

Ezekiel Chapters 36b and 37 - John Karmelich

Title: Why God interferes in our world!

One thing Christians and religious Jews have contemplated for millennia is the question of, "Why does God bother?" We assume a perfect God doesn't need anything, therefore, if God did create everything, why did He bother? To give an example of His interference in the world, in this section we will read of Israel (the nation) becoming a nation after being either barren or controlled by others for roughly 2,500 years! Yes, it came true in the last hundred years, but Ezekiel's prediction doesn't completely come true until Jesus returns to rule the world from there! God did this since He made the unconditional promise to rule the whole world from Israel one day! That requires Israel to exist and for the Israelites living at then to believe in Him! My point is God interferes in our world for His sake and not ours! I'll expand on that idea in this lesson!

As I studied these chapters, it started dawning on me why God is bothering in the first place: First, I'd like us to consider Ezekiel's original audience. They were in captivity in the land of what's Iraq today. Jerusalem was in ruins with probably millions killed at that time. Remember that Israel separated into two countries centuries earlier to Ezekiel. The northern one died 150 years prior to when he wrote this. He is now dealing with the destruction of the Southern Kingdom and the end of Israel as an entity. Yet he's stating Israel will one day be united again as one country, with a descendant of King David (Jesus) being king over the whole world! For millennia scholars argued that will never be a reality! Israel's the only nation in world history to be scattered and become be united again as an independent country! For me, proof the bible and Ezekiel (in particular) is God ordained, look at the nation of Israel today!

That leads me back to my lesson title. I keep thinking why did God bother in the first place? What's in it for Him? Years ago, I heard a sermon that the church is God's "wedding gift" for His Son for making that sacrifice! I think that's a great way to look at from God's perspective! He loves people because He needed to express His love upon something, and He chose the church! So, what about Israel? I think it is the same answer: We must accept God picks who He picks! He's in charge of His world, and we've got to accept it. We have His Word (Bible) to understand that, and He choose to share that information with us! What do we do with that God-based information? We use our lives to glorify Him and spread the news about Him about His plan for mankind. God chooses to work through people like you and me to share all this news! So, what are we doing about it? It is not a matter of feeling guilty that we're not doing enough! It's about obedience to what He desires for our lives here and now! OK, I got all of that out of my system, let me talk a bit about Ezekiel and modern Israel quickly: When Israel declared itself as an independent county, David Ben Gurion the leader in 1948 when it became a country again, stated for the first time since Ezekiel's day (he quoted Ezekiel that God keeps His promises) that the nation of Israel is an independent country after about 2,500 years!

OK John, we know Israel exists today and we believe the Bible is the word of God. Why should I read further? What's in it for me? For starters, all Christians go through their periods of doubts. Reading a passage like the one in this section is a reminder all of this is real! If we can trust in His unconditional promise about Israel literally coming true after 2,500 years, doesn't that imply having confidence over our eternal salvation and God's promises to the church from promises Jesus stated 2,000 years ago?

That leads back to the question, if God is perfect (by definition), why bother in the first place? As best I can figure, God wanted someone or something to express His love upon. He chose people who desire

to truly turn their lives over to Him. As I stated earlier (and in the last lesson) the Christian church is in effect a wedding gift to Jesus for paying the price for all our sins. OK that's that, time to move on!

The reason I ended my last lesson in the middle of Chapter 36, is because Ezekiel switches topics from discussing the land of Israel to the fact God will work in the future (Ezekiel's perspective) to restore the nation of Israel for His name's sake. In other words, nobody deserves salvation. God does it because of the unconditional promise He made to them about giving them that land! In the same way, He made an unconditional promise of eternal salvation to us! Ezekiel gives a few final insults about the Israelites in the middle part of the Chapter (for disobedience) then He focuses on the promises (in the long-distance future)! Realize it is not because they (or us) deserve it! One of the things I love to point out is God does not say in Chapter 36 I'll bring the Israelites out of Babylon! God stated He'll bring the Israelites out of all nations! (See Verse 24). That's proof this prediction is bigger than the exile return from Babylon!

It becomes obvious this prediction is only partially true with present Israel and won't be fully true until it is under the rule of Jesus one day. One of the things Chapter 36 states is David will be the king over Jerusalem. I hold the view that's literal, but we'll find out one day after Jesus returns! In the meantime, God is making it clear it'll be obvious not only to the nation of Israel but to the world God is God as He will rule the world from Jerusalem because that's His unconditional promise. As I like to say that's His game plan, and since He's in charge so we must accept it!

Yes, I'm skipping some details (this is a summary)! The key point is God will make it obvious not only to the Israelites but also to the world He's in charge, so we must "Deal with it"! So why is He taking so long to get the "show on the road"? For starters none of us would be saved if it happened say 100 years ago. God's timing is God's timing, and we must accept it! Anyway the later part of Chapter 36 tells how the land will be fruitful and productive with Israel as one nation again!

Chapter 37 was made famous by an old Spiritual song. I must admit I was fascinated how Ezekiel was told in "pieces" about the restoration. He was "transported" to Jerusalem (Yes, I'm thinking transporter like Star Trek!) Ezekiel saw dry bones that have been dead for a long time. God asked Ezekiel if those bones could live again? Ezekiel realized God created Adam and Eve, so he "punted" that question back to God. Then we get a detailed description of muscles and skin coming back over the bones to create a new life there in the land. Ezekiel is NOT talking about resurrection but the country being a country! It is obvious to us today, but it had to be a shock to Ezekiel and his audience. Scholars debated if Ezekiel was being literal about Israel being a country for 2,500 years! That debate should have ended in 1948!

One of the things that fascinated me is the "gradual" process of it all! After all Ezekiel just could have said, the land became a united country again. Why give all the colorful details this way? Part of it was to show that Israel as nation was to exist again! As I said no other nation in history pulled that off, plus Hebrew became the only dead language in history to be in common use again! I also know Israel today is mostly secular. That's another reason why I think Ezekiel got colorful is his slow way of saying that the nation of Israel will be as God intended it to be. In other words, we are "half-way there"! Now we are waiting for the Messiah (Jesus to return) to rule the world there!

The last part of Chapter 37 talks more about the eternal rule of Jesus over Israel. Ezekiel's emphasizing the fact God's doing it not for Israel's sake but due to His unconditional promise that He will restore the nation to Israel as He promised to Abraham! God will also change their hearts to accept His rule there! That of course is future to us and will tie well to the strange two chapters I'll discuss in the next lesson!

OK John we get the idea that Israel is back in the land. As Christians we accept the idea Jesus will rule there one day. That's old news to us veteran Christians. It leads me back to my lesson title: "Why God interferes in our world!" We must remember He didn't create the world for our sake. God created it to show what He's capable of doing: Fully payment for our sins Himself! Then God wants us to live in a paradise environment as a gift for our willingness to accept that free gift! One day we'll see the land of Israel as He intended it to be and we can realize He not only did it for Israel's sake, it is also so all of us can glorify what He's done for all saved people for all of eternity!

With that said, hope you like this study. I wrote a more detailed one some years back. If you want to read that, click on that link on the same page! It is still a joy to study this stuff and again I'm grateful for you reading this. If you're new here, you're always welcome to e-mail me. Thanks for reading all this!