

Ezekiel 36:1–38 – From Desolate Ground to New Hearts

Ezekiel 36 shifts from judgment to hope. Earlier, in Ezekiel 6, God spoke to the mountains of Israel about coming desolation because of idolatry. Now He speaks to those same mountains about restoration, fruitfulness, and renewal. What was empty and ruined will one day be alive and full again.

But the deepest part of this chapter is not about geography. It is about God's name, God's grace, and God's power to give His people a new heart and a new spirit. That promise reaches all the way to us through Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on the cross to save us and rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

1. From Mockery to Fruitfulness (Ezekiel 36:1–15)

God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the mountains of Israel:

The nations around Israel had mocked the land. When Israel was judged and scattered, enemies said, "Great, now those ancient high places are ours." They saw the ruined land as an opportunity for themselves.

God answers:

"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. For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown." (Ezekiel 36:8–9, NKJV)

The same hills that were stripped and abandoned would once again be cultivated and inhabited. Cities would be rebuilt, fields would be plowed, orchards would thrive, and people would live there again.

God is saying, in effect, "Your story is not over. I am for you. I will restore you."

Practical Application

God can do this kind of work not only in land, but in lives.

Maybe your "inner landscape" feels like those mountains used to be:

- Wasted years
- Spiritual barrenness
- Broken relationships
- Deep regrets

The same God who promised to make desolate mountains flourish can take a life that feels empty and plant something beautiful in it. He does not just patch up the old; He brings new growth.

If you belong to Him, you can take this to heart: your failures do not have the final word. God does.

2. Why the Land Was Desolate (Ezekiel 36:16–21)

God then explains why the land became desolate in the first place:

“When the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds... Therefore I poured out My fury on them... So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries...” (Ezekiel 36:17–19, NKJV)

Their problem was not just enemies from outside; it was sin from within:

- Bloodshed
- Idolatry
- Corruption in daily life

When they were scattered among the nations, they did not reflect God’s character there either:

“And when they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name... ‘These are the people of the Lord, and yet they have gone out of His land.’” (Ezekiel 36:20, NKJV)

In other words: “If that is how the people of the Lord act, what kind of God do they serve?” Their lives misrepresented Him.

Practical Application

This speaks directly to us.

If you call yourself a Christian, you carry the name of Christ in your everyday life. People around you are forming opinions about God based on what they see in you:

- How you talk
- How you treat people
- How you handle money, anger, pressure, and temptation

We do not have to be perfect, but we do need to be honest, humble, and growing. When we live in open sin or hypocrisy, we are not just hurting ourselves; we are giving people a reason to dismiss the God we claim to follow.

This is a serious calling: we represent the Lord to a watching world. That should not crush us, but it should sober us and drive us closer to Him.

3. God’s Motive: His Holy Name and His Grace (Ezekiel 36:22–24)

God now says something very striking:

“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.”’” (Ezekiel 36:22, NKJV)

The restoration God promises is not a reward for good behavior. It is an expression of His grace and His faithfulness to His own name.

“And I will sanctify My great name... and the nations shall know that I am the Lord... when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.” (Ezekiel 36:23, NKJV)

God’s plan is to work in His people in such a way that others will see His character more clearly.

Practical Application

This keeps us from pride.

- Any change in us
- Any growth in holiness
- Any fruit in our lives

All of it is ultimately for God’s glory and by God’s grace.

When God restores you, heals you, or uses you, it is not because you have become impressive. It is because He is merciful and faithful. That truth keeps us low and grateful in the best way.

4. A New Heart and a New Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25–27)

Now we reach the heart of the chapter:

“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. 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. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” (Ezekiel 36:25–27)

God is not just promising external restoration. He is promising inner transformation:

- **Cleansing** – forgiveness from filthiness and idolatry
- **A new heart** – not hard and unresponsive, but alive and tender
- **A new spirit** – a new inner orientation toward God
- **His Spirit within** – the power to actually walk in His ways

This is exactly what we find fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the new covenant:

- Jesus shed His blood on the cross to cleanse us from all sin.
- He rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.
- He pours out the Holy Spirit on those who trust Him, giving them a new heart and a new power to live.

The Christian life is not “try harder to keep the rules.” It is God changing you from the inside out.

Practical Application

Ask yourself:

- Is my faith only external—rituals, habits, and labels—or has God given me a new heart?
- Do I only try to obey from the outside, or is the Spirit of God working in me, changing my desires?

If you have trusted in Christ, this promise is your story in progress. God is at work in you, teaching you to love what He loves and to turn away from what destroys.

If you have not yet trusted Him, this is what He offers: real forgiveness and a real new start, not just in circumstances, but in your heart.

5. Restored Land and Remembered Grace (Ezekiel 36:28–38)

God continues:

“Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses...” (Ezekiel 36:28–29, NKJV)

He promises:

- Safety and dwelling
- Freedom from uncleanness
- Abundant harvests and provision
- Rebuilt cities and tilled land

So much so that people will say:

“This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden...” (Ezekiel 36:35, NKJV)

And Israel will remember their past sins and be humbled:

“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.” (Ezekiel 36:31, NKJV)

God repeats:

“Not for your sake do I do this... let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” (Ezekiel 36:32, NKJV)

The end result:

“Then they shall know that I am the Lord.” (Ezekiel 36:38, NKJV)

Practical Application

When God restores us and blesses us, He often lets us see our past more clearly—not to crush us, but to teach us humility and gratitude.

- We remember where we came from.
- We see how stubborn we were.
- We marvel that He did not give up on us.

That kind of remembrance does not lead to despair; it leads to worship. We say, “Lord, if it were not for Your grace, I would still be in the ruins.”

Challenge for Believers

Ezekiel 36 confronts us with some searching questions:

1. Are you living as God’s representative—or misrepresenting Him?

- Do your words, attitudes, and choices reflect the character of the God you claim to know?
- Or would people say, “If that is a Christian, I want no part of it”?

2. Are you cooperating with God’s work of inner transformation?

- Are you allowing Him to soften hard places in your heart?
- Are you yielding to the Holy Spirit, or resisting Him?

3. Are you taking credit for what only grace could do?

- Do you see your growth and blessings as evidence of God’s mercy?
- Or are you quietly congratulating yourself?

Let this chapter draw you back to a posture of humility and surrender. Ask the Lord:

- To search your heart
- To cleanse what needs cleansing
- To freshen your love for Him and others

God delights to renew His people. He loves to turn spiritual wastelands into places where His life is visible.

Invitation to Those Who Have Not Yet Given Their Life to Jesus

Ezekiel 36 is not just about ancient Israel. It also describes the kind of work God still does today in individual hearts.

Maybe you feel spiritually dry, weighed down by guilt, or disappointed with yourself. Maybe you have tried to change and have found that willpower is not enough. You do not just need new habits; you need a new heart.

That is exactly what God offers you in Jesus Christ.

- Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross. He took our sins and the judgment we deserved.
- He rose from the dead, and His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord.
- He offers forgiveness, a new heart, and His Spirit to all who turn to Him in faith.

The Bible says:

“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:13, NKJV)

If you sense the Lord drawing you, you can respond right now. There is no magic formula, but you might pray something like this from your heart:

“Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and that my heart is not right. I cannot change myself. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins, that You shed Your blood to save me, and that You rose from the dead. I confess that You are God, Savior, and Lord. I turn from my sin and surrender my life to You. Please forgive me, give me a new heart, and fill me with Your Spirit. Make me Yours, and help me to walk with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

If that is truly your desire, then today is the day to begin walking with Him. Tell someone who follows Jesus, begin reading the Bible (start with the Gospel of John), and ask the Lord to lead you into a community where His Word is taught and His love is lived out.

God takes desolate ground and makes it fruitful. He takes hard hearts and makes them new. Through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, He is still doing that today.