

# EZEKIEL

## Chapter 37

### *The Valley of Dry Bones*

**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, “Prophesy 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.” 7 So 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. 8 And 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. 9 Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, 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. 11 Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ 12 Therefore prophesy, 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. 13 And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And 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.”**

**37:1–28** One of Ezekiel’s major visions. Surprisingly no date is given (as in 1:2; 8:1; 40:1), but the event must have occurred sometime after 586 B.C. (CSB)

With the possible exception of the inaugural vision (chapter 1), this is easily the best known chapter of the book—not least because of the well-known African-American spiritual “Dry Bones,” based on the first half of the chapter (37:1–14). The remaining verses (37:15–28) are clearly set off by the word-event formula, “the Word of Yahweh came to me” (37:15), and the customary address to the prophet as “son of man” (37:16, as in 37:3, 9, 11). It is probably safe to assert that the second half of the chapter is generally as unfamiliar as the first half is familiar. (CC)

**37:1–14** After Ezekiel deflated the pride and self-conceit of his hearers (ch 36), he had to overcome their reluctance to accept the Gospel of restoration. Because the heart of the exiles was “deceitful ... and desperately sick” (Jer 17:9), they did not greet the glorious promise of redemption with jubilation but with the doleful lament of despair: “Our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off” (Ezk 37:11). However, the Good Shepherd does not hesitate to seek out also the sheep that have strayed into the desolate country of sullen doubt and bleak hopelessness. He granted Ezekiel a vision that was to convince his hearers that their despair grew out of their

refusal to believe in a Creator who “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rm 4:17; cf Dt 32:39; Ps 33:9). (TLSB)

The faith of the child of God is constantly threatened by two opposite dangers: overconfidence and despair. It was to the second of these dangers that God’s message in Ezekiel 37 is addressed. In the previous chapter God had assured His people that the exiles now in Babylon were not gone forever but that “they will soon come home” (36:8). God’s people were so depressed by their situation, however, that they found it difficult to believe God’s promise. They said: “Our hope is gone; we are cut off” (37:11). To reassure His people God granted Ezekiel a remarkable vision: the vision of the valley of dry bones. (PBC)

Ezekiel, a late contemporary of Jeremiah, spent his entire ministry among the exiles in Babylon between 593 and 571 B.C. His book contains a straightforward Law/Gospel message, chapters 1–24 being Law and 25–48 being Gospel. It is divided into four large chunks of oracles, mostly in chronological order. Chapters 1–24 contain threats and condemnations of the Israelites up until the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. Chapters 25–32 contain prophecies against Israel’s national enemies, which by implication are Gospel for God’s people. Chapters 33–39 are mostly oracles of Israel’s future restoration. Chapters 40–48 are a detailed vision of the restored new Jerusalem. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Our text (37:1–14) can be divided into four parts. In the first (vv 1–3), Yahweh leads Ezekiel in a vision into a valley filled with very dry bones. The second part (vv 4–8) contains the first of three prophecies which Ezekiel is to deliver at Yahweh’s command. He speaks what the Lord gives him to say, and the bones come together. Tendons, flesh, and skin envelope them, but they are still lifeless bodies. The third part (vv 9–10) contains Ezekiel’s second prophecy, directed to the Spirit (or wind) who enters the bodies and animates them. The final part (vv 11–14) contains God’s explanation of the vision. The dry bones are the Israelites, who had lost hope of ever being released from exile. God tells Ezekiel to prophecy their future restoration, promising that he will bring the dead out of their graves, put his Spirit in them, and return them to their land. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

In all three of these prophecies one fact stands out clearly: the life-giving Spirit comes through the Word which Ezekiel speaks. Yet it is God who gives life and the Spirit; Ezekiel merely does as he is commanded (vv 7, 10). Life comes through the Spirit and the Spirit comes through the Word of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

Ezekiel’s vision in the midst of the valley of the dry bones is bracketed by material prophesying the Lord’s promise to create a new Israel wherein he will wash his people with clean water, put his Spirit within them, and give them a new heart (ch 36). In that chapter, God also promises to increase his people like a flock so that “the waste cities be filled with flocks of people” (36:38) like the flocks in Jerusalem at the time of sacrifice. On the other side of the pericope is the promise in 37:15–28 that God will have for himself a people with his servant David as their king and shepherd. For God to have such a people will require nothing less than a resurrection from the dead. This is exactly of what Ezekiel is given to be an instrument in our text. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**37:1-4** Ezekiel says “the hand of the LORD was upon me.” This is a formula of revelation used elsewhere in the prophecy (see 1:3; 3:22; 8:1; 33:22; 40:1) to indicate God’s action. The vision that Ezekiel is about to see is not of his own pious imagination; it is the work of God’s Spirit. In the grip of Yahweh’s hand, Ezekiel is set in the midst of a valley strewn with bleached skeletons.

In view of this scene, God interrogates his prophet in v 3: “Son of man, can these bones live?” Ezekiel defers an answer to God: “O Lord GOD, you know.” As Walther Eichrodt says, “No words are wasted on any human hopes of resuscitation; responsibility for answering the question is shifted onto God’s shoulders” (*Ezekiel: A Commentary* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975], 508. Translation © 1970 SCM Press Ltd. Used by permission). Then Ezekiel is told to prophesy over the bones, that is, to speak to them the “word of the LORD” (v 4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**37:1-2** The “valley” is the same Hebrew word as the “plain” in 3:22. In the place where Ezekiel had previously seen the majesty of God, he now sees the desolation of the exiles. The dryness of the bones denotes a complete absence of life; they are quite dead. “Having dry bones” is also a Hebrew idiom for feeling despair (v 11). Perhaps the vision drew on Ezekiel’s memory of the Israelite dead strewn outside Jerusalem and along the desert road on the way to exile. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

**37:1** *Spirit of the LORD*. Used elsewhere in Ezekiel only in 11:5; usually simply “the Spirit,” as in 8:3; 11:1, 24. (CSB)

Hbr *ruach*, also denotes “breath” (vv 5, 6, 8, 9, 10) and “winds” (v 9). (TLSB)

*valley*. The Hebrew for this word is the same as that translated “plain” in 3:22–23; 8:4. Ezekiel now received a message of hope, where he had previously heard God’s word of judgment. (CSB)

Apparently the same “plain” where the Lord appeared to Ezekiel earlier in his ministry (3:22). (TLSB)

*bones*. Verse 11 interprets them as symbolizing Israel’s apparently hopeless condition in exile. (CSB)

The bones Ezekiel sees represent the essence of human nature: dead and without hope (V. 11; cf Ps. 6:2; 22:14; 31:10) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

The verbs in verse 1 (and most of this text) are Hilphil, expressing a causative action. They help emphasize the one-sided action of God’s grace. God – working through His Word, spoken by the prophet – is the sole cause of new life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

**37:2** *led me around* – Means to circle the neighborhood. Ezekiel was shown everything so that he would see the absolute hopelessness of the situation.

God causes Ezekiel to go around and around or back and forth among the bones in order to see that they all were “very dry” – without the least hint or hope of life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*very many*. Symbolizing the whole community of exiles. (CSB)

*very dry*. Long dead, far beyond the reach of resuscitation (1Ki 17:17–24; 2Ki 4:18–37; but see 2Ki 13:21). (CSB)

Utterly dead. Cf v 11. (TLSB)

Dried or totally withered away. It points to the complete absence of life. Having dry bones is also a Hebrew idiom for feeling despair (V. 11). Perhaps the vision drew on Ezekiel’s memory of the Israelite dead strewn outside of Jerusalem and along the desert road on the way to exile. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 2)

**37:3** *Son of man* – This title is 93 times in Ezekiel and always refers to Ezekiel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*can these bones live* – Yahweh asks a rhetorical question: “Can these bones live?” The obvious answer is no. Yet Ezekiel expresses faith in the omnipotence of God by answering that only God knows the answer. Perhaps he hoped against all hope that God would somehow bring to life those who were so utterly dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

*you know* – Cf Jn 21:17; Rv 7:14. (TLSB)

Only the God who made man from the dust of the earth could make something living out of that valley full of bones which represented the whole community of exiles. (PBC)

**37:4-6** Through His Word, God promises miraculous change, despite the description in v 2. The bones, arranged according to their former function and position, are covered with sinews and flesh. (TLSB)

“The prophet is suddenly transformed from being the spokesman of human impotence into the spokesman of divine omnipotence.” Using the citation formula, “thus says the Lord Yahweh” (37:5), he is to prophesy to the bones as though they were a living audience. He proclaims that what is about to be done will be accomplished through the medium of God’s Word, by which Yahweh has the power to fulfill whatever he promises to his people. (CC)

**37:4-5** The literary skill of Ezekiel is seen in his use of the word *ruach*. It occurs 11 times in this passage and is translated in the NIV by 3 different words: as [God’s] Spirit in vv 1, 14; as breath in vv 5, 6, 8, 9, 10; and as wind in v 9. No single English word can do justice to its variety of meanings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The word *ruach* clearly refers to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, in vv 1, 14. It appears to mean breath or life in vv 5, 6, 8. The plural clearly means winds in v 9. But there is ambiguity in v 10 and in the singular forms in v 9. Does it mean breath, or does it mean Spirit? We cannot be sure. What is clear is that it is personified and Ezekiel speaks to it, perhaps as a prayer for the Spirit to come and give Israel new life (cf. the hymns “Come, Holy Ghost . . .” LW 157, 158). At any rate, the Spirit (or breath) comes through God’s Word spoken by Ezekiel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

There is probably an allusion throughout this passage to the original creation of man, which contained references to the Spirit of God (Gen 1:2) and in which God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen 2:7; though *ruach* does not occur, the verb *nopach*, “breathe, blow” is the same as in v 9 of our text). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

**37:4** *Prophecy over these bones.* Ezekiel had previously prophesied to inanimate objects (mountains, 6:2; 36:1; forests, 20:47) and now prophesied to lifeless bones and the “breath” (v. 9). (CSB)

It is ridiculous to speak to dead bones that cannot possibly hear – unless God’s life-creating Word is spoken, since it can give life to the dead. Compare God’s original creation of man from lifeless earth (Gen. 2:7) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

**37:5-6** God’s Word says what it does and does what it says. So God declares his own promissory word to the bones. He will cause breath (*ruach*) to enter them, and they will live. He will clothe the bony frames with sinew and flesh, but it is his breath that will enliven them. The outcome of this restoration is stated at the conclusion of v 6: “you shall know that I am the LORD.” These words echo the promise made already in 36:36 after God declares that the desolate land will become like the Garden of Eden. In other words, this is the promise of the work of the Spirit: a new creation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**37:5** *breath* – In this text it is the same word as used for spirit in verse 1. Genesis 2:7 has another word for breath: – Here it means to give a blast/puff of wind; inspiration; or soul. (QV)

**37:6** *sinews ... flesh ... skin ... breath.* Lists of four items are common in Ezekiel. (CSB)

*flesh* - The extension of a person’s body.(QV)

*skin* - The naked skin or hide. (QV)

**37:7-10** Ezekiel speaks these words from Yahweh in two scenes. First, his prophetic words are spoken, creating a stirring as disjointed bones are joined together. In his view, the skeletons are knitted together with sinew and covered with skin, but they remain lifeless corpses: “But there was no breath in them” (v 8). Then a second time Ezekiel is mandated to prophesy, calling on the breath to come from the four winds that they might live. Just as God breathed life into the still, lifeless Adam that he had formed from the earth (Gen 2:7), so now life is breathed into countless cadavers through the prophetic words. God’s Word and Spirit go together, creating life. Also see Ps 33:6. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**37:7** **WAS COMMANDED** – Ezekiel carried out his orders and the Lord kept His promise. This ought to be a description of our lives: We carried out the Lord’s orders and the Lord carried out His promises. Knowledge that we are doing the Lord’s will in our lives is what takes away the boredom and drudgery. We are not just working for a paycheck. We are serving God and supporting our families as God expects. We are not just studying. WE are using our minds to the maximum capacity because the Lord has called us to be good managers of our intellect. We are not just taking care of the kids. We are shaping the souls of God’s own children by letting them

learn of Jesus from the way we talk and act. And the Lord keeps His promises, just as He did when Ezekiel preached to those dry bones as he was instructed to. (PBC)

*rattling*. Probably the sound of the bones coming together, but possibly recalling the sound accompanying God's presence, as in 3:12–13 ("rushing sound"). (CSB)

**37:8** *but there was no breath*. This visionary re-creation of God's people recalls the two-step creation of man in Ge 2:7, where man was first formed from the dust and then received the breath of life. (CSB)

Their form and appearance were restored but not yet life, which only God can give. (TLSB)

**37:9** *four*. The "four winds" in Matthew 24:31 and Revelation 7:1 are associated with all the redeemed, who are gathered from the ends of the earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*slain*. What Ezekiel saw was a battlefield strewn with the bones of the fallen (see v. 10). (CSB)

The passive participle "slain" implies that the people did not simply die; they were killed as a result of sin and unfaithfulness. Similarly, our old Adam must be put to death by being crucified and buried with Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

**37:10** *breath came into them*. Humanly speaking, Israel's hopes for survival appeared dead and buried in the exile. Prospects of national revival were as unlikely as expecting a vast array of skeletons, dried and dismembered, to come to life again. Yet at God's command, spoken by His prophet, death must surrender its victims. (TLSB)

*stood* – Not only to stand but to arise again and take a firm position.

While the bones were in disarray, the resurrected stand as a vast army with strength, order efficiency, and purpose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*army* - This was not only a large band of courageous men, but they were also war worthy. (QV)

The expression can have military or nonmilitary senses. Ezekiel typically uses the military sense. (TLSB)

**37:11-14** These verses are one of the classic sources for the Old Testament teaching of the resurrection, possibly the source of the credal affirmation "And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures." What was prophesied for Israel was fulfilled by Christ, Israel's representative and Israel reduced to one, so that the church, the new Israel, might share in the promise. Ezekiel uses resurrection imagery to show how Israel will be brought out of exile to new life. The idea of resurrection was known and anticipated by Israel for some time. The idea would have been highly comforting to the Israelites in exile. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

The statement “you will know that I am the Lord” (vv 13, 14) occurs more than 30 times in the book. The people come to know Yahweh as they experience his salvation: they are brought out from their graves, given the Spirit and new life, and returned to the land, the location of the means of grace. This knowledge of the Lord comes from the Holy Spirit working through the prophetic Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 2)

God interprets for Ezekiel what has just transpired in this parabolic vision. The bones are the whole house of Israel clean cut off and without hope. Ezekiel’s preaching to this dead congregation does what the Lord promises. Graves are opened and the dead live, restored to the land of Israel. Through God’s act of opening their graves and bestowing on them the gift of resurrection in the midst of utter hopelessness, the dead will know their God; they will know that he is the Lord. They will know their Lord, for he will put his Spirit within them and locate them in their land. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 2)

**37:11** *Our bones ... dried up.* A sense of utter despair, to which the vision offers hope. (CSB)

Ezekiel explains his symbolism from v 2. (TLSB)

The “are” in “these bones are the whole house of Israel” is a required English insertion in the Hebrew nominal clause, so it should not be pressed. “Represent” or “stand for” would be more accurate. “The whole house of Israel” intimates what will be the subject of the second half of the chapter (37:15–28), the united kingdom, including those whom the Assyrians had exiled about 130 years previously (as has been already affirmed in 36:10 and will be reiterated in 39:25 and 45:6—a consistent prophetic theme in general). The martial picture in 37:9–10 is now abandoned, and the purely visionary form of the previous verses with it. (CC)

The object lesson complete, Yahweh explains its meaning. Repentant Israel recognizes her plight. Her sin caused her exile and Jerusalem’s fall. By herself, she is hopeless. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

This vision of the dry bones might have been the basis for the NT picture of the spiritual status of all people. St. Paul, for example, wrote, “You were dead in your transgressions and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). By nature everyone is spiritually dead, unable to do anything pleasing to God. But in His might and mercy the Lord has made us “alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:4). This makes it possible for us who were “foreigners and aliens,” exiled from God because of sin, to become “fellow citizens with God’s people” (Ephesians 2:11-13, 19) (PBC)

**37:12** *graves.* The imagery shifts from a scattering of bones on a battlefield to a cemetery with sealed graves. (CSB)

Vision was to remind the exiles that He who promised to revive their dead nation was the same God who “formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gn 2:7). Through His prophets, God demonstrated His power to force death to give up its victims (cf 1Ki 17:17–24; 2Ki 4:18–37). (TLSB)

**37:13** *know that I am Lord* – The recognition formula, “then you will know that I am Yahweh” (repeated for emphasis in the next verse), shows that “as ever in the book of Ezekiel, salvation is to be a means to a divine end. The redeeming act of God would bring with it the revelation of his true self.” (CC)

God calls them “my people.” That is their hope! God will shatter their tombs of sin, resurrecting them from exile. In a new exodus, God will bring them up to the land of Israel, His forgiveness giving new life, direction, and purpose. They will be His people, and He will once again be their God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

**37:14** *I will put my Spirit* – Only the Lord can bring new life to the spiritually dead. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*I will place you in your own land.*† These words make it clear that the Lord is not speaking here of a general resurrection from the dead but of the national restoration of Israel, apparently dead and buried in the exile. (CSB)

The promise of land, given originally to Abraham, will be fulfilled when the faithful inherit the new heavens and earth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*you shall know* – Three times (vv. 6,13, `4) God states that His Word and work will make His people “know Him,” by His gracious acts and through His Holy Spirit. Their certain and lasting hope is to know the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 2)

*I will do* – The revelation of God’s power to raise the dead sends beams of light into the future beyond Israel’s rescue from death in the Babylonian graveyard. A revived Israel is but the earthly clay that He will use to call into being a Spirit-filled people of all nations, once dead in trespasses but made alive in Christ Jesus (Rm 6:11; Eph 2:1). He who is “the resurrection and the life” will awaken those who sleep in the dust of the earth—“some to everlasting life, and some to ... everlasting contempt” (Jn 11:25; Dn 12:2; cf Jb 19:25; Ps 49:19; 73:24; Is 26:19; Jn 5:25–29). (TLSB)

**37:1–14** In a dream, God carries Ezekiel to a valley filled with dry bones and calls him to prophesy over them. Through Ezekiel’s word, the dead receive life. The people receive hope of restoration. God’s Word is effective and still has power to give new life and hope. • Almighty God, You alone speak the words of eternal life. Save us, Lord, for we cannot save ourselves. Amen. (TLSB)

*I Will Be Their God; They Shall Be My People*

**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. 25 They 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. 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. 28 Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.”**

**37:15–28** God will restore the Kingdom through new hope and faith. According to ch 34, it will be unlike any earthly dominion in that there will not be a succession of rulers, but only one Shepherd or King—God’s “servant David” (Jesus Christ). His unending rule will claim the allegiance of all nations the world over (see note, v 28). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy of His messianic reign when He spoke of “one flock, one shepherd” (Jn 10:16; cf Gal 3:26–29). (TLSB)

**37:16** *take a stick.* Ezekiel’s last symbolic act involving a material object (cf. 4:1, 3, 9; 5:1). (CSB)

As Ezekiel in his early ministry was directed to dramatize the judgment about to overtake Israel (chs 4–5), so he also used an action prophecy to portray the promises of the Gospel. (TLSB)

*write on it.* Zec 11:7 seems to be based on this passage in Ezekiel. (CSB)

*For Judah.* The southern part of Solomon’s divided kingdom. (TLSB)

*For Joseph.* The northern 10 tribes that seceded (1Ki 12) and were often called Ephraim, a leading tribe that descended from Joseph. (TLSB)

**37:17** *Join them to one another.* The sticks may have been miraculously joined, or Ezekiel may have joined the sticks together in his hand. (CSB)

Ezekiel enclosed the ends of the sticks in his fisted hand, giving them the appearance of having become a single rod. (TLSB)

**37:18** *Will you not tell us ... ?* The symbolic act successfully aroused the people’s curiosity (see 12:9; 21:7; 24:19). (CSB)

One almost gets the impression that Yahweh is so eager to have the prophet complete his action prophecy so that a full explanation can be given that he interrupts his own instructions to give Ezekiel advance notice that the people will not understand and will interrogate him as to the meaning. (CC)

**37:19** *one in my hand.*† God would duplicate Ezekiel’s symbolic act by uniting the two kingdoms separated since Solomon’s death (see 1Ki 12). For similar prophecies of the reunion of Israel see 33:23, 29; Jer 3:18; 23:5–6; Hos 1:11; Am 9:11. (CSB)

**37:22** *mountains of Israel*. See 6:2–3; 34:13; 36:1. (CSB)

*one king*.† Only here and in v. 24 is the word “king” used of the future ruler. Usually “prince” is used and frequently in chs. 45–48, where the ruler in the coming age is always referred to as “prince.” (CSB)

The pantomimed healing of this ancient political rupture was to visualize the one nation and the one King who will rule forever, in accord with an everlasting covenant of peace. (TLSB)

**37:23** *idols*. The old and basic offense). (CSB)

*backsliding*. Cf. Jer 2:19; 3:22. (CSB)

*cleanse*. Cf. 36:25 for the same notion. (CSB)

*my people ... their God*. See note on 11:20. (CSB)

**37:24** *My servant David*.† As in 34:23 the coming Messianic ruler is called David because he would be a descendant of David and would achieve God’s purpose more fully than David did. (CSB)

The messianic King is so designated in 34:23. (TLSB)

*shepherd*. As in 34:23 the coming ruler is likened to a shepherd who cares for his flock (cf. Jn 10, especially v. 16). (CSB)

**37:26** *everlasting covenant*. See 16:60 and note. The phrase occurs 16 times in the OT, referring at times to the Noahic covenant (Ge 9:16), the Abrahamic (Ge 17:7,13,19), the Davidic (2Sa 23:5) and the “new” (Jer 32:40). Cf. the covenant with Phinehas (Nu 25:12–13). (CSB)

*set my sanctuary among them*. As he had done before. This word is further developed in Ezekiel’s vision of the future age, in which the rebuilt sanctuary would have central position (chs. 40–48). See vv. 27–28. (CSB)

**37:27** *My dwelling place*. God will be present wherever and whenever His people worship Him “in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:19–26). (TLSB)

**37:28** *My sanctuary*. Before Ezekiel elaborates on the homage and service rendered by the new covenant people to their Redeemer and King (chs 40–48), he assures them in advance that no enemy will be able to silence their song of praise or prevent the extension of the Kingdom. (TLSB)

**37:15–28** Ezekiel prophesies that God will unite Israel again. No longer will two kingdoms exist, but one under “My servant David” (v 24). God fulfills this messianic prophecy for us in Jesus Christ at Calvary when the Church (God’s new Israel) “was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing” (Rm 6:6). In Christ, God is our God and we are His people. • Almighty Father, through Christ, You hallowed us from all uncleanness. We rejoice in our salvation as Your pure gift. Amen. (TLSB)