

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 16: Judgment on Edom; the Mountains of Israel Restored -- Ezekiel 35:1–36:38

Chapter 35 brings the LORD's word against Mount Seir, the land of Edom, the brother nation descended from Esau. Edom is condemned for a perpetual enmity toward Israel and for coveting her land in the day of her calamity. The LORD will make Mount Seir a desolation, repaying its hatred and its bloodthirstiness, that Edom too may know that He is the LORD.

Chapter 36 turns from the mountains of Edom to the mountains of Israel, which the enemy had claimed and reproached. The LORD speaks tenderly to His own land, promising that it will again be tilled and sown, that the people will return, the cities be rebuilt, and the ruins raised up, so that the mountains shoot forth their branches and yield their fruit to God's people.

Yet the LORD makes plain why He acts. It is not for Israel's sake, but for the sake of His holy name, which they profaned among the nations. They are not restored because they deserve it, for they defiled the land with their idols and their blood. God acts to vindicate His own holiness, a truth that guards against any thought of merit or of an unconditional, Calvinistic election.

At the heart of the chapter is the great new-covenant promise. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit. I will put my Spirit within you. This cleansing and inward renewal are fulfilled in the new covenant in Christ and His church, received through faith, repentance, and baptism into Christ, not in a future political restoration of national Israel.

Group Discussion: As a class, list the charges against Edom in chapter 35 and the way the LORD repays them. Then read 36:25–27 carefully and discuss what is promised, the clean water, the new heart, the new spirit, and the indwelling Spirit. Show from Acts 2:38, John 3:5, and Titus 3:5 how these promises are fulfilled in the new covenant in Christ and in the church, and discuss what for my name's sake guards against in our understanding of grace.

Personal Reflection: Search your heart for any settled enmity or covetousness like Edom's, any old grudge that has hardened into perpetual hostility. Then consider the promise of a new heart and a new spirit, and ask whether you have entered the new covenant in Christ through faith, repentance, and baptism, and whether you are walking in the newness of life His Spirit gives.

Read Ezekiel 35:1–36:38

Study Questions

1. What is the charge against Mount Seir in 35:1–9, and how does the perpetual enmity of Edom toward Israel reveal the seriousness of long-nursed hatred before God?

2. Where have you allowed an old grievance to harden into a settled, perpetual hostility, and what would it look like to lay it down?
3. Edom said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them (35:10), coveting the land even though the LORD was there. Why is such covetousness a sin against God Himself, and how does He answer it?
4. What do you find yourself coveting that belongs to another, and how does remembering that the LORD is present change the way you regard it?
5. The LORD speaks to the mountains of Israel with promises of return, rebuilding, and fruitfulness (36:8-12). What does this teach about God's faithfulness to restore and bless even after judgment?
6. When you have come through a season of ruin brought on by your own sin, how have you experienced or doubted God's willingness to restore you?
7. The LORD says plainly, It is not for your sake that I will act, but for the sake of my holy name (36:22, 32). Why does God stress that He acts for His name and not because Israel deserves it, and how does this guard against thinking we earn His favor?

8. How does it humble you and yet comfort you to know that God saves for the sake of His own name and not because of your worthiness?

9. The LORD promises, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit. I will put my Spirit within you (36:25–27). Show from Acts 2:38, John 3:5, and Titus 3:5 how this cleansing and new heart are fulfilled in the new covenant in Christ and the church, received through faith, repentance, and baptism into Christ. Explain why this is not a promise of a future political restoration of national Israel, and how the words for my name's sake guard against both a merit-based reading and a Calvinistic unconditional-election reading. What does it mean for you to receive the new heart and the indwelling Spirit today?

10. After studying these chapters, how should the promise of a new heart, a clean conscience, and the indwelling Spirit shape the way you live, repent, and walk before God each day?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Acts 2:38, repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit; John 3:5, born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom; Titus 3:5, saved by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit; Hebrews 10:22, hearts sprinkled clean and bodies washed with pure water; Romans 9:30–10:13, righteousness is by faith for Jew and Gentile, not by merit or fleshly descent

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