Where do you want to set the story, and then how accurate in your setting can you be? Ancient books are like that, too. There are things that were written at a certain time that are written about something that happened centuries or millennia earlier and they just do a good job of it.

So these things are no indication of the date of Job. There's nothing actually in the book that really gives you any idea as to when it was written. Now if you know Hebrew and if we were having a class in Job in grad school, the Hebrew professor would quickly point out that there are lots of things in Job (and there are a good number of them) that are found elsewhere only in late Hebrew: basic points of morphology, how words are formed, points of syntax, grammatical issues, linguistic issues that are common in late Hebrew but not common in early Hebrew. They would argue for a late date for Job on that basis. That could be, too. You could have a mix of things. You could have someone take a book that was written early and edit it and update the language linguistically. There are books in the Bible that do get editorial updating—usually place names and things like that. So that in and of itself doesn't prove that Job is late, but it's a good argument for it. It's a coherent argument, I should say. The truth is that nobody really knows. There's nothing definite in the book that can really nail down a date for it. If you read fifty commentaries on Job, the dating of Job would probably range from pre-patriarchal days all the way into the Second Temple period. The reason is it's all a guess. It's all a guess. So we can't assume that Israelites had known and read widely in the book of Job and come across this verse to reinforce the idea of individual resurrection (a positive afterlife destiny). Scholars will point this out and say, "We just don't get any help here."

35:00

I'm going to offer a little bit of push-back here. I've tried to help you understand why the discussion is what it is, and I would think that there are passages that certainly hint at the idea of a positive afterlife. If you're new to my content, you could go up to my website (drmsb.com) and you could search the site for things like "afterlife" and you're going to get to posts that I did years ago on afterlife expectation in the Old Testament. There are passages that I think very clearly have a positive afterlife outlook. In other words, it's not just Sheol (the grave) and everybody goes there and that's the end of the story—that all of the talk about Sheol and all of the talk about living beyond this world is neutral or negative. You just go to the grave and then you're kind of like in this cadaverous existence and that's pretty much it, and we have to wait until the New Testament to get ideas like heaven and hell. That is a gross overstatement. But again, that's where a lot of scholars are—maybe we could even say that's where the consensus is. For the life of me, I can't really figure out why that is because, again, there are a handful of passages that... I'll be blunt here: you really can't read them any other way but positive. Again, Job 14:14 doesn't really help us because it's probably late. We don't know but... There are definitely passages that are pre-exilic that

have a positive afterlife view. It's not just the grave and everybody goes there and that's the end of the story. Isaiah 4:3 I think is worth mentioning.

³ And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem.

Now I will admit that you could read Isaiah 4... Even if you believe in three Isaiahs (like most critics do), this would be in first Isaiah, so this is eighth century—pre-exilic. You have this idea of being left in Zion, and everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem. That sounds to me like Book of Life kind of stuff. We've done a whole episode on this podcast on the motif (the idea and the theology connected to the idea) of Books of Life in the Bible. This is some of that language. It would really be difficult for me to believe that an Israelite could have this concept of being "recorded for life in Jerusalem" or being in the Book of Life in a positive way and *not* think that this was an afterlife idea. I just think that would be bizarre to connect that *only* with this life. But a lot of scholars will look at Isaiah 4:3 and say this is just a reference to people who are going to survive something bad that happens to Jerusalem, and God ordained the ones that would be left and that's that. It's just about this life and something bad happening to Jerusalem. You realize that if this is the eighth century and you take it that way, this is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. A lot of critics don't want anything to do with prophecy. Trust me. They don't want anything to do with actual prediction of the future. But if they're going to deny an afterlife sense to that verse, that's precisely what they have here. Because we know that Jerusalem wasn't destroyed until the sixth century—two centuries later. So I don't see how they can have their cake and eat it, too, in this passage and just say it's about life in this world. I look at Isaiah 4:3 and to me it is suggestive of this Book of Life kind of language.

Another one is Psalm 69:28.

²⁸ Let them be blotted out of the book of the living; let them not be enrolled among the righteous.

This is a pretty clear idea in my mind to Book of Life stuff. If you have a Book of Life (a book of the living) that God keeps on record (again, we did a whole episode on this) and the ones who are listed in that book are the righteous (which is what this verse says), to me it defies clear thinking and defies logic to look at that and say, "Oh, they wouldn't have taken that as a positive afterlife statement. Again, neither of those verses deal with bodily resurrection. That's true. There's no reference to bodily resurrection. But there is a reference to this positive notion of living beyond the grave with the Lord. Psalm 87:5-7 say this:

40:00

⁵ **And of Zion it shall be said,
 “This one and that one were born in her”;
 for the Most High himself will establish her.**

⁶ **The LORD records as he registers the peoples,
 “This one was born there.” *Selah***

⁷ **Singers and dancers alike say,
 “All my springs are in you.”**

Some scholars (and I think it's worth thinking about) would take that passage and sort of align it to the thinking of Isaiah 4:3 and this thing about being written in God's book for life in Zion—that this is some sort of future prospect, about connecting this Book of Life (this record that God keeps) with life in Zion. I realize a lot of scholars would say it's just about current Jerusalem (Jerusalem in this life) because Jerusalem is great. It's where God's presence is and everybody wants to live there, and so on and so forth. It strikes me as a little bit too limiting to take the passage like that. I don't want to necessarily belabor this whole point because we did do an episode on the Books of Life idea. I don't want to drift too far down the road here, but I want to add a quotation here from the *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, the “Prophets” volume. This is by Phillip Johnston. You're going to hear a couple of things in here that are the consensus idea, but then I'm going to have a question for him at the end of this section. Again, this is representative. Johnston writes:

Intertestamental and New Testament writers understood the "Book of Life" as referring to post-mortem fate [MH: and he gives a reference to passages in Enoch and Jubilees and the New Testament—Luke, Philippians, Hebrews 12, Revelation 21, all these]. This interpretation has often been read back into the Old Testament. This approach takes the few Old Testament references as glimpses of a future hope. However, this need not be the meaning in their initial context. [MH: Again, Johnston is with the consensus here.] The record for life (Isaiah 4:3) applies to the current life on earth, not a later one. The divine comment on those in Malachi's heavenly book [MH: I did not read that verse], "On the day when I act, I will spare them" (Malachi 3:17) suggests preservation during judgment rather than life after death. Even the Book of Names in Daniel's final vision (Daniel 12:1), though mentioned just before resurrection, concerns "your people who shall be delivered," that is those who will survive the unprecedented anguish and presumably remain alive on earth. [MH: So Johnston doesn't even have Daniel 12:1-2 in there with the afterlife idea.] Similarly, the books mentioned in several Psalms need imply no more than Yahweh's careful concern and provision for his people.

Again, this is the consensus thinking. But I have a simple question—at least I think it's simple. My question is for the consensus in light of Book of Life stuff and

some of these other references—positive references to being with the Lord after death in the Psalms and what-not. Here's my simple question: Where does this new understanding of these Old Testament phrases and ideas come from? In other words, if we go into the Second Temple period and Jews all of a sudden are writing about a positive afterlife and bodily resurrection with the Lord after death, where does that idea come from? If it doesn't come from these passages, where does it come from? What happened to prompt this presumed shift in understanding? Now, I ask that and I'll be honest with you: I haven't seen any of the consensus tell me. I haven't seen any consensus-view scholars, whether they're evangelical or not, answer that question. Everybody knows when you get to the Second Temple period that this talk—this personal eschatological talk, afterlife talk—sort of starts to blow up. Everybody knows that. You hit a certain point in the history of Israel where this flow of the Biblical period on into what we call the Intertestamental Period and then into the New Testament period... We all know that in the Second Temple period, the Intertestamental Period, that this discussion blossoms and blooms. I used the phrase "blows up" because you get a lot of this talk. Well, they will reference these verses and these concepts like the Book of Life. Johnston's quote began with this statement:

Intertestamental and New Testament writers understood the "Book of Life" as referring to post-mortem fate.

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That's absolutely clear. So my question for Dr. Johnston and others is, what happened? Who turned the lights on? What non-biblical thing all of a sudden produced this idea—an idea to which writers in the later periods would link back to the Old Testament? How did that happen? If these verses have nothing to do with the idea, then where did the shift happen? How did this shift occur? My suggestion is that it's really a question of frequency and volume, not that the idea wasn't present in the Old Testament. I think that the consensus (this is just me) confuses the *increase* in the discussion with being innovative or new. What I'm suggesting is that it's not really new. You do get vestiges of this—hints of this—in the Old Testament. It's perfectly fine to take those Old Testament passages as meaning what they seem to mean and, of course, what they will be thought to mean later in the Second Temple period and the New Testament. Just because there's more of them and we cross some sort of line where all of a sudden this topic becomes a big deal in the literature that's produced in the Second Temple period doesn't mean the ideas were not there in the earlier period. It's a question of frequency and interest. It intensifies. But it's a mistake to conclude from the ballooning of the material (the amount of attention that's paid to it) that it didn't exist prior. I just think that's a wrong-headed approach. But again, that's just me. For the sake of our listeners, I want you to understand because a lot of you do read academic material in this respect and you're going to run into this. I want you to know what the consensus is, how it thinks, and then I'm just offering a little bit of push-back to it. I think the question I asked is a reasonable question, and I think the position that I just sketched out (that we're confusing frequency of

reference with existence or non-existence) I think is misguided. I think that approach is also quite reasonable. So again, I just want to challenge that a little bit. I'm at a bit of a different place there. I say that just so that you know what's going on here.

Now, the other issue that we need to get into when it comes to the dry bones and what it describes (this national restoration) is when that was fulfilled or when it will be fulfilled—this whole question of fulfillment. There are two conditions—two things described—in verses 1-14. There's a restoration of the people to the land and there's, of course, this being brought back from the dead, this being made alive again. You have this reference to the wind, the air, making them breathing beings again—whether that's the Spirit or not. As we're going to see in the next section (verses 15-18), it's more clearly the Spirit of God that's in the picture there. So that might be what's going on in the first 14 verses, including and along with the wind. Either way, God is the animating force, like Block said.

So you get two points—the revival of the nation and then the restoration of the nation to the land. And the revival of the nation means all Israel—all twelve tribes. And then they're brought back to the land. So has that happened yet? Is it only the future? Is it a little bit of both? These are the interpretive questions that arise. Verses 15-28 are essentially another side of the same coin. I'm going to read the passage quickly and then get into a few things here. We don't want the episode to be overly long, but I'm going to read the rest of the chapter and you'll get the feel for it. This part's a little less familiar than the first fourteen verses.

50:00

¹⁵**The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶“Son of man, take a stick and write on it, ‘For Judah, and the people of Israel associated with him’; then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him.’ ¹⁷ And join them one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when your people say to you, ‘Will you not tell us what you mean by these?’ ¹⁹ say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰ When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹ then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. ²² And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. ²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them**

from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

²⁴“My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes. ²⁵They shall dwell in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children's children shall dwell there forever, and David my servant shall be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”

That's the end of the chapter. You look at that and it's very clear that what we're talking about is a unified Israel—all twelve tribes, both halves of the divided kingdom made into one. There are some really important phrases that occur in verses 15-28, that reinforce the idea: "no longer two nations," "no longer divided into two kingdoms." God says, "This is what I'm about to do." If you can read Hebrew you would detect that what we have here is a series of participles in the *qatal* forms. This is futuristic thinking. So the question is, how far in the future? We're in the sixth century here with Ezekiel. Is this a reference to the return of the people from Babylon? That would be doubtful because that's only Judah. Or is it some remote future return—a future beyond the return from Babylon that we read about in the Old Testament? Is it something yet future to that? I think that much is pretty clear. But then we have to ask ourselves if this is fulfilled in the New Testament because a lot of people will think that if it's beyond the Old Testament return from Babylon, that's end-times. "That's future to us right here and now in the 21st century, even to our time." What I'm saying is that you can't just assume that.

For those who've been listening to the podcast for any length of time, you know where I'm going to go with this. I'm going to go into the already-but-not-yet paradigm of eschatology that is just everywhere in the Bible. That's just the way it is (laughing). You have already and not yet. You have statements like Ezekiel 37. We've been through a number of these Old Testament passages where the fulfillment was beyond the Old Testament period, but that is not a legitimate reason to conclude that it's *all* future to us today. Future to Old Testament times can include fulfillment in the first century—i.e., the New Testament era. So you have things that were already fulfilled, but then there are going to be these outliers and you have the "not yet fulfilled." So already (first century), and not yet

(still future). Again, this is going to be the same kind of thing. The way to sort of break this down... How else shall we look at this? The elements that we've looked at in the whole chapter, whether it's the first half or the second half... You have an element of restoration in the land as the whole people of God, and you have God dwelling among them—this language about "I will be their God and they will be my people and I will be in their midst and my Spirit will be in them (or with them) in their midst." We need to be thinking about this kind of language. All the tribes in the land, the Spirit of God (presence of God) associated with the restoration of the nation, who as a whole are back in the land. That's what we need to have in our heads here.

55:00 It can't really refer to the return from Babylon because of all of the tribes. You'll notice as we read through the passage, "I will take Israel from the *nations*" (plural). Verse 28: "Then the *nations* (plural) will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel." We're not just talking about Babylon here. This is a bigger picture than that. It's the people of Israel, no matter where they have been scattered. They will be brought back together.

So how do we look at this? What future are we talking about? I would say we have an already/not yet paradigm looking at us again. When will the Israelites from all the nations be regathered (or when *were* they)? Well, you certainly have that happening in some respect in Acts 2. At Pentecost, the Jews come from all over the known world. Of course, that's where the Spirit of God shows up. The Spirit is in their midst and is going to inhabit people from that point on. You say, "What about the temple?" Well, the temple is the Body of Christ. How do we know that? Because John says so. Paul says so. When Jesus talks about the temple he refers to his body as the temple that will be destroyed and raised again in three days. Paul takes that and he refers to individual believers as the temple of God. He refers to the Church corporately as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3 and 6). He talks about the Spirit "tabernacling" in believers. That is temple language. You get this in the New Testament. But then you have other things that just don't quite work there. What do we do with that?

Let's just go through the list here, and this is how we'll end the episode because it gives us a little bit of this eschatological already-but-not-yet flavor. I would say here's what's going on with the "already." You have New Testament temple talk, which is pretty clear. Again, my objection is to this whole idea that we've got to have a future temple for this stuff to be realized (and I realize this is common in evangelicalism). "You've got to have a future temple for this talk about the spirit of God and the presence of God being in the midst of his people. You've got to have a temple for that. Temple, temple, temple." Frankly, I don't think so because of New Testament temple talk. Just think about it: the New Testament is pretty clear about its temple language in association with Jesus' body and with believers. Why would we look for a literal temple in the future when 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19-20 have believers (individually and corporately) as the temple of God? It's probably true that people of Ezekiel's day probably can't really imagine

temple-talk without a temple and what goes with it (sacrifices, etc.). But is that really going to inhibit or limit the New Testament writers from the temple talk that they use? Obviously no, because it didn't.

I'll just put it this way: anyone who takes any view that involves a literal future temple and links that idea with the fulfillment of these passages (that it's an all-or-nothing proposition to them)... Any literal view has a couple of straightforward issues to resolve. Many, in my experience, want to affirm a literal temple but not the sacrifices. "Well, we can't have the sacrifices. If the sacrifices are brought back then the writer of Hebrews is wrong because the sacrifice on the cross took care of all our sins past, present, and future. It took care of *my* sins and I live after the Biblical era, so it doesn't make any sense to have the sacrifices come back. Then we've got a real theological problem." And we do! Of course, the answer to that is usually, "The sacrifices that come back are a memorial. They're going to instruct the people (especially the Jews) of what happened at the cross. They're going to be like a visual portrayal of the Messiah having to die for the sins of the whole world. The sacrifices are essential because they're going to teach the people what happened at the cross." I'm not trying to be totally irreverent here, but dude... Why don't you just hand that person a New Testament? That's the way you and I learned about what happened at the cross! We didn't have to watch an animal die on an altar to understand the message of the cross! What, in the future there's going to be no New Testaments? The Bibles are all going to be gone? You don't need sacrifices. Not only do they present a theological conundrum (basically, it means the writer of Hebrews is dead-wrong), but it doesn't make any sense to have them as a memorial or a teaching device because you can just hand somebody a New Testament. You can just give the gospel to somebody. Jews today come to Christ all the time without needing to watch a sacrifice. It just makes no sense. But again, this is the way you're going to see this argued. That's a huge problem.

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Back to the bigger point (sorry for the little hobby horse there)... I'm thinking this idea of the nation being brought back and the Spirit of God being present with his people (like Ezekiel 37 describes)... We don't need a literal temple for that. We have this kind of thing happening in the New Testament era with the book of Acts, with the gathering at Pentecost of the Jews from all the lands to which they had been scattered. They come back to Jerusalem, they hear the Gospel, the Spirit of God descends upon them, they go back, and they begin the process of reclaiming the nations—bringing the Gentile into the fold and correcting the Deuteronomy 32 problem.

We also have "glory" passages attributed to Jesus that really matter for this. Why do I bring up the glory? Well, the glory is associated with the temple. Remember the glory leaves the temple in Ezekiel? It forsakes the temple and Jerusalem and the temple get destroyed. When does the glory come back? There are people that say, "Oh, it's only in the Millennium! We've got to have the Millennium and

build the temple and then the glory can come back and take up residence in the new temple." Well, what about Isaiah 40:5?

**⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."**

That gets quoted in the Gospels about Jesus! Isaiah 60:1-3 says:

**Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.**

**² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.**

**³ And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.**

Again, this is a passage that is quoted in the New Testament about Jesus, whose body is the temple. And we are corporately the temple, and individually the temple! And his Spirit—the light—tabernacles within us! This is New Testament theology. Here's another one. Again, we're talking about the "already" aspect of this. So we've got New Testament temple-talk. We've got glory passages applied to Jesus, and that mattered because the glory is linked to the temple. Look at Ezekiel 37:26-27 again.

²⁶ I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. ²⁷ My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

That is a quote from Leviticus 26:11-12. Let me read that to you.

¹¹ I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. ¹² And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

You say, "Well, who cares, Mike, if Ezekiel quotes Leviticus 26:11-12? We can obviously hear the similarity of the two passages and then how one draws on the other. Big deal. Who cares?" We should care because Paul quotes Leviticus 26:11-12 and it's conceivable that he might have been thinking of Ezekiel 37. In 2 Corinthians 6:16 it says:

**¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,
 “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
 and I will be their God,
 and they shall be my people.**

Who is he writing to in 2 Corinthians? He's writing to the Corinthians! Who are the Corinthians? They're Gentiles! He's just equated a Gentile church with Leviticus 26 and/or Ezekiel 37:26-27. Again, that should matter. That should matter. Another one: Ezekiel 36:28b-29a. This mirrors Ezekiel 37:23, the second part of that where we were today. Let me just go back to chapter 36 and read that.

²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.

1:05:00

Ezekiel 37, which we just read a few minutes ago:

²³ They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Guess where some of that gets quoted? We've already looked at the 2 Corinthians 6 passage. Matthew 1:21 says:

²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

You say, "Is that really drawing on Ezekiel 36 and 37?" I've uploaded an article for podcast listeners by Piotrowski, and the title of the article is "I Will Save My People From Their Sins: The Influence of Ezekiel 36 and 37 on Matthew 1:21." It's from Tyndale Bulletin. If you're interested in the article you can get it and read it. If you get the newsletter, you'll get the link to where we store these articles for the podcast. But I just want you to listen to how this article begins, and this will make the point. It's a really good point.

Matthean scholars are nearly unanimous that LXX Psalm 129:8 [Psalm 130:8 in the Masoretic Text] is the allusive background to Matthew 1:21 [the thing being

alluded to], notwithstanding formidable semantic differences. Ezekiel 36:28b-29a; 37:23b, however, provides a more convincing and more fruitful conceptual background for Matthew's programmatic verse.

The first gospel begins with a startling declaration that Jesus 'will save his people from their sins.' There are only two verses in the entire Old Testament where salvation is from an internal moral enemy [MH: a sin nature within us that we need to be saved from]. Ezekiel 36:29a reads, 'And I will save you from all your defilements.' Ezekiel 37:23b reads, 'But I will save them from all their assemblies in which they sinned.' All other uses of **שָׁמַר/שָׁמַר** ('save') in the OT regard historically identifiable oppressors external to a group or individual. Given this rarity, Matthew's declaration at 1:21 that Jesus will 'save his people from their sins' is extraordinary on a semantic level. Should this direct interpreters back to these two texts in the OT to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' name and calling? If so, the reader's surprise is doubled by the observation that in Ezekiel 36:28b-29a; 37:23b it is YHWH himself who saves from sins.

You see what he's saying? He's saying, "Look, this phrase in Matthew, 'You shall call his name Jesus and he will save his people from their sins'... If you look at the salvation terminology (Greek or Hebrew) in the Old Testament, the only time you ever have any indication that salvation is needed from an internal sin problem is in these two verses in Ezekiel. That's it." And so Piotrowski is arguing that this is what Matthew is tracking on. If you follow that lead, what you have is you have something that is said of God himself in Ezekiel 36-37: "I will save my people from their sins." What is said about God in Ezekiel is now put upon Jesus. Jesus occupies the God-slot in those passages. It's yet another New Testament tactical way of identifying Jesus as God—in this case, with specific respect to saving them from their sins.

1:10:00 You say, "What does that matter for our subject today?" Well, it matters because one of those comes from Ezekiel 37. It links the restoration of the people and the forgiveness (the salvation from their sins that we read about in Ezekiel 37) to the New Testament era, to the work of Christ. And then when you get to Pentecost and all the temple-talk in the New Testament—that it's Jesus' body, it's the Body of Christ, it's the Church, it's individuals in the Church as believers are tabernacled with the Spirit... All of that fits together as sort of a comprehensive picture that what Ezekiel is talking about was fulfilled (at least in part) in the New Testament period. That's what it means, because that's how the New Testament repurposes the ideas.

There's also a not-yet to this, and we'll close with this. What's the not-yet part of Ezekiel 37? It's kind of obvious, really. If you're looking at the passage here, there's a lot of Edenic imagery in Ezekiel 37. You might just sort of read right over it. We'll include Ezekiel 36 in this, too. Ezekiel 36:9-11. Let's just go back

there and we'll go into chapter 37 because Ezekiel 36 is the same prophecy of restoration—the same set of ideas. God says:

⁹ For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown.

Interesting language: "tilled." I wonder if the Hebrew word there for "tilled" is the same as the language in Genesis for the Garden of Eden and that Adam would work the ground. Guess what? It is.

¹⁰ And I will multiply people on you, the whole house of Israel, all of it. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt.¹¹ And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful.

What? Be fruitful and multiply? Where did we see that? Genesis. Eden.

And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

You get Ezekiel 36, a few verses later. Verses 34-35:

³⁴ And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. ³⁵ And they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'

Again, it's the language of Eden and it's not accidental. You have Eden being tilled. You have "breathing the breath of life" into the dry bones in Ezekiel 37. Where do we see God breathing the breath of life into someone? It's Adam! It's Genesis. It's Eden. These connections are not accidental. You've heard me say this a thousand times. These are biblical writers repurposing biblical terms so that your mind will be drawn back to these places, to these other passages, so that those other passages will inform how you read this one.

So what we have here is a very clear vision of the people of God, and we know that includes Gentiles because of the New Testament talk about all Israel being saved. "Those who were not my people will be my people." Who wasn't the people? That was the Gentile. "Now they're my people." All this stuff we've covered in the podcast before when it comes to eschatology. You have all of these ideas. When the people of God are fully brought back into the fold, including the fullness of the Gentiles (which was a concept linked with what Israel did in terms of their rejection)... This begins in the first century. This begins in the

book of Acts. It's already fulfilled and happening. But the full fruition of it—the full consummation of it—is not yet. That's why you get this Edenic imagery. And lo and behold, when we get the New Testament description of the kingdom come to earth, of the global Kingdom of God in the book of Revelation, what does it look like? What is it called? What is it associated with? It's Eden. Again, none of this is accidental. All of this is deliberate.

1:15:00

To wrap up, Ezekiel 37 is a lot more than a funny song that we can sing about Ezekiel and the dry bones and this one's connected to that one... There's a lot of heady theology here. It's more than just saying there's a lot of theology here. This is a good example again (we keep running into this and we will the rest of the way here) of how we can't just read something in the Old Testament and assume that it's 21st century and beyond end-times. That's a simplistic approach to eschatology. The already-but-not-yet idea shows up all the time. There's really something to it because it just shows up everywhere. This is how eschatology works in the Bible. There's a lot that's already been fulfilled in the first century. That doesn't mean that there's nothing left in the future. There is. It's already but not yet. It's not just already (like the a-millers) and it's not just not yet (like the standard dispensational pre-millers). It's already but not yet. It's not an either/or; it's a both/and. We've got to start thinking in those terms to really understand a lot of this Old Testament prophetic talk and how it relates to the New Testament.

TS: I include myself as a literal "temple will be built." I was under that impression, as well.

MH: It's really common. I'll say this: If there's a literal temple built (because a lot of Jews want this), fine. I just don't think that's going to be a fulfillment of any specific prophecy. I view that kind of how I view 1948. I don't see 1948 as being a specific fulfillment of any particular prophecy, but it's an important factor in this way: due to the fact that Israel does have a future role to play in eschatology. Armageddon, *Har Mo'ed*, the Mount of Assembly. This is Zion. There's a final conflict that focuses on Jerusalem. I'm not surprised if Israel became a state again back in 1948 because that's going to be preparatory to Jerusalem playing a geopolitical role in prophecy. Okay. Good. I view a temple the same way. If somebody builds one, fine. I just don't think there's any direct prophetic link, any prophetic reason to expect that. It could be incidental. It could factor in to something later on. But we're so kind of fixated when we see temple-talk to just make certain assumptions and we kind of ignore or gloss over some of the stuff that the New Testament writers actually say about temple stuff later on.

TS: Yeah, I thought I could just sit back and relax and wait and see if a temple is being built, but it's a little bit more complicated than that, I guess!

MH: Yeah, it is. For those who might be new to the podcast, I'm one that if you're a premillennialist... I don't like the term, even though some of what I think is going to align to all the systems, which is why I say I don't like any of the systems and

they all cheat, because they all do. That's not a crime, it's just the way it is. I expect a literal kingdom of God to come to earth and a premillennialist is going to say that kind of thing. That's all well and good and I agree with that. I just don't think we need a temple for that to happen. I don't know of any passage that requires a temple with a future kingdom. In fact, if you look at Revelation 21 and 22, it makes a very specific point that when all the people of God are gathered and they're all there and the Spirit of God is among them and we're all sitting there with the new Eden, it specifically and explicitly says, "I saw no temple there." It's just blunt, point blank. And I realize how dispensationalists are going to say that's another future kingdom on earth, that's not like the Millennial kingdom—that kingdom and the Millennium are different. And, of course, you have to make them different for your system to work. I understand that. All I'm saying is that's a system. Why not put those things together? Why not join instead of split? There's a certain artificiality to a lot of this. I just don't want people who are premillennial to listen to this and think, "Mike doesn't think there's going to be a real kingdom out there to come... he's an amillennialist!" No, I'm not an amillennialist. I'm not a standard anything. You just sort of have to get used to that (laughing). I'm not in any of the camps.

TS: All right, Mike. As we inch our way towards the end of Ezekiel, next week we'll be covering chapters 38 and 39.

MH: Oh yeah. We're actually going to have two episodes on this. One will be sort of the nuts and bolts of the passage and the other we'll do end-times kind of stuff with it. There's a lot in there. The chapters are long. We're not going to go through every verse. I'm not going to give you some sort of "Prophetic Timeline of Mike" and that kind of thing. Reasons for that will become evident, but we're going to have to spend two weeks on those two chapters. You just can't mash it into one.

1:20:00

TS: That sounds good. I'm definitely looking forward to it. I just want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible podcast! God bless.

