

Ezekiel 34-36 • Chapter Study

INTRO

Remember now — we've turned the corner in Ezekiel's ministry.

Ch. 33 marks that turning point where the prophet shifts from **announcing** Jerusalem's doom to **forecasting** Israel's glorious restoration.

That restoration will take place in phases that stretch out over the next 2500 years.

There will be a return of Jewish exiles from Babylon **in less than a hundred years** from Ezekiel's time to commence the work of rebuilding.

Their work will rebuild the nation to which the Messiah would come in His first advent.

But then Israel would suffer **another** setback, destruction & dispersal among the nations.

Then, in the last days, she'll be regathered once more, prosper greatly, & will see Second Advent of the Messiah who'll come in glory to establish His throne.

But before we can get to those glorious prophecies, we need to wade thru some announcements of God's displeasure w/Israel's leaders.

What we find here is crucial as we see how God evaluates national leaders.

While this has specific application to God's covenant people, to Israel—the principles apply to all leaders, civil & spiritual.

So as we walk thru ch. 34, consider how all of this speaks to our leaders today – both in the Church & Nation.

Ch. 34 • God Evaluates the Leaders of His People

Vs. 1-10 • Abusive Shepherds

A terrible fate has befallen God's people.

First, the northern Kingdom of **Israel** was defeated & carried away into captivity by the **Assyrians** in the 8th C. BC.

Then, abt a century & a half later, the **Babylonians** did the same to the southern kingdom of **Judah**.

All of this came because the people turned from God to worship idols.

Here – God **lays the blame** squarely on the shoulders of the rulers; both the religious & civil leaders.

While the people bore their own individual responsibility for the sin they committed, **NATIONALLY** – God **holds the leaders responsible** for what had happened to the kingdom & land.

If you've ever read or studied thru Chronicles & Kings, you know that there's a long list of names for the Kings of Israel & Judah.

They're each evaluated by a single criteria – whether or not they loved & served God.

The good kings were those who were loyal to Yahweh.

The bad kings forsook him to worship idols.

When a good king sat the throne, the clock ticking down to judgment **at least stopped**.

If the king **actively** led the people to return to the Lord by removing idols & calling them to renew their covenant w/God, the clock **went backward** & prosperity flowed.

But if a bad king reigned, the clock **ticked forward** to judgment.

If that king **actively pursued more** idols & **more** injustice, the hands **sped** forward.

Very little is mentioned in Kings & Chronicles abt the common people.

The focus is on the rulers because they set the pace and are responsible for what happens in the nation.

¹ And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?”

In the previous message Ezekiel delivered, he said the **LAND** of Israel was lost because the people had violated their covenant with God.

Since the land & their prosperity in it was all conditioned on their obedience & loyalty to God, when they forsook Him, they had to go **Out** of the land.

It was a divorce.

Israel was God's wife, living in His house.

But when she committed spiritual adultery by worshipping idols, & refused to leave her lovers, God

divorced her & made her move out.

In the coming chs., we find the story of unfaithful Israel coming to her senses, repenting of her adultery & God restoring her.

But before that can happen, He needs to lay the blame where the blame lies = w/those who'd failed & led others in ruin. The leaders.

He refers to those leaders as shepherds; a common idiom for rulers in the ancient Middle East.

We think of the 23rd Psalm, where David looks to God as his shepherd-leader.

And of course, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd in John 10; a passage which holds Eze 34 as its backdrop, as we'll see.

The image of the ruler as a shepherd is seen in the scepter & the crosier ancient leaders held as symbols of their office & authority.

The **scepter** is the shepherd's **rod**, while the **crosier** is the **staff**. [Picture]

As God **begins** His indictment of the rulers, He goes right to the bottom line: They were selfish.

They put their own wants & needs ahead of those of those they led.

³ You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, *but* you do not feed the flock. Instead of feeding the flock, they fed ON it.

Remember back a couple weeks when we saw how **God evaluates a society** on how it treats the poor & powerless within it.

That's a good way to evaluate the morality of an entire society.

So we read

⁴ The weak you [the leaders] have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. ⁵ So they were scattered because *there was* no shepherd;

No **REAL** shepherd.

They were all just **office holders, position-junkies**, power-crazed bureaucrats fattening themselves off their office.

and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. ⁶ My sheep wandered through all the [note this] mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching *for them*."

While the Jews **were** eventually **literally**, physically scattered, this most likely refers to their spiritual wandering during the long years of lead up to their captivity.

Many times in Chronicles & Kings, then throughout the prophets, we read how the people went up onto the hills to worship at the illicit shrines to their idols.

In fact, that **very phrase** is used "on every high hill" to refer to these pagan altars.

God's indictment of the leaders was that they **failed** to call the people back to God.

Why didn't they?

Well, because they knew the people **wanted** to worship idols.

And they didn't want to make the people upset with them.

They'd stopped being **LEADERS** who led & became **politicians** concerned w/staying in office.

Because God's people had been SPIRITUALLY scattered, they became **physically** scattered among the nations.

Spiritual declension always precedes economic disaster.

Vs. 1-6 are God's **indictment** of Israel's leaders. Now comes His **verdict**.

⁷ "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: ⁸ "As I live," says the Lord God, "surely because My flock became a prey, and My flock became food for every beast of the field, because *there was* no shepherd, nor did My shepherds search for My flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed My flock"— ⁹

therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord! ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hand; I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more; for I will deliver My flock from their mouths, that they may no longer

be food for them.”

The leaders position is revoked!

What is it The Donald says on *The Apprentice*? “You’re Fired!”

That’s what God says to these corrupt & abusive shepherds.

Vs. 11-31 • God, the True Shepherd

¹¹ ‘For thus says the Lord God: “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day.

This is such a great picture.

Imagine a sunny day. There’s a hillside where a flock of sheep have spread out to graze.

The shepherd sits on a rock watching the flock.

Clouds slowly roll in. They thicken & lower. But the sheep are so busy grazing they fail to notice the skies turned ugly.

Suddenly a rumble rolls across the sky from distant thunder.

A couple sheep hear it & move closer to the shepherd for comfort, but most of them ignore it.

Then suddenly a bolt of lightning & thunder cracks the sky above them.

The sheep are startled and take off in every direction.

The storm breaks for a few minutes then moves on & the shepherd starts collecting his flock from all the places they’ve scattered.

That’s the picture here.

The storm that broke over Israel was Assyria & Babylon.

But God would collect His people from the places they’d been scattered and gather them under His faithful hand.

¹³ And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land; I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country.

¹⁴ I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

Instead of the hills & mountains being places devoted to idols, they will be places of blessing & fellowship w/God.

¹⁵ I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God.

Not “I will MAKE them lie down against their will.”

This is as David said, “The Lord is my Shepherd, . . . He **makes me** lie down in green pastures.”

Really, He **makes it** so I CAN lie down.

Sheep won’t lie down unless they’re well fed & at peace.

They’re **skittish** by nature & if there’s ANYTHING that causes anxiety, they won’t lie down.

God is simply saying, “I’ll take good care of my people.”

¹⁶ “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”

When most of the flock is scraggly, anemic, thin, & weak; but there are a few fat & sassy sheep, you know it’s because they’ve been hoarding the food & have gotten fat at the expense of the weak.

God will set that right.

¹⁷ ‘And *as for* you, O My flock, thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep,

between rams and goats. ¹⁸ Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture—and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? ¹⁹ And *as for* My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet.”

Another picture of how selfish & abusive the leaders have been.

²⁰ ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God to them: “Behold, I Myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, ²² therefore I will save My flock, and they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

While God will supernaturally lead His people from Heaven, He’ll go further & step in among them in the person of the Messiah.

²³ I will establish 1 shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.

David lived over 400 years before this.

So is this a prophecy that he’ll be resurrected? Possibly.

There are some who believe this is a prophecy of the Millennium & that David will return to rule over Israel.

This may also be a prophecy of the Messiah who’s the Son/Descendant of David who restores His throne.

In John 10, Jesus uses this passage as the backdrop for His claim to being the Good Shepherd.

²⁵ “I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. ²⁶ I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing. ²⁷ Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase. They shall be safe in their land; and they shall know that I *am* the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. ²⁸ And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make *them* afraid. ²⁹ I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore. ³⁰ Thus they shall know that I, the Lord their God, *am* with them, and they, the house of Israel, *are* My people,” says the Lord God.’ ”

This is a perfect passage to be reminded that when we deal w/prophecy in the Bible, we’re not to think of it as a simple foretelling and singular fulfillment.

Nearly all prophecy foretells not a *single future event* but the *entire future*.

Prophecy is less of AN Event as it is of *patterns* that *cycle & grow* & reach a grand climax.

We’re supposed to understand WHAT that grand climax will look like by the patterns that lead up to it.

[Diagram]

So here, God says He will make a covenant of peace with Israel.

That covenant speaks of the *land* of Israel & their prosperity in it.

It’s a promise to deliver them *once for all* from the hostility of the nations.

Well, we know history for the Jews so far & we’d have to say that hasn’t happened yet.

Anti-Semitism has a long & ugly history, reaching its zenith during Hitler’s Final Solution in WWII.

This promise of a covenant of peace is the Millennium when the Jews from all over the world are gathered back into their land, all God’s promises to them are fulfilled and Christ reigns over all the Earth.

But, all of that is better understood by Israel’s return to the land under the Persians and their rebuilding Jerusalem.

Then the nation’s growth under the Maccabees.

There were set backs during the Greeks and later the Romans.

Then they were scattered once again, even worse than before under the Assyrians & Babylonians.

But then, in 1948, after being exiled from their land for nearly 2000 yrs, they became a nation once more.

But even TODAY’s headlines show their presence in the land is anything but peaceful.

They’re surrounded by hostile neighbors, pledged to their destruction.

God wants them to know that while they may have suffered under some hideously corrupt & abusive leaders, they are still His people, He is still their God, & when all is said & done—every one of His promises to them for good

will be fulfilled.

That's the **glorious end** of the story – not the darkness & loss that's marked so much of it along the way.

³¹ “You are My flock, the flock of My pasture; you *are* men, *and I am* your God,” says the Lord God.

Ch. 35 • Judgment on Mount Seir (Edom)

Not only have Israel's **leaders** let her down, her **neighbors** have mistreated her.

God will deal with them too.

In this ch, God uses Mt Seir, another name for **Edom** on Israel's SE border, as a representative for **all** the people who've delighted in Israel's fall.

When the Jews were deported & the land was left desolate, they rushed in to take over.

If you've been coming on Weds, you might read this & say,

“Wait. Didn't Ezekiel **already** speak an oracle of judgment against Edom back in ch. 25?

“Why this 2nd one, placed here as the prophecy has turned to point to Israel's glorious future?”

And the answer is Because **this speaks** to Israel's future.

Just as God will rid them of pathetic leaders & give them awesomely awesome leaders, He'll take care of all those nations who want to harm her.

Mt. Seir/Edom is just the label all those hostile nations are lumped under because

The history of animosity between Israel & Edom was long.

It dated all the way back to **Jacob & Esau**.

Jacob was the father of Israel, Esau of the Edomites.

During the Exodus, Edom blocked Israel's way to Canaan.

During the time of the kings, there was near constant conflict between the kingdoms.

And after the devastation left by the Babylonians, the Edomites were the regional power least effected, so they rushed in to take advantage of Israel's loss.

In fact, they got a toe-hold in Israel at this time that wasn't removed until 600 years later.

The Herods were Edomites.

So God speaks specifically to Edom here – but **all nations** hostile to Israel are really in view.

¹ Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it, ³ and say to it, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O Mount Seir, I *am* against you; I will stretch out My hand against you, and make you most desolate; ⁴ I shall lay your cities waste, and you shall be desolate. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Because the **land** of Edom follows a mountain range called Seir, that becomes a synonym for the region.

⁵ “Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed *the blood of* the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, *when* their iniquity *came to an end*, ⁶ therefore, *as I live*,” says the Lord God, “I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you. ⁷ Thus I will make Mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it the one who leaves and the one who returns. ⁸ And I will fill its mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines those who are slain by the sword shall fall. ⁹ I will make you perpetually desolate, and your cities shall be uninhabited; then you shall know that I *am* the Lord.

Since the Edomites had been a bloodthirsty, merciless people, they would be victims of an equally bloodthirsty & merciless enemy.

Their land would be left desolate, an empty wasteland.

¹⁰ “Because you have said, ‘These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, [Israel & Judah] and we will possess them,’ although the Lord was there, ¹¹ therefore, *as I live*,” says the Lord God, “I will do according to your anger and according to the envy which you showed in your hatred against them; and I will make Myself known among them when I judge you. ¹² Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord. I have heard all your blasphemies which you have spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, ‘They are desolate; they are given to us to consume.’ ¹³ Thus with your mouth you have boasted against Me and multiplied your words against Me; I have heard *them*.”

¹⁴ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “The whole earth will rejoice when I make you desolate. ¹⁵ As you rejoiced because the inheritance of the house of Israel was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir, as well as all of Edom—all of it! Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord.” ’

This all ties directly back to the Abrahamic Covenant in Gen 12 when God said he would bless those who bless Israel and curse those that cursed them.

Ch. 36 • Blessing & Renewal for Israel

Though what follows is a **pronouncement** of **blessing**, its form is an **announcement** of **judgment**. God speaks not so much to the **PEOPLE** of Israel as the **LAND**.

¹ “And you, son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say, ‘O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord! ² Thus says the Lord God: “Because the enemy has said of you, ‘Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession,’ ” ³ therefore prophesy, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Because they made *you* desolate and swallowed you up on every side, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you are taken up by the lips of talkers and slandered by the people”— ⁴ therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around— ⁵ therefore thus says the Lord God: “Surely I have spoken in My burning jealousy against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who gave My land to themselves as a possession, with wholehearted joy *and* spiteful minds, in order to plunder its open country.” ’

If it sounds like God is worked up & incensed at the delight of Israel’s enemies at how they’ve been ruined – you’re reading it correctly.

Note that word in v. 2; they say, “Aha!”

We could translate it as “Hahahaha!” while rubbing our hands w/glee.

A total of 7 times in the Bible the enemies of God say that about His people being harmed, and it really ticks God off.

What raises God’s ire so here is how the LAND of Israel has become a joke!

The once glorious land of milk & honey, which thrived under the reigns of David & Solomon and was so rich & powerful that rulers from across the Middle East went there to see for themselves, has become a desolate wasteland.

⁶ “Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne the shame of the nations.” ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord God: “I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that *are* around you shall bear their own shame. ⁸ But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come. ⁹ For indeed I *am* for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. ¹⁰ I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.

V. 10 = Will it be just the tribe of Judah that’s returned to the land?

What about the **supposed** ‘Lost tribes of Israel?’ The ones carried away by the Assyrians?

They too will come.

Don’t pay any attention to those who want to make a claim to being the Lost Tribes of Israel.

There are no lost tribes.

¹¹ I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better *for you* than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I *am* the Lord. ¹² Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them *of children*.”

There was a time when the wildness of the land claimed the lives of those who settled there.

Wild beasts, disease, just the hardship of trying to work unfertile soil took a toll.

But those days are in the past.

The land will bloom and produce life.

¹³ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Because they say to you, ‘You devour men and bereave your nation *of children*,’ ¹⁴ therefore you shall devour men no more, nor bereave your nation anymore,” says the Lord God. ¹⁵ Nor will I let you hear the taunts of the nations anymore, nor bear the reproach of the peoples anymore, nor shall you cause your nation to stumble anymore,” says the Lord God.’ ”

Now Ezekiel moves from speaking of the restoration of the *land*, to the restoration of the *people*.

¹⁶ Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ¹⁷ “Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. ¹⁸ Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols *with which* they had defiled it.

The worship of idols involved hideously abominable practices. Bloody rituals.

¹⁹ So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. ²⁰ When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name—when they said of them, ‘These *are* the people of the Lord, *and* yet they have gone out of His land.’

²¹ But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went.

Let’s not miss that; it’s important.

The Jews were known people whose God was *Yahweh*.

Just as the *Egyptians* were the people of *Ra & Amon*.

The *Assyrians* were the people of *Ashur*.

The *Babylonians*, the people of *Marduk*.

So when Israel fell, the other kingdoms concluded that meant Yahweh was weak.

And Israel hadn’t just fallen – I mean look at what the Jews had done before their kingdoms fell.

They’d turned their backs on their own God! How pathetic!

I mean, when you won’t even be loyal to YOUR God, how sad must that God be?

Their defeat & exile proved how lame Yahweh was – they thought.

Christian: We need to listen to what God says here.

Our behavior, how we live – reflects on how people see Jesus.

If we say He’s the Lord but don’t obey Him, well – He’s not much of a Lord, is He?

If we say He’s our Savior but go on sinning like made, what’s He saved us from?

Listen: The **DAY WILL COME** when God’s name **will be** vindicated & all the world will see that He **IS** SAVIOR & LORD!

Every knee **WILL** bow & every tongue **WILL** confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

But we must be careful we don’t dishonor His name **today**.

²² “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the Lord,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

Maybe not YOU, but *someone* reads this & says, “Wow, God sure is concerned about His reputation!”

Yes He is – not because his actual worth rises or falls with what people think.

On the contrary – it’s **THEIR FATE** that rises or falls with what they think **ABOUT** Him.

Remember the old adage for getting a job – “It’s not *what* you know, but Who you know”?

Regarding **Life** = “It’s Who you know & what you know about Him.”

What we think about God is THE MOST important thing about us.

So, yeah: God’s concerned about His rep – because it determines the quality of our lives today and where

we spend eternity.

In the next verses, God makes a promise of a new covenant He'll make with Israel.

It begins with Jesus Christ but goes on to find ultimate expression when they collectively come to faith in Him as their Messiah & enjoy His rule in the Millennium.

Here's how it begins . . .

²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. That looks to 2 great future rounds of fulfillment.

The first was their return to the land under the Persians in the 5th C. BC.

The second was their return beginning in 1948 and continuing to today.

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

Water is a frequent spiritual idiom for God's Word.

Which is interesting because here's what happened to the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

When Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, the exiles realized they wouldn't be going home soon, as Ezekiel had been saying.

His message to them we saw last Sunday at the end of ch. 33 – that they considered him more an **entertainer** than a prophet, was heeded by many of them and they repented.

They not only became more attentive to his message as the Word of God, they began to study their scriptures.

And they quickly saw that everything that had happened to them was foretold in the books of Moses.

They rediscovered their heritage and history and repented of their idolatry.

So much so that the Jews have ever since had a knee-jerk allergic reaction to idols.

God's Word washed them & charted the way forward.

It was in Babylon that the party of the **Pharisees** was born – men fiercely loyal to God's Word.

Biblical scholarship began among the Jews as a permanent fixture of their culture.

But, & here's what's fascinating to those of us watching current events, reports have come out that there are many non-Orthodox Jews in Israel who've begun Bible studies.

Many of these Bible studies groups were prompted by Jewish interaction w/evangelical Christians who knew a lot more about the OT than those Jews.

They were jealous that Christians knew more about Genesis & Exodus, Isaiah and Ezekiel than they did and decided to correct that.

They also had Christians point out to them how the ancient prophecies of Israel's being regathered into her land in the end times was coming to pass in current events.

2 years ago, PM **Benjamin Netanyahu** started a Bible study in his home with a select group.

Israel's 1st PM **David Ben Gurion** & later PM **Menchem Begin** also held such Bible studies.

Many of you know who Joel Rosenberg is.

He's written some amazing novels about the last days & several non-fiction books about prophecy & current events in the Middle East.

He has close ties to people in key positions in Israel & says that there's a growing interest among many non-religious Jews in the Bible & prophecy.

So yes—there's something of a **renewed spiritual sprinkling** taking place in Israel and among Jews worldwide as they return to the Scriptures.

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

This is the promise & blessing of the New Covenant. This is what faith in Jesus brings.

It began with Jesus' first coming and continues whenever anyone, Jew or Gentile comes to faith in Him.

But there will be a time in the close future when the Jewish people will in-mass turn to Him as their Messiah & Redeemer.

When that happens

²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do

them.²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.²⁹ I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you.³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach 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.

This looks to the Millennium when the Jews will be regathered from all nations back into their land. They will have the borders God set for them.

And they will as a nation worship Jesus as their Savior, Lord, and God.

The goodness of His grace will so overwhelm them they will be **utterly humbled** as they remember how undeserving of His grace they are.

Just as we do tonight!

³² Not for your sake do I do *this*,” says the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!”

God won’t do all this for them because they deserve it! He **does it because of Grace**.

³³ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable *you* to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.³⁴ The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by.³⁵ So they will say, ‘This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities *are now* fortified *and* inhabited.’³⁶ Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places *and* planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*.”

There was a partial fulfillment of this in the Return from exile in the 5th C. BC.

But then the Jews were conquered by the Romans in the 1st C. and utterly banished from the land in the 2nd C AD.

The massive siege works of the Romans against the cities & fortresses of Israel led to literally ALL the trees being cut down.

This altered the ecosystem, and from that the climate.

Israel was renamed **Palestine** in the Roman attempt to erase any vestige of the Jews’ right to the land. Palestine then became an arid desert wasteland. And what wasn’t desert became a swampy, malaria-infested bog.

Palestine became a byword, a place where the poorest of the poor among the Arabs lived.

It didn’t even have its own rulers; it was administered from Syria.

You can read the history of Palestine for yourself – but just know that from about the 3rd C. until 1948, the people of the Arabs of the Middle East could care less about Palestine.

The only time they cared was during the time of the Crusades when the Europeans came and made a claim to it for its connection to the Bible.

Then of course, it became a hot topic once again in 1948 when the Jews declared Israel a modern nation once more.

Then all of a sudden the Arabs went berserk & claimed the land belonged to them.

It so, why didn’t they do something with it – and actually CALL IT **PALESTINE**, instead of “Lower Syria?”

Why didn’t they irrigate, plant, grow, & build?

Like the Jews did as soon as they arrived & turned the desert into a garden;

& drained the swamps

& reclaimed the land

& turned acreage that used to sell for a couple hundred bucks an acre

into some of the highest priced land in the world.

³⁷ ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase

their men like a flock. ³⁸ Like a flock *offered as holy sacrifices*, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I *am* the Lord.” ’ ’ ”

This is an amazing prophecy of Israel during the Millennium.

When the Jews are back in their land, enjoying God’s blessing, they’ll finally realize how that blessing is the basis for the blessing of the whole world.

So they will ask God to bless & prosper them because it will all redound to His glory and that will move the rest of the world to want to know & serve God as well.

God says, “I’ll hear their request and answer it.”