



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Matthew 14–28 Sermon Series
Supports Session 2: Real Devotion
Sermon Title: “A New Heart” (Ezekiel 36:22-32)

Connection to Session 2

In Session 2, Jesus dealt with the traditions of the religious leaders and their focus on ceremonial hand washing. This session shows how the leaders had placed the commands of man over the commands of God.

Ezekiel 36:22-32 addresses the reality of a changed heart rather than compliance to external rules. While the Lord did ask the people of Israel to obey His ways, the text is clear that God desired for them to do so from the heart. Since it is impossible for unredeemed sinners to please God from the heart, God must give His people a new heart to enable them to love Him. This famous passage clarifies the nature of regeneration and eliminates any dependency upon man-made rituals to please God.

Introduction/Opening

In the 1939 movie, “The Wizard of Oz,” the Tin Man believes he is unable to feel genuine love, so he wants the Wizard to give him a heart. Though the Wizard proves himself to be a fraud by the end of the movie, the desire to love and be loved is a part of the universal human experience.

In the Old Testament, God promised a day when He will give His people a new heart. This will not be an artificial heart like the Tin Man received, and neither will He leave the heart of stone that is unresponsive to the things of God. Through Christ, we receive hearts of flesh that are receptive to the Spirit of God

Outline

What’s At Stake (Ezekiel 36:22-23)

The Book of Ezekiel is written to the people of Israel who are in exile in Babylon. Ezekiel wrote to explain to the nation how their sin brought them into this situation, but also to remind the nation that the Lord will deliver them from Babylon and restore their fortunes as His chosen people.

What is clear in verses 22 and 32 is that God acts for His own name and His own glory. The Lord is a covenant-keeping God, and through His faithfulness, His glory is shown among all the nations. Ezekiel told the people that what was at stake in the exile was more than the personal fortunes of the Jewish people—it was God’s glory and His name. Israel’s sin had profaned God’s name, and the Lord must act.

God’s actions in restoring the nation were not just for Israel’s own benefit, but for all the nations to know that the Lord is the true and living God. In His dealings with Israel, He was showing how He will be faithful to address the sin problem of the entire human race. Zechariah 14:9 states, “On that day the LORD will become King over the whole earth—the LORD alone, and his name alone.”

What’s Going to Happen (Ezekiel 36:24-28)

The heart of this passage explains the nature of regeneration. God’s desire is not for external obedience, but obedience from the heart.

- **Verse 24: The Lord will gather His people.** Ultimately, salvation is of the Lord. In Ezekiel’s day, He is speaking of restoring the nation to the land. Ultimately, this prophecy points to God’s redemption of people from all nations.

- **Verse 25: The Lord will cleanse His people.** The religious leaders in Jesus’s day thought cleanliness was a matter of external religion. The gospel teaches that cleansing comes through His Spirit for the removal of sin (Titus 3:5). Ezekiel wanted the people to know God will cleanse them from all sin and idolatry. This is a miraculous work of the Lord!
- **Verse 26: The Lord will regenerate His people.** The Lord promised through the prophet that His people will have new hearts, full of the things of God! God makes us alive to Him through Christ.
- **Verse 27: The Lord will indwell His people.** God promised to not only cleanse and regenerate, but to live inside those who are saved through the Holy Spirit. Romans 8 is clear that every believer in Christ is filled with the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- **Verse 28: The Lord will know His people.** Before the ten Plagues, Moses promised the enslaved Hebrews that God desired to dwell among them (Exodus 6:7). Ezekiel reinforced this promise. Ultimately, this will be realized in full when Christ’s redeemed bride dwells with Him forever (Revelation 21:1-4).
- **Verse 29: The Lord will save His people.** This verse clarifies what God does in salvation. God doesn’t just save us from external sins, but rather the uncleanness of our hearts. Famine is associated with disobedience to God’s law. In that future day, all the people will be holy, and there will be no danger from famine because they will no longer sin against God.
- **Verse 30: The Lord will bless His people.** The promise of the fruit trees is tied to the blessings of obedience in the book of Deuteronomy. Revelation 22:1-3 gives a picture of the eternal state and the blessings we have in Christ. Heavenly blessings are promised to the believer in Christ.

When we are born again, we see God at work in salvation from start to finish.

What’s Changed (Ezekiel 36:31-32)

This passage concludes with a call to repentance. The nation will realize their sins are detestable to God and begin to hate their own wickedness. The nation should be repulsed by their sin, not just because it impacted them personally, but because they had defamed their God.

For us today, an awareness of our sin is a sign that God is at work. The “god of this age” has blinded unbelievers to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4). To truly see our sin and need for a Savior is a sign of God’s grace. Christians should have a growing awareness of their sin and also a growing awareness of the grace that comes through Christ.

Application Points:

- *Do not minimize sin.* Sin is about more than our personal wrongs; it is disobedience to a Holy God. Christians often minimize sin rather than repenting of it. Unbelievers must realize that their sin is an offense against God. It’s not merely about being a “good person” or a “bad person.”
- *Go to the only true remedy for sin.* This is good news! Unbelievers and believers can be forgiven of our sin when we repent and turn to Christ.
- *Reject unrepented sin.* Believers should be quick to repent and eager to forgive because they have been changed by God. Share the gospel with an unbeliever, and trust God to bring new life.

Conclusion

External actions will never change your heart. Our sin defames God’s name and dishonors Him among the nations. But when we believe in Jesus as our Savior, God gives us a new heart. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we see our sin as it truly is and run to Christ in repentance. Don’t just try to keep a list of external rules—turn to Christ who gives you a new heart.

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