



bb-TBC-26

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bb-TBC-26: I will do a new thing

▼ Introduction:

Last time we introduced the three prophets whose ministry spanned more than a hundred years and although they never met and probably knew little of each other's ministry their ministry is along the same lines. The language and the imagery is often different but their theme is one. They're all looking past the current judgement of something new. Isaiah is the earliest of these men to bring a message that people are not to think about the old ways in which God had worked in the past.

ISAIAH:

▼ c740-701 BC

▼ Isaiah 42:9 ASV

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and **new things** do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them. (Isaiah 42:9 ASV)

▼ Isaiah 43:18–19 ASV

Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a **new thing**; now shall it spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18–19 ASV)

▼ Isaiah 48:6 ASV

Thou hast heard it; behold all this; and ye, will ye not declare it? I have showed thee **new things** from this time, even hidden things, which thou hast not known. (Isaiah 48:6 ASV)

IN all these verses Isaiah is using the language of the Exodus to describe the future but is making it clear that what God is planning is not simply a repeat of that escape from captivity in Egypt. God, he says, is going to do a **new thing**.

And Isaiah uses another word to indicate that this is not a repair but a new creation.

▼ Isaiah 65:17–18 ASV

¶ For, behold, **I create** new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. (Isaiah 65:17–18 ASV)

We will see how Paul takes up this theme of a new creation and a new Jerusalem later.

JEREMIAH:

▼ c640–587 BC

Jeremiah, who comes 100 years later, is essentially saying the same thing but using a different vocabulary or shall we say a different palette?

▼ Jeremiah 31:31–32

¶ Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. (Jeremiah 31:31–32 ASV)

This is an especially important prophecy, and we shall return to it later, but in passing we should notice that it was addressed to both of the separate nations, the 'House of Israel' and to the 'House of Judah' and declares that God is going to make a new covenant. Using the same pattern of contrast we have just seen in Isaiah he says "not according to the covenant that I made with your fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt".

Isaiah's "new thing" was not to be compared to the "former days" and now Jeremiah says the "new covenant" is not to be compared to the old, Sinai Covenant.

EZEKIEL:

▼ c593–571 BC

When his turn to prophesy comes he also declares the same truths but uses yet another different vocabulary, another colour on the artist's palette;

▼ Ezekiel 36:26

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26 ASV)

He says much more than this but for the time being and at the risk of repetition we will just gather these key points together. The old ways, the old covenant and the old heart were all to be left behind and in their place there would be **a new thing, a new covenant and a new heart**

This is not an addition but a replacement. God declares he will 'take away' the stony heart and 'give' a heart of flesh. All three prophets predict judgement followed by something new that cannot be compared to what has gone before. Later, the writer to the Hebrews writes that God 'takes away the first that he may establish the second'.

The Recipients of the Blessings

▼ Context, context, context

Who were going to be the recipients of these blessings? At first glance it seems the answer is obvious, 'the house of Israel and 'the house of Judah'. After all, are they not the nations to whom Jeremiah addressed his prophecy? Yes, it's true, he needed to gain the attention of 'the house of Israel' now in captivity and 'the house of Judah' also now in captivity but when he has their attention he makes a significant statement.

and if we extend our quotation from Jeremiah we may see the apparent discrepancy;

▼ Jer 31:31-33

¶ Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that ***I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*** not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah.

But ***this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days***, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-33 ASV)

▼ *digging deeper, a puzzle.*

Question: Verse 31 tells us that God is going to make a New Covenant with both 'the house of Judah' and 'the house of Israel'. In other words these two ancient and separate nations. However, in verse 33 he describes the nature of the covenant that he is going to make with 'the house of Israel' and makes no mention of 'the house of Judah'. What has happened to 'the house of Judah' previously mentioned in verse 31.

Is this New Covenant with both or only one?

Answer: In the previous chapter (Chapter 30) God declares that he will bring both 'separate' nations back from captivity;

▼ Jeremiah 30:1–3

¶ The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah, the God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. For, lo, the days come, saith Jehovah, that *I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah*, saith Jehovah; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. (Jeremiah 30:1–3 ASV)

It will be helpful if we remind ourselves that God ordained and confirmed the separation between 'the house of Israel' and the 'house of Judah' during the reign of Rehoboam, the grandson of David. He 'rose up early' and sent his royal messengers, his prophets, to both kingdoms.

the Northern kingdom of Israel in the land known as Samaria had been stripped of its inhabitants, only a trickle of the Northern tribes had relocated in the Southern kingdom of Judah.

▼ Isaiah 17:6

Yet there shall be left therein gleanings, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost branches of a fruitful tree, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel. (Isaiah 17:6 ASV)

We shall find part of the answer in an almost forgotten miracle.

Ezekiel's Forgotten Miracle

▼ Ezekiel's prophecy includes a wonderful promise of a 'new heart'

▼ Ezekiel 36:22–32 cf. Ezek 11:17–20;18:31

¶ Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went.

And I will sanctify my great name, which hath been profaned among the nations, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

For I will take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.

And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep mine ordinances, and do them.

And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

And I will save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the grain, and will multiply it, and lay no famine upon you.

And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye may receive no more the reproach of famine among the nations.

Then shall ye remember your evil ways, and your doings that were not good; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.

¶ Nor for your sake do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

(Ezekiel 36:22–32 ASV)

...and Ezekiel 36 flows into Ezekiel 37...

▼ The Two Sticks

This record is found in Ezekiel 37 where we find two prophetic revelations;

▼ Ezekiel 37:1-14 The Resurrection of Israel and a return to the land of Israel

▼ Ezekiel 37:11 this prophecy is addressed to the house of Israel

Then he said unto 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 clean cut off. **Therefore prophesy, and say unto them**, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.

(Ezekiel 37:11-12 ASV)

There is no specific reference to the house of Judah in this prophecy

▼ Ezekiel 37:15-28 two revelations and two sticks

The prophet is instructed to take two sticks to enact a dynamic prophecy;

▼ Ezekiel 37:16

And thou, son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it,

For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions:

then take another stick, and write upon it,

For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

The first stick is inscribed with the words 'for Judah, and the children of Israel'. This is the **Southern** nation-state of Israel

The second stick is inscribed with the words 'for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions'.

The **Northern** Kingdom is not only described in the Bible as the house of Israel but also as 'Ephraim' and 'Joseph' and 'Rachel' and 'Samaria'. Its first king, Jeroboam I, was from the family tribe of Ephraim and Ephraim was its largest tribe or clan; Ephraim, in turn, was the son of Joseph and Joseph was the son of Rachel. It is also called Samaria after the name of its capital city. So Ezekiel has two sticks, two separate sticks, then he receives further instructions.

▼ Ezekiel 37:17-20

and ***join them for thee one to another into one stick, that they may become one in thy hand.***

And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these?

say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, **I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions;** and I will put them with it, even **with the stick of Judah,** and make them one stick, and **they shall be one in my hand.**

And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thy hand before their eyes. (Ezekiel 37:17–20 ASV)

▼ A miracle would take place. In the hand of Ezekiel, who is referred to as 'son of man' more than 30 times in this book, the two nations would be reconstituted as one.

▼ the son of man -

Ezek 2:1, 3, 6, 8; 3:1, 3–4, 10, 17, 25; 4:1, 16; 5:1; 6:2; 7:2; 8:5–6, 8, 12, 15, 17; 11:2, 4, 15; 12:2–3, 9, 18, 22, 27; 13:2, 17; 14:3, 13; 15:2; 16:2; 17:2; 20:3–4, 27, 46; 21:2, 6, 9, 12, 14, 19, 28; 22:2, 18, 24; 23:2, 36; 24:2, 16, 25; 25:2; 26:2; 27:2; 28:2, 12, 21; 29:2, 18; 30:2, 21; 31:2; 32:2, 18; 33:2, 7, 10, 12, 24, 30; 34:2; 35:2; 36:1, 17; 37:3, 9, 11, 16; 38:2, 14; 39:1, 17; 40:4; 43:7, 10, 18; 44:5; 47:6

▼ I wonder if Ezekiel's dynamic prophecy brought a much older Bible verse to mind?

▼ Genesis 2:24–25

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:24–25 ASV)

Bible truths are often deeply laid, layer upon layer.

▼ One Nation... and One King

Then the significance of the miracle was spelled out by God clearly for any who were puzzled by all.

▼ Ezekiel 37:21–22

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel;

and one king shall be king to them all;

and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all; (Ezekiel 37:21–22 ASV)

God was going to reunite the nation... *They will be one in my hand.* They would become One Nation again under One King. It would no longer be 'the house of Israel' AND the 'house of Judah' but simply, as Jeremiah expressed it, "the house of Israel". They would become a **new** Israel as a result of "a new thing", a "new covenant" and a "new heart", a people of 'one heart'.

▼ Ezekiel 11:19–20

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh;

that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:19–20 ASV)

The two separate nations would be reconstituted as a single nation, a single entity. Covenants can do that! It was going to be a "new creation". God who alone can bara-create, was committed to the project.

a Reminder from ISAIAH & a Pointer from Ezekiel

▼ However, we do need to remind ourselves of the Isaiah factor.

▼ Isaiah 10:21–22

A **remnant** shall return, even the **remnant** of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

For though thy people, Israel, be as the sand of the sea, only a **remnant**

of them shall return: a destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. (Isaiah 10:21–22 ASV)

¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the **remnant** of his people, that shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. (Isaiah 11:11 ASV)

And there shall be a highway for the **remnant** of his people, that shall **remain**, from Assyria; like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. (Isaiah 11:16 ASV)

This return would not be every single individual from the house of Israel and from the house of Judah but a "remnant" from both houses. When the apparent outworking of these wonderful promises began to take place, it was indeed a "remnant" that returned, a tiny "remnant". Out of an original population of perhaps 7 million less than 50,000 would return as a "remnant" but when the "remnant" returned in the time of Ezra he calls it "Israel" and records that "all Israel" were back in their cities. (Ezra 2: 70) Slightly more than 1/2 of 1% remained to become the start of a new nation; the "remnant" was tiny but this "remnant" was enough and was now "all Israel". This people would become the carrier of the promises given to God's covenant people.

In the early prophecies of Ezekiel we read of this promise to reunite the people under one king but this time the manner of expression is breathtaking;

▼ Ezekiel 34:22–24

therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

And I, Jehovah, will be their God, and my servant David prince among them; I, Jehovah, have spoken it. (Ezekiel 34:22–24 ASV)

Again we ought to remind ourselves that David had been dead and buried for almost 400 hundred years when God gave Ezekiel this prophecy. Did it just mean some kind of return to the family of David, the Davidic dynasty, or did it mean that which was far beyond their comprehension at this time? The scene was being sent for the

fulfilment of these promises that would be more complete than anything they could imagine. Surely Christ had these words and colours in his mind some 500 years later when he declared himself to be "the good Shepherd".

▼ John 10:16

And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10:16 NKJV)

He is consciously using the language/colours of Ezekiel. The New Covenant would reconstitute the separated peoples of Israel and Judah into a new Israel and over that one flock David would reign. But who are the other sheep that will also find their place in this new setting and become part of this one new flock?

Now can you keep a secret?... So can God!

▼ Summary

In this chapter, The Better Covenant. Chapter 10 "A New Start" we revisited the "new thing" the "New Covenant", the "New Heart" themes of the prophets who spoke of the restoration. We began to see that this is not just a reclamation or a salvage attempt but that out of this Syrian/Babylonian exile something quite new would come to birth. We saw that a "New Israel" would be constituted with a different covenant and we saw that Christ had these prophecies in mind in some of his most famous New Testament sayings.

We also asked, but did not answer, who Christ's 'other sheep' might be.