



## *Repentance Tabernacle Church*

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### **The Prophet Ezekiel!**

**Lesson Text:** Ezekiel 36-37

**Focus Verses:** Ezekiel 36:26-27 - <sup>26</sup>A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

**Truth About Covenant:** God is faithful to restore hardened hearts.

**Covenant Context:** After being exiled to Babylon, Ezekiel prophesied to the Jews of their need to repent and renew their covenant with God. Although they were hundreds of miles away from their land and the Temple, God made a covenantal promise through Ezekiel that He would pour out His Spirit and everyone—not just those in Judea—would have access to His glory.

Judah's prophet Ezekiel was on a mission to bring the Jews back to God, but Ezekiel was captured along with his fellow Hebrews. They were taken as prisoners of war to Babylon where God gave Ezekiel a vision of the heavenly throne room: a world beyond the "barbed wire." It was his lifeline during his captivity, and he promised God had something much better than what they were experiencing. In his heart, Ezekiel held hope that God would one day set them free and bring them back where he longed to be: God was going to bring His people home.

It is difficult for contemporary Westerners to imagine the traumatic reality of Judah's Exile in Babylon. In an era when world travel has become commonplace. The ultimate curse for breaking God's covenant was exile from their promised homeland (Deuteronomy 28:63-64). They refused to accept that their captivity was the result of their own sins. Their hard-heartedness is what spurred God to send Ezekiel to confront them with his unusual methods. If the people would not listen to the Word of God, then God would show it to them.

Ezekiel lived in a time when Judah lost all sense of internal motivation to serve the Lord. Instead, she had chosen to follow the spiritually destructive path of least resistance. Judah had turned a blind eye to the destruction that had befallen the larger northern kingdom of Israel just over a century earlier, merrily continuing down the same path of idolatry and faithlessness. Clearly, nothing would turn Judah from her destructive path unless she wanted to leave it—no warning stern enough, no threat drastic enough to turn her away.

God has always called His people to live a life separated from the ungodly ways of the world. It is a key way we are called to proclaim the uniqueness of our God. But what happens when the people who wear His name—who claim to follow this God who is so utterly unique among the many "gods" our world is worshiping—live a life no longer distinguishable from that of their neighbors? God's name, which should be glorified, is instead profaned and dishonored. **Let us live to honor and glorify God's name and help draw people looking for Him closer to Him.**

The ultimate lesson is not that we are doomed to judgment but that we are called to repent. We are called to own up to our wrongdoings, shortcomings, and blatant rebellions, and then to choose to walk a different path by the power of God. And it is a choice anyone can make. This transformation only happens through the indwelling of the Spirit (Acts 2:38). The more we yield ourselves to God, the power of His Spirit increases as the power of our own sinful habits and worldly ways of thinking decreases. Through the Spirit, we can live victoriously over sin's power.

But there was still hope because Judah's God specializes in transforming stony, unresponsive hearts into sensitive, fleshly hearts. And He is the same God today, specializing in transforming not just who we are but who we want to be. God does not just take away our sin, but He replaces our craving for sin with a desire to live for the glory of God. To all those struggling with spiritual laziness, with a lack of proper motivation to pursue God's plan and purpose in your life, let God do some "heart surgery" today. Although we will not be fully sinless on this side of Heaven, each day we can grow closer to God.