

# Earth's Ultimate Cleansing – God's Kingdom Restored to Divine Righteousness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, now we come to our Bible reading, and today we are back in the book of Ezekiel, looking at chapter 36, reading from verse 16 through to the end of the chapter.

As you'll know, Willie Philip has been preaching through this major prophet in the Old Testament, and we are back here today, reading from chapter 36. So beginning from verse 16.

And yet they had to go out of his land.

But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. Therefore, say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God.

It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

[ 1 : 55 ] And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness.

And from all your idols, I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. And you shall be my people. And I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleanness.

[ 3 : 09 ] And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. I will make the fruit of the trees and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good. And you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations.

It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord God. Let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

Thus says the Lord God, On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited and the waste places shall be rebuilt.

And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. And they will say, This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden.

[ 4 : 13 ] And the waste and desolate and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited. Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the Lord.

I have rebuilt the ruined places and replanted that which was desolate. I am the Lord. I have spoken and I will do it.

Thus says the Lord God, This also I will let the house of Israel ask me to do for them, to increase their people like a flock, like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed feasts.

So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of people. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

Amen. Amen. This is God's word. And may he bless it to us this morning. Well, do turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 36.

[ 5 : 20 ] And the passage that Stephen read for us. The second half of the chapter. We've seen how Ezekiel's message of hope for his generation of beleaguered exiles in Babylon, following them, following them, coming to terms with the horror of God's judgment on their land, on their holy city, even on God's holy temple itself.

That that hope that Ezekiel laid before them was not just the immediate hope of a return to their earthly home in the land of Israel, but it was something far more.

He lifted their eyes to see something ultimate. God's ultimate promise of all of his covenant oaths sworn right through history, right to the very beginning, way back before his covenant with David, before even his covenant with and through Moses, right back to Abraham, through whose siege, remember, he promised blessing would come not just to his natural people, but to every family of the earth.

And in fact, the language that God uses through Ezekiel in these chapters is of restoration on a cosmic scale, reversing the curse on all mankind, on all creation.

Because that was the ruinous result of man's rebellion right back at the very beginning. In chapter 34, do you remember, we saw that this restoration is described as radical.

[ 6 : 53 ] It's described as far reaching. With all mere human rule, the shepherds, the kings of a human nature put away.

And at last, God's rule, divine rule instituted on earth through his servant David, he calls him, who would be forever. And it's a picture that nothing less than the ultimate, the ultimate coronation of earth king.

And only that can bring about what we saw last time in chapter 35, in the first half of chapter 36, which was the ultimate comfort of the bringing again of God's divine rest.

All the enemies of God and his people, represented by Edom's perpetual enmity, defeated, judged, and a return instead to Edenic rest.

If you look again at verses 10 to 12 of chapter 36, they recall, don't they, the language of Genesis 2, a world unspoiled by human sin, where man and beast are fruitful, where they multiply everywhere on the earth.

[ 7 : 57 ] And the superlatives of that language there, they transcend anything that is merely historical. It points beyond. It points to ultimate realities, to darkness defeated, to Eden restored.

In that language, that perspective continues throughout the rest of chapter 36. Look down to the end, to verse 35, the land that was desolate, and the prophet now foresees it becoming like the Garden of Eden.

And notice that it means the absence of enemies, all misery. Not just that, but the positive restoration of all things.

Everything that was waste, everything that was desolate, everything that was ruined, he now says, is inhabited and is filled. Everything is made right.

Everything is restored to divine righteousness. That God's salvation in the scriptures is often used as a synonym for righteousness.

[ 8 : 59 ] We read it in Psalm 98 at the beginning. The Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. God's salvation is not just a negative, a removal of sin and guilt and shame and all of these things, but it's a great positive.

It's a restoration to righteousness. All things made right. And Ezekiel and his people knew that. They had heard the prophet Jeremiah before him speaking about God's salvation in exactly these terms.

An internal covenant of peace ushered in by the offspring of David, a kingdom that will be called by the name of the Lord, our righteousness. A hundred years before that, Isaiah had promised the new exodus after the horrors of the exile, and it would be the beginning, he says, of God ushering in a whole new creation.

It's too small a thing for my servant to merely restore Israel, says the Lord. My salvation through him will reach the ends of the earth, and all flesh will know that I am the Lord, your Savior.

What's that salvation that they will know? Well, it's nothing less than God putting everything right in his world. My righteousness draws near, he says.

[ 10 : 19 ] My salvation has gone out. When he comforts Zion, the wilderness will become like Eden, the desert, like the garden of the Lord. My righteousness will be forever, and will never be dismayed.

You can read all of that in Isaiah chapter 51, and following, and so on. But you see, God's salvation means righteousness forever, rightness forever.

God will put all things right forever, everywhere. In Isaiah chapter 52, it says that the return of the Lord to Zion, to his people Israel, it will mean the ends of the earth, will see the salvation of our God.

And he goes on to speak about what that means, and how it comes about, through the servant of God, who at last will make atonement for his people's sins. And through him, many will be counted righteous.

And so, says Isaiah, he, the servant of the Lord, will sprinkle many nations, bringing cleansing, from everything that defiles, and bringing restoration, of that divine, rightness.

[ 11 : 36 ] And so he says, he will gather, all the outcasts of Israel, and I will gather yet others, besides those, that are already gathered. And you know, Isaiah's prophecy ends, doesn't it?

With those wonderful pictures, of a holy renewed earth, a new creation, a new heavens, and a new earth. What the apostle Peter, was later to call, the home of, righteousness.

Where everything is right. And that is what Ezekiel, is speaking about here, in this second half of chapter 36. What it means, and how it comes about. And he is speaking about a real world, about his own generation, in history, and a real return for them, a real fulfillment, first in their experience, to their land.

Yes, of course he is. But, even more importantly, God is lifting his people's eyes, to what is ultimate. Lifting our eyes, to something far more important.

And that is the restoration, of his rightness, to his whole kingdom, to this whole world. He's showing us the destiny, of a new Eden, the home of righteousness.

[ 12 : 45 ] Where God, and his people, will be restored to, through earth's, ultimate cleansing. Let's try and get to grips, with Ezekiel's words here.

Under three sections really, where he speaks about, an absolute requirement, and then an astonishing regeneration, and it's abundant result. Look at verses 16 to 23 first.

It tells us about, an absolute requirement. And that is that, God's name, will be restored, to honor.

Verse 23 sums it up. I will vindicate, the holiness, of my great name.

God's name, have been dreadfully dishonored, and defiled, by the defilement of his land. Look at verse 17. His people's ways, and his deeds, their attitudes, that gave way to their actions, were as, well as one translates it, puts it, as filthy, as a bloody rag.

Now notice, verse 17 is not, hate speech, against people with a womb, as some people might say today. Goodness. No, if you go back to Leviticus chapter 15, you'll see that God speaks about, ritual uncleanness, both of males, and of females.

[ 14 : 03 ] But, the metaphor throughout Ezekiel, has been of God's people Israel, as a wayward wife, whoring, against her husband. And that's why, the female metaphor is used here.

It's not, ritual uncleanness, that God is speaking about though, it's moral filth. Look at verse 18. Bloodshed, and idolatry.

Violence, against human beings, and violation, of the worship, of God. And those, two things, are the most serious things ever, in the law of Moses.

The two things, that always required a capital punishment, which most other things never did. It's the same double charge, you can read about it, in that great Psalm 106, that charts Israel's disobedience, through the years.

And in verses 34 to 42 there, he talks here, about the bloodshed, and elaborates, that the bloodshed, was especially against children. They sacrificed, their sons and daughters, to the demons.

[ 15 : 03 ] They poured out, innocent blood, to the idols of Canaan. And God especially abhors, the abuse, of children, and infants, and the murder of infants, when it's for the economic gain, of society, or the state, to placate, evil ideologies, evil, idols.

That's a solemn warning still, isn't it, to our world, where abortion is so rampant, for convenience, and for economic gain. And for this verse 18, we're told, God poured out his wrath.

And those two verses, really sum up, don't they, the first 24 chapters, of Ezekiel, that we saw, were so grim. God's wrath, poured out on his people. He spent his fury, on them, we read.

And notice verse 19, his judgment, is perfectly just, in accordance with their ways, and their deeds. I judge them. And he promised, he would do that.

Of course, his people didn't believe it then, but now it's happened. Notice all the past tenses. I poured out, I scattered, I judged. And they can't deny, any longer the fact of it, or the pain of it. [16:19] But notice verse 20, God's righteous judgment, created, created, a further problem for God. His holy name, is profaned, among the nations, because of his people's plight.

Now the Gentile nations, roundabout, don't understand theology. So to them, the defeat of a nation, means, defeat of its gods. And so what they're saying is, well these are, the Lord's people, but they've been taken, out of his land.

Therefore, their God, Yahweh, is either powerless, to help them, or in fact, he's evil, and capricious, in allowing this calamity, to happen to them. And back in chapter 20, you might remember, we saw that, God had talked about that, being a threat, way back in Israel's history, way back when they were in Egypt.

And he said, he would have, poured out his wrath, on them then, but, for the reputation, of his name, among the Egyptians. It was what worried Moses, do you remember, in the golden calf episode, in Exodus chapter 32.

He said to God, if you destroy the Israelites now, the Egyptians will say, that you're an evil God, you just brought them out here, into the desert, to destroy them. And later on, when they rebelled, against God's command, to go into the land, at Kadesh Barnea, Moses said, well if you judge your people, if you abandon them, the Egyptians, will just say, that you're weak, and you were powerless, to help your people.

[17:42] And that's still, what people say, isn't it, about God today, when something terrible, happens in the world. You get people, who don't even believe in God, criticizing God, and say, well why didn't God, do something to stop this?

God must be wicked, if he exists at all. Or people look at, what they seem to think, is the decline of God's church, as they look around it. Mainline and established denominations, today falling apart. And they say, well obviously, if there was a God, he didn't have any power, to keep his church, it's falling apart. And that's how it looked, to the world then you see. God looked weak, or he looked wicked, to the world.

His reputation, in the world was at stake, because, he'd had to judge his people. And it was a reversal, of the true role of Israel.

God called Israel, to be a kingdom of priests, to be a holy nation. To bring the praise, of his name, to all the nations. But now, his name is profaned, among the nations, because of them.

[18:47] Witness to God, has become, anti-witness. And that's a terrible thing, isn't it? A terrible thing still. When God's church, becomes an anti-witness, when it, it condones lies, when it condones, unholiness, instead of being a pillar, and buttress of truth, to our world.

But verse 21, you see, tells us that, God cares deeply, for his holy name, and his reputation, even if his people don't. And that word, concern, it means, it means deep compassion, pain, that the name, above every other name, is being dragged, through the gutters, in Babylon, of all places.

The enemy stronghold. God's, own utter righteousness, in judging his people's sin, even his own people's sin.

It actually results, in dishonor, for his name, in the world. And people think he's weak, or he's wicked, or both. Because, of course, they have no understanding, of real righteousness, and real justice.

Because people judge God, by the ways of their own, false idols. They judge God, by, man's actions, by their own, actions, and by what their own, human hearts would do.

[20:10] People tend to think of God, don't they, as just a great big version, of ourselves. And that's very telling, isn't it? Because if you think, God is a monster, then actually, you're unconsciously, revealing rather a lot, about the reality, of your own heart and mind.

But God cares deeply, about his own name. And he will act, not notice, not primarily, for his people's sake, and their plight. But, look at verse 22, for the sake, of his holy name.

To vindicate it, verse 23, so that the world, so that the nations, will know, that he is, the Lord, a holy God. For God, to be concerned, with his own glory, is the rightest thing, in the universe.

the fact that we, think it's strange, well, that's just a measure, of how utterly, man-centered, we are in our thinking. I will vindicate, the holiness, of my great name.

And therein, you see, lies his people's, great hope. Because God, will be true to himself, even if, God's people, are not true to him. His people's hope, lies not, in the feebleness, of an arm of flesh,

but rather, in the all-prevailing might, of omnipotence.

[ 21 : 31 ] As the 19th century, exposer, Patrick Fairbairn, puts it. He goes on, says this, mortifying as this is, to human pride, it yet provides, the only solid, and abiding peace, for those who have come, to rightly know, the evil of their sin.

All hope, lies in the large measures, of God's own free, and spontaneous, beneficence. And the creature, thus exchanges, the vanity, of a human ground, for the infinite, sufficiency, of a divine one. And that is, where there is, real hope, you see, for messed up sinners. Because, look at two vital words, there in verse 23, can you see them? Through, you.

The nations, will know, that I am the Lord, when through you, I vindicate my holiness, before their eyes. It's through, what God is going to do, for his people, and in his people, that he will restore, the reputation, of his name in the world.

Vindicating his holiness. And bringing the full revelation, of his true nature, to the world. So that they will know, that he is the Lord, who redeems, and who restores.

[ 22 : 53 ] Now how will that be? What would God do, to bring about, this great vindication? Well, it was his people's hearts, that were the root, of all the evil, that engulfed them.

And all the evil, that flowed out from them, to others. So that, must be, where this great vindication, and restoration, is going to be seen. As one writer puts it, that's how God acts.

He brings glory, to his name, in manifesting his mercy, towards those, who have forfeited, the right to mercy. Indeed he says, the transforming work, of the spirit, in God's people, is the most potent, evangelistic appeal, in the world.

And that's why, what follows you see, in verses 24 to 32, speak, of an astonishing, regeneration.

God's name, will be restored, to honor in the world, as God's people, are restored, in holiness.

Through you, I will vindicate, my holiness, before their eyes. And these verses, describe, don't they, an astonishing change, in God's people, reversing, the sheer degradation, of their disgrace.

[ 24 : 13 ] So that once again, they will display, to the world, the dignity, of deity. But notice, what happens, to them, and in them, is all, God's doing.

Do you see verse 24? I will take you. Verse 25, I will sprinkle you. I will cleanse you. And on and on it goes. It's God, the sovereign Lord, who restores, his divine righteousness.

It's his, his sovereign grace, over sin abounding, as we sang. His sovereign grace, towards utterly helpless humanity, reversing, everything, that is natural, in his people.

And it's a wonderfully, graphic description here, of what God's salvation, is, and does. First of all, verse 24, we're told God will reverse, the distancing, that sin brings, between God, and his people. Because a holy God, can't have fellowship, with sin. I will take you, from the nations, where they've been scattered, away from God's kingdom, and I will gather you, and bring you, into your land, your own land, where you belong.

[ 25 : 30 ] It said that of the land itself, back in verse 8, God's people, will come home, to their land. The dreadful rupture, of relationship, between God, and his people, that is the heart, of the curse of sin.

That's going to be restored. Sin scatters, all the way back, to the very first banishment, of man from Eden, Genesis 3, driven out of the garden.

And again, do you remember, in Babel, mankind is scattered, over the face of the earth, because of their, hubristic, defiance against God. It's the very nature, of sin, and it scatters, and distances.

But God's grace, gathers, and brings back home. But you see, the terrible betrayal, that caused that rupture, can't just be overlooked.

Because there's filth, there's defilement, that marks God's land, and has damaged God's name.

And so secondly, you see, verse 25, sins, dirt, and defilement, must be cleansed.

[ 26 : 34 ] And again, God himself, will do that. I, will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean, from all your uncleannesses, from all your idols. I, will cleanse you.

Now that image of cleansing, is one that comes from the, the priestly rituals, that we'll be very, very familiar, to Ezekiel, with his background as a priest. You can read about it, in Numbers chapter 19.

The water was, sprinkled on a person, with a hyssop branch. And they were considered, to have been bathed, to have been washed, in that cleansing water. And that was because, the water was mixed, with the ashes, of a sacrificial animal.

So the blood of the sacrifice, you see, was the sin offering, and that was what was represented, by the sprinkling of the water. And symbolically, then that united, the person who was washed, with the

sacrifice, and it's death.

And that's why, of course, the apostle Paul, gets his language, about Christians, being baptized, into the death, of Jesus. And that's what, the sprinkling of Christian baptism, represents.

[ 27 : 43 ] We're baptized, into his death. And it's a powerful symbolism, you see, because, because, sin is not just, morally wrong, it's filthy, it's dirty, it makes us defiled, it makes us offensive, to smell, and to sight.

And so, there has to be, a real cleansing, there has to be, a water, that has a purifying power, that comes, only from, the sacrifice, that is slain, for the purging, of that sin.

One that's appointed, directly, by God himself. And only that, as David knew, in his great psalm of penitence, Psalm 51, only that, will blot out, my transgressions.

You must wash me, thoroughly, from my iniquity, cleanse me, from my sin, purge me, with hyssop, and I shall be clean. And sin's dirt, must be cleansed, because, we cannot come, into God's home, into God's dwelling place, stinking, and filthy.

Once many years ago, when I was a much younger man, my early years here, there was a group of folk, went out, and had a Saturday afternoon, paintballing.

[ 28 : 58 ] And, we did it, in this really filthy field, out past Glasgow airport, somewhere. I think there was one or two folk here, actually was, were there, and would remember it. But we got absolutely filthy. And I remember, when I came back, I was covered, from head to foot, in mud, and it stank.

And Rebecca, wouldn't even let me, over the threshold, of the house. I had to go around, to the back garden, and be hosed down, and take all my clothes off, before she would even, let me in, to the back door, and the utility room.

Well, how much more, must the filth, and the stench of sin, be utterly purged, utterly washed, before we can even, come across the threshold, of God's house, and his home.

But God says, that I will do. I will cleanse you, of all your uncleanness. And not only that, you see, look at verses 26, and 27.

Sin's defiance, and sin's disobedience, will be transformed. God will put a new heart, and spirit in his people. Our heart, and spirit, is our human will, our affections.

[ 30 : 05 ] That's where the, the real problem, of our human nature is. Jesus said, remember, it's from within, the heart of man, that all manner, of evil emanates. So it's the heart, and the spirit, that has to be transformed, if people are going, to become holy.

Transformed, from hard, and stony hearts, into soft hearts. From hearts of flint, which are against God, to hearts of flesh, which are receptive, to his touch. And only God, can work that transformation.

But he promises, verse 27, I will do it. I will put my spirit in you, and cause you, to walk, in my statutes, and obey my rules. It was God's command, always, to his people, that they must obey him, as the covenant Lord.

But you see, God, always promised, to cause, what he commands. God's grace, always gives, what God's law requires. Way back in, in Deuteronomy, chapter 30, you can read, of Moses, foretelling, of the day, when after exile, God's people, would return to him.

When they obey his voice, in all he commands. When they turn to the Lord, with all their heart, and soul. That's God's command. And yet, even there, in the midst of his promises, he says, God himself, will circumcise their hearts, so that they will love the Lord, with all their heart, and soul, that they might live.

[ 31 : 32 ] See, only God, can change the human heart. Because the human heart, and the human spirit, is so defiant, by nature. Only a miracle, can change it.

And as Chris Wright, says so rightly, the gospel, is already breaking through, such texts, in the law of Moses, as it is here, in Ezekiel's prophecy. The apostle Paul, of course, expounds the same truth, much more fully, doesn't he, in Romans chapter 8, where he explains, how it is, that the spirit of life, as he calls God's spirit, will set us free, from the condemnation, of the law, and our disobedience, to God's commands, and set us free, for, the consummation, of the Lord's purpose, that God's commands, will command, and control, our lives, from within, from renewed hearts, so that he says, the righteous requirement, of the law, might be fulfilled, in us, who walk according, to the spirit.

God, God, can send, his spirit, into the hearts, of his people, to bring about, real transformation, from within, but only because, he will one day, send his son, into the world, for sins.

That doesn't mean, that Ezekiel's words, here for his people, are only, for the ultimate future, he wasn't, promising, a real spiritual change, that was impossible, for them, of course not, any more than, David, didn't believe, that there was, real spiritual change, possible in his heart, by God's spirit, of course not, otherwise no one, in the Old Testament era, would ever have found salvation, the spirit of God, in the lives of believers, wasn't lacking, in the Old Testament, but, it did depend, on God's promise, still to be fulfilled, the promise of the Messiah, the servant David, who would come, because it would only be then, do you remember, as the prophet Zechariah, spoke about, many years after, the return of the people, to the land, only then, when a fountain, of cleansing, would at last, be opened from Jerusalem, and the sprinkling, that will truly cleanse, the heart from sin, and renew the heart forever, in new birth, by the spirit, would be secured, through the death of the son, and indeed, that is exactly, what happened, at last, fulfilling the scripture, we saw that on Good Fridays, we looked at John chapter 19, where John is so insistent, you remember, that what flowed, immediately, from the dead body, of the Lord Jesus Christ, was water, and blood, the blood, of the sacrifice, that makes, the sprinkled water, truly cleansing, but you see, because God's covenant, would never fail, because it would be accomplished,

God could promise, and perform, and he did, to overcome, sin's disobedience, in his people, if they trusted him, and so, if you look at verses 29, and 30, he tells them, that sin's disgrace, would be utterly reversed, never again, will you suffer, the disgrace, of famine, among the nations, famine, was one of the, cardinal signs, of covenant curse, the antithesis, of God's, blessings for obedience, you can read it all, in Deuteronomy chapter 28, think of Elijah's time, when God said, there would be no rain, on the land, as a response, to Ahab's sin, and all the Baal worship, and so there was famine, but, if then, their uncircumcised heart, is humbled, and they turn to the Lord, he will remember, the land, that was the promise, in Leviticus chapter 26, which we've seen already, underlies so much, of Ezekiel's prophecy, and that's what God promises here, to do these things, it's a sovereign certainty, it is God's promise, he will do it, but notice, it's not unconditional, there must be repentance, and indeed, true grace, always, works, true repentance, and that's what verses 31, and 32 here, demonstrates so clearly, because, sin's, real depth, will be realized, and will be remembered, by God's people, then you will remember, your evil ways, you will loathe yourselves, verse 32, be ashamed, and confounded, for your ways, they're no longer, being ashamed, among the nations, and their sin, will no longer, be remembered, by God, be totally cleansed, but notice, it is to be remembered, by them, and there's a godly grief, over sin, isn't there, as Paul tells, the church in Corinth, not leading to death, but leading to life, leading to both shame, and rejoicing, because we realize, how much, we have been saved from, indeed, the more, we really understand,

[ 36 : 41 ] God's grace, the more, we will really realize, the depth of our sin, won't we, John Newton was quite right, in his hymn, Amazing Grace, it was grace, that taught my heart, to fear, and grace, those fears relieved, it's a mark, of real faith, it's a mark, of real conversion, that we also, come to care, for God's glory, and therefore, we also understand, and mourn, our own sinfulness, in a way, that we didn't beforehand, there's a real grace, in a proper shame, for sin, remembering our sin, isn't harmful to us, that's what our culture, today wants to tell us, but it's not, it is healing for us, true health, and healing, comes not from, pretending away, our iniquity, not from, repressing sin, or by promoting sin, and saying, oh it's just our identity, it's to be rejoiced in, no, true health, and true healing, comes from the reality, of the purging of sin, for God's own name's sake, and when we realize, and when we remember, just how deeply, offensive, to God's name, and just how deep,

God's concern is, for the honor of his name, it's then you see, that we realize, how utterly certain, we can be, of our salvation, because God, is determined, to deal, with the blot on his name, that our sin is, it's not for your sake, that I will act, says the Lord, verse 32, but it is, as he said back, in verse 23, to vindicate his holiness, that he will do, all of this, for you, to vindicate himself, through his people's salvation, not, not for your sake, that might seem to be, a destructive thing for us, a crushing thing for us, but no, that is what gives us, absolute assurance, and comfort, and absolutely certain hope, because none of it, depends on us, do you see, it all depends, on almighty God, and he is determined, utterly committed, to make all things right, for the sake of his name, and for his reputation, and for that of his family, of his household,

I can do it, I can do it, every parent's heard that many times, haven't they, from their young children, give it to me, I can do it, I can remember saying it myself, maybe a young child, has had a new Christmas present, and they are taking it out of the box, and starting to put it all together, and they

pull it away from you, and you try to help them, let me help you, no I can do it, but then maybe hours later, it is near bedtime, and still all the pieces, are all over the floor, in a complete mess, and little Johnny is sitting, in the middle of it all, on the floor, in a flood of tears, and he is saying, I need it made for tomorrow, because my friends, are coming to play with it, and we won't be able to, and they will all hate me, and little Johnny, is sobbing uncontrollably, in his mother's arms, I can't do it, I can't do it, and he goes off to bed, absolutely miserable, but then when mum, goes in a little later, to kiss little Johnny, good night, she sees he is not crying anymore, in fact he is, drifting off to sleep, with a smile on his face, are you feeling better, says mum, yes says Johnny, he throws his arms, around his mother, everything is going to be alright, daddy is going to build my toy, and I know he can do it, because daddy can do anything, and he promised, and he will do it, he will make it right, see that's blessed assurance, isn't it, not in ourselves, but in a father, who must make all things right, for the sake of his name, for the sake of his reputation, as the God who is, utterly righteous, as the God who does, all things right, always, through you,

I will vindicate, my holiness, before their eyes, and on that day, you see, when he brings, that cleansing, that astonishing regeneration, where my God's people are, renewed, in holiness, then verses, 33 to the end here, describe, the abundant result, the abundant result, of God's kingdom, recreated, in wholeness, and this final section, describes, doesn't it, a land abundantly restored, and abundantly, replete, the prophet Jeremiah, is repeating refrain, of the Lord, was that he would, pluck up, and break down, and destroy a nation, or a kingdom, for its evil, but, if it turned from its evil, he will also build, and plant, once again, and that's what we see here, verses 33 to 36, describe, a land, absolutely restored, verse 38, re-inhabited, rebuilt, verse 33, sorry, and verse 34, replanted, the land is chilled, verse 35, cities, fortified, and inhabited, that is safe, from all enemies, a haven of rest, a haven of peace, a land, once desolate, but now again, fit for the divine, like, the garden, of Eden, verse 35, the home of righteousness, and all will know, that it is God, who has done, all this recreation, verse 36, the nations will know, that I have rebuilt,

I have replanted, I will, do it, and not only, is God's kingdom, absolutely restored, it is abundantly replete, with people, verse 37, God's people, increased, not diminished, verse 38, like the throngs, in Jerusalem, during the feast, huge crowds, always, even the waste cities, he says, will be filled, with flocks, of people, literally, flocks, of Adams, filling, God's Eden, another allusion there, to the return, to the perfection, of God's dwelling place, on earth, God's original purpose, for human beings, to fill the earth, with his images, of glory, and notice verse 37, God will now hear, and answer his people's prayers, previously, we were told in Ezekiel, God would not listen, to his people, in fact, God banned, even Ezekiel, from interceding for them, on their behalf, but now, do you notice, their prayers, will be aligned, with God's purpose, to increase, vastly, his flock, his people, and he will answer, and he will do it, ask, and it shall be given to you, sounds very familiar, doesn't it, it's a wonderful picture, of the wholeness, restored, to God's land, and to his people, all things put to right, restored, to righteousness, and as one scholar says, it's a picture of humanity, fulfilling, all the potential, was there, in the first humans, in other words, what's viewed here, is nothing less, than new creation, a new creation, that will write large, across the universe, the power, and grace, and mercy, of Israel's sovereign God, for all, to recognize, and acknowledge, of course, there was, a fulfillment of this, in Israel's, immediate history, but never like this, never like this, you can read,

[ 44 : 58 ] Ezra, and Nehemiah, you can read, the prophets, Haggai, and Zechariah, and Malachi, and they, are speaking only, aren't they, of a pale shadow, of what's promised here, why so, well, for one thing, there was still, no true shepherd, no Messiah king, to usher in, this great new covenant, of peace, and because, Ezekiel was speaking here, clearly, of more, than just restoring, the land of Israel, to righteousness, but he is, talking about, restoring the whole earth, to Eden, Israel's exile, from the land, of Canaan, mirrors, man's exile, from Eden, and God's, just punishment, on sin, and the curse, of death, that he brought, that, profaned, God's own name, not just on the earth, but in the heavenly realms, God's whole purpose, for creation, of mankind, was being scorned, by angelic beings, in the heavenly realms, by Satan, and his fallen angels, the demonic spirits, and to them, it looked as though,

God was weak, and defeated, as though, he was unable, to display, his glory in man, as he had purpose, to do in creation, think of the devil's taunts, in the book of Job, for example, Job 1 and 2, that God wouldn't be able, to withstand the devil, in his battle, for the soul of Job, and so on, Bible seems to tell us, that even, God's own holy angels, seem unable, somehow to fathom, to fully

understand, what's going on, in God's world, if you read, Daniel for example, chapter 8, or Daniel chapter 12, you find angels, asking questions, how long, will God's sanctuary, go on being defiled, how long, will the shattering, of God's people, be, until it comes to an end, apostle Peter, tells us that, doesn't he, in first Peter, he says, that angels, are intently, trying to fathom, what it is, that God's plan, is doing, what it is, he was saying, when he spoke, through these prophets, of all, even the angels, in heaven, can't fully understand, why God is allowed, to happen on planet earth, what has happened, there's mystery, and misunderstanding, and there's malevolence, expressed to God, in the heavenly realms, because of, humanity's sin, and rebellion, and God must, vindicate his name, and he will do it, he says, through you, through his chosen, seed of promise, he'll do it, through the final, consummation, of all his covenant, promises, to Abraham, alluded to here, in verse 28, about being his God, and the God of his seed, forever, and through Moses, as alluded to in verse 27, where he says, his people would walk, in his statues, and would obey his law, and to David, as we've seen already, in chapter 34, and we'll see again next time, in chapter 37, none of these, things were plainly, completely fulfilled, in Israel's return, to the land, the temple was rebuilt, filled, but as Haggai said afterwards, everything you offer there, is unclean, the problem of sin, in the human heart, still remained,

Eden was not restored, ultimate cleansing, was still needed, and that fountain, to cleanse all sin, and uncleanness, that Zechariah spoke of, had still not been opened, because, as we saw, in John's gospel, at Easter time, Jesus, was not yet glorified, glorified, as the forever offering, for sin, so that through his blood, God's people, might at last, be sprinkled truly clean, from all their uncleannesses, from all their idolatry, and given a heart, pure, and in devotion, to God alone, but you see, we look back on that now, don't we, today, earth's ultimate cleansing, has been accomplished, through the blood of Jesus, which cleanses from all sin, the new creation, that Ezekiel promises here, has already begun, Paul declares, that when anyone is in Christ, there is, new creation, everything that was filthy, and dirty, and defiled by sin, he says, is now washed, made holy, in the name of the Lord,

Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of our God, and so we have, the wonderful, and the permanent assurance, of verse 37 here, that God's ear, is open to us, to our prayers, that we can draw near, to his throne of grace, that we are confident, that we will receive, all the mercy, and grace that we need, why, because, we have assurance, that our hearts, are sprinkled clean, from an evil conscience, that our bodies, are washed, with pure water, says Hebrews chapter 10, we've got something, even better, than the peace, and assurance, of little Johnny, going to bed, knowing his father's promise, will be fulfilled, we've woken up, on the next morning, and we've seen, it's already been done, and he has put, all things right, that we couldn't put right, we know, that Christ, the son of God, so loved his church, that he gave himself for her, making her holy, cleansing her, by the washing of water, with the word, the word of the gospel, which through the Holy Spirit, has been preached to us, and brought us to life, and here is the real wonder, here is the real miracle, God said to Ezekiel, through you, through his people, he will vindicate, his holiness, before the whole world, and Paul, Christ's apostle, in Ephesians chapter 3, verse 10, says yes, this, is the mystery, hidden, from the ages, in God, who created all things, that through, the church, through you, the manifold wisdom, of God, might now, be made known, not just, to the nations, of the world, but to the rulers, and the authorities, in the heavenly realms, God's holiness, is being vindicated, among the angelic hosts, faithful angels, and fallen angels alike, even now, through his church, here on earth, his whole plan, in creating this universe, is being vindicated now, through Christ's saving, of his bride, his church, and that was God's, eternal purpose, Paul says, even before creation, but it has now, been realized, in Jesus Christ, our Lord, through you,

[ 51 : 48 ] I vindicate, my holiness, before their eyes, that might be, very hard for us, to believe, because we don't yet, see or feel, that righteousness, absolutely restored, do we?

We don't see it, abundantly replete, and we still struggle, because although God, has put his spirit, within us, and has given us, a new nature, a new heart of flesh, so that we delight, in God's law, in our inner being, well with Paul, we still struggle, don't we?

Because we still live, in these bodies of death, we long for deliverance, who will deliver me? Says Paul, indeed Paul tells us, the whole creation, is waiting with, eager longing, for that day, the true revealing, of the sons of God, the great vindication, our vindication, and God's vindication, when the universe, will know, beyond all that, because it will see, the resurrection, of all God's people, and see all things, made right, forever, to the praise, of his glory, on that day, when the return, of our

Lord Jesus Christ, comes at last, we will see, the whole earth, recreated in wholeness, we'll see, the land that was desolate, become like, a garden of Eden, absolutely restored, abundantly replete, with multitudes, that no one can number, of people, praising his marvelous glory, as it is vindicated, in them, to the praise, of his glorious grace, on the day of his coming, how we need, his coming, but as we wait in hope,

Peter the apostle says, doesn't he, we're to speed his coming, how, living lives, of holiness, and godliness, waiting for, and hastening, the coming day, of God, we have his promise, it will come, Ezekiel's words here, shall be fulfilled, and we look, with even greater assurance, because we know, that new creation, has already begun, and we know, that he who has begun, a good work in us, will bring it to completion, in the day of Jesus Christ, so the call to us friends, is to be a people, who trust God's promise, and who ask God, to go on doing, what he promises to do here, in verse 37, to answer our prayers, to increase, his people like a flock, so that that new creation, will be filled, with flocks of people, innumerable, people cleansed, people transformed, people restored, people gathered home, to the father's house, to the home of righteousness,

I have spoken, says the Lord, and I will do it, I will do it, and how much more, do we have that assurance, in our risen savior, amen, let's pray together, help us, oh God of our salvation, for the glory of your name, deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake, how we thank you Lord, that our hope depends, not on us, but on you, and on the honor, of your name, and so may we live, to praise that name, and to proclaim that name, so as to show, its glory, your glory, to the world, even through us, amen.