

Ezekiel 36:16-38: Concurrent restoration of the land and filling by the Holy Spirit.
Amazingly, the process is actually initiated and in progress right now in Israel.

A. Background of Ezekiel 36:1-15: Message to the land of Israel over restoration.

The hope of restoration is particularly relevant for it is just after Jerusalem's fall. In v1-3 enemies are identified as speaking maliciously against it. They are called in v3 the "rest" or in Hebrew "sheerit" meaning "remnant" of the nations. In context, it must be referring to the surrounding nations who are not taken yet by Babylon. Their "good" reason for the desolation of Israel is actually their evil intent to possess their land. Therefore, God gives a series of prophetic assurances to the land and firstly it is in regards to these enemies (4-7). Note that from v4, it is evident that God is not just speaking about the mountains but with the valley and ravines, it is really the entire land of Israel. God is responding in jealousy (6), meaning that He feels for the land of His people and in wrath He will judge the surrounding nations to endure their own insults. This is already fulfilled, for Babylon finally invades and destroys them all, including Edom. God now promises restoration for the land (8-12). On the physical side, it will be immensely fruitful but for the inhabitants, God promises that His people the Jews will return. The invaders have desolated Israel but these waste places will be rebuilt and the Jews will inherit the land (12). Finally, in v13-15, He promises to restore the bad reputation of the land, which is to devour men, leading to a nation "bereaved of children". In Hebrew, this latter phrase is just one word "shakol" meaning to be barren. It means that the nation will get nothing from the land. When the Jews first enter Israel under Joshua, they are aptly rewarded. In fact, they become a nation and then a strong kingdom. It is the return from the Babylon exile in 538 BC that they end up getting less. They never developed into a strong nation and in 70 AD, they are destroyed again by Rome. The reputation of the land to bereave can certainly be applied to Israel's return from the Babylon exile. As this slander will be removed forever, v15 is a hint that the promises here are for a second return of the Jews in the future.

B. Explaining Ezekiel 16:16-38: Israel's concurrent restoration and spiritual revival.

God affirms that the reason for scattering them is their own sins of blood shedding and idolatries (16-19). Yet, the scattering has profaned God's name for it implies that His people are being neglected (20-23). God will act for His namesake but this is grace for it is not dependent on the righteousness of the Jews. The stages of restoration are clearly stated (24-32). They will first be re-gathered and only after this comes the cleansing (24-25). Having a new heart and His Spirit (26) is regeneration that is possible only through Christ. So after the return of the exiles, Christ the Messiah will come. If they will accept Him, perhaps all the prophecies here will be fulfilled. However, they crucify Him and the Jews are again scattered in 70 AD. Note in v33 that there will be a cleansing and it must be spiritual as depicted in v26-27. Then at the same time in v34-38 is the rebuilding of the desolated land and cities. It is happening now, for since 1948 Israel is reborn with the re-gathering of Jews. Only after this comes the spiritual revival, namely the rise of the Messianic Jews, concurrently with rebuilding of the land. They will grow and as God will not allow bereavement anymore (12), they will be victorious over all enemies, even the antichrist as God leads them by the two witnesses through the Tribulation (Rev. 11:3-6).

Linkage to Jer. 23:3-4 and Battle of Gog: It harmonizes with the fact that only after the regathering of Israel, will spiritual shepherds be raised to care for the Messianic Jews. The revival will get a special uplift in **Eze. 38-39** by Gog's demise before the Tribulation.