

# Spirit Filled Heart

Ezekiel 36:22-32

SS Lesson for 09/24/2017

**Devotional Scripture:** Isa 43:15-21

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*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*

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*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

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# Introduction

## **Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson**

The lesson reviews how to gain a clearer understanding of our future restoration through a **Spirit Filled Heart**. The **study's aim** is to recognize the spiritual work God will do in Israel as a nation. The **study's application** is to live daily according to the new nature under the control of the Holy Spirit. **NOTE:** A major part of this lesson was copied from a previous Sunday School Lesson dated 03/15/2009.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### **Key Verse: Ezekiel 36:26**

*Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh*

### **Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

This text comes right in the middle of one of the most famous and powerful prophecies that we find in God's Word. This prophetic section first looks back over Israel's sinful and troubled history and then projects a season of great restoration and glory in the future. For us it displays the importance of regeneration (the new birth), which is also one of the signs of God's covenantal promise to us (cf. Ezek. 36:26). What are the implications of this new birth, this new Spirit-born heart that God grants to all His people by faith? The book of Ezekiel was written to address the circumstances of the exiles after the kingdom of Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians. Much sin, including idolatry, led to a season of great discipline. Ezekiel reviewed all that (cf. 36:16-20). But then came the promise of forgiveness and regeneration (vss. 25-26). By this we see that the gift of regeneration is based on God's forgiving mercies. At the time when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, our sins are forgiven and new life comes. The Holy Spirit has invaded our hearts. The implications of all this are very great. We see from Ezekiel's prophecy that for Israel, there would be a future. One day many of the Jewish people would enjoy the blessings of the new covenant described here. They would experience a resurrection from the dead (37:12-14), a regathering in the Land of Promise (vs. 21), and a restoration to God's favor (vss. 22-23). They would enjoy the blessings of a great, future messianic kingdom (vs. 24). Thus we see that the new birth is connected to all the covenantal promises of God. When we receive the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not just that we have new life with a Spirit-filled heart, as wonderful as that is. The new birth also guarantees our future inheritance. Our new "heart of flesh" is a sign and mark that one day God will restore all things in the new heavens and new earth. God is a covenant-keeping God. Every time we are able to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit and new life in Christ, we are reminded of God's great covenantal plan for us. The new birth is a wonderful sign of God's abundant grace. In Ezekiel's amazing picture of the dry bones of the nation of Israel coming to life (37:1-10), we glimpse the connection between regeneration and all the future promises of God. The gift of the Holy Spirit in regeneration truly is "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14). So all of the covenant signs of the Bible (the rainbow, circumcision, the Sabbath, and a new Spirit-filled heart) speak of salvation in one way or another. Salvation is simple, yet it is somehow difficult to grasp. It is hard for us to comprehend grace. We always want to add something to God's grace, to do something to earn or gain our salvation. But these signs are the pictures of God's gift of salvation. It is all accomplished by God, from regeneration to resurrection to restoration.

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Some words and phrases are meant to hinder communication. It is not uncommon for those in government or business to use euphemisms—nice-sounding words or phrases instead of their less attractive counterparts. Such a practice is so common that we may barely notice. We understand that a "previously acquired vehicle" is really just a used car. Those who are "economically disadvantaged" live in poverty. To end up in "correctional custody" is to be in prison. Some euphemisms are more insidious than others. Admitting that a military attack resulted in "collateral damage" obscures the fact that innocent civilians died. A politician who "committed terminological inexactitude" has lied. And cries for "equal rights" may in some (but not all) circumstances be code words for an attempt to legalize immoral behavior. Sadly, experience has taught us not to take people at

face value. Too often people conduct themselves with hidden agendas as they hide behind obscure communication. But God is very clear about wanting new hearts in his people.

Ezekiel prophesied from Babylon, where he had been taken captive along with the king of Judah and 10,000 others in 597 BC (2 Kings 24:12-14). In the fifth year of their captivity (592 BC), the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, and his prophetic ministry began (Ezekiel 1:3). Ezekiel was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah. Both prophesied the end of the nation of Judah. Jerusalem would be destroyed and the temple defiled. Jeremiah preached this message in Jerusalem, where he was in danger of being executed for treason. But Jeremiah persisted and even wrote a letter to the exiles in Babylon, telling them to prepare for a lengthy captivity (Jeremiah 29:1-23). Ezekiel echoed the same message while in Babylon. As a captive himself, he encouraged his fellow Israelites not to believe the false rumors of an early return from exile. The first 30 chapters of the book that bears his name predict the dire consequences of sin on Judah and surrounding nations. Word came of the prophecy's fulfillment—Jerusalem had indeed fallen (Ezekiel 33:21). From that point on, the prophet's tone became softer, more comforting. He provided a foundation for faith and hope. Though the city had fallen, God had not forgotten his people. Relief would come.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### ***The Reason for A Spirit Filled Heart (Ezek 36:22-23)***

22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

23 "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD," declares the Lord GOD, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

### **For God's Name sake (22)**

*Meaning of "For the Sake of God's Name" (from Keil & Delitzsch Commentary)*

Vatablus, for example, gives this explanation: "If their God whom they preach had been omnipotent, He would not have allowed them to be expelled from His land." And we must decide in favor of this exposition, not only because of the parallel passages, such as Num 14:16 and Jer 33:24, which support this view; but chiefly on account of the verses which follow, according to which the sanctification of the name of God among the nations consists in the fact that God gathers Israel out of its dispersion among the nations, and leads them back into His own land (vv. 23 and 24). Consequently the profanation of His name can only have consisted in the fact that Israel was carried away out of its own land, and scattered in the heathen lands. For, since the heathen acknowledged only national gods, and regarded Jehovah as nothing more than such a national god of Israel, they did not look upon the destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the carrying away of the people as a judgment of the almighty and holy God upon His people, but concluded that that catastrophe was a sign of the inability of Jehovah to defend His land and save His people. The only way in which God could destroy this delusion was by manifesting Himself to the heathen as the almighty God and Lord of the whole world through the redemption and glorification of His people, "so I had pity, compassion upon my holy name".

*So that God's power is known (Ps 106:8)*

8 Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.

*So that God will get the glory (Ps 115:1-2)*

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth. 2 Why should the nations say, " Where, now, is their God?"

*So that God's Name is acknowledged as great (Josh 7:6-9)*

7 Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, why did You ever bring this people over the Jordan, only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! 8 "O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? 9 " For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?"

*So that sins are forgiven (1 John 2:12)*

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

### **Vindication of God's holiness (23)**

*God is majestic in holiness (Ex 15:11)*

11 " Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?

*God declares Himself that He is holy (Lev 11:44)*

44 For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

*God is holy because He is exalted above all (Ps 99:2-3)*

2 The LORD is great in Zion, And He is exalted above all the peoples. 3 Let them praise Your great and awesome name; Holy is He.

*God is holy in His calling (1 Peter 1:15)*

15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;

*God is holy in His righteousness (Isa 5:16)*

16 But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.

### **So that Nations will know that God is Lord (23)**

*God is Lord because He is the only one who truly reveals mysteries (Dan 2:45-47)*

45 "Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy." 46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. 47 The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery."

*God is Lord because only God has the power to make things happen (Ps 46:10)*

10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

*God is Lord because He is the creator (Ps 100:3)*

3 Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

*God is Lord because God is revealed by Jesus (Matt 11:27)*

27 " All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

*God is Lord because through knowing Jesus, we know God (John 8:19)*

19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also."

### ***The Method of the Spirit Filled Heart (Ezek 36:24-27)***

24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

### **Stuff Washes Off (From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)**

What is the dirtiest, most loathsome job you can imagine? Please pardon the repulsive suggestion, but have you thought of cleaning out a city's sewer lines? Whatever goes down the toilet, the sink, and the storm drains (including such things as bicycles and hypodermic needles) ends up in the city's lines. And sometimes, they get plugged up. Roy Parrino has cleaned out sewer lines for more than a dozen years, and he does it for \$25 per hour. His work uniform consists of hip waders, rubber gloves, a hard hat, and goggles. He braves the dangers of rancid water, bacteria, disease, toxic fumes and, of course, *the smell!* As Parrino says, "You really have to psych yourself up for it. It's about as dirty as you can get. You've got to look at it one way: 'Stuff washes off.'" Yes, stuff washes off, but the kind of pollution in which ancient Israel had immersed herself took more than a simple bath to remove. The spiritually toxic environment of idolatry and immorality had nearly killed Israel as a nation, but God used their captivity in **Babylon** as the cleansing agent that restored them to life. Even today, God sometimes allows us to wallow in the depths of our chosen "sewer" in order to make us seek his cleansing power.

### **God will gather His people (24)**

*God longs to gather His people (Matt 23:37)*

37 " Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling.

*God gathers His redeemed people (Ps 107:2-3)*

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary 3 And gathered from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.

*God will gather His people one by one (Isa 27:12)*

12 In that day the LORD will start His threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel.

*God will gather all groups and types of His people into one (Isa 56:8)*

8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, "Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered."

*God sends His angels to gather (Matt 13:40-42)*

40 "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 " The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

*God will gather to judge (Matt 25:32)*

32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

## **God gives His people a new heart and spirit (26)**

*A new heart that has been circumcised (Deut 30:6)*

6 "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

*A new heart that is clean (Ps 51:10)*

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

*A new heart that is unified (Jer 32:39)*

39 and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for the good of their children after them.

*A new heart that has been written on by God (2 Cor 3:1-3)*

2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

*A new heart that has been transformed (Rom 12:2)*

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

*A new heart that has been renewed (Eph 4:23-24)*

23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

## **God's Spirit indwells His people (27)**

*God's Spirit indwells to make known His words (Prov 1:23)*

23 "Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

*God's Spirit indwells as part of God's adoption (Rom 8:15)*

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, " Abba! Father!"

*God's Spirit indwells to make us His temple (1 Cor 3:16)*

16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

*God's Spirit indwells to give spiritual life (Rom 8:11)*

11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

*God's Spirit indwells as a treasure (2 Tim 1:14)*

14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

## ***The Results of A Spirit Filled Heart (Ezek 36:28-32)***

28 "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

29 "Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.

30 "I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

31 "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.

32 "I am not doing this for your sake," declares the Lord GOD, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel!"

### **Restoration of fellowship (28)**

*A fellowship that is based on love and obedience (John 14:23)*

23 Jesus answered and said to him, " If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

*A fellowship that make us complete (2 Cor 13:11)*

11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

*A fellowship that calls for living righteously (1 John 1:6-7)*

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

*A fellowship that makes us sanctified (2 Cor 6:16-17)*

16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 17 Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate" says the Lord. " and do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.

### **Restoration of effectiveness and productiveness (30)**

*Effective through the knowledge of good things of God (Philem 6)*

6 and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.

*Effective through prayer (James 5:16)*

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

*Productive through good deeds (Titus 3:14)*

14 Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.

*Productive through the fruits of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:5-8)*

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Effective and productive through abiding in Jesus (John 15:5)*

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

## **Repentance (31-32)**

*God declares that all people should repent (Acts 17:30)*

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

*God grants repentance that leads to knowledge of the truth (2 Tim 2:24-26)*

24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

*Repentance through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)*

38 Peter said to them, " Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Repentance so that sins will be forgiven (Acts 3:19)*

19 "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

*Repentance that results in God's compassion (Prov 28:13)*

13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.

*Repentance to leads to the return to God (Isa 55:6-7)*

6 Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### ***Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable***

#### **Verse 18-19**

Yahweh had poured out His wrath on them because of their bloodshed and idolatry. He had judged them for their deeds by scattering them among the nations (cf. Deuteronomy 29:1 to Deuteronomy 30:10).

#### **Verse 20-21**

Their dispersion made Yahweh look impotent since the nations concluded that He could not keep them safe in His land. The Lord had risked His reputation by driving Israel out of the land, but He cared about His reputation, which the Israelites had made common. We need to remember that how Christians represent God by our words and deeds likewise concerns Him (cf. Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). "Israel was guilty of two great sins, the first of which was *polluting God's land* ( Ezekiel 36:16-19). "Their second sin was that of *profaning God's name before the Gentiles* (Ezekiel 36:20-23)."

#### **Verse 22-23**

Ezekiel was to tell the Israelites that it was in spite of them that He would act for them; He would deliver them for the sake of His own reputation that they had profaned (cf. Ezekiel 20:39). He would vindicate His reputation as being a holy (unique) God when He proved Himself such in the sight of the nations (cf. Exodus 5:2; Exodus 9:16; Exodus 32:11-18; Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 20:3; Leviticus 22:31-33; Numbers 14:13-19; Deuteronomy 29:1 to Deuteronomy 30:10).

## **Verses 22-32**

The method of Israel's restoration (36:22-32) "The next verses in the chapter are among the most glorious in the entire range of revealed truth on the subject of Israel's restoration to the Lord and national conversion."

### **Verse 24-25**

The Lord promised, first, to take the Israelites from all the nations, to Revelation -gather them, and to bring them back into their land (cf. Ezekiel 11:16-17; Ezekiel 20:34; Ezekiel 34:13; Ezekiel 37:21). He would then, second, purify His people and cleanse them from all their former uncleanness (cf. Ezekiel 36:17; Ezekiel 11:18; Exodus 12:22; Leviticus 14:4-7; Psalm 51:7; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Justification, not sanctification, is in view. "The new exodus motif occurs ten times in Ezekiel, but it gains increasing prominence in the restoration oracles."

### **Verse 26**

He would, third, give them a new heart and spirit and would remove their hardness of heart and give them soft hearts (i.e., regenerate them; cf. Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 18:31; 2 Corinthians 3:3-6). Perhaps this passage was in the Lord Jesus' mind when He spoke to Nicodemus about the new birth. The heart stands for the whole person-mind, will, and emotions (cf. Ezekiel 2:4; Ezekiel 3:7)-and the spirit describes the motivation that drives thought and conduct. "The temptation to find the fulfillment of the "new heart" and "new spirit" of Ezekiel 36:25-27 exclusively in Christian conversion in this age should be resisted. New Testament conversion is only a preview of the massive spiritual revival God has in store for all of true Israel and Gentiles who believe."

### **Verse 27**

God would, fourth, also put His Spirit within the Israelites and cause them to obey His commands carefully (cf. Ezekiel 11:19-20; Ezekiel 18:31; Ezekiel 37:14; Ezekiel 39:29; Jeremiah 31:31; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18; Romans 7:7 to Romans 8:4; 2 Corinthians 3:6-18; Hebrews 8:6 to Hebrews 10:39). This is a coming of the Holy Spirit on Israel in the future, not His coming on the church at Pentecost.

### **Verses 28-30**

They would, fifth, live in the Promised Land and enjoy a permanent, intimate relationship with God (cf. Jeremiah 31:33). He would also deliver them from their uncleanness (Ezekiel 36:25) and, sixth, give them abundant harvests constantly so they would never experience famine (cf. Ezekiel 34:29). In other words, He would bless them with consistent fertility and fruitfulness (cf. Ezekiel 34:29).

### **Verse 31-32**

Then the Israelites would, seventh, remember their former sins and loathe themselves (cf. Ezekiel 6:9; Ezekiel 20:43). Again, the Lord would not accomplish this regathering for the sake of His people, but for the sake of His reputation among the rest of the world's population (cf. Ezekiel 36:22). This present announcement of God's gracious dealings with His people should shame them and bring them to their knees in repentance. "This context and that of similar accounts of God's restoration of Israel to her land, along with the historical perspective, make it clear that the return mentioned in this passage does not refer to the return to Canaan under Zerubbabel but to a final and complete restoration under the Messiah in the end times. The details of Israel's reestablishment on her land set forth above simply did not occur in the returns under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah." This new covenant passage in Ezekiel 36:22-32 has much in common with the new covenant passage in Jeremiah 31:31-34. A significant difference is that Jeremiah put more emphasis on the role of God's Word in Israel's transformation whereas Ezekiel put more emphasis on the role of God's Spirit. Both His Word and His Spirit will be crucial in Israel's future restoration.

### **Verse 33-34**

Future cleansing from sin and restoration of the Jews to the land and restoration of the land to fruitfulness would all occur at the same time. This shows that the Jews' present occupation of the Promised Land does not fulfill these promises; they have not yet experienced God's cleansing for their sins, which comes with regeneration (cf. Romans 11:26-27).

*(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/ezekiel-36.html#1>)*

## **Heart of the Lesson from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary**

Our God is holy. He is righteous and just. And yet, He is merciful and gracious. Sometimes the Lord saves us from our circumstances not because of us but in spite of us.

**For the sake of His holy name (Ezek. 36:22-23).** Ezekiel 36 begins with the Lord telling the prophet to speak hope to the mountains of Israel that their trees would once again produce fruit. God would also cause the surrounding nations to suffer scorn. The prophet then spoke the Lord's words to the Israelites, saying, "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake." The Israelites had defiled the name of the Lord throughout the nations because they had turned their hearts to idols and no longer possessed the very land that God had given them. But our God will not be disgraced. He will not allow His glory to be dimmed or dishonored. Therefore, to show the peoples of the earth that He was the Lord, God was going to restore the Israelites and sanctify His holy name.

**Coming home with a new heart (Ezek. 36:24-27).** God told the Israelites that it was time to come home. He was going to cleanse them from their filthiness and the stench of their idolatry. Then He was going to give them a new heart. He would remove their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. What is the significance of a new heart, and why do we need one? The primary truth is that all of us were dead in sin and had hearts in need of regeneration. But there is also a practical aspect we can consider. Sometimes the trials of life lead us to believe untruths about God. When our experiences do not equate with our expectations, we reinforce negative thoughts and emotions. When this happens, we harden our hearts, sometimes unconsciously. We then search for something or someone other than God in whom to believe. Our hearts have hardened. God was telling the Israelites that He was going to restore their love and trust in Him. Through His actions toward them, He would expel the lies of the enemy and cause them to follow His decrees. "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek. 36:27).

**You will remember your evil ways (Ezek. 36:28-32).** In this prophetic declaration, God told His people that He was going to restore everything. The people would dwell in the land of their fathers, the ground would produce crops, and the trees would generate good fruit. They would no longer bear the burden of their iniquities, shame, and reproach. Because the name of the Lord is holy, He would do these things for His people. The goodness of God is extraordinary. It can often cause us to reflect on our actions. God was not restoring His people because they made a choice to return to Him. He was displaying His goodness and glory to them out of love. God made it quite clear that His people would reflect on their evil ways and would hate themselves because of their transgressions and abominations. God is not a liar. He will not be mocked. He will not allow His people to slander His character forever. He will prove Himself to the nations of the world whether His people choose to believe that He is good all the time or not. His name is holy, and He is good.

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

Everyone has had the experience of saying something embarrassing. Perhaps it was as innocent as simply getting our words tangled so that what came out of our mouths was not at all what we intended. Or maybe it was not so innocent, and we said something unkind about an individual whom we thought was not within earshot. Then we realized the person overheard us after all. The combination of words and circumstance caused us to embarrass ourselves. And we blushed. It's a natural reaction. But Jeremiah spoke of a time in Israelite history when the people did not know how to blush. They sinned against God and, when they learned of their sin, still felt no shame. "Are they ashamed of their detestable conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush" (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12). When Ezekiel told the people to be "ashamed and disgraced," he used a Hebrew word very closely associated with the one translated "blush" in Jeremiah. Both men lived in a culture where shame seemed to be a lost concept. The same was true in Paul's day (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2). The same is true in ours. And what a great loss it is! Until we can be ashamed of our sin, we will not be able to see things as God does.

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary***

1. Our sin cannot diminish God's name or faithfulness (Ezek. 36:22)
2. Believers are called to represent God to the whole world (vs. 23)
3. Only as God purifies us can we ever hope to be the people He designed us to be (vss. 24-25)
4. Only God can give rebellious man a new heart that is willing to serve Him (vss. 26-27)
5. God's plan since day one has been to have a personal relationship with man (vs. 28)
6. With a new heart and new spirit, we experience new blessings and grace from God (vss. 29-30)
7. Turn to God, for He wants what is best for you (vss. 31 -32)