

1. My title for this lesson is "preparation for restoration". The idea behind this title is that God enjoys restoring relationships with believers. Often God is working behind the scenes to help our relationship with Him and work out the details of our life for His glory.
 - a) At this moment in Ezekiel's writing, most of the Israelites lacked a lot of hope. Their land, which had been in Jewish control for almost a thousand years, was now essentially empty of people as the Babylonians had conquered and mostly emptied the land.
 - b) Those Israelites that survived were hauled off to Babylon 500 miles away. Imagine that hopelessness! The point is during such times, God is still working in ways for our benefit!
2. Let me talk a little about what this lesson title means to us. My title of "preparation for restoration" is about how God is preparing for a renewed relationship with the Jewish people. That same principal applies to restoring relationships with Christians today.
 - a) There are times in the lives of all believers where we have our doubts about God and what He is doing in our lives. There are moments where we are giving up hope. I have often found that God does His best work when we feel all is lost in a particular situation. Sometimes we give up on God helping us in the way we want Him to work. Remember that God never gives up on those who are "His". For God to restore our relationship, He will first often work to "clearing the path" for that relationship.
 - b) Just as God is clearing the land of Israel for a renewed relationship with them, so God often works in ways to clean out our hearts to renew our relationship with Him.
3. Let me talk about why God picked the Jewish nation. In other words, why them? ☺
 - a) Does this mean that God loves the Jewish people more than other groups of the world? Not in the sense that God favors one group or one person over another.
 - b) With that said, God wanted one group of people to be His witnesses to the world of His existence and what God expects of mankind. God picked the Israelites and started with one man (Abraham) to start this nation. God does favor the Jews only in the sense they are chosen for this role. It had nothing to do with the goodness of that group of people.
 - c) Since God wanted this one nation to be "His witness", it is also necessary to punish them when they are disobedient to Him. God held the Israelites accountable for their knowledge and obedience of Him. In the same way, there is more accountability for the Christian who knows God, or "should know God well". Since the Israelites had the problem of idolatry, God eventually had to get to the point of driving them out of the land as a way to "wake them up" of dealing with that issue of idolatry.
 - d) God eventually needed to bring the Israelites back to the land not because they deserved it, but because He made unconditional promises to the "starting family" of the Israelites that the land of Israel would belong to them. The land of Israel was an unconditional gift from God in exchange for them being His witnesses to the world. (References: See Genesis 15:7, 28:4, 28:13 as examples of this promise.)
 - i) God can punish the Israelites (i.e., 70 years in captivity), but God can and does, still work in the background for our benefit in that He made unconditional promises to that nation that the land would be given to them. Therefore, God protects that land, even during times the Jews were not there.
 - e) This also leads to the classic question of "Why have a chosen nation to begin with?" Why couldn't Jesus die on the cross after the Garden of Eden and then we could all look to that moment in time for the forgiveness of sins? The "short" answer is God wanted to create as much evidence as possible for the existence, life and death of Jesus as possible. To do that, prophets before Jesus predicted every aspect of His role and ministry. There is nothing that Jesus did that was not predicted somewhere in the Old Testament.

- i) God created as much evidence as possible to verify Jesus as the only way to approach Him and (in terms of evidence for Jesus' purpose) this is one of the main reasons for the history of Israel.
 - ii) Even with that said, God still made unconditional promises to the Nation of Israel through its founders. That promise including inheriting the land of Israel.
 - iii) This surprisingly leads us back to Ezekiel. ☺ God spends one and one half chapters (this lesson) describing the preservation of the land of Israel not due to the goodness of the Israelites, but for the sake of God keeping His word to them.
- 4. With that said, let me try to summarize the key points of the text in this lesson.
 - a) Chapter 35 talks about the fate of the Edomites. If you recall a few lessons back, Ezekiel spent eight chapters (25-32) describing the fate of seven nations surrounding Israel. One of those nations was the Edomites. OK, so why bring up those guys up again here?
 - i) One answer is, of all of Israel's enemies, they were the most "Anti-Jewish" and were the most happy the Babylonians destroyed Israel. The Edomites looked to benefit the most from the land of Israel being empty and wanted that land.
 - a) The underlying point is that any thought the Edomites had of physically taking over the land of Israel will be "brought to nothing" by God.
 - b) There appears to be another reason hinted at in the text. The bible teaches that part of the Second Coming of Jesus (i.e., the coming of the "Messiah") takes place in Edom!
 - i) For those familiar with say, the Book of Revelation, the bible describes an "end time" period where the Israelites are pursued by the Antichrist with the goal of wiping out the remaining living Jews. (See Revelation 12:13). The book of Zechariah teaches of one place the Jews can flee too for safety in the "end times". That place is Edom. This prediction is made in Daniel Chapter 11, Verse 11.
 - ii) My point of all of this is that I believe the reason God picks on Edom in Chapter 35 and describes its ultimate destruction is also because God uses that land in the "end times" for the benefit of the Jewish people. The point is not only that the Edomites will lose their desire to get the land of Israel, but that the demonic forces behind that desire will also have one more "big loss" in the end times.
 - iii) If all of this confuses you, don't panic. ☺ I will discuss it more in this lesson.
 - c) This lesson also covers the first half of Chapter 36. The first 15 verses of Chapter 36 "parallel's" Chapter 35. The point is just as God is against the enemies of Israel taking over their land, so God wants to help the land "live again" with people, animals and trees.
 - i) Chapter 36 starts off with a lecture to the "land itself". The point of that lecture is God still has great plans for this piece of real estate and it will "live again".
 - ii) In the next lesson, which covers the latter part of Chapters 36 and all of Chapter 37, we will talk about the Israelites taking over the land again and what that means to us today and in the future. More on that in the next lesson.
 - iii) Chapter 36 and 37 are possibly the most interesting lesson in terms of modern history. These chapters do focus on Israel's taking the land after the Babylonian captivity, but some of those predictions do enter modern times when Israel became a country again in 1948. We'll talk about this a lot in the next lesson.
- 5. What does all of this mean for you and me? It means that "in the end" those that trust in God for their salvation and those that put their trust in Jesus for paying the price for their sins are the ultimate winners even when the world appears to be falling apart around us.
 - a) We all go through times in our lives when it feels like life is falling apart and we don't know what to do. That is (for the believer) when God is usually working in the background "working it all out" for His glory.
 - b) The Israelites had their lives depleted of all hope and are now taken into captivity. It would be easy here for them to give up all hope and think all is lost. At this moment is when Ezekiel starts to give this message of hope for their future that all is not lost.

- c) That is the idea for you and me. When everything appears to be falling apart, God is there in the background effectively yelling out to His people, "Don't worry. I have a plan. All may seem hopeless to You but I (God) know all things and in the end, it will all work out for My glory and My people will win in the end."
 - i) In other words, God is preparing us for restoration so we can glorify Him after He, and He alone works all things out for His glory.
 - d) OK, on that confusing but positive note, we can start the text itself. ☺
6. Chapter 35, Verse 1: The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir; prophesy against it,
- a) Chapter 35 begins a new vision by Ezekiel. The focus of this vision is "Mount Seir", which is a "code name for Edom. The word Edom is not mentioned until Verse 15. It is almost as if God is saying, "I am so against you Edom, that I don't want to state you by name, and instead I'm just going to refer to you by the main mountain (Mount Seir) in that area.
 - b) The territory of Edom today is part of the country of Jordan. It is southeast of Israel and is essentially the other side of the Dead Sea from Israel.
7. Verse 3: and say: `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, Mount Seir, and I will stretch out my hand against you and make you a desolate waste. ⁴ I will turn your towns into ruins and you will be desolate. Then you will know that I am the LORD.
- a) If one visits this area today, one thing one will notice is how empty it is. Tourists will sometimes visit the "dead" city of Petra, which is in "Edom". The only sign of life in this dead city is a single hotel built for tourists.
 - i) When most tour buses go to Petra, one usually stays in a hotel three hours away. That bus ride to Petra is extremely empty of scenery. In these verses of Ezekiel, God said He will make this place a desolate waste. That three-hour bus ride to Petra is noticeably empty of plant, animal and human life. It is a "desolate waste".
 - ii) Why do tour buses go to Petra? One reason is that God said this would be a place the Jews would flee to in order to escape from the Antichrist. (See Daniel 11:41.)
 - b) It's time to recall a little from the last time we talked about the Edomites in Chapter 25.
 - i) Essentially they were conquered by the Babylonians, but still existed as a people.
 - ii) A few centuries later, the Edomites were conquered by the Israelites and the Jewish religion became part of the Edomite culture for a while. I mentioned that King Herod "The Great", who lived at the time of Jesus birth, was an Edomite. Herod was not a practicing Jew, but was familiar with Judaism due to this history.
 - c) The point as it applies to these verses is that God is literally going to destroy the Edomite culture. Part of it came true from the Babylonians and part of it came true centuries later.
 - i) My proof: How many Edomites do you know that exist today? None.
 - d) Let's remember why God picks on Edom here in Chapter 35. They were probably the chief enemy of Israel. This goes back to the time of Jacob. Jacob had a twin brother named Esau who was the founder of the Edomites. The bible is full of stories of battles between these two groups going on for many centuries.
 - i) God held the Edomites accountable in that historically they knew they came from a single God and they knew that God gave His "best blessing" to Jacob (Israel). The problem is these two cultures have been at odds for centuries.
8. Verse 5: `Because you harbored an ancient hostility and delivered the Israelites over to the sword at the time of their calamity, the time their punishment reached its climax, ⁶ therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will give you over to bloodshed and it will pursue you. Since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you. ⁷ I will make Mount Seir a desolate waste and cut off from it all who come and go. ⁸ I will fill your mountains with the slain; those killed by the sword will fall on your hills and in your valleys and in all your ravines. ⁹ I will make you desolate forever; your towns will not be inhabited. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

- a) Let me summarize these verses. God is saying to the Edomites that since they have an ancient hatred of the Jews and are now witnessing their punishment with the idea of taking over their empty land, I (God) will work against you. The other point of this paragraph is since the Edomites desired to kill the Israelites "blood" will be against them.
 - b) Know that the word "Edom" means red. There is a play on words where red is the color of blood and the fact that the Edomites desired to kill the Israelites. That word "red" is used a bunch of times in this chapter to mean both bloodshed and Edom.
 - i) At this time the Edomites encouraged the Babylonians to conquer Israel with the hope of gaining that land for themselves and getting rid of their ancient enemy.
 - ii) God's response to all of this is that He will be against Edom. God will allow the Edomite people to be killed by the sword and make it desolate forever.
 - c) Now let's talk about how this applies to our lives. When we are at our low moments of our lives, there are often enemies who would want to take advantage of our downfall. It may not be other people, but it may just be spiritual forces that want to see us be miserable, since our misery can make us bad witness for God.
 - i) I'm not saying we have to be happy when everything is going wrong. I am saying that we still have to trust in God in those times. When we start thinking that God is not helping us the way we expect Him to act, is often when dark spiritual forces will "help us be miserable" and be a bad witness for God.
 - ii) The idea here is to realize that when we are down, God is still there working in the background on a plan for our lives. In this lesson, God is protecting the land of Israel for its further use by the Israelites down the road. God is taking care of the enemies of Israel when the Israelites are at a weak moment due to their captivity.
 - d) Meanwhile, let me finish describing the text: The idea of the last few verses is that the Edomites will be defeated so badly, they will have unburied bodies all over the hills and valleys of their land. Like the land of Israel, the land of Edom is mostly a "hilly" terrain.
 - i) The text also says that the defeat will be so bad that Edom will be desolate forever. As I stated, if one drives from the nearest modern city in Jordan to what was Edom, it is desolate except for the dead city of Petra, which is a tourist destination due to its "design" in the rocks and its reference as an end time location.
9. Verse 10: `Because you have said, "These two nations and countries will be ours and we will take possession of them," even though I the LORD was there,
- a) In Verse 10, God is quoting the thoughts of the Edomites. One has to remember that for centuries, Israel was split into a northern and southern kingdom. The northern kingdom, called Israel was defeated over a hundred years earlier by the Assyrians. Now the southern kingdom is defeated by the Babylonians, who also took control of the northern kingdom since the Babylonians had already defeated the Assyrians.
 - i) The Edomites are thinking "Well, since the Babylonians are going to leave this land bare, it would be easy for us to now take over this essentially empty land."
 - b) The other point is that God Himself is still watching over the land. Even though God sent the Israelites into captivity and one of the early chapters of Ezekiel described God leaving the Temple itself, God is still concerned for "His land" and His presence is still there.
10. Verse 11: therefore as surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I will treat you in accordance with the anger and jealousy you showed in your hatred of them and I will make myself known among them when I judge you. ¹² Then you will know that I the LORD have heard all the contemptible things you have said against the mountains of Israel. You said, "They have been laid waste and have been given over to us to devour." ¹³ You boasted against me and spoke against me without restraint, and I heard it. ¹⁴ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. ¹⁵ Because you rejoiced when the inheritance of the house of Israel became desolate, that is how I will treat you. You will be desolate, O Mount Seir, you and all of Edom. Then they will know that I am the LORD."

- a) Verse 11 talks about God judging Edom. (A.k.a.: Mt. Seir.) God will make it known that He "hears" what the Edomites are saying about them taking over the land of Israel.
- b) One has to imagine the Edomites thinking, "The God of the Israelites has abandoned His people. He must not be very powerful." Given that type of thinking God needed to show them that He is still in charge and in control. By God destroying the Edomites, He is making it known to that part of the world that the God of the Israelites still exists, He is still in charge and He still protects those He chooses to protect.
- c) The most interesting verse (to me) is Verse 14 where it says, "While the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate." The question is, "Why would the whole earth rejoice over the desolation of this land"? The only logical answer is this prophecy has some sort of double-meaning. It must be talking about some other time in history as "let's face it" the whole world didn't care at that time that the Babylonians defeated the Edomites. I stated earlier in this lesson that the land of "Edom" is also prominent during the time of Jesus 2nd Coming. Let me explain further:
 - i) The book of Isaiah also preached about the fall of Edom. It says, "My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; see, it descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed." (Isaiah 34:5 NIV.)
 - a) This verse in Isaiah mentions a sword that has "drunk its fill in the heavens". It is describing a sword so powerful that its damage has filled the heavens. Then it says this sword will descend in judgment on Edom.
 - ii) OK John, I understand Edom is going to be destroyed. What is your point?
 - iii) Now let's look at Isaiah Chapter 63. Verse 1 reads, "Who is this (person) coming from Edom, from Bozrah, (part of Edom) with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength?"
 - a) Isaiah 63 is describing somebody "important" coming from Edom.
 - b) Isaiah Chapter 63, Verse 1, goes on. It then says, "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." That sounds a lot like God to me. I believe this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus, the Messiah speaking.
 - iv) Now let's go to Revelation 19: 11-13. It says, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God."
 - a) In Revelation 19, this is the moment when Jesus comes back to earth. We know the rider of the horse is Jesus by the last line.
 - b) The verse says His robe is dipped in blood. My question is "Whose blood"?
 - (1) I would argue it is not Jesus' blood as that was shed at the cross.
 - c) The purpose of Jesus coming in Chapter 19 is to "rule the nations".
 - v) So what is my point of these verses in Isaiah and Revelation? It teaches that when Jesus comes back, he comes back to Edom (specifically the location of Bozrah) as stated in Isaiah 63 and the point of Jesus coming at this point is to rule the world.
 - vi) So why does Jesus come to Bozra (in Edom) and not directly to Israel? The answer is to prepare "His people" that he will come and rule. Let me explain further.
 - a) The Book of Daniel (11:41) predicts that when the Antichrist comes, he will invade Israel, but Edom and Moab will not be captured by the Antichrist. That leads to the speculation that many Jews will hide in Edom and Moab when the Antichrist comes.
 - vii) This leads us back to Isaiah Chapter 63 and Revelation 19. Both are describing the coming of the Messiah (Jesus). It says His garment is red. The idea is that when the Messiah comes, He will defeat the antichrist and Jesus comes to earth at Edom to rescue His people from the power of the antichrist.

- viii) OK John now I am confused. ☺ Where are going with this? This actually leads me back to Ezekiel. Ezekiel says in Verse 14 the whole world will rejoice at Edom being desolate. What will cause the world to rejoice over the "death" of Edom? The only thing I can think of is "The second coming of Jesus", which is the Messiah who is to rule the world. The point is the text is hinting at the fact that Edom will be the location of the world rejoicing over the appearance of the Messiah.
 - d) So you are saying that when Jesus comes back, he will touch down at Edom. How does that affect my life today?
 - i) For starters, keep in mind that life is short in comparison to eternity. The return of Jesus starts the beginning of a wonderful new life for all believers for eternity.
 - ii) Next, remember that God is still working in the background even during the times when all appears lost. The Israelites were taken into captivity and God is describing how He is protecting their land. Tying together some verses in Ezekiel, Isaiah and Revelation we read how God protects His people.
 - e) The final line of Chapter 35 of Ezekiel says, "Then they will know that I am the LORD".
 - i) I've talked about this line in a few recent lessons. The idea is that on judgment day, those who lived in Edom will realize the God of the Israelites is also the God of the Universe who will judge them for eternity.
 - ii) The sin of the Edomites was that they should have treated the Israelites better. They should have known their history that they were related to the Israelites and that God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people and not to the Edomites.
 - iii) The main idea is that God is protecting His people and God takes care of our enemies, even when we are too weak to defend ourselves.
11. Chapter 36, Verse 1: "Son of man, prophesy to the mountains of Israel and say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD.
- a) I have to admit, Chapters 36 and 37 are two of my favorites in the Old Testament. Much of it applies to the modern state of Israel and is my proof that God is still concerned about the nation of Israel today. The next lesson will focus heavily on the issue of modern Israel and why (in my opinion) it is still part of God's plan of salvation.
 - b) In the meantime, we are still dealing with the Edomites in contrast the land of Israel.
 - c) The first 15 verses of Chapter 36 very much parallel the 15 verses that are Chapter 35.
 - d) With that said, notice that Chapter 36 is addressed to the land of Israel. It is as if none of God's people can hear this message and God is addressing it to the land itself.
 - i) In reality, God is still speaking to the Israelites in Babylon. The point is God is preaching to the Israelites that He is still watching over the land itself and will protect that land for the inevitable return of the Israelites and for the day when God will rule the world from Israel.
 - e) Think of this verse in terms of promises. The Israelites are all captured and all (but a very small percentage) in the Babylonian empire. God is promising through Ezekiel that they would return to the land of Israel one day. That alone is a word of encouragement in what has to be a horrible time to go through.
12. Verse 2: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The enemy said of you, "Aha! The ancient heights have become our possession." '
- a) Verse 2 mentions "the enemy". Remember the chapter breaks were not part of the original text, so the "enemy" would refer to the Edomites of the last chapter. So why are the Edomites not mentioned by name? I suspect it is to remind us that God is always for "His People" and He protects us from all our enemies.
 - b) The actual idea behind this verse is the Edomites are thinking they could take over the land of Israel (both the northern and southern kingdom) as the Babylonians have essentially left it empty at this time.

13. Verse 3: Therefore prophesy and say, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because they ravaged and hounded you from every side so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations and the object of people's malicious talk and slander, ⁴ therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Sovereign LORD: This is what the Sovereign LORD says to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys, to the desolate ruins and the deserted towns that have been plundered and ridiculed by the rest of the nations around you-- ⁵ this is what the Sovereign LORD says: In my burning zeal I have spoken against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, for with glee and with malice in their hearts they made my land their own possession so that they might plunder its pastureland.'
- a) Remember that this prophecy is directed to the land of Israel and not the Jewish people. The key to this paragraph is to read Verse 5. God says He is "Against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom". God is saying the land belongs to Him and just because other nations think they can have it, they will not get away with that desire.
 - b) I want you to stop and think about the land of Israel "this way": God created the heavens and earth. Yet, given all of that, there is a small piece of real estate on the planet earth where God says, "This is mine". It sort of seems strange when one thinks of it that way. Why would the God who made everything in existence care about a small piece of real estate on earth? The answer is this piece of real estate is associated with God and where most people today associate with the God of the world.
 - i) Because Jews, Christians and even Muslims associate the "Promised Land" with a single God that created the world, this place has become the center of controversy for thousands of years and to this day Israel is the destiny of multitudes of visitors.
 - ii) I'm reminded of a joke between Ronald Reagan and Menachem Begin, who was the president of Israel in the 1980's. After a meeting, Reagan told Begin to don't forget to pray about their decisions. Begin joked that he would go pray from Jerusalem as that city was a local phone call to God. ☺
 - c) Meanwhile back at the text. The idea of these verses is that the Edomites desired to have the land of Israel after it was conquered and emptied. The Edomites thought this would be an easy time to have a victory over their ancient enemy and an easy battle to win.
 - i) This leads me back to my opening statement of how God protects us during the weak moments of our lives. The Israelites were being punished for ignoring God. Despite that, God still had plans for that nation and one of the key themes to Ezekiel is that despite the sins of Israel, God is not done with them as a nation.
 - a) The way God is protecting them is by first protecting the land.
 - ii) When some Israelites did return after 70 years, the collective sin of idolatry was no longer an issue. The captivity did eliminate idolatry. There were other issues, but as a whole, they worshipped God alone. My point is the 70-year deployment of the Israelites "worked" in the sense that idolatry was not a major issue anymore.
14. Verse 6: Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel and say to the mountains and hills, to the ravines and valleys: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I speak in my jealous wrath because you have suffered the scorn of the nations. ⁷ Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I swear with uplifted hand that the nations around you will also suffer scorn.
- a) It's easy to comprehend the idea that God cares about people. After all, He will judge each of us on the basis of how we lived our lives and He controls our destiny.
 - i) It is another thing to try to comprehend that God cares about a little piece of real estate in the Middle East more than the rest of the world or universe.
 - ii) The best way to grasp this is to understand that it is about God keeping His promises. He made a promise to Abraham, (and confirmed it to his son Isaac and again to his son Jacob) that their descendants would inherit this land. Therefore, if God is going to give this land to the Israelites, God must then protect the land not due to the goodness of the Israelites, but because God wants to keep His promises.

- b) OK John, why should I care about this? Comprehend the idea that if God has promised good things to His "chosen people", imagine how much more that means to the Christian! In John 14:2-3, Jesus said that a reason He had to go back to heaven after His resurrection is to "prepare a place for us". I'm not positive what that exactly means, but if God goes to this much trouble to protect the land of Israel, I can't imagine how much trouble God has gone through to prepare a wonderful place for us for eternity.
 - c) Meanwhile, back to the text. Verse 6 says the land of Israel has suffered the "scorn" of the nations. What does that refer to?
 - i) Most likely it refers to the Babylonian armies who cut down much of the tree life in Israel as part of its siege against that country. If the Babylonians made battering rams, they had to cut down trees. If they wanted wood for fires to keep warm, they had to cut down the trees. If this is correct, the idea is that the land itself has suffered and God is promising He will protect the land after all of this.
15. Verse 8: "But you, O mountains of Israel, will produce branches and fruit for my people Israel, for they will soon come home. ⁹ I am concerned for you and will look on you with favor; you will be plowed and sown, ¹⁰ and I will multiply the number of people upon you, even the whole house of Israel. The towns will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. ¹¹ I will increase the number of men and animals upon you, and they will be fruitful and become numerous. I will settle people on you as in the past and will make you prosper more than before. Then you will know that I am the LORD. ¹² I will cause people, my people Israel, to walk upon you. They will possess you, and you will be their inheritance; you will never again deprive them of their children.
- a) Remember why Ezekiel is preaching: It is not to help the land of Israel grow new trees and be farmed again. ☺ It is to preach to the Israelites in Babylon that the captivity will not be forever and there is coming a day when the Israelites will be back to the land again.
 - b) The main point of the first 15 verses of Chapter 36 is despite the Babylonians best effort to wipe out the land of Israel and despite the Edomites desire to possess this land, God is protecting that land and one day the land prosper again when the Israelites return.
 - c) These verses in this paragraph focus on the future day when the land of Israel will be prosperous again. The land will one day again be sown for grains and will produce fruit.
 - d) I want to key on something said in the last line of Verse 11. It says, "(I) will make you prosper more than before". Somehow, someway, the Israelites will prosper more when they come back into the land.
 - i) Does this mean the amount of fruit and crops they produce will be greater in the years after the captivity than the years prior to the captivity? It could be.
 - ii) I think it is much more than that. When God speaks of prosperity, it usually refers to the idea that "fruit for God" will be produced. That means that more people will turn to Him and live for Him. One can interpret that as a lack of future idolatry or as a sign of the Messiah to come to that land.
 - e) Here is where the text starts to get more interesting: Verse 12 says, "You (the physical land) will never again deprive them (The Israelites) of their children." That verse says that the land of Israel will never be deprived of containing Israelites.
 - i) After the 70-year period of captivity, some Israelites returned, but the land was part of the Medo-Persian Empire, then the Greek Empire (in its various forms) and then the Roman Empire. The Romans did destroy Jerusalem around the year 70AD and the surviving Jews were scattered after that. From the time the Romans destroyed that city until the time Israel became an independent nation again in 1946, there were always some Jews living there, but it never was a country.
 - ii) The point is God was "right" about this prediction. Despite the fact that the Jews have had many battles and many fights over the millennia since this prediction, there always were some Jewish people in the land during this long time frame.

- iii) Notice that this promise of the land does not say things will be peaceful forever for the Israelites. It just says the land will always contain Israelites after this captivity. God never promises anyone a calm and perfect life with no troubles. Even after we accept God to rule over our lives, it does not mean things will be perfect. God promises to help us through any situation, but He does not promise world wide peace and serenity until the Messiah (Jesus) comes to rule over the world Himself.
- 16. Verse 13: " `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because people say to you, "You devour men and deprive your nation of its children," ¹⁴ therefore you will no longer devour men or make your nation childless, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁵ No longer will I make you hear the taunts of the nations, and no longer will you suffer the scorn of the peoples or cause your nation to fall, declares the Sovereign LORD.'"
 - a) To read these verses, first one has to remember who these verses are addressed to: "The land of Israel" (as opposed to the people of Israel).
 - b) Verse 13 is a response by God to an accusation by "some people" against the land of Israel. Remember that the surrounding nations were aware that the Jews worshipped God. The point is those people thought of "God" as a local deity that only works in Israel.
 - i) The Edomites thought that God was behind the fall of Israel and in that sense, they were right. At that point in time the Edomites would think, "The God of Israel can't be trusted because He allowed His people to be kicked out of the land."
 - ii) The point of all of this is God is saying after the Israelites come back, they will no longer hear others complain that God abandoned them in the sense He is bringing the Israelites back to the land "forever". Yes, most Israelites will be scattered again, but the point is the land will never be fully emptied again of the Jews and no one can make the accusation that God "fully empties" the land again.
 - c) If one is getting confused, one has to remember that we are starting to read a mixture of "short term" and "long term" predictions about Israel. The "immediate" application refers to the time period after the 70 years when the Israelites took over the land again. The "long term application" refers to a future day when Israel is an independent country and then one day the Messiah will rule the world from Israel.
- 17. Verse 16: Again the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁷ "Son of man, when the people of Israel were living in their own land, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions. Their conduct was like a woman's monthly uncleanness in my sight. ¹⁸ So I poured out my wrath on them because they had shed blood in the land and because they had defiled it with their idols. ¹⁹ I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. ²⁰ And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, `These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.'"
 - a) Notice Verse 16 starts a new vision. We have a review of what the Israelites did wrong (i.e., their sins). The main focus of rest of this chapter and the next chapter is on the future. For God to describe the future, He needs to review the idolatry issue and its "end".
 - b) In Verse 17, God compares the sins of the Israelites to a "woman's monthly uncleanness". The point is the idolatry and "shedding of innocent blood" was so bad that it became like something "that is better not to describe in public". Verse 18 then goes on to say that God poured out His wrath upon them for their actions.
 - c) This leads to the question: If God is speaking about the future, why is He reviewing?
 - i) The answer is Verse 19: It reads, "They were dispersed among the nations and scattered through the countries". Notice both "nations" and "countries" are plural.
 - ii) In the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people were not scattered over lots of nations, but were either killed or "just" taken to the Babylonian Empire.
 - iii) This paragraph is not just reviewing the past, but also describing future events. It is a "double prediction" about short and long term fulfillments of prophecy.

- d) Here is where I'm going with this: The rest of Chapter 36 and all of Chapter 37 are not just about when Israel came back in 70 years. It has a "double fulfillment".
 - i) We already got some of that "double fulfillment" in this lesson with the fact that God focuses on Edom in Chapters 35 and 36. It has a "short term fulfillment" in that Edom will not get their goal of taking over the empty land of Israel and they will be wiped out as a nation. There is also a very long term fulfillment in that the land of Edom becomes a key location in the "end times" when the Messiah (Jesus) comes to rule and reign over the whole earth.
 - ii) Even if you are still confused about some of the future details of Jesus being "dipped in blood" and coming to the land of Edom (remember the reference to the area of Bozrah, which is part of ancient Edom), I want you the reader to get used to the idea of "double fulfillments" of prophecy. Yes this lesson was focusing on the bad intentions of Edom to take over Israel. At the same time, I believe God singles out Edom as it becomes a significant location in "end times".
18. Verse 21: "I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone." ²² "Therefore say to the house of Israel, `This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³ I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.
- a) The point is not about the Israelites, but about God's holy name. God protecting His land has nothing to do with the goodness of the Israelite people. God compares the lifestyle of the Israelites to a women's menstrual period. If one had to compare the goodness of Christians outside of our life with Jesus, I would argue we are no better than they were!
 - b) The point here is God is concerned about "His name and His reputation". The reason God keeps His promises to Israel is the same reason He keeps His promises to us. It is because "His name" is at stake and His reputation for keeping His word is at stake.
 - i) For that reason, God has and will gather the Israelites in the land and God keeps His promises about eternal salvation to Christians. It is not because of our goodness, but it is because of God keeping His word.
 - c) Over the rest of the chapter (in the next lesson), we are going to read about God's future promises for the nation of Israel.
 - i) Yes it applies to the Israelites right after the 70 years of captivity, but we'll find lots of double references to all of Israel's history right up to the present day.
 - ii) There are many Christians (not me) who argue that modern Israel is not part of God's redemptive plan and that God today only works through the church. The problem with that view is it takes away God's promises to the nation of Israel.
 - iii) As I like to say, "If I can't trust God's unconditional promises to the nation of Israel, how can I ever trust God's unconditional promises to me through Jesus?"
 - d) This leads us back to the text of the last few verses. It talks about how God is going to show His glory through the salvation of the Jewish nation and preserve that nation. God is not doing it for their sakes, but for the sakes of His name and His reputation.
 - i) Notice Verse 23 says, "Then the nations will know that I am the LORD".
 - ii) Let me explain Verse 23 this way: When people ask me for proof that the bible is the Word of God, the first thing I say is, "Look at Israel". No other nation has been scattered and came back together as a country. Israel has done it twice in history. If you want proof that God is real, look at the fact that "Israel" is still around today.
 - a) I have met people who don't know the bible that well, but they do admit it is "miraculous" how Israel has survived as country over the last 50 years or so despite always being attacked through its modern history.

19. Let me wrap it up here. In this lesson, we learned about God's plans for nation of Edom both in the past and in the future. We are starting to get "double references" about the restoration of Israel is not just about what happened many centuries ago, but is also about the present day!
- a) Time for my standard question: How does any of this apply to my life?
 - i) Yes I believe Jesus is coming back and now I understand a few more details about His return. We have a double reference to Edom in these chapters not only focus on the future of Ezekiel's audience but to relate it to "end times" as well.
 - ii) I understand that God still is concerned about Israel. Even if you have doubts on that subject, hold that thought and we'll discuss that more in the next lesson.
 - b) The question of the moment is in a sense, "Yes John, all of this is interesting. What about the fact I'm out of job or my family's income is in jeopardy or my kids are sick or I am dealing with this bad issue or that bad issue right now?"
 - i) What I want you to get out of this issue is the title of this lesson, which is "preparation for restoration". While things may appear like they are falling apart right now, know that God is working on a plan for your life and my life.
 - ii) For the Israelites at this moment in history, things looked terrible. Those that survived the Babylonian attack were kicked out of their homes and were transported many hundreds of miles away.
 - iii) Ezekiel is saying as bad as things looked for their future, God still has a plan for those who trust in Him. Yes, I'm talking about salvation as individuals, but also I'm talking about God keeping His promises to those who are "His".
 - iv) God told Abraham that He would give the land of Israel to his descendants. That was an unconditional promise. There was nothing Abraham did to earn that promise and nothing Abraham could do to change it. That promise was fully up to God and was not conditional upon Abraham's descendants being good people.
 - a) Ezekiel describes the one time the Israelites were kicked out of the land due to their idolatry, but at the same time, that land is still their inheritance.
 - v) For the Christian, God promises eternal salvation if we trust in Him. God also promises that God will guide us through this life and work all things out for His glory (See Romans 8:28). It does not mean all things will work out smoothly or without problems. It does not mean we will all be rich and successful in this lifetime. It means that no matter what situation we are in, God is there providing a way for us to get through it.
 - vi) The point is just as God was preparing the land of Israel for the eventual return of the Israelites to that land, so God is working in the background of our lives preparing the way to lead us into eternal salvation. God never promises that whatever situation we are in will quickly come to an end. What God does promise is that He will be there with us through those situations and guide us in the way we should go and deal with it.
 - c) Just as God was still with the Israelites through their "dark hour" God is still with us through the dark hours of our life. If you get nothing else out of this message, get that!
20. Let's pray: Father, Help us to remember that You are always there working out our lives for Your glory. We don't always understand why we are going through the "situation of the moment", but we know that You are aware of it and You are working on a plan for our lives to help us through such situations. Help us to glorify You and keep the eternal focus in mind through whatever we are dealing with in our lives. May we live to glorify You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.