

BONES, STICKS, AND THE NEW COVENANT

I. [Ezekiel 37:1-23](#) [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) [Acts 1:6-8](#) [Ephesians 2:1-22](#)

A. There's a little graveyard at the intersection of Lake and Bickel Church Roads. In high school a bunch of us guys on a dare decided to campout there one night. We just threw our sleeping bags on the ground, spent the night, and woke up the next morning thinking we'd done something bold and courageous. We hadn't.

B. Ours was an anti-climatic venture but Ezekiel had a far different experience with a graveyard. His was a valley full of bones. We'll begin with Ezekiel's story, then take a trip from the OT to the NT; or better stated, from the old covenant to the new covenant. We'll begin with Ezekiel, touch base with Jeremiah, hear from Jesus on ascension day, and finish up with Paul in Ephesians and Romans. If at first today you feel detached from God's people, by the time we leave today you should definitely feel like one of them.

C. [Ezekiel 37:1-23](#) (ESV) gives us a vision and then a simple but profound illustration with sticks...

1) **V1-2:** *1 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. (Picture an age old battlefield with unburied bones strewn everywhere.)*

2) **V3-7:** *3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." (Ezekiel has a sliver of faith.) 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. (And you wonder where Tolkien got some of his inspiration for Lord of the Rings!)*

4) **V8-11:** *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.' (Keep in mind that Judah is currently exiled in Babylon and the northern ten tribes were exiled into Assyria 150 years earlier. So the imagery fits.)*

5) **12-14:** *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." (Has this happened?) (Next up is a second prophecy, certainly akin to the first.)*

6) **V15-16:** *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.' (Ephraim represents the northern ten tribes long since dispersed into captivity. The leftover remnant intermarried with Gentiles.)*

7) **V17-23:** *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.*

D. Next up Jeremiah prophesies of a new covenant that will replace the old. [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) (ESV) says: *31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the*

LORD. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. **(Considering the scattering of the northern ten tribes a century and a half earlier and Judah captive in Babylon, these words might've seemed absurd. But the One King foretold by Ezekiel, who'd come through the lineage of King David and likewise from His eternal throne in heaven, would institute this new covenant by the shedding of His blood for the sins of Israel, Judah, and we Gentiles too!)**

E. As Jesus was about to ascend following His resurrection, Acts 1:6-8 (ESV) records: 6 So when they had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (i.e. Raise the bones; Join the sticks?!) **7** He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, **(the remnant of the ten)** and to the end of the earth." **("Uttermost parts of the earth."** Us! So how is the new covenant extended to us? How did we get included? How do those outside make their way inside? How does a wild olive branch get grafted in?)

F. Ephesians 2:1-22 (ESV) is just one of many passages that explains our inclusion. It begins with being called from death to life...

1) V1-3: 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **(We were lawbreakers, in rebellion to God, profaners of His name!)**

2) V4-10: 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--**6** and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

3) (Next our inclusion) V11-22: 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands **(Jews were the circumcision having had this old covenant rite performed shortly after birth.)--12** remember **(You Gentiles)** that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility **15** by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, **(Abolishing the divisive aspects of the law that separated Jews and Gentiles by removing the condemning power of the law because Jesus kept it in full.)** that He might create in Himself one new man **(Jews & Gentiles = Church)** in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in **one body** through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. **17** And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. **18** For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. **(If that doesn't make you feel like part of the Family of God, what will?! How many times have I shared passages on our adoption? The New Covenant makes us God's children!)**

G. You're Abraham's children by faith! Your hearts have been circumcised. The wild Gentile olive branch has been grafted in. The Law Giver became the Law Keeper who died for the lawbreakers, absorbing our punishment. The record of the Law Keeper (His righteousness) is now ours. The New Covenant instituted by His blood is for all who will believe, whether those near or far. Everyone who believes, even though he dies, yet shall he live. Our resurrection will either fulfill or exceed Ezekiel's and as God's sons & daughters we will bask in His eternal presence forever!

H. Romans 11:24-36 (ESV) is a good reminder for us lest we get the swell head:
24 For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. **25** Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **26** And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; **27** "and this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins." **28** As regards the

gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. **29** For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. **30** For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, **31** so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. **32** For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all. **33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! **34** "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?" **35** "Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?" **36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

I. Let me send you home with two Benedictions, words to ponder, words to own, words to cherish with all your hearts:

*** Hebrews 9:15 (ESV) speaks of the Mediator of this New Covenant: 15 Therefore He (Jesus) is the Mediator (Inaugurator, Judicator, Negotiator, Instigator, Peacemaker,) of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.**

*** John 5:25-29 (ESV) Go home with Jesus' promise of resurrection: 25 "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. 27 And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (Dem bones gonna rise again!)**

*** Close with Prayer...**

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Ezekiel 37:1-23 (ESV)

1 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, "Prophecy 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, "Prophecy 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." **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.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Acts 1:6-8 (ESV)

6 So when they had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Ephesians 2:1-22 (ESV)

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience--**3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--**6** and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. **11** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands--**12** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. **14** For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility **15** by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, **16** and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. **17** And He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. **18** For through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. **19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, **21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Hebrews 9:15 (ESV)

15 Therefore He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

John 5:25-29 (ESV)

25 “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. **26** For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself. **27** And He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. **28** Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear His voice **29** and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Bonus Stuff

What is the Covenant of Grace? - Daniel Hyde - Ligonier Ministries

<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-covenant-grace/>

The New Covenant and the New Covenant People - John Piper

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-new-covenant-and-the-new-covenant-people>

The Wondrous Covenant - Sermon by Charles H. Spurgeon
<https://www.spurgeongems.org/vols58-60/chs3326.pdf>

Hebrews 9:11-15 (ESV)

11 But when Christ appeared as a High Priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) **12** He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. **13** For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, **14** how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. **15** Therefore He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 10:1-18 (ESV)

1 For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. **2** Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? **3** But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. **4** For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, He said, *"Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body have You prepared for Me; 6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings You have taken no pleasure. 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God, as it is written of Me in the scroll of the book.'" 8* When He said above, *"You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings"* (these are offered according to the law), **9** then He added, *"Behold, I have come to do Your will."* He does away with the first in order to establish the second. **10** And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. **11** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, **13** waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. **14** For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. **15** And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, **16** *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put My laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," 17* then He adds, *"I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."* **18** Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (cf Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Romans 11:1-36 (ESV)

1 I ask, then, has God rejected His people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **2** God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? **3** *"Lord, they have killed Your prophets, they have demolished Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."* **4** But what is God's reply to him? *"I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."* **5** So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. **6** But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. **7** What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, **8** as it is written, *"God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."* **9** And David says, *"Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; 10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."* **11** So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather, through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. **12** Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! **13** Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry **14** in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. **15** For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **16** If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. **17** But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, **18** do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. **19** Then you will say, *"Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."* **20** That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. **21** For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. **22** Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in His kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. **23** And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. **24** For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will

these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. **25** Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. **26** And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "*The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will banish ungodliness from Jacob*"; **27** "*and this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins.*" **28** As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. **29** For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. **30** For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, **31** so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. **32** For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all. **33** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! **34** "*For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor?*" **35** "*Or who has given a gift to Him that He might be repaid?*" **36** For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

Quote by John Owen

"Secondly, the proper counsel and intention of God in sending His Son into the world to die was, that thereby He might confirm and ratify the new covenant to His elect, and purchase for them all the good things which are contained in the tenure of that covenant, - to wit, grace and glory; that by His death He might bring many (yet some certain) children to glory, obtaining for them that were given unto Him by His Father (that is, His whole church) reconciliation with God, remission of sins, faith, righteousness, sanctification, and life eternal."

- John Owen, *The Death of Christ*.

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

"People have their treasures, their pearls, their jewels, their rubies, their diamonds—and these are their peculiar stones. Now, all in the covenant of grace are the peculiar stones of God. He values them above all things else! In fact, He keeps the world spinning for them! The world is but a scaffold for the church. He will send creation packing when once it has done with His saints. Yes, sun, moon and stars shall pass away like worn-out rags when once He has gathered together His own elect and enfolded them forever within the safety of the walls of heaven!"

- C.H. Spurgeon, Sermon titled, "*The Wondrous Covenant*." October 31, 1912.

Excerpt by John Piper

So the new covenant is God's pledge to forgive the sins of His people and to put His laws within us and to write them on our hearts, and to be our God and to make us His people.

The new covenant is not a mere possibility; it is a new creation. It is something not merely that God proposes, but something that He accomplishes. It is the creation of a people for God who will not forsake Him. They will be His people and He will be their God for ever. The certainty of it lies not in them, but in God's covenant commitment: He says that He will forgive their sins and remember their iniquity no more. And He says that He will write his laws this time not just on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the heart.

So the two problems that separate people from God are solved in the new covenant.

1) The first is the problem of guilt because of sin (which Jesus solves by shedding His blood to lift our guilt by taking it on Himself—"I will forgive their iniquity"—"*this cup is the new covenant in My blood*").

2) The other problem is rebellion—our tendency to run away from God and follow the destructive suggestions of the world (which God solves by writing His law on our hearts so that it is not just His will imposed from outside, but it is His will experienced from the inside as our own will).

- John Piper, "*The New Covenant and the New Covenant People*," February 7, 1993.

Resurrected and Reunified

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"*You shall know that I am the LORD, when I ... raise you from your graves, O my people. 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*" (vv. 13–14). - Ezekiel 37

From the opening chapters of Genesis, a close connection is made between life and dwelling before God in the land of His blessed presence. Adam and Eve enjoyed intimacy with the Lord and life before Him while they lived in Eden. But when they broke the covenant, they were cast out of God's presence and subjected to death (Gen. 1–3). Israel's

punishment for breaking the covenant was exile—being kicked out of the Promised Land where the Lord granted life to His people and sent among the Gentiles to experience slavery, suffering, and death ([Deut. 28:64–68](#)). Paul spoke of life outside of the “covenants of promise” as life “having no hope and without God in the world” ([Eph. 2:12](#)).

Consequently, the ancient Jews who lived in Babylon understood themselves to be essentially dead. This notion of death in exile forms the backdrop against which we can better understand today’s passage. God takes Ezekiel out to a valley and shows the prophet a mass of exposed bones ([Ezek. 37:1–2](#)). Ancient Near Eastern peoples viewed unburied human bodies with particular horror, so the sense conveyed by the image is the old covenant people of God as dead and unclean in their sin. Moreover, the fact that Ezekiel sees only bones conveys the fact that the nation is really and truly dead. It is not going to be able to bring itself back to life. These are not bodies that have only been lying there a few minutes, and so it is possible that they might not really be dead. No, these bodies have been there a long time and have almost fully decomposed. Only God can help them.

The Lord promises that He will bring these bodies—the nation of Israel—back to life by His sovereign act (vv. 3–6). Moreover, He says the proclamation of His Word will accomplish their resurrection. God has Ezekiel prophesy over the bones, and at that point they are restored to life and given the Holy Spirit (vv. 7–14). The Lord is saying that He will restore His people through the foolishness of preaching. As part of this restoration, Israel and Judah will be reunited as one nation in God’s hand under David, namely, the Messiah (vv. 15–28).

Christ Jesus fulfills the teaching of today’s passage. Resurrection was central to His ministry ([John 11:1–44](#); [20:1–18](#)). He began His work in Galilee, the former northern kingdom of Israel, gathering in the descendants of that kingdom along with the descendants of Judah in Judea ([Matt. 4:12–17](#)). Finally, He decrees that the proclamation of the Apostolic gospel is the means of bringing dead sinners back to life ([Matt. 28:18–20](#); [1 Cor. 1:21](#)).

Coram Deo

Under the fuller revelation of the new covenant, we see that the resurrection of Israel finds its fullest realization in the resurrection of the saints in the new heaven and the new earth. As Christians, we are the Israel of God, the one community of believers united by faith in Jesus Christ that is made up of believing Jew and believing Gentile alike. Our resurrection and inheritance of the restored creation—through the resurrection of Christ—fulfills Ezekiel.

Passages for Further Study:

[Luke 20:27–40](#)

[Romans 6:5](#)