

## Ezekiel – Eschatology

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We have reached the last part of the Book of Ezekiel – eschatology. The first part of chapter 37 contains the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (Ez37:12b). This is implicitly related to the Great White Throne Judgement in Revelation chapter 20 (Rv20:12a). After the vision, Ezekiel returns to familiar theme – New Israel (Ez37:27-28). Then, at the beginning of chapter 38, the actors in the attack of Gog are introduced (Ez38:2).

**What is “Eschatology”?** Eschatology relates to “last things”. From a Biblical perspective, the primary meaning is the study of the events leading up to the Second Advent, the Second Advent itself, and **events after the Second Advent**.

**Structure of the Book of Ezekiel:** The Book of Ezekiel generally follows a chronological order. Since the fall of Jerusalem recorded in chapter 33, Ezekiel has primarily dealt with the establishment of the New Israel. The first half of Chapter 37 skips to the end of millennium, the Great White Throne Judgement (Rv20:11-13). Then the second half of Chapter 37 reverts to the organization of the New Israel in the World Tomorrow. This clearly suggests that when Ezekiel was assembling the book, he did NOT understand what was the meaning of the first half of Chapter 37. In fact, **without the book of Revelation, it is impossible to understand the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones**.

**The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones:** Ezekiel had already experienced some very “real” visions, such as the First Temple vision. **Ezekiel almost certainly understood the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones as a metaphor for the reconstruction of the nation of Israel**. The vision starts out much like other visions (Ez37:1-2). As in other visions, Ezekiel is required to participate in the vision (Ez37:3-6). The vision has a familiar objective: **“you shall know that I am the LORD”**. From our perspective, the details of the dead coming back to life, cannot be a metaphor (Ez37:7-10).

**Interpretation of the Vision:** Ezekiel is told that what he is seeing is **“the house of Israel”** (Ez37:11). The return to the land and the provision of the Holy Spirit would further Ezekiel’s conviction of a metaphor (Ez37:14). Again, from our perspective, the details make it clear that, as described in the Great White Throne Judgement, a resurrection to physical life is being described (Ez37:12-13). Indeed, however, **the vision is a “metaphor”** because it deals only with “the house of Israel” as a type of all humanity to come up in the Great White Throne Judgement.

**A Sign Act – the Two Sticks:** Ezekiel now returns to the establishment of the New Israel in the World Tomorrow (Ez37:15-17). The “two sticks” represent the historical division of Israel, with the Tribe of Ephraim having pre-eminence in the North and the Tribe of Judah having pre-eminence in the South.

**Interpretation of the Sign Act:** Through the Second Exodus, **people will be called to one nation** having no schism between North and South (Ez37:18-21). There will be a unified nation in the Land of Israel; **all persons will be called to repentance and conversion**; with resurrected David as King (Ez37:22-27). **New Israel will fulfill God’s purpose by being an example nation to teach all the nations of the world** (Ez37:28).

**The Peoples on the Periphery:** The prologue to the attack of **Gog** identifies the following actors: land of **Magog**, **Meshech**, **Tubal**, **Persia**, **Cush**, **Put**, **Gomer**, and **Beth-togarmah** (Ez38:1-6). **Sheba**, **Dedan**, and **Tarshish** are identified later. **Who are these peoples?** The first rule of Biblical Exegesis is to understand **what the original author meant by the words he wrote**. The second rule is to understand **what the original audience would have understood** by the written words. Ezekiel wrote the words we are considering, but they are **a direct quotation from God**. Ezekiel, and at least some of his readers, would have been familiar with the eponymous ancestors, but by the time of Ezekiel most of these names applied to well-known groups or tribes of people. Ezekiel, himself, references most of these tribes and groups in other places, indicating that they were well known (Ez27:10,12-15a,20,22-23,25, 29:10, 30:4-5, 38:2,6, 39:6, 1Chr5:4).

In the time of Ezekiel, the mainstream of civilization comprised Egypt, the land along the East Coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and Assyria-Babylonia. The peoples identified in Ezekiel 38 were all well known, but they were NOT part of the mainstream of civilization – they were on the periphery of the mainstream of civilization. **That is the point of God’s using these peoples as a type of the peoples to attack Israel in the World Tomorrow – the attack will come from outside of the “mainstream of civilization”**.

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